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Children's Literature: From the Educational Dimension to Identity Formation and Socialization

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Abstract

Educational, philosophical, and scientific theories generally agree that children constitute the true wealth of a nation, as they represent its fundamental building blocks, its hoped-for tomorrow, and the bright future toward which it aspires. Accordingly, proactive nations in the developed world direct all their efforts and mobilize their resources toward the proper and comprehensive education and upbringing of children at all levels and dimensions: intellectual, cognitive, emotional, educational, scientific, and others. This aims to shape the individual of the future, endowed with the scientific and intellectual capacities that enable them, first and foremost, to become a mature and conscious citizen; secondly, to be healthy and well-balanced; and thirdly, to be an active member of society who keeps pace with transformations and developments. Such an individual is capable of adapting to challenges and emerging developments, provided that they have received the necessary preparation—namely, sound educational formation and comprehensive socialization that strengthens their resilience and protects them from various social shocks and emerging societal problems.

Aesthetic and cultural education represents one of the most important stages in the upbringing and formation of children. Therefore, educational systems attach great importance to children's literature, considering it an educational and instructional reference that provides the foundational basis from which other forms of knowledge and educational and formative activities emerge. It prepares children to interact with their school, family, and social environments, facilitates communication with others, and develops their ability to respond to questions and inquiries. At the same time, it stimulates their memory, imagination, curiosity, and motivation to explore and seek new experiences and knowledge.

Furthermore, children's literature contributes to developing self-confidence, curiosity, and openness to diverse forms of learning. It enhances children's creative competencies in writing, imagination, taste, aesthetics, and the arts. At the same time, it establishes an underlying intellectual and emotional framework that stimulates children's faculties and encourages them to function continuously and harmoniously, while remaining receptive to development and renewal.

Children's literature has undergone significant developments and made substantial progress. Among these developments is its transition from a stage of formation and recognition as an independent literary genre to a stage of critical analysis concerned with several issues, including:

The relationship between children's literature and reality.

Children's rights and duties in children's literature.

Values and the cultural, historical, and civilizational heritage represented in children's literature.

Children's literature and the socialization of the individual.

Other related issues that require further study and analysis.

Keywords: Children's Literature; Digital Literature; Identity; Socialization.

Introduction

There is broad agreement among various studies and scholarly research that children represent the capital upon which every nation relies, indeed, upon which humanity as a whole depends. Human beings constitute an indispensable asset in all calculations, while the socialization of individuals plays a fundamental role in shaping the features of tomorrow. These features cannot be properly established if the foundations of those who will shape them are absent.

Children require a set of foundations upon which their development can be based, and consequently, they need appropriate literary and spiritual nourishment to achieve this development. For this reason, one of the foremost concerns confronting those who place their hopes in children and their future is the literature addressed to them, particularly during their early stages of development. It is therefore necessary to engage seriously with this field, especially in light of the new perspectives and conceptions that characterize the contemporary world.

The focus on children's literature cannot be separated from the technological development currently taking place throughout the world. It is therefore necessary to examine this emerging form within the contemporary literary landscape, together with the various perspectives surrounding it. Accordingly, the research problem, which seeks to examine children's literature in both its Arab and global dimensions, also addresses its digital dimension in order to investigate its forms and contents, as well as the most significant obstacles, challenges, and prospects it presents, in addition to its impact on the socialization of children.

1. Children's Literature: Between Its Essence and Generic Classification

There is no disagreement that childhood is, by far, the most important stage of human life, as it is the period that exerts the greatest influence on an individual's development throughout life. It is during this stage that an individual becomes well-adjusted or maladjusted, diligent or lazy, ambitious or hesitant, upright or immoral, and so forth. This confirms the saying of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) (...). For this reason, experts consider childhood an inexhaustible human resource and one of the most important forms of wealth possessed by nations. In the words of Ali Haddad, it is "the first age stage through which a human being passes at the beginning of his or her individual and social existence, whose characteristics determine patterns of behavior and inclinations, physical and mental development, linguistic representation, forms of play and movement, means of expressing feelings and emotions, needs, and ways of satisfying them."ⁱ This is what gives childhood absolute priority in studies and in the programs of institutions concerned with it, such as education, health, and the arts. Childhood is the first seedling from which the edifice of a nation is constructed. Children are also the wealth of the present and the resource of the future in any healthy society that seeks to build the human being. Moreover, they are a source of joy in life and delight to the soul, since wealth and children are among the things that bring beauty and happiness to life. This is clearly expressed in the Qur'anic verse: "Wealth and children are the adornment of the worldly life."ⁱⁱ

At the forefront of the foundations of socialization during childhood comes "children's literature," as it constitutes a fundamental basis of the nation, expressing its beliefs, identity, cultural heritage, history, aspirations, and ways of life. It is "the literary work that, when read or heard by children, arouses pleasure and interest in them, seeks to modify their values and attitudes, and produces a clear effect in stimulating their emotions and minds."ⁱⁱⁱ

Although children's literature is an independent literary genre in its own right, it nevertheless derives from literature and draws upon it. Thus, "the same definition that applies to literature also applies to it, except that it addresses a specific category of recipients, namely children."^{iv}

Numerous and diverse concepts have been associated with "children's literature," to the extent that no fixed and unified definition can be identified. Some even consider it essentially no different from adult literature in terms of its nature and function. Among the most prominent definitions is that provided by Ali Al-Hadidi, who describes it as "a form of literary expression that has its own presence and methodologies, whether in terms of its language and its compatibility with the child's vocabulary and with the stylistic repertoire appropriate to what is being composed for them, or in terms of its content and its suitability for each stage of childhood, or in terms of matters of taste and techniques employed in the formulation of its texts."^v He also considers it "a means of education, participation, and entertainment; a way toward human coexistence; a means of learning commendable behavior; a tool for forming sound emotions in children; and a method through which the child discovers the manifestations of right and wrong in society."^{vi} In this way, it enables the child to understand life as it truly is and to distinguish between good and evil, ugliness and beauty, and righteousness and wrongdoing.

Ismail Abdel Fattah, for his part, defines it as "everything that is written for children, whether stories, scientific material, plays, scientific knowledge, questions, or inquiries presented in books, magazines, radio or television programs, cassette recordings, or other media. All these materials constitute children's literature."^{vii}

Hadi Noman Al-Hayti defines it as follows: "It is a collection of literary productions presented to children that take into account their needs and stages of development; that is, in its general sense, it encompasses everything presented to children during childhood in the form of materials embodying meanings, ideas, and emotions."^{viii}

Elsewhere, when identifying the characteristics, features, and types of this literature, he describes it as a collection of "artistic works that portray ideas, feelings, and imaginative elements compatible with children's perceptions and take the forms of stories, poetry, drama, essays, and songs."^{ix}

This means that children's literature is not restricted to a single literary genre; rather, it encompasses numerous literary genres and forms. It is a form of artistic creation directed toward children, on the one hand, with the aim

of shaping and socializing them, and, on the other hand, with the aim of stimulating their emotions, entertaining them, and imparting knowledge to them. Furthermore, it develops and enriches their language in connection with their thought, conveys to them the experiences of humanity with all their circumstances and consequences, and thereby makes an effective contribution to the construction of the child's personality and the development of its various components and competencies. This encompasses educational, pedagogical, moral, and other functions. In this way, children's literature establishes the fundamental pillar of a comprehensive child-oriented culture. It constitutes an educational and formative intellectual medium that relies on specific modes of expression and seeks to achieve particular objectives through various forms, channels, and genres, such as the short story, which represents one of the most popular literary genres among children due to its compatibility with their nature and abilities, as well as songs, theatre, short essays, and other forms. Accordingly, children's literature may be regarded as a literary genre that branches into various literary forms. More precisely, it is a genre in terms of its general form, possessing its own general characteristics and distinctive features, while, in terms of its specific forms, each genre has its own particular characteristics and structure. In the words of Ahmad Zalat, it is "a literary genre that is constantly renewed in the literature of every language. In Arabic literature, it refers to a newly developed type derived from adult literature (oral and written) and addressed to childhood, taking into consideration children's linguistic and cognitive levels, elevating their language, imagination, and knowledge, and facilitating their integration into life, with the aim of fostering their attachment to literature and its various arts and fulfilling educational, moral, artistic, and aesthetic functions."^x

The Concept of Children's Literature

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that "children's literature" is an integral part of literature in general and incorporates its characteristics and qualities. At the same time, however, it is concerned exclusively with a specific category of readers, namely children. Compared with the general standards and characteristics of literature, it is considered a relatively modern genre, as it did not emerge as written texts based on specific standards and addressed to a particular age group until the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it had existed previously in the form of stories transmitted orally to children by grandparents.^{xi} Such stories, however, did not attain the level of children's literature as a distinct genre governed by specific standards and addressed to a clearly defined audience. This is because the concept of "children's literature" in its broadest sense refers to written intellectual production contained in texts intended for children across various fields of knowledge, including educational and school textbooks, reading materials in the form of stories, dramatic texts, and other forms. In its more precise sense, however, it refers to literary creativity, whether poetry or prose, and whether written or oral.

In light of these considerations, the concepts of "children's literature" have multiplied and diversified according to the perspectives from which this literature is approached, particularly in terms of its nature, purpose, or value. Saad Abu Al-Rida, for instance, states that "children's literature has two concepts: the first is general and refers to documented intellectual production, while the second is specific and refers to good-quality discourse that creates artistic pleasure in the minds of children, whether it is poetry or prose, and whether it is delivered orally through speech or presented in written form."^{xii}

As for Farid Gabriel Najjar, although his view is broadly consistent with those of many scholars on this matter, he defines "children's literature" as "books prepared for children and their reading materials, which are produced by experts in children's literature and are characterized by the quality of their content and style, as well as their suitability to children's tastes and level of maturity."^{xiii}

Muhammad Rushdi Khater adopts almost the same definition, considering it to be "everything presented to children in written form, whether books or magazines, and whether it consists of stories, plays, or scientific material."^{xiv}

This is also essentially the definition provided by Fathi Al-Nimr, who describes it as "writings specifically produced for children in accordance with standards appropriate to their level, developmental characteristics, and needs."^{xv} Similarly, Hassan Brighesh states: "Children's literature is the literary output that corresponds to children according to their levels, ages, and abilities to understand and appreciate literature, in accordance with the nature of the era and in a manner compatible with the society in which they live."^{xvi}

Focusing on the artistic dimension and architectural structure, Ahmed Zalat defines this literature as "a form of creativity founded on artistic creation, whose linguistic structure relies on simple, accessible, standard Arabic vocabulary that corresponds to the child's linguistic repertoire, in addition to transparent and uncomplicated imagination and varied, purposeful content. All these elements are employed in such a way that the styles of address and orientations adopted serve the child's mentality and perception, enabling the child to understand, appreciate, and enjoy the literary text, and subsequently to discover its horizons and implications through imagination."^{xvii}

By bringing together the points of convergence and common dimensions among the various concepts, we may conclude that children's literature refers to books prepared by specialists for children, provided that they take into consideration their level of maturity and awareness, as well as the developments of the contemporary era and society. It is a literary creation in its own right, based on a specific linguistic lexicon that corresponds to the child's linguistic level and keeps pace with their intellectual and cognitive development. It facilitates their understanding and perception of facts and objects, broadens their imagination, and is also founded on purposeful themes and contents.

On this basis, children's literature has become "broad in scope, multifaceted, and variable in its dimensions according to numerous considerations, such as the type of literature itself, the age group to which it is addressed, and other considerations. Children's literature does not merely mean a story, a prose or poetic tale; rather, it encompasses all areas of human knowledge."^{xxviii} This has enabled it to expand and extend to encompass all fields and domains of children's knowledge, including illustrated dictionaries, theatres, museums, and other forms of cultural and educational production that contribute to developing their perceptions, nourishing their imagination, stimulating their minds, and broadening their cultural horizons.

Accordingly, in its comprehensive and explicit sense, children's literature constitutes the entirety of "the intellectual production recorded in books and other media intended for these children, whether in school textbooks or through free reading. It refers, in its broadest sense, to good and beautiful language that provides children with an aesthetic experience while contributing to enriching their intellectual capacities, whether it takes the form of oral literature expressed through speech, written literature expressed through writing, audiovisual materials, flexible or compact discs, or other media. Such production must possess specific characteristics appropriate to the child's lexicon and correspond to the stylistic repertoire through which it is written."^{xxix}

Children's literature thus seeks to develop the child's intellect and mental and cognitive abilities, enrich their linguistic repertoire through its various means and forms, and shape their knowledge base through diverse historical, geographical, and religious information, as well as scientific facts. It consequently contributes to the development of the child's personality and the enhancement of their skills, abilities, and life and social experiences.

Children's Literature in Western Writings

Many studies concerned with literary studies and the "theory of literature" maintain that the earliest origins of this literary genre can be traced back to France, where it emerged in the late seventeenth century, with the publication in 1697 of a collection entitled *Mother Goose's Tales* by the French poet Charles Perrault.^{xx} This collection consisted of a variety of stories and tales, the most famous of which are *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*. What was particularly distinctive about these stories was that Perrault initially published them under a pseudonym associated with his daughter, Perrault d'Armancoeur, out of fear that doing otherwise might diminish his standing in the eyes of the public. After the collection gained widespread fame and attracted considerable interest, he published another collection entitled *Tales and Stories from Times Past*, this time attributing it to himself. This collection represented one of the earliest stages in the modern development of children's literature and exerted a significant influence on children's tales and folklore in many other European countries after being translated into numerous languages.^{xxi}

This attempt was followed by other contributions to children's literature, most notably those produced by the French writer Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy in her collection *The Children's Store*. With the dawn of the eighteenth century, more mature forms of children's writing began to emerge, fulfilling the requirements of this literary genre, particularly in the works associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Some scholars attribute the growing popularity of writing for children to the influence of the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights*, as well as to Western philosophers' views concerning education and the formation of individuals and societies. Between 1737 and 1791, a French periodical specifically intended for children appeared, considered the first of its kind in this field. For the first time, its editor also referred to himself using the expression "The Friend of Children." The periodical included a variety of stories drawn from different countries and written in several languages, thereby paving the way for authorship and publication in this field.

As for France, the situation was somewhat different in England, where writing for children was combined with advice and moral instruction. Religious books for children also appeared, tending toward intimidation, fear, preaching, and moralizing. This type of literature was unpopular and was subsequently opposed by philosophers. Numerous stories were translated into English, including the tales of *Mother Goose*, which influenced the production of new books for children. This development became closely associated with John Newbery, the owner of the famous bookstore established specifically for children, which offered a collection of stories, legends, tales, and fables in England and America.^{xxii}

In Germany, writing for children coincided with the publication of the collection *Children's and Household Tales* in 1812, compiled by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The collection was translated into numerous languages and was distinguished by preserving the form and content in which these tales had been transmitted among the general population. In other words, the stories were recorded for children "without additions that might distort them and without resorting to symbols or fabricating hidden morals."^{xxiii}

In Russia, the collection *Russian Legends* is regarded as one of the earliest texts specifically intended for children. It consisted of a collection of folk tales inspired by the customs and traditions of the Russian people. Among the most prominent writers for children in Russia were Alexander Pushkin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, who composed sixteen poetic pieces for children, and Ivan Krylov, the renowned poet famous for writing through the voices of animals.^{xxiv} Maxim Gorky was also at the forefront of children's literature writers. His works were distinguished by their originality and high quality. He acknowledged that his work stemmed from his strong belief in the importance of childhood as a formative stage. His 1917 letter to his fellow leading writers of the world, in which he praised childhood and emphasized the purpose and objectives of writing a series of works for children, stands as evidence of this commitment.^{xxv}

Children's Literature in Arabic Writings and Digital Literature for Children

Children's Literature in Arabic Writings

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, children's literature in the Arab world remained largely confined to the educational system and its instructional framework. Historical and literary studies indicate that Arab interest in children's literature emerged in the early years of 1875, particularly through translation, which paved the way for the "emergence of children's literature among Arabs in the modern era, especially in Egypt during the reign of Muhammad Ali. The first person to present a book translated from English in Egypt was Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), who was appointed to oversee education at the time. He translated stories under the title *Children's Tales* and incorporated some of these stories into school curricula."^{xxvi}

Alongside him, the "Prince of Poets," Ahmed Shawqi, made a significant contribution to enriching children's literature with more than fifty texts encompassing poetry, narrative poetry, anthems, and songs. These works "were all characterized by simplicity of style, a coherent sequence of events, and clarity of their educational purpose, in addition to entertainment and amusement."^{xxvii} It is by no means an exaggeration to state that Shawqi stands among the foremost authors of children's literature in the Arabic language in the modern era. In his writings, he drew upon his familiarity with French literature, particularly the famous fables of La Fontaine. Among his most notable works are those included in the sections entitled "Tales and Particularities" and in the collection *Al-Shawqiyyat*. It is also worth mentioning the formative and educational role undertaken by Kamel Kilani, who is regarded by specialists in this field as the spiritual father of children's literature written in Arabic and the leader of the "School of Writers for Young Readers" in the Arab world. His creative works, inspired by the Arab heritage, focused on "familiarizing children with the Arabic language. He gradually introduced them to it according to their different age groups, seeking to awaken their talents and abilities, strengthen their inclinations and aspirations, and ultimately foster their love of reading. His stories focused on Arab heritage and foreign cultures; he wrote about religion and history and produced a collection of stories from the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him. A number of other poets also emerged, including Muhammad al-Harawi, Ahmad Najib, and Wafaa Wagdy. Some of their poetry was about children, while some was specifically written for children."^{xxviii}

Other names subsequently emerged, particularly in recent years. Among the most prominent was Muhammad al-Harawi, who composed two three-part narrative series for children, one intended for boys and the other for girls, entitled *Samir al-Atfal lil-Banin* (Children's Companion for Boys) and *Samir al-Atfal lil-Banat* (Children's Companion for Girls). He also composed songs for children and published collections of stories.

Digital Literature for Children

Nowadays, it is impossible to discuss children's literature whether globally or locally without addressing the technological and digital developments taking place in the literary sphere. Literature intended for children is no longer confined to printed books. Rather, numerous types of media have emerged that shape the features of this literature and constitute channels connecting the author with the intended audience and the recipient of the message, namely the child. This is particularly evident in electronic books and virtual-world technologies, which have increasingly provided content that is appropriate to the age of the target group while simultaneously keeping pace with digital and technological developments.

However, several issues arise in this regard: What are the most prominent forms and contents adopted by these media? What are the major challenges they present? And what impact do they have on the child's development socially, psychologically, and morally as well as on the formation of the child's identity?

To address these questions, we will explore the digital experience in children's literature beginning with its conceptual framework. It is essential to understand what exactly we are dealing with and what can be classified within this field so that we may examine its contents and forms on the one hand, and its current reality and future prospects on the other. It is not possible to explore an open-ended domain without clearly defined features; rather, its characteristics and boundaries must first be established in order to ensure that the study remains within the scope of academic research.

From this point of departure, we deemed it appropriate to shed light in this section on three main elements, namely, in essence: the concept or concepts attributed to digital literature intended for children; the themes and content on which this type of literature focuses; and the effects resulting from it, both at the personal level of the child and at the social level.

Digital Literature Intended for Children

The references available to us contain numerous and diverse definitions of digital literature intended for children. However, we will seek to formulate a comprehensive definition that brings together the common points shared by these definitions. Among these definitions is the following:

Digital literature intended for children may be defined as "that type of literature presented on a digital screen, whether a television, an electronic tablet, or a mobile phone."^{xxix} This definition draws our attention to a fundamental issue in the general concept of digital literature for children, namely its digital dimension. However, it focuses exclusively on the visual aspect, since, according to the preceding definition, any literary work presented on a digital screen acquires this designation.

Other definitions may focus on another dimension, namely the digital dimension regardless of its form, whether sound, image, color, or movement. It is therefore considered a form of digital creativity concerned with children's arts and directed toward their particular age group.^{xxx} This definition also sheds light on an important aspect of this field, as digital literature is not necessarily limited to the visual medium; it may also be auditory or kinetic.

In order to synthesize these definitions, we may state that digital literature intended for children encompasses any literary work presented in an audible or visual digital format that employs technological media to disseminate content directed at children with the aim of educating them. This is evident in many of the media widely available today, which may encompass a variety of themes, contents, and forms.

Forms and Content

It is clear that the various definitions of this type of literature reflect the perspectives and theoretical approaches adopted by each researcher when dealing with this literary genre. Some researchers focus on the types or forms upon which it is based, whereas others approach it from the perspective of the content that constitutes this literature. The digital forms of children's literature are broad and rich in terms of diversity. They have emerged in various forms, particularly in recent years, as diversity has become a fundamental basis for competition and audience attraction. This has led to the emergence of new forms that continue to expand on a daily basis, whereas, in the past, such forms were largely limited to illustrated stories and similar works. Among these emerging forms are the following:

A. Electronic Books:

These constitute one of the forms of literature intended for children, through which children learn by interacting with their content, which is most often cultural or moral in nature. Arab programmers have increasingly paid attention to the value-oriented dimension in the production of their content, particularly content directed toward children and young people, in response to the growing interest of parents in such programs and applications.

Various platforms and applications have begun to provide interactive educational electronic books in Arabic. One example, among others, is the digital series of interactive books published by Alia Publishing House,^{xxxii} which consists of a collection of books designed according to different age groups, with their contents varying from one age category to another.

This experience is not the only one in the field of interactive digital books. Rather, numerous examples can be found throughout the Arab world, such as the Fun Learning Store,^{xxxiii} a platform that provides diverse content for different age groups.

B. Illustrated Stories:

Illustrated stories represent one of the earliest forms of children's literature. However, what has been particularly noticeable in recent years is their development in response to technological advancement and the evolution of digital technologies. These stories have increasingly relied on digital websites and platforms for dissemination and have appeared in various formats. Indeed, some illustrated stories have been transformed into applications available on mobile phones and electronic tablets.^{xxxiii}

A. Audio Stories:

Audio stories are among the most widespread forms of digital literature for children. They have currently gained considerable popularity across social media platforms, particularly on YouTube. These stories are based on narratives that convey a particular moral, message, or value, and they may sometimes overlap with illustrated stories.

These forms, however, are not the only manifestations of digital literature addressed to children. There are numerous other forms whose variety is too extensive to be exhaustively covered here, as doing so may take the present study beyond its intended scope.

Contents:

The contents conveyed by these various forms of digital literature addressed to children differ according to age groups and according to the objectives pursued by those responsible for producing such literature. In many cases, these contents are determined by the needs of children and their parents, and are therefore subject to the principles of supply and demand. Among the contents that are most sought after in children's programs and in digital literature addressed to children are the following:

Educational and Pedagogical Content:

This is one of the most highly demanded types, particularly because parents seek to direct children's interests toward educational aspects that enable them to acquire a wide range of skills. These primarily include linguistic and creative skills, as well as the inculcation of values and moral principles.^{xxxiv}

This type of content may be regarded as the central framework around which the various forms of digital literature addressed to children revolve, since they inherently incorporate an educational dimension, whether direct or indirect. Accordingly, skills, values, and even social dimensions are among the predominant elements in the content of digital literature addressed to children.

Although the fundamental dimension of this type of literature is educational and pedagogical, it is not free from obstacles and potential effects that may negatively affect children on the one hand, and their learning and acquired skills on the other. Therefore, the most significant difficulties that arise in this field should not be overlooked.

Challenges and Obstacles:

At the outset, it should be noted that the development of digital literature and the advancement of technologies that contribute to children's education and enable them to acquire new skills and diverse knowledge are desirable developments, given the rapid evolution of technology and the pace characterizing the scientific field. These developments can have beneficial effects on children's development, particularly during their early years.^{xxxv} Sensory interaction with objects enables children to develop certain abstract concepts and provides them with a

broad scientific culture that may open up new horizons for scientific inquiry.^{xxxvi} Nevertheless, this should not obscure their potential negative effects, whether at the psychological and moral level or at the social level.

Decline in Family Interaction:

Perhaps one of the most prominent challenges in this regard is the decline in children's interaction with their families. The amount of time children spend on digital platforms may gradually draw them away from real-life interaction with their families,^{xxxvii} thereby creating a significant challenge to the development of their personalities and the formation of their cultural awareness. Consequently, digital literature, which parents may initially use as a means of educating children, regulating their activities and behavior at home, and perhaps helping them acquire certain skills, may itself become a factor that negatively affects direct communication and, more broadly, their communication skills.^{xxxviii}

Addiction and the Reinforcement of the Autism Spectrum:

Continuous exposure to screens may lead to the development of persistent inactivity and chronic addiction to them,^{xxxix} which may consequently have negative physical and psychological effects on children. Many researchers attribute the development of autism to excessive exposure to screens and prolonged screen time.^{xl} Therefore, excessive exposure to different types of screens, regardless of the content they provide, may have negative effects on the child.

Identity and Socialization

The media with which a child interacts at an early age play an important role in their socialization and in shaping the features of their identity. These media contribute to the formation of the concepts and values upon which the child is raised, as children implicitly learn from them. Researchers have therefore placed particular emphasis on the issue of identity, whose features may be shaped in children who interact with digital literature, either positively or negatively.

A. Digital Literature for Children and the Enhancement of Identity Features

Digital media targeting children may contribute to strengthening their sense of belonging and reinforcing the features of their identity when they are purposeful and seek to connect children with their origins and roots. This may occur through their exposure to such media, their reception of its content, and their conscious or unconscious emotional response to it.^{xli} Consequently, the effect in this regard may be positive.

Digital Literature for Children and Identity Fragmentation

Children may be exposed to inappropriate content, whether in the substance of the messages conveyed by such media or through advertisements and open spaces within them that may facilitate the dissemination of content capable of distancing children from the values, principles, and fundamental components upon which their society and environment are based.

The content conveyed through digital media is not devoid of messages that may have negative effects on children who receive them as established truths and subsequently seek to imitate and reproduce them in real life.^{xlii} This may lead children to adopt certain undesirable behaviors, which may gradually become deeply rooted and eventually constitute fundamental structures and essential components of their identity.

Conclusion:

This research brings us to its conclusion. Although we have not covered all the issues that may arise from children's literature in both its Arab and global dimensions, as well as from its digital form, it should be noted that this is a rich field of study, particularly with regard to its digital dimension. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to record some of the key observations that emerged throughout the different stages of this research, the most important of which are as follows:

First: Children's literature, in general, is an integral part of literature as a whole. Accordingly, it has a significant presence in various world literatures, both Arab and Western. This study examined some representative examples, including Russian, French, and Arab children's literature.

Second: Digital literature intended for children encompasses a variety of concepts, much like children's literature in general, owing to the diversity of perspectives through which it is approached. However, in our view, the most appropriate concept is that of any form of literature that adopts digital media as its means of expression and dissemination.

Third: The forms assumed by digital literature addressed to children vary according to the nature of the content it conveys. Consequently, numerous forms can be identified, including illustrated and digital stories, as well as various types of electronic books, whose contents often revolve around educational dimensions.

Fourth: Despite the important position occupied by this type of literature and the facilities it provides, it also faces numerous challenges, including the negative effects it may have on children, such as screen addiction and related health problems, as well as social and family isolation that may result from excessive immersion in the digital world. More importantly, it may affect the formation of children's identity and their socialization, particularly in light of the content they are exposed to through these digital media.

In concluding this study, it is essential to highlight the central issue addressed by this research, namely the prospects of children's literature, particularly its digital dimension. The values, principles, and moral standards upon which a nation is founded require a form of literature capable of instilling and nurturing these values in children during their early stages of development. This can only be achieved by embracing digital literature

directed toward children and providing content that reflects these values and principles, while drawing upon the cultural and moral foundations of the nation in order to educate and raise future generations accordingly.

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