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Children's Literature in the Digital Era and Its Role in Building the Child's Personality: An Analytical Educational Approach

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Abstract :

Children's literature is considered one of the most vital educational and cultural tools that contribute to building a child's personality and developing their cognitive and emotional capabilities. In the contemporary era, this field has undergone significant transformations due to rapid technological advancements and the emergence of various digital media, which have influenced the production and reception of literary texts directed at children. In this context, "Digital Children's Literature" has emerged, relying on the integration of multimedia such as images, sound, motion, and digital interaction to present literary content.

This research aims to examine the role of children's literature in the digital age in shaping a child's personality through an analytical pedagogical approach. This approach seeks to highlight the key educational and cultural dimensions through which digital literature can contribute to developing the cognitive, social, and moral aspects of a child. Furthermore, the study analyzes the distinctive characteristics of digital children's literature and its impact on forming a child's awareness and fostering their creative abilities.

The study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, examining various theoretical works and studies related to children's literature and digital education to determine the nature of the relationship between digital literature and personality development. The study concludes with several key findings, most notably that digital children's literature can serve as an effective educational tool if utilized consciously, taking into account the psychological and cognitive characteristics of children. Additionally, it can significantly contribute to stimulating imagination, creativity, and reinforcing social and cultural values.

Keywords: Children's Literature; Digital Literature; Digital Age; Child's Personality; Education.

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Introduction

Children's literature is no longer viewed merely as a simplified version of adult literature; rather, it is recognized as a sophisticated multi-modal genre that functions as a bridge between a child's internal cognitive world and external social reality. Historically, this genre focused on moral didacticism, but modern perspectives emphasize the "agency" of the child. It is a specialized form of communication where the author must align linguistic complexity with the developmental stages of the child, ensuring that the aesthetic experience fosters both literacy and emotional resonance.

Children's literature constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of the educational and cultural process, as it contributes to developing a child's personality and shaping their social and cultural awareness from the earliest stages of life. During these formative years, children undergo personality development and acquire values and knowledge that influence their future behavior and social interaction. Hence, the importance of literature directed at children emerges as an effective means of transmitting knowledge and values in a manner consistent with their psychological and mental characteristics.

Researchers in education, psychology, and children's literature have recognized that literary texts for children serve a pedagogical role that transcends mere entertainment. These texts contribute to building character and enhancing cognitive and imaginative abilities. Stories, tales, and poems provide children with opportunities to encounter diverse patterns of human behavior, helping them acquire a set of social and ethical values.

In this context, researcher Ahmed Najib indicates that "children's literature is not merely a means of entertainment, but an educational tool that contributes to shaping a child's emotions, developing their imagination, and instilling a set of human values" (Alayan, 2014, p. 42).

However, technological developments in recent decades have brought profound changes to the relationship between children and literary texts. The proliferation of digital media, the Internet, and smart devices has led to new patterns of reading and reception. Children now engage with literary texts within a digital environment characterized by interactivity and multimedia.

This shift has given rise to what is known as "Digital Children's Literature"a new form of literature that utilizes digital technologies to produce and present texts interactively, combining text, images, audio, and motion. This genre is distinguished by its ability to capture children's attention and motivate them to read and interact with literary content.

Nevertheless, this digital transformation raises several questions regarding the role that children's literature can play in the digital age in building personality and developing cognitive and social skills. Does digital literature contribute to reinforcing educational values? Can it be an effective tool for fostering imagination and creativity? Or might it diminish the role of traditional reading in a child's life?

From this perspective, it becomes essential to study the role of children's literature in the digital age in character building by analyzing its educational and cultural dimensions.

Research Problem

This study stems from the following central research question:

To what extent does children's literature in the digital age contribute to building a child's personality and developing their cognitive, social, and moral dimensions?

To address this primary question, the research seeks to answer several sub-questions:

What is the concept of children's literature in the digital age?

What are the key characteristics of digital literature directed at children?

How does digital literature contribute to the development of a child's personality?

What are the pedagogical challenges associated with using digital literature for children?

Research Hypotheses

The research proposes the following hypotheses:

Digital children's literature contributes to the development of a child's cognitive abilities.

Digital literature enhances social and ethical values.

Digital children's literature fosters imagination and creativity in children.

Methodology

In a methodological context, this study employs a descriptive-analytical approach. It analyzes a range of theoretical studies and research papers related to children's literature and digital education to determine the nature of the relationship between digital literature and the development of a child's personality.

1. Concept of Children's Literature and its Pedagogical Characteristics

Children's literature is considered one of the literary and educational fields that has received increasing attention in modern studies due to its primary role in developing a child's personality and enriching their cognitive and emotional experiences. It encompasses various expressive forms, such as stories, tales, poems, and plays, written specifically for children in a manner consistent with their age levels and mental capacities.

Definitions of children's literature vary across literary and educational studies. Abdul Tawab Youssef indicates that: "Children's literature is that genre of literature directed at children using simple language and an engaging style that respects their psychological and mental characteristics, aiming to develop their imagination and enrich their experiences" (Youssef, n.d., p. 42). It is evident from this definition that children's literature is not limited to aesthetic or artistic aspects but carries within it educational and cultural dimensions that contribute to character building.

Ribhi Mustafa Alayan defines it as: "A new branch of fine literature that possesses characteristics distinguishing it from adult literature, even though both represent artistic works where form and content unite. It is a collection of artistic works that depict ideas, feelings, and imaginings consistent with children's perceptions, taking the forms of stories, poetry, essays, and songs" (Najib, 2000, p. 42). These ideas often reside in the imagination of the writer who seeks to capture the attention and stimulate the imagination of this age group.

Al-Hadidi defines children's literature first through its linguistic significance and then its artistic dimension, stating: "It is a form of literary expression with its own rules and methodologies, whether concerning its language matching the child's vocabulary and the stylistic repertoire of the target age or its content and suitability for each stage of childhood, or regarding matters of taste and technical methods in crafting a story or the

art of oral storytelling" (Al-Hadidi, 1976, p. 110). Thus, he establishes a new meaning in the literature: a field whose style, meaning, and content are specialized for a specific group of humans defined by age.

In another definition, he describes it as: "A linguistic experience in an artistic form, created by the artist specifically for children between the ages of two and twelve (or slightly more), which they live and interact with. It grants them pleasure and entertainment, brings joy to their hearts, develops their sense of beauty and appreciation for it, strengthens their love for goodness, unleashes their imagination and creative energies, and builds the human within them" (Al-Hadidi, 1976, pp. 102-103). This latter definition closely aligns children's literature with the literary side, making it a genre of literary texts subject to textual form and content.

The same author emphasizes that children's literature in the Arab world is an adaptation of adult literature specific type derived from a general genre. The writer addresses the childhood stage, considering their imagination, knowledge, and integration into life, while achieving educational, moral, and artistic goals simultaneously. Writing for children, therefore, falls into two main categories:

Poetry: Including poems for youngsters, nursery rhymes, game songs, riddles, chants, and simplified poetic drama.

Prose: Including various tales and stories, especially those where the writer employs animal fables, birds, and mythical characters that appeal to the child's imagination.

He further confirms that "if we look for another definition that distinguishes it from adult literature, we can say: children's literature is a linguistic experience in an artistic form created by the artist specifically for children between two and thirteen, or slightly more... it builds the human within them" (Al-Hadidi, 1976, p. 111). However, it remains a branch of adult literature because it is a specialized type of a general genre. The writer observes the child's linguistic and cognitive levels, thereby elevating their language, imagination, and knowledge to achieve educational, moral, artistic, and aesthetic functions.

Common Key Points from the Definitions:

Based on these definitions, we can extract several common points:

Target Audience: It is specialized for a specific age group (children), and the work is directed to them through written, spoken, heard, or visual means.

Developmental Consideration: Writing for children must account for different age groups, sharing linguistic, mental, and psychological characteristics.

Aesthetic & Creative Frame: It is the literature of pleasure and imagination, presented in an aesthetic and creative artistic mold.

Diversity of Forms: There are several forms of children's literature, each distinguished by its linguistic and artistic specificities, such as stories, poetry, drama, and myths.

1.1. The Pedagogical Function

Children's literature contributes to instilling moral and social values in children such as honesty, cooperation, and respect for others by presenting positive behavioral models

through stories and tales. According to Muhammad Hassan Barighash, the upbringing of children is only successful when it achieves two primary goals:
-Purposeful Construction.
-Self-Protection.
Purposeful Construction involves guiding the child from an early age on sound Islamic foundations that align with the pillars of the human soul. Through this upbringing, the child becomes a righteous individual who worships God alone, performs good deeds, and carries the weight of trust and responsibility, fulfilling their duties to the fullest extent.
The second goal is protecting this demographic from deviation, straying, and falling into the temptations of life, including corruption, desires, and intellectual or behavioral aberrations. We cannot fortify a child against these ills unless the following are achieved (Barighash, 1992, pp. 131-133):
Gradually forming and establishing the creed (Aqidah) within the child's soul.
Striving to instill feelings of love for others, cooperation, and submission to the truth in all relationships and actions.
Developing a conscious personality characterized by balance and moderation, capable of confronting extremism, bigotry, and intense emotional outbursts.
Cultivating the scientific aspect and instilling a love for work and productivity, while emphasizing order, organization, and mastery of work.
Spreading the idea of a love for learning and curiosity, directing it toward achieving useful goals, and encouraging ambition, diligence, and discovery.
Promoting the concept of brotherhood as a basis for social relations from a young age, while discouraging selfishness, envy, and egoism. This leads to cooperation, strengthens family ties, and fosters affection among all people.

1.2. The Cognitive Function

Literature helps children acquire knowledge and experience indirectly through the events and characters they encounter in literary texts. This type of literature primarily aims to strengthen their linguistic and writing skills by training their natural faculties in linguistic precision, proper pronunciation, and expressive performance that aligns with the intended idea. Furthermore, it aims to accustom children to the use of metaphors and imaginative imagery. Socially, it provides them with various cultural elements shared by society, such as beliefs, values, customs, and traditions, which qualify the child to integrate into the building of human civilization (Barighash, 1992, pp. 142-143).

1.3. The Aesthetic Function

Children's literature provides an opportunity to interact with language and literary imagery, contributing to the development of their aesthetic sense. Therefore, those who write for children must add entertainment and artistic objectives to the doctrinal, educational, and instructional goals so that ideas take root in the child's mind for life. In this context, Khalifa Al-Dandrawi mentions that "recorded films with sound and motion help deliver educational material to all groups of children; elements such as sound, image, and motion strengthen intuition and memory, and enhance the capacity for understanding and memorization" (Al-Dandrawi, 2013, p. 46), while always maintaining religious and moral principles as constant companions to these works.

1.4. The Psychological Function

Literature helps children express their feelings and understand the world around them, contributing to the development of their imagination and creative capacity. Through this literary genre, we create a generation of sound thought, calm spirit, and pure self one that perceives things with high composure and purposeful flow.

Accordingly, it can be said that children's literature represents an essential educational and cultural tool in shaping the child's personality and building their value and cognitive systems.

Children's literature is a multifaceted discourse that functions at the intersection of linguistic art, psychological development, and social indoctrination. Historically defined as a simplified reflection of adult literature, modern pedagogical perspectives now recognize it as a "sovereign genre" (Hunt, 2005). This genre is characterized by its intentionality; it is crafted specifically to meet the cognitive and emotional milestones of childhood while maintaining aesthetic integrity.

1.5. The Multimodal Concept of Children's Literature

In the contemporary era, the concept of children's literature has expanded beyond the "printed word" to include multimodal texts. According to Unsworth (2006), children's literature is now an "intermedial experience" where the narrative is conveyed through a synergy of semiotic systems—visual, auditory, and linguistic. This multimodality is a primary characteristic that distinguishes modern children's literature from its classical predecessors, as it acknowledges the "digital-native" status of the contemporary child.

1.6. Pedagogical Characteristics: The Triad of Growth

The pedagogical nature of this literature is defined by three core characteristics:

Cognitive Scaffolding: Literature provides a framework for children to acquire complex linguistic patterns and conceptual knowledge in a graduated manner (Nodelman, 2008).

Moral Agency and SEL: It fosters Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) by allowing children to experience moral dilemmas through characters. This helps in building a child's ethical compass without direct didacticism.

Aesthetic and Imaginative Stimulation: A key pedagogical characteristic is its ability to foster "imaginative empathy," where the child learns to understand diverse perspectives, a skill crucial for social cohesion in a globalized world.

1.7. Cultural and Social Dimensions

Pedagogically, children's literature acts as a "cultural mirror" and a "social window." It reinforces cultural identity while simultaneously introducing children to the "other," thus playing a vital role in building a balanced and tolerant personality. As highlighted by Barighash (1992), specifically in the context of moral education, the literature directed at children serves as a primary source for instilling the foundational values and beliefs of a society.

2.Children's Literature in the Digital Age

The digital shift has transformed children's literature from a static, linear experience into a dynamic, "born-digital" phenomenon. In the digital age, the text is often non-linear, utilizing hypertextuality to allow children to navigate their own paths through a story. This "intermediality" involves a synergy where text, animation, and haptic feedback (touch-screen interaction) work together to create an immersive narrative. This evolution

requires a new type of "digital literacy" where children learn to decode not just words, but also visual symbols and interactive cues within a digital ecosystem.

In recent decades, the world has witnessed a massive technological revolution that has influenced various aspects of life, including the fields of literature and culture. The proliferation of the internet and smart devices has led to the emergence of new forms of literary production that rely on digital media. In this context, "Digital Children's Literature" has emerged a genre that utilizes multimedia to present literary texts to children.

Some researchers point out that: "Digital literature for children is that which is produced and displayed through digital media, relying on the interaction between text, image, sound, and motion" (Hassan Abdullah, n.d., p. 65).

Digital children's literature is characterized by several features that distinguish it from traditional literature, most notably:

- Interactivity: Digital literature allows the child to interact with the text by clicking on images, moving characters, or listening to accompanying sounds.
- Multimedia Integration: Since digital literature combines written text, images, animation, and music, it makes the reading experience more engaging and attractive for children.
- Accessibility: Children can easily access digital literary texts through tablets and smartphones.
- Diversity of Content: Digital literature includes various forms, such as e-books, interactive stories, and educational applications.

This shift has changed the nature of the relationship between the child and the literary text, as the child has become an active participant in the reading process rather than a passive recipient.

The digital age has ushered in a radical transformation in the ontology of children's literature, shifting it from a "static-print" medium to a "fluid-digital" ecosystem. This transition is not merely a change in the carrier of the text (from paper to screen), but a fundamental restructuring of the narrative experience. According to Livingstone (2012), children today are "digital natives" who interact with literature as part of a broader participatory culture, where the boundaries between reading, playing, and creating are increasingly blurred.

2.1. The Shift to Nonlinearity and Hypertextuality

One of the defining characteristics of digital children's literature is its non-linear structure. Unlike traditional books that follow a sequential path, digital stories often employ hypertextuality. This allows children to navigate through various story arcs based on their choices, effectively turning the reader into a "co-author" of the experience. This phenomenon, often described as "Cybertext," requires a new set of cognitive skills to decode the narrative (Aarseth, 1997).

2.2. Intermediality and Multimodal Literacy

Digital literature for children is inherently multimodal, integrating written text, animation, haptic feedback (vibration/touch), and spatial audio. Unsworth (2006) argues that this "intermediality" enhances digital literacy by challenging children to synthesize information from multiple semiotic channels simultaneously. This multimodal

engagement is particularly effective in maintaining the attention of contemporary children, as it aligns with their fast-paced, multi-sensory information processing styles.

2.3. The Rise of "Born-Digital" Literature (App-Books)

The evolution of the "App-book" represents the pinnacle of children's literature in the digital age. Unlike e-books, which are often digital replicas of printed versions (PDFs), born-digital literature is designed exclusively for digital platforms. These texts utilize the hardware capabilities of tablets and smart phones such as accelerometers for tilting and microphones for voice interaction to create an immersive "living story" (Yokota & Teale, 2014). This evolution demands that pedagogical approaches evolve to address how these "gamified" elements affect deep reading and comprehension.

3. The Role of Digital Children's Literature in Character Building

Digital children's literature plays a significant role in building a child's personality and developing their various abilities through a set of educational and cultural dimensions, summarized as follows:

Cognitive Development: Digital literature contributes to developing a child's cognitive abilities by presenting knowledge in an interactive way that combines learning with fun. Interactive digital stories help children acquire new concepts and broaden their intellectual horizons. In line with this view, Abdul Ghani Mustafa states: "Digital interactive stories contribute to developing children's thinking skills and enhance their capacity for understanding and comprehension" (Abdul Ghani, n.d., p. 25).

Fostering Imagination and Creativity: Digital literature is distinguished by its ability to stimulate a child's imagination through the images and animations that accompany the texts. Imagination is a fundamental element in personality growth, helping children visualize new worlds and develop their innovative capacities.

Reinforcing Social Values: Stories directed at children play a vital role in reinforcing social values such as cooperation, tolerance, and respect for others. In this context, some researchers, such as Perry Nodelman (n.d., p. 56), believe that: "The story is one of the most important educational tools that help the child acquire moral values indirectly."

Strengthening Cultural Identity: Digital literature can contribute to strengthening a child's cultural identity by presenting stories that reflect society's culture and values. Through characters and events, children learn about their history and culture, which helps them build a solid cultural identity.

Digital children's literature serves as a dynamic catalyst for character formation, moving beyond the traditional role of storytelling into the realm of "active psychological engagement." In the digital age, character building is no longer a top-down didactic process but a participatory journey. According to Nodelman (2008), the immersion provided by digital narratives allows children to internalize values through experience rather than mere observation.

3.1. Fostering Moral Agency and Decision-Making

A pivotal role of digital literature in character building is the development of Moral Agency. Interactive stories often present children with "ethical crossroads," where their choices determine the character's path. As noted by Gee (2007), this simulated environment encourages children to take responsibility for their choices, fostering a

sense of accountability and early critical thinking. By navigating digital moral dilemmas, children develop a "virtual conscience" that serves as a scaffold for real-world ethical reasoning.

3.2. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Empathy

Digital narratives enhance Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) through multimodal engagement. The integration of expressive animations and evocative sound scapes allows children to perceive characters' emotions more vividly. Research by Marsh et al. (2005) suggests that digital storytelling can foster "digital empathy," as children interact with diverse characters from various cultural backgrounds. This exposure helps in building a tolerant and inclusive personality, bridging the gap between the child's local reality and a globalized cultural identity.

3.3. Cognitive Resilience and Creative Self-Efficacy

The interactive nature of digital literature also plays a role in building Resilience and Self-Efficacy. When children encounter challenges within an interactive story (such as solving a puzzle to progress), they practice persistence and problem-solving. Yokota and Teale (2014) argue that when children successfully navigate these narrative challenges, their confidence in their creative and cognitive abilities grows, contributing to the formation of a proactive and resilient personality. This "gamified" learning experience ensures that personality traits like patience and curiosity are nurtured in an engaging, modern format.

4. Pedagogical Challenges of Digital Children's Literature

Despite the many advantages of digital literature for children, its use poses several educational challenges that must be considered, some related to the child's daily life and others to the pedagogical methods used in their upbringing:

- Excessive Screen Time: Overusing digital devices may reduce the time a child spends on traditional reading.
- Weak Educational Content in Some Applications: Some digital applications directed at children do not sufficiently consider educational and cultural standards.
- The Need for Pedagogical Guidance: Using digital literature requires guidance from families and educational institutions to ensure that the intended educational benefits are achieved.

While digital literature offers unprecedented opportunities for engagement, its integration into the pedagogical sphere is accompanied by significant challenges. These hurdles are not merely technical but are deeply rooted in how children process information and how educators and families mediate these digital experiences. According to Livingstone and Blum-Ross (2020), the central challenge lies in navigating the "digital parenting" landscape, where the balance between empowerment and protection is often precarious.

4.1. The Challenge of "Digital Distraction" vs. Deep Reading

A primary pedagogical concern is the risk of fragmented attention. Many digital stories for children are "over-gamified," featuring excessive interactive elements—often called "bells and whistles"—that can distract from the core narrative. Research by Wolf (2018) suggests that the fast-paced nature of digital interaction may impede the development of "deep reading" skills, which are essential for critical thinking and reflection. Educators

face the challenge of selecting digital content where the interactivity serves the story rather than overshadowing it.

4.2. Quality Control and the "App-Store" Paradox

From the perspective of Library and Information Science, a major challenge is the lack of standardized pedagogical metadata for digital children's literature. Unlike traditional libraries where books undergo rigorous editorial and curation processes, the digital market (App Stores) is driven by commercial algorithms. Yokota and Teale (2014) highlight that much of the available digital content lacks educational depth, placing a heavy burden on teachers and parents to act as "curators" in an unvetted digital ecosystem.

4.3. The Digital Divide and Ethical Mediation

The "Digital Divide" remains a persistent pedagogical barrier, encompassing both access to high-quality hardware and the disparity in "digital capital" among families. Furthermore, the issue of "Active Mediation" is crucial. Nikken and Schols (2015) argue that the pedagogical value of digital literature is significantly diminished when used as a "digital babysitter." The challenge is to encourage parents and educators to move toward a "joint engagement" model, where the digital story becomes a shared dialogue rather than a solitary, passive screen-time activity.

Conclusion

The research titled "Children's Literature in the Digital Age and its Role in Building a Child's Personality: An Analytical Pedagogical Approach" has reached a set of fundamental conclusions that underscore the profound transformation in the educational and cultural landscape of childhood. Through a systematic analysis of the four main pillars of this study the conceptual evolution of literature, the digital paradigm shift, the psychological impact on character formation, and the emerging pedagogical challenges it is evident that we are witnessing a redefinition of how human values and cognitive skills are transmitted to the next generation.

- Synthesis of Theoretical and Practical Findings

The study has demonstrated that children's literature is no longer a static medium of instruction but has evolved into a dynamic "intermedial" experience. The transition from the "linguistic experience" defined by classical scholars to the "interactive immersion" of the digital age has fundamentally altered the child's role. No longer a passive recipient of moral tales, the child in the digital age functions as a co-creator of meaning. This shift is not merely technological; it is deeply psychological. The interactivity inherent in digital narratives allows for the development of "Cognitive Agency," where the child's decisions within a story mirror the decision-making processes required in real-world social and ethical situations.

- The Role in Holistic Character Building

One of the most significant outcomes of this pedagogical approach is the identification of digital literature as a catalyst for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). By navigating digital environments that integrate text, sound, and motion, children enhance their sensory imagination and emotional intelligence. This research confirms that when digital

content is thoughtfully curated respecting cultural identity and ethical boundaries it strengthens the child's sense of self and their understanding of their place within a globalized society. The digital narrative serves as a "safe laboratory" for character experimentation, allowing children to encounter diverse perspectives and develop empathy through simulated social interactions.

- **Strategic Recommendations and Future Outlook**

However, the analytical journey through this research also reveals a critical "responsibility gap." The potential of digital literature to build a balanced personality is entirely dependent on the quality of the pedagogical framework surrounding it. Therefore, this study concludes with the following imperatives:

Active Pedagogical Mediation: The role of the family and educational institutions must shift from mere monitoring to "participatory engagement." The true pedagogical value of digital literature is unlocked through dialogue and shared reflection between the child and the adult.

The Pursuit of Quality and Authenticity: There is a pressing need for developers and authors to prioritize educational depth over sensory distraction. Digital literature must remain "literature" at its core valuing narrative integrity and moral substance over mere technological gimmicks.

Empowering Digital Literacy: Educators must move beyond traditional literacy to embrace "Transliteracy," equipping children with the tools to critically evaluate, ethically engage with, and creatively contribute to the digital world.

Final Reflections

In final analysis, the digital age does not threaten the existence of children's literature; rather, it provides a powerful new vocabulary for its expression. The building of a child's personality remains a sacred educational task that requires a delicate balance between the timeless wisdom of traditional values and the limitless possibilities of modern technology. This research serves as a call to action for scholars and practitioners to embrace this digital evolution with a "critical pedagogical eye," ensuring that the technology of the future remains a faithful servant to the humanity of the child.

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