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Examining Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Levels of Digital Awareness

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between parents' digital awareness levels and gender-based emotional beliefs in relation to daily internet usage duration. Using a correlational survey design, quantitative data were collected from 236 parents of school-aged children. Data collection instruments included a personal information form, the Digital Awareness Scale, and the Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs Scale. Independent samples *t*-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and correlation analysis were conducted to examine differences and relationships among variables. The findings revealed that parental role and education level did not significantly affect parents' digital awareness or gender-based emotional beliefs. However, daily internet usage duration significantly differentiated both variables. Parents with longer internet usage durations demonstrated higher levels of digital awareness. Similarly, gender-based emotional belief scores tended to increase as internet usage duration increased. Furthermore, a positive relationship was identified between parents' digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs. The findings suggest that digital parenting should be evaluated not only in terms of technological competence but also from the perspective of gender-sensitive emotional awareness. Accordingly, parent education programs may benefit from integrating both digital literacy and gender awareness components.

Keywords: digital parenting, digital awareness, gender-based emotional beliefs

1. Introduction

Today, digitalization profoundly impacts family structures and parenting processes. Children's access to digital environments at early ages has reshaped traditional parental roles and their responsibilities in guiding their children through the digital world. While this reshaping highlights the significance of concepts such as digital parenting, it also reveals new research requirements regarding how parents' gender-based emotional beliefs influence their attitudes toward children in digital settings (Pazarcıkcı et al., 2024). In this context, examining the relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness attitudes has emerged as a contemporary need and has been investigated accordingly.

The family is defined as a fundamental social unit where individuals come together through biological, legal, or emotional bonds, and where relationships of mutual responsibility, love, and support prevail (American Psychological Association, 2020). The family is the most influential environmental factor in the physical, emotional, and social development of individuals, and this unit entails the obligation of its members to provide care, protection, and socialization to one another (Ho, Mahirah, Ho & Thumboo, 2022). Parenting, on the other hand, is a combination of behaviors, attitudes, and strategies exhibited to meet a child's physical needs while supporting their cognitive, emotional, and security development (Baumrind, 1991). According to Bornstein, parents are not only providers of a child's basic needs but also constitute one of the most powerful environmental influences shaping their cognitive development. This perspective suggests that regardless of how much parental attitudes vary, children are fundamentally influenced by the family they reside in. The family is the place where a child's life begins and where they receive their primary education. Parental attitudes influence children's personality traits, social lives, and even their future parenting roles. Evaluated from this perspective, the primary objective of parents should be to raise healthy individuals and healthy generations for society (Gökler & Atamtürk, 2021).

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When examining the concept of parenting, it is stated that there are seven distinct parenting styles: authoritarian, neglectful, permissive, authoritative, laissez-faire, inconsistent/unstable, and perfectionist (Gökler & Atamtürk, 2021). Different parenting styles affect children's psychological and social development in various ways (Soygüt & Çakir, 2009). While authoritarian parenting leads to increased anxiety, low self-esteem, and elevated stress levels, a permissive parenting style results in lower anxiety levels and higher self-esteem in children. Neglectful parenting can adversely affect children's capacity to form emotional bonds, whereas perfectionist parents lead to issues such as parental dependency, anxiety, and an inability to express oneself in children. Among the challenges encountered in modern parenting, work-family balance, economic concerns, and psychological stress come to the forefront. To address these issues, parenting support programs, psychological counseling, and education-based practices are developed (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). These advancements enable parents to raise children in a more effective and conscious manner.

Childhood is a critical period during which the fundamental building blocks of emotional development are established (Saarni, 1999). In this process, parents play a central role in children's recognition, expression, and regulation of emotions. Parents' emotion socialization styles are generally examined under three main categories: modeling, emotion coaching, and reaction to emotions (Fosco & Grych, 2013). Supportive reactions strengthen children's social and emotional skills, whereas suppressive reactions can create negative effects on children. In this context, gender can be identified as one of the concepts that warrant consideration. Gender represents the set of norms and expectations regarding how individuals are defined as male or female by society (Eagly, 1987). Culturally transmitted gender roles shape behavioral expectations during childhood. For instance, female children are expected to be more sensitive and empathetic, while male children are expected to be strong and independent. These parental expectations pigeonhole children, causing them to be unable to reflect their thoughts authentically. This situation prevents the formation of children's characteristic traits. Parents' gender-based guidance toward children is a significant factor in the internalization of these roles (Lytton & Romney, 1991). Gender norms influence parents' approach to emotions; embedded expressions such as "boys don't cry" or "girls are more sensitive" can restrict children's emotional experiences (Brody & Hall, 2008). These beliefs held by parents shape children's emotional regulation and social skills. Behaviors that are forced into a specific mold prevent children from expressing their emotions adequately. Research demonstrates that gender-based beliefs are decisive factors in academic, social, and psychological outcomes.

On the other hand, technological transformation has reshaped family structures and modes of communication (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Digital environments generate both opportunities and risks for children's social and emotional development. Domestic communication is reorganized through messaging, social media, and online purchases. Children's early introduction to the digital world requires parents to possess more conscious and active guidance. The characteristics that parents must possess to become good guides in their children's digital worlds and to instill the correct ways of technology use have given rise to the concept of "digital parenting" (Yay, 2019). A digital parent is a mother or father who commands the digital world, is aware of the opportunities and risks in digital environments, and can protect their child against these risks. Furthermore, such parents act as role models for the correct use of digital tools and teach their children to respect others in the digital world just as they do in real life, while closely following technological advancements. As digital technologies have become universally accessible and easier to use, parental attitudes toward these technologies have shifted, and the concept of digital parenting has gained prominence (Bostancı, 2023). While some parents believe that their children can develop a wide variety of skills, knowledge, and understanding by using digital technologies, others are concerned about the negative impacts of digital technology utilization on children's social and health development (Cao et al., 2022, p. 2401).

In this context, it can be argued that digital awareness has gained ever-increasing significance for parents. Digital awareness is a multidimensional concept encompassing the knowledge, consciousness, and critical thinking skills that individuals must possess when utilizing digital environments (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). This concept does not merely consist of technical knowledge or device operating skills; it also includes elements such as digital safety, privacy, digital footprints, online ethics, and the recognition of potential risks. Digital awareness is viewed as a core competence that enables an individual to use digital tools, such as the internet and social media, in a conscious, safe, and responsible manner (Jones & Mitchell, 2015). For parents, digital awareness is a critical variable that determines their capacity to guide and supervise their children's digital experiences. Since digital environments play an important role in both the learning and socialization processes of children, parental digital awareness can support children's safe and conscious media use (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). For instance, when parents possess awareness regarding online risks and privacy, they can establish appropriate boundaries for their children, recommend safe content, and introduce them to the dangers they may encounter online beforehand. Digital awareness involves not only possessing information but also

developing a critical digital consciousness. This encompasses an individual's ability to question the reliability of digital content, recognize misinformation and disinformation, and discern gender and cultural stereotypes (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Consequently, digital awareness provides the psychological and cognitive infrastructure necessary for an individual to shape their online behaviors ethically and consciously. The concept of digital awareness in contemporary society should not be limited to children or youth; it is also a critical skill for adults, particularly parents. The digital awareness level of parents exerts an indirect influence on children's digital experiences, thereby shaping their social, emotional, and cognitive development. For this reason, digital awareness training and consciousness-raising programs should be designed with a family-oriented approach and should directly guide parents' practical applications. Ultimately, digital awareness is a multidimensional competence that allows individuals to act safely, consciously, and responsibly in the digital age. For parents, this concept is a fundamental building block in fostering proper guidance strategies and ensuring children's safe digital experiences.

Parents' digital awareness interacts with their gender-based emotional beliefs, thereby influencing children's media use and emotional development (Bostancı, 2023). Stereotypical content in digital environments may prompt parents to re-evaluate their attitudes and alter their guidance toward children. The intersection of digital awareness and gender beliefs emerges as a critical variable in the management of emotions and behaviors that parents exhibit toward their children, both in digital environments and in daily life. In other words, digital awareness enables not only the correct use of technology but also the recognition, questioning, and, when necessary, correction of biases based on gender norms. This situation contributes to children experiencing a healthier development of identity and emotion in both the digital and social worlds. Consequently, the interaction between digital awareness and gender beliefs shapes parental attitudes and comprehensively affects children's emotional, social, and cultural development. This intersection constitutes a critical dimension that must be taken into account in modern parenting studies.

The observed relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness is complex and multidimensional in terms of both children's emotional development and their experiences in digital environments. To comprehend this relationship, it is necessary to focus on the modes of interaction between these two dimensions. First, parental digital awareness serves as a filter that guides what information children acquire and what behaviors they develop when encountering online content. Parents with high digital awareness possess the capacity to recognize the gender stereotypes to which their children are exposed and to evaluate them through a critical lens. This enables children to question the gender representations they encounter in digital environments and to develop more flexible emotional responses. The second dimension involves parents' gender-based emotional beliefs. These beliefs shape expectations regarding which emotions children can express or suppress. If parental digital awareness is low, these stereotypes may be reinforced in digital settings; for example, messages suggesting that boys should not express emotions or that girls must conform to specific behavioral patterns may be supported through digital content. However, when parental digital awareness is high, these beliefs can be recognized, and children's emotional and behavioral development can be supported through conscious interventions.

From an analytical perspective, the relationship between digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs presents a reciprocal and decisive interaction. While digital awareness functions as a tool for parents to mitigate the impact of gender stereotypes, rigid beliefs may limit the effectiveness of digital awareness. This interaction directly affects both the child's emotional flexibility and their critical thinking skills in digital environments. For instance, a parent with high digital awareness can notice a male child's tendency to suppress his emotional responses and offer alternative, supportive messages through digital content. In sum, the relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness constitutes a dynamic structure for child development. The quality of this relationship determines how parents guide their children, how they interpret emotional responses, and their capacity to manage stereotypes encountered in digital environments. Therefore, the conscious management of both dimensions by parents is of critical importance for children to undergo a healthy developmental process both digitally and emotionally. The relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness levels is an area of growing importance in both Turkish and international literature, yet it remains understudied.

Studies in the Field of Digital Parenting and Digital Awareness

- **Yay (2019)** theoretically examined the concept of digital parenting within the Turkish context. The results of the study concluded that digital parenting roles constitute a fundamental element shaping children's relationship with educational technologies.

- **Bostancı (2023)** investigated the impact of parents' attitudes toward digital technologies on children's social media use. The findings reveal that parental attitudes toward technology are a decisive factor in enabling children to transform social media from a space of risk into an opportunity for academic and social development.

Gender Beliefs and Parenting

- **Gökler and Atamtürk (2021)** examined the relationship between child-rearing attitudes and gender. According to the research results, democratic parenting attitudes support gender equality, whereas authoritarian and protective attitudes serve to perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes.

- **Esen and Siyez (2017)** demonstrated that gender-based stereotypes influence children's emotion regulation skills and that parents play a critical role in this process.

International Literature Review

Digital Parenting

In the international literature, digital parenting began to be studied at an earlier date, leading to the development of comprehensive models:

- **Livingstone and Helsper (2007; 2008)** showed that parents' digital skills determine the balance between risks and opportunities in children's internet use. Digital awareness was identified as one of the most critical variables for children's online safety.

- **Jones and Mitchell (2015)** examined digital awareness from the perspective of critical media literacy, demonstrating that parents' ability to recognize online risks exerts a regulatory effect on children's digital behaviors.

- **Cao, Dong, and Li (2022)** determined that parental attitudes toward digital technology vary according to cultural context, noting that parents in China perceive digital risks at a higher level.

Gender and Emotional Beliefs

International research indicates that gender-based emotional stereotypes are a universal phenomenon:

- **Brody and Hall (2008)** found that emotions are socialized differently in female and male children; girls are guided toward being nurturing and emotional, whereas boys are directed toward being independent and strong.

- **Denham et al. (2010)** stated that parents' emotion socialization styles (supportive vs. dismissive/supportive vs. nonsupportive) exhibit gender-based differences.

- **Chaplin (2015)**, in a cross-cultural meta-analysis, showed that male children experience greater emotional suppression, which leads to lower emotional expression skills during adolescence.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

A review of the existing literature reveals that no prior study has investigated the intersection between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness levels. Addressing these two variables simultaneously will provide a holistic assessment regarding both children's emotional development and their experiences in digital environments. From both a societal and academic standpoint, this subject holds paramount importance for developing guidance strategies that support healthy emotional and digital development in children.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The process of digitalization leads to societal transformations that reshape family structures, parenting roles, and children's emotional-social developmental processes. Situated at the center of this transformation, parents are both influenced by traditional gender beliefs and bear the responsibility of guiding their children safely and consciously through digital environments. A review of the literature indicates a complete absence of research examining parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels together. Investigating these two variables in tandem is anticipated to fill a significant gap in holistically understanding the emotional and digital dimensions of modern parenting.

Furthermore, findings regarding how gender-based stereotypes—which play a major role in child emotion socialization—may be reinforced in digital environments or mitigated through digital awareness will introduce a novel perspective to the field of child development. At a societal level, by simultaneously evaluating two vital parenting dimensions that affect children's emotional and digital experiences, this study offers critical implications for conscious parenting, digital literacy, and gender equality. The insights to be gained will serve as a guide for family counselors, psychologists, teachers, and policymakers in developing parental education programs. In these respects, the study contributes to the academic literature while yielding practical outcomes that support parents in cultivating more conscious, egalitarian, and digitally adaptive attitudes in child development.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness levels, and to examine the relationship between these two variables. In accordance with this objective, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels?
2. Do parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels significantly differentiate according to their:
    - Parental role (mother vs. father),
    - Education level,
    - Daily internet usage duration?
3. What is the relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness levels?

Based on the theoretical framework and the stated problem, the following hypotheses were established:

H1: Parents' digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs vary significantly based on their daily internet usage durations.

H2: There is a positive and significant relationship between parents' digital awareness levels and their gender-based emotional beliefs.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a correlational research design, utilizing quantitative research methodologies. Quantitative research encompasses strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, collecting data through predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003). The correlational research design is an approach that examines two or more variables to determine the existence and/or degree of covariation between them (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Karasar, 2012).

2.2. Population and Sample

The target population of the study consists of the parents of children aged 6–17 who participated in Youth Camps affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the province of Konya in 2026. Surveys were distributed to all students across the camps, which hosted approximately 600 students, and one of their parents was requested to complete the survey on a voluntary participation basis. Out of approximately 600 families, 236 responded and returned the surveys. The demographic data of the participants are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	Values / Categories	*n*	*%*
Parental Gender	Female	198	83.9
	Male	38	16.1
Education Level	Primary and High School	87	36.9
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	63.1
Total Number of Children	1 child	63	26.7
	2 children	96	40.7
	3 children	50	21.2
	4 or more	27	11.4
Daily Internet Usage Duration	Less than 1 hour	27	11.4
	Between 1–3 hours	78	33.1
	Between 3–5 hours	97	41.1
	More than 5 hours	34	14.4
Daily Digital Time Spent with Child	1 hour or less	148	62.7
	Between 1–3 hours	63	26.7
	3 hours and above	25	10.6
Total		**236**	**100**

When Table 1 is examined, it can be observed that the participating parents predominantly consist of females (83.9%). Regarding education levels, 36.9% of the participants possess a primary or high school education, while 63.1% hold a bachelor's or postgraduate degree. To ensure sufficient statistical power for the comparative analyses and to construct balanced groups that reflect the fundamental difference between basic and higher education, the participants' education levels were merged into two functional categories: Primary/High School and Bachelor's/Postgraduate. In terms of the total number of children, families with 1 or 2 children constitute the majority. Looking at daily internet usage duration, a significant proportion of the participants (74.2%) report an internet usage time between 1–3 and 3–5 hours. Lastly, it is observed that the majority of parents (62.7%) spend 1 hour or less per day in digital environments together with their children.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments and Data Collection

In this study, a personal information form, the Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs Scale, and the Digital Awareness Scale were utilized as data collection instruments. Detailed information regarding these scales is presented below.

- **Personal Information Form**

A personal information form was employed to gather data regarding the participants' age, gender, education level, marital status, number of children, age range of the child, daily internet usage duration, and the most frequently used digital tools.

- **Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs Scale**

The scale was developed by Bağcı and Seven (2022) and consists of 15 items. It is a 4-point Likert-type scale rated from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). The scale includes items that reflect parents' understanding of gender-based emotions. As a result of the reliability analysis conducted for this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be alpha = .726, indicating a high level of reliability.

- **Digital Awareness Scale**

The scale was developed by Manap and Durmuş (2020) and comprises 16 items. It is structured as a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The scale consists of four subdimensions: negative modeling, digital neglect, productive use, and protection from risks. It evaluates parental behaviors regarding guiding children in digital environments, recognizing digital risks, and serving as a role model in technology use. The reliability analysis performed for this study revealed a Cronbach's alpha value of alpha = .794, demonstrating that the instrument possesses an acceptable and robust level of reliability.

2.4. Ethical Approval

Prior to the collection of the research data, the necessary ethical approval was obtained from the Selçuk University Faculty of Education Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated 15/01/2026 and numbered E-63706756-300-1174374. Throughout the research process, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and data were collected strictly on a voluntary participation basis.

2.5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the demographic data of the participants, descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, were utilized. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values were calculated to determine the parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the differences based on parental roles and education levels, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine the differences based on average daily internet usage duration. Finally, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was examined to determine the relationship between parents' gender-based emotional belief levels and the dimensions of digital awareness.

For the interpretation of the data, an evaluation interval and criterion categorized as low, medium, and high were adopted based on the number of Likert options. Within this scope, interpretations were made using the formula:

$$\text{Evaluation Interval} = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Number of Intervals}}$$

Accordingly, the Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs Scale (GBEBS), which consists of a 4-point Likert scale, was evaluated based on the 4-1/3 formula and interpreted as: 1.00–2.00 = low, 2.01–3.00 = medium, and 3.01–4.00 = high. The subdimensions and the overall score of the Digital Awareness Scale, calculated using the 5-1/3 formula, were interpreted as: 1.00–2.33 = low, 2.34–3.66 = medium, and 3.67–5.00 = high.

The data were analyzed using the SPSS 21 software package, and the level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Skewness	***Kurtosis***
Digital Awareness	.023	1.986
Gender-Based Emotional Belief	-.388	.628

Table 2 presents the skewness and kurtosis values of the variables. It was observed that the skewness (.023) and kurtosis (1.986) values for the digital awareness variable, as well as the skewness (-.388) and kurtosis (.628) values for the gender-based emotional beliefs variable, fell within the acceptable range ±2. These findings indicate that the data met the assumption of normal distribution. Consequently, parametric tests were utilized in the subsequent statistical analyses.

3. Findings

The data collected from 236 parents within the scope of the study were analyzed, and the results are presented under the respective subheadings below.

3.1. Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Digital Awareness Levels

Descriptive statistics regarding the parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels were examined. In line with the data obtained within the scope of the study, parents' digital awareness levels were evaluated both overall and on the basis of subdimensions, whereas their gender-based emotional belief levels were evaluated using the overall scale score. The arithmetic means, standard deviations, and corresponding evaluation levels regarding the obtained findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs (GBEB) and Digital Awareness Levels (N=236)

Scale / Dimension	$\bar{X}$	*sd*	*Level*
Negative Modeling Dimension	2.25	.845	Low
Digital Neglect Dimension	2.35	.916	Medium
Productive Use Dimension	3.64	.865	Medium
Protection from Risks Dimension	3.63	.938	Medium
DIGITAL AWARENESS OVERALL	2.97	.538	Medium
GBEB OVERALL	2.74	.491	Medium

As can be seen from Table 3, parents' overall digital awareness levels were found to be at a medium level ($\bar{X}$= 2.97). When examined in terms of subdimensions, negative modeling was the only dimension found to be at a low level ($\bar{X}$= 2.25). It was observed that parents possessed a medium level of digital awareness in all other dimensions, namely digital neglect ($\bar{X}$= 2.35), productive use ($\bar{X}$= 3.64), and protection from risks ($\bar{X}$= 3.63). On the other hand, it was concluded that parents' gender-based emotional belief levels were also at a medium level ($\bar{X}$= 2.74).

3.2. Determination of Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Digital Awareness Levels According to Parental Roles

In this section, it was investigated whether parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels significantly differentiated according to maternal and paternal roles. In this regard, parents' digital awareness levels were compared on the basis of overall and subdimension scores, whereas their gender-based emotional belief levels were compared using the overall scale score. The findings obtained according to maternal and paternal roles are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs (GBEB) and Digital Awareness Levels According to Parental Roles

Factors		*N*	$\bar{X}$	*sd*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Negative Modeling Dimension	Mother	198	2.21	.818	-2.031	234	.043*
	Father	38	2.51	.949			
Digital Neglect Dimension	Mother	198	2.34	.905	-.404	234	.686
	Father	38	2.40	.980			
Productive Use Dimension	Mother	198	3.66	.881	.745	234	.457
	Father	38	3.54	.783			
Protection from Risks Dimension	Mother	198	3.65	.924	.641	234	.522
	Father	38	3.54	1.018			
DIGITAL AWARENESS OVERALL	Mother	198	2.96	.537	-.385	234	.701
	Father	38	3.00	.551			
GBEB OVERALL	Mother	198	2.74	.495	-.231	234	.817
	Father	38	2.76	.476			

* p<.05

When Table 4 is examined, it can be observed that parents' overall digital awareness levels do not significantly differentiate according to maternal and paternal roles ($t_{(234)}$= -0.385, p > .05). Similarly, the GBEB variable is not significantly influenced by parental roles ($t_{(234)}$= -0.231, p > .05). When analyzed in terms of subdimensions, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference in the negative modeling dimension of digital awareness based on parental roles ($t_{(234)}$ = -2.031, p < .05). Upon examining the arithmetic means, it can be inferred that fathers' negative modeling digital awareness levels ($\bar{X}$= 2.51) are significantly higher than those of mothers ($\bar{X}$= 2.21). Conversely, no significant differences were found between parental roles in any of the remaining dimensions, including digital neglect ($t_{(234)}$= -0.404, p > .05), productive use ($t_{(234)}$ = 0.745, p > .05), and protection from risks ($t_{(234)}$= 0.641, p > .05).

3.3. Determination of Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Digital Awareness Levels According to Education Levels

In this section, it was investigated whether parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels significantly differentiated according to their education levels. In this regard, parents' digital awareness levels (both overall and subdimensions) and their gender-based emotional belief levels (overall scale score) were compared based on their educational backgrounds. The obtained findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparison of Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs (GBEB) and Digital Awareness Levels According to Education Levels

Factors	Education Level	*N*	$\overline{X}$	*sd*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Negative Modeling Dimension	Primary and High School	87	2.26	.882	0.107	234	.915
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	2.25	.826			
Digital Neglect Dimension	Primary and High School	87	2.28	.912	-0.837	234	.403
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	2.39	.919			
Productive Use Dimension	Primary and High School	87	3.55	1.009	-1.146	234	.253
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	3.69	.768			
Protection from Risks Dimension	Primary and High School	87	3.53	1.052	-1.230	234	.220
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	3.69	.863			
DIGITAL AWARENESS OVERALL	Primary and High School	87	2.91	.649	-1.312	234	.191
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	3.00	.460			
GBEB OVERALL	Primary and High School	87	2.78	.575	0.907	234	.365
	Bachelor's and Postgraduate	149	2.72	.435			

* p<.05

When Table 5 is examined, it can be observed that parents' overall digital awareness levels do not significantly differentiate according to their education levels ($t_{(234)}$= -1.312, p > .05). Similarly, the GBEB variable is not significantly influenced by educational backgrounds ($t_{(234)}$= 0.907, p > .05). When analyzed in terms of subdimensions, it can be stated that there is a no statistically significant difference in the negative modeling dimension of digital awareness based on education levels ($t_{(234)}$= 0.107, p > .05).

3.4. Determination of Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Digital Awareness Levels According to Daily Internet Usage Durations

In this section, it was investigated whether parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and digital awareness levels significantly differentiated according to their daily internet usage durations. In this regard, parents were categorized into groups based on their daily internet usage durations; the descriptive statistics regarding their digital awareness and gender-based emotional belief levels are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Parents' GBEB and Digital Awareness Mean Scores According to Daily Internet Usage Durations

	Internet Usage Duration	*N*	$\overline{X}$	*sd*
Digital Awareness Level	A- Less than 1 hour	27	2.65	.465
	B- Between 1–3 hours	78	2.86	.541
	C- Between 3–5 hours	97	3.08	.532
	D- More than 5 hours	34	3.15	.450
Gender-Based Emotional Belief Level	A- Less than 1 hour	27	2.76	.474
	B- Between 1–3 hours	78	2.59	.520
	C- Between 3–5 hours	97	2.81	.459
	D- More than 5 hours	34	2.90	.455

When Table 6 is examined, it can be observed that the mean scores of parents' levels for both digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs differ according to their daily internet usage durations. To determine the statistical

significance of these differences, the groups were compared using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. ANOVA Results Comparing Parents' GBEB and Digital Awareness Levels According to Daily Internet Usage Durations

Variables	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	*sd*	*Mean of Squares*	*f*	*p*	*Meaningful Difference*
Digital Awareness Level	**Between Groups**	6.065	3	2.022	7.550	.000*	A-C, A-D,
	Within Groups	62.116	232	.268			
	Total	68.180	235				
Gender-Based Emotional Belief Level	**Between Groups**	3.092	3	1.031	4.448	.005*	B-C, B-D
	Within Groups	53.752	232	.232			
	Total	56.843	235				

* p<.05

As can be seen from Table 7, parents' daily internet usage duration leads to a statistically significant difference in both their digital awareness levels ($F = 7.550$, $p < .05$) and their gender-based emotional belief levels ($F = 4.448$, $p < .05$). According to the results of the Scheffe post-hoc test conducted to determine between which groups the differences occurred, the digital awareness levels of parents with less than 1 hour of daily internet usage ($\bar{X}$= 2.65) were significantly lower than those of parents with 3–5 hours of usage ($\bar{X}$= 3.08) and those with more than 5 hours of usage ($\bar{X}$= 3.15). Similarly, regarding gender-based emotional belief levels, the Scheffe test results revealed that the GBEB mean scores of parents using the internet for more than 5 hours daily ($\bar{X}$= 2.90) and those using it between 3–5 hours ($\bar{X}$= 2.81) were significantly higher than the GBEB mean scores of parents with a daily internet usage duration of 1–3 hours ($\bar{X}$= 2.59).

3.5. The Relationship Between Parents' Gender-Based Emotional Beliefs and Digital Awareness Levels

Finally, the relationship between parents' gender-based emotional belief levels and their digital awareness levels, as formulated in the research questions, was analyzed, and the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. The Relationship Between Parents' GBEB and Digital Awareness Levels (N=236)

		Negative Modeling	Digital Neglect	Productive Use	Protection from Risks	DIGITAL AWARENESS
GBEB	**r**	.126	.070	.301**	.283**	.324**
	p	.054	.282	.000	.000	.000

p<.01

When Table 8 is examined, the correlational metrics expose a positive and moderate linear relationship between parents' gender-based emotional beliefs (GBEB) and their overall digital awareness levels ($r = .324$, $p < .01$; Cohen, 1988). When analyzed in terms of subdimensions, GBEB scores show positive and weak correlations exclusively with the protection from risks ($r = .283$, $p < .01$) and productive use ($r = .301$, $p < .01$) dimensions, whereas no significant linear associations are observed with the negative modeling or digital neglect dimensions.

4. Discussion

In this study, parents' gender-based emotional beliefs and their digital awareness levels were examined; furthermore, it was determined whether these variables differentiated according to demographic characteristics such as parental role, education level, and daily internet usage duration. The findings underscore the critical importance of comprehensively addressing digital parenting alongside gender-based emotional beliefs in contemporary family studies.

The findings indicated that parents' overall digital awareness levels were moderate. When examined in terms of subdimensions, the negative modeling dimension prominently emerged with a low-level score. This phenomenon indicates that parents exhibit limited direct negative modeling behaviors toward their children in digital environments; however, they maintain a moderate level of consciousness regarding other dimensions of digital awareness, namely productive use, digital neglect, and protection from risks. This finding aligns with prior literature suggesting that although parents are generally cognizant of digital risks, they frequently face practical constraints in translating this awareness into proactive, regulatory behaviors (Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Jones & Mitchell, 2015).

Furthermore, the study determined that parents' gender-based emotional beliefs were also at a moderate level. This result suggests that contemporary parents do not entirely dismiss gender-based emotional stereotypes, yet they do not rigorously uphold or enforce these traditional dogmas either. Previous studies have emphasized that parental gender-based emotional beliefs exert a powerful influence on how children express their emotions (Brody & Hall, 2008; Chaplin, 2015). Within this framework, the moderate level of gender-based emotional beliefs identified in this study implies that parents may currently occupy a transitional phase, navigating between traditional patterns and modern parenting approaches.

In terms of comparative analyses based on parental roles, no statistically significant differences were observed regarding overall digital awareness or gender-based emotional beliefs. Nevertheless, a nuanced analysis of the subdimensions revealed that fathers scored significantly higher than mothers in the negative modeling subdimension. This finding suggests that fathers may exhibit behaviors that represent more frequent negative modeling for children within digital environments. Previous research has noted that fathers often maintain extended online durations during digital media utilization, an engagement that is directly observed by children (Nikken & Schols, 2015). Consequently, this outcome accentuates the necessity for digital parenting training programs to intentionally design modules that actively incorporate paternal roles.

Regarding educational backgrounds, the analyses demonstrated that parents' digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs did not significantly differentiate according to their formal education levels. This outcome suggests that digital awareness cannot be adequately accounted for solely through formal educational attainment; rather, factors such as daily lived experiences and direct exposure to digital environments may function as more decisive components. *Corroborating this perspective, several studies have underscored that conventional education levels remain insufficient on their own to explain digital parenting behaviors (Livingstone & Smith, 2014)*.

The analysis concerning daily internet usage duration indicated that higher daily internet usage duration was positively associated with elevated levels of parents' digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs.Specifically, the higher digital awareness mean scores observed among parents with extended internet usage suggest that the aggregate time spent online may serve an experiential purpose, fostering experience and awareness. However, it must be noted that unless this increased exposure is accompanied by a conscious digital engagement, it inherently harbors systemic risks. Indeed, the international literature continuously highlights that the overarching determinant is the qualitative nature of digital experiences rather than mere quantitative media exposure (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that parents possess moderate levels of both digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs, and these variables exhibit limited differentiation across specific demographic characteristics. The empirical evidence underscores that the digital parenting paradigm must look beyond technical knowledge, recognizing that cultivating an emotional awareness rooted in gender sensitivity is equally paramount.

4.1. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to parents of children attending youth camps in Konya, Türkiye; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all parents. Second, the unequal distribution of participants, particularly the predominance of mothers in the sample, may have influenced the comparison of parental roles. Finally, the data were collected through self-report scales, which may be subject to response bias.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for practice and future research. First, parent education programs designed to improve digital awareness should adopt a holistic approach by incorporating gender equality and emotional awareness components. Second, gender-sensitive digital literacy training may be developed to support parents in establishing more balanced and conscious approaches to child development in digital environments.

For future research, studies involving larger and more diverse samples are recommended. In addition, qualitative or mixed-method studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between parents' digital awareness and gender-based emotional beliefs.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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