

HABILITATION THESIS

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF PARENTING AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: BENCHMARKS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND TEACHERS

Assoc. prof. SONIA CARMEN I GNAT

SUMMARY

The habilitation thesis entitled “Psychological and Educational Dimensions of Parenting and Digital Technology: Benchmarks for the Development of Children, Young People and Teachers,” represents the culmination of an academic and professional trajectory situated at the intersection of psychology, educational sciences, and emerging technologies. The work synthesizes both the teaching and research experience accumulated over several decades and the active involvement in institutional and international projects, shaping an integrated vision of contemporary education. This vision brings together two fundamental research directions: parenting and child development in family and educational contexts, on the one hand, and digital technology with its impact on the psychological and educational well-being of teachers, pupils, and young people, on the other.

A defining element of this work is its interdisciplinary nature, built on the convergence of psychology, educational sciences, sociology, and technology studies. This intersection is essential for capturing the transformations that education is undergoing in a society marked by globalization and accelerated digitalization. The family, as the primary space of socialization and development, constitutes the starting point of this approach, being the environment where the first models of attachment are formed, where the child internalizes the rules of social coexistence, and where the foundations of emotional and cognitive self-regulation are consolidated. Research on parenting highlights the role of parenting styles and early affective relationships as predictors of psychological balance, school performance, and social adaptation capacity. Moreover, recent literature emphasizes the importance of the family environment in reducing psychological vulnerabilities and building resilience in children and adolescents.

At the same time, digitalization represents a second major force shaping both individual and institutional development. Technology is no longer merely an auxiliary tool in the educational process but a medium in itself, influencing motivation, attention, learning styles, personal identity, and interpersonal relationships. The rise of online educational platforms, the use of artificial intelligence, and unlimited access to digital resources have created not only significant opportunities for personalized learning and democratized access to knowledge but also major risks such as digital dependence, social alienation, and technological stress. Research on digital well-being indicates that the balance between the benefits and risks of technology depends on individual psychological factors, institutional strategies for integrating digital resources, and the support provided by families and teachers.

This work aims to integrate these two directions into a common analytical framework, in which parenting and the digitalization of education are not viewed as parallel domains but as convergent dimensions of the same educational reality. Their interaction generates a complex space for reflection and intervention, where parenting strategies, digital competencies, and educational policies intertwine and shape the psychological and educational development of present and future generations.

The main objective of this thesis is to highlight the complementarity between the two research directions—parenting and digital technology—and to demonstrate how, together, they provide a holistic perspective on the development of children, teachers, and young people. Parenting, as the foundation of socialization and identity formation, emphasizes the familial and psychological dimension, underlining the importance of the parent–child relationship, unconditional acceptance, and educational strategies that support resilience, emotional self-regulation, and social adaptation. In parallel, digital technology introduces new challenges and opportunities for the educational process and for psycho-emotional development, shaping a context in which traditional patterns of learning and socialization are reshaped by online platforms, artificial intelligence, and virtual environments.

The first direction, focused on parenting, aims to investigate the mechanisms through which attachment models, parenting styles, and affective support influence children's psychological balance and school performance. Within this area, emphasis is placed on identifying protective factors that reduce the risk of emotional disorders, analyzing parenting strategies that foster adaptation in diverse social contexts, and exploring ways in which psychological and

psycho-educational interventions can strengthen the mental health of children and adolescents. Drawing on classical theories and recent studies, it becomes clear that parenting is not merely a framework for transmitting values and norms, but a decisive factor in shaping resilience and coping abilities. Furthermore, the transgenerational dimension provides a deeper understanding of how parents' attachment experiences influence family relationships and children's subsequent development, emphasizing the importance of support programs designed to break cycles of family vulnerability.

The second research direction focuses on the impact of digital technology on education and psychological well-being, examining the relationship between the use of digital resources, technological stress, and the emotional health of students, teachers, and young people. Digitalization has brought with it a series of opportunities—such as personalized learning processes, expanded access to information, teaching flexibility, and the creation of new learning communities—but also risks, including cognitive overload, decreased attention, internet or video game addiction, and the intensification of cyberbullying phenomena. In this context, the digital competences of teachers and students become essential not only for educational performance but also for maintaining psychological well-being. The lack of such competences is often associated with technological anxiety, reduced professional satisfaction, and even the intention to leave the educational system. Therefore, digital mentoring programs and strategies for managing technological resources are analyzed as viable solutions to support adaptation, reduce stress, and optimize the educational process.

By bringing together these two research directions, a solid and innovative field of reflection is configured, one capable of grounding theoretical models and generating practical applications. Parenting and digital technology can no longer be viewed separately, since children and adolescents develop emotionally and cognitively within a hybrid reality shaped both by family experiences and by constant exposure to digital environments. From this intersection, new conceptual frameworks emerge that provide benchmarks for understanding protective factors against risks such as digital addiction, cyberbullying, social isolation, or mental health disorders, while also highlighting the potential of technology to support psychological well-being and educational development.

The scientific relevance of this habilitation thesis derives from a complex research activity structured on several levels— theoretical, empirical, and applicative. The body of work

published in Web of Science–indexed journals, international databases (BDI), as well as in collective volumes and monographs, demonstrates not only the coherence of the research directions but also the consistency of the results obtained. These works have addressed central themes for psychology and educational sciences, such as parenting, child development, adolescent mental health, digital wellbeing, the acceptance of educational technologies, and their impact on teachers and students. The publications have provided the necessary framework for testing research hypotheses, validating psychological and educational instruments, and formulating conclusions with direct applicability in academic and social contexts.

The contributions go beyond the abstract level of theory, being supported by active participation in national and international projects, which have enabled comparative exploration of phenomena and the development of innovative intervention models. Through these projects, transnational analyses of digital competences have been conducted, programs for preventing technology addictions have been developed, and interventions aimed at strengthening the psychological resilience of teachers and students have been implemented. The experience of working in interdisciplinary teams has contributed to the integration of advanced methodologies—from predictive models using neural networks and bibliometric analyses with VOSviewer to applications of decision tree regression—thereby strengthening the relevance and rigor of the research.

The applicative dimension of this activity is evident in the way scientific results have been transferred into educational and counseling practices. Training programs dedicated to parents emphasized the development of communication competences and the management of children’s emotional health, while programs for teachers focused on adapting to the digital environment, preventing technological stress, and integrating digital pedagogy. In addition, pupils and students benefited from psychological and psychoeducational interventions designed to support emotional self-regulation, reduce risks associated with technology dependence, and promote a functional relationship with digital environments. These initiatives demonstrate the capacity of research to generate a direct and measurable impact on the educational and social community.

Therefore, the habilitation thesis is not only a synthesis of the contributions made so far but also a starting point for consolidating an academic and scientific program oriented toward interdisciplinarity, innovation, and social applicability. It reflects the maturation of a professional trajectory dedicated to psychology and educational sciences and expresses a constant concern for

articulating the links between family, school, and the digital environment. This orientation highlights the formative role of the family as the nucleus of emotional and identity development, the importance of school as a space for cognitive and social growth, and the influence of the digital environment as a transformative factor shaping how young people construct their identity and life competences.

The thesis does not merely serve to certify the stages of an academic career but assumes the mission of proposing an integrated perspective on contemporary educational and psychological processes. Its central objective is to promote balance, resilience, and constructive adaptation to the challenges and complexities of the present world, offering benchmarks for research, educational policies, and practical interventions. In this way, the thesis asserts its relevance through its ability to respond to fundamental questions for education and society, contributing to the development of generations capable of successfully navigating between family traditions and digital innovation.