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Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society

# Are parental mediation strategies linked to knowledge of adolescents' online experiences?

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# Parental knowledge

- Parental knowledge about adolescents' activities → positive adjustment (Kerr et al., 2010)
- Research on offline whereabouts (Liu et al., 2020), but less on online activities/experiences
- Knowledge necessary for timely intervention, support, and guidance
- Parents often underestimate
  - Time spent online (Barlett & Fennel, 2018)
  - Engagement in risky activities (e.g., cyberaggression; Symons et al., 2017)

**What promotes parental knowledge of adolescents' online activities/experiences?**



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# Parental mediation

- Parenting strategies aimed to minimize risks and maximize benefits of child digital technology/internet use (Clark, 2011)

- Different types of strategies: (Livingstone et al., 2011)
  - **Active mediation** – discussions about internet usage, explanations of how to be safe online
  - **Restrictive mediation** – rules to limit time or content of internet usage
  - **Monitoring** – checking what children do online
  - **Technical mediation** – using technical means, e.g., parent control apps
    - **Technical monitoring** – monitoring adolescent activity
    - **Technical restrictions** – setting restrictions (e.g., blocking websites, setting time limits)

# Parental mediation as knowledge-generating practice?

- Do parental mediation strategies help inform parents?
- Presumably, some should, e.g., monitoring, technical mediation
  - but largely untested
- Adolescents are active agents who decide whether to confide in parents or not
  - Parental mediation can support disclosure, but also lead to backlash effects
  - Active mediation – higher chance of confiding about cyberbulling (Cerna et al., 2016)
  - Monitoring – more disclosure but also more secrecy and lying (Lisztwan Honusová et al., 2026)
  - Restrictions – less disclosure (Lisztwan Honusová et al., 2026)

- Previous research
  - Links between mediations and knowledge inconsistent (age of adolescent, type of experience)
  - Focus on specific experiences – low statistical power (Caivano et al., 2020; Symons et al., 2017)
  - Focus on combined experiences – harder to interpret (Geržičáková et al., 2023)

# Our study

- Focus on adolescents' (11-14) social internet usage and risky online activities/experiences
  - e.g., sexting, online aggression, personal information disclosure
- Two types of parental knowledge:
  - **Subjective** – parent self-report vs. **"Objective"** – comparison of adolescent and parent reports

- **RQ:** *How are parental mediation strategies linked to parents' subjective/objective knowledge of adolescent risky online activities/experiences?*

| **Hypotheses** | Subjective knowledge | Objective knowledge |
|---|---|---|
| Active mediation | H1a + | H1b + |
| Monitoring & Technical monitoring | H2a + | H2b - |
| Restrictive mediation & Technical restrictions | exploratory | H3 - |



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# Design and sample

- Online survey (CAWI), May 2025
- **1,562 parent-adolescent dyads** from Czechia
- Adolescents: age 11-14, *M* = 12.51, *SD* = 1.13; 51.4% boys (0.1% other)
- Parents: age 24-71, *M* = 43.63, *SD* = 6.15; 59.2% women
- Quota sampling:
  - Households: parent education, region, municipality population
  - Adolescents: age, sex
  - Parents: sex (60/40% or more balanced)
- Sampling and data collection by STEM/MARK
- Approved by Research Ethics Committee of Masaryk University

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# **Measures pt.1:** Parental mediation & subjective knowledge

| Variable | Items | Score | *M* (*SD*) | α | Sample item | Response scale | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Active Mediation | 7 | mean | 5.83 (1.01) | .92 | *I try to help my child understand what she/he sees on the internet.* | Very untrue (1) – Very true (7) | Shin & Lwin, 2022 |
| Restrictive Mediation | 6 | mean | 5.36 (1.34) | .92 | *I have rules that restrict which types of websites or apps she/he can use.* | Very untrue (1) – Very true (7) | Shin & Lwin, 2022 |
| Monitoring | 6 | mean | 4.85 (1.47) | .92 | *I try to help my child understand what she/he sees on the internet.* | Very untrue (1) – Very true (7) | Livingstone et al., 2017 |
| Technical Monitoring | 3 | sum | 1.06 (1.07) | - | *Do you use programs or apps that show you which websites the child is visiting?* | Yes (1), No (0), I don‘t know (NA) | Steinfeld, 2021 (adapted) |
| Technical Restrictions | 4 | sum | 1.59 (1.54) | - | *Do you use programs or apps that block her/his access to certain websites* | Yes (1), No (0), I don‘t know (NA) | Livingstone et al., 2017 (adapted) |
| **Subjective Knowledge** | **4** | **mean** | **3.52 (0.80)** | **.92** | ***How much overall do you know or not know about what he/she does on the internet?*** | **Nothing at all (1) – A great deal (5)** | **Beyens et al., 2024** |



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# **Subjective knowledge:** Results

- Monitoring & active mediation
  - strongest links to higher subjective knowledge
  - Supports H1a and H2a
- Restrictions
  - Technical – lower subjective knowledge
  - Non-technical – weak positive effect
- Fathers
  - Slightly lower subjective knowledge
  - Weak effect

**Linear regression**

| **Predictor** | ***B*** | ***SE*** | ***p*** | **β** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 1.47 | 0.24 | <.001 | |
| Active Mediation | 0.21 | 0.02 | <.001 | **.26** |
| Restrictive Mediation | 0.04 | 0.02 | .046 | **.06** |
| Monitoring | 0.21 | 0.02 | <.001 | **.38** |
| Technical Restrictions | -0.06 | 0.02 | <.001 | **-.12** |
| Technical Monitoring | 0.11 | 0.02 | <.001 | **.15** |
| Adolescent Sex | -0.01 | 0.03 | .827 | .00 |
| Adolescent Age | -0.01 | 0.01 | .471 | -.02 |
| Parent Sex (Male) | -0.11 | 0.03 | .002 | **-.07** |
| Parent Age | 0.00 | 0.00 | .413 | -.02 |

$N$ = 1555, $F(9, 1545) = 118.02$, $p < .001$, **Adj. $R^2$ = .40**



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# **Measures pt.2:** Risky online activities/experiences

1) Sexual Interactions
   - Sexting: received / sent
   - Sexual solicitations: received / sent
   - Van Ouytsel et al., 2019

2) Aggressive Interactions
   - Aggressive messages: received / sent

3) Interactions with People Met Online

4) Exposure to Potentially Harmful Content
   - Self-harm, thinness, cyberhate, illegal activities, sexual, violent
   - Smahel et al., 2020

5) Personal Information Disclosures
   - In 3 contexts:
     - On social media profile
     - In private messages with friends
     - With people met online
   - 5-6 types:
     - Photos of self
     - Photos of family
     - Personal information (e.g., name, address)
     - Photos/videos of current location
     - Substance use
     - Login details *(not asked for social media)*

**Reported by adolescent and parent**

1 = never
2 = at most a few times
3 = several times a month
4 = several times a week
5 = more often

} at least once



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# **Objective knowledge:** Analysis

- **Objective knowledge**
  - Adolescents‘ and parents‘ reports dichotomized (Never / At least once) and compared:

| Adolescent report | Parent report | Coding |
|---|---|---|
| At least once | At least once | **Accurate knowledge** |
| | Never | **Underestimating** |
| Never | | Excluded from analysis |

- **Links to parental mediation**
  - Selected 7 activities/experiences (1 from each group)
  - Separate logistic regressions predicting accurate knowledge
  - Predictors: 5 types of parental mediation, adolescents’ and parents’ age and sex
  - Only adolescents who reported the activity/experience



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| Type | Activity/Experience | n | Prevalence (adolescent report; %) | Underestimating (%) | Accurate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1 Sexual** | Solicitation sent | 92 | 6 | 41 | 59 |
| | Sexting received | 288 | 19 | 44 | 56 |
| | Solicitation received | 246 | 16 | 48 | 52 |
| | Sexting sent | 121 | 8 | 49 | 51 |
| **2 Aggressive** | Aggression received | 637 | 41 | 45 | 55 |
| | Aggression sent | 286 | 18 | 51 | 49 |
| **3 People met online** | Interaction frequency | 720 | 46 | 59 | 41 |
| **4 Harmful content** | Illegal activity | 732 | 47 | 32 | 68 |
| | Sexual | 524 | 34 | 34 | 66 |
| | Violent | 645 | 41 | 35 | 65 |
| | Cyberhate | 753 | 49 | 39 | 61 |
| | Thinness | 651 | 42 | 39 | 61 |
| | Selfharm | 677 | 44 | 43 | 57 |
| **5a Info: Social Media** | Location picture/video | 903 | 58 | 13 | 87 |
| | Picture of self | 884 | 57 | 17 | 83 |
| | Picture of family | 516 | 33 | 23 | 77 |
| | Personal info | 248 | 16 | 56 | 44 |
| | Substance use | 169 | 11 | 56 | 44 |
| **5b Info: Private Message** | Picture of self | 1215 | 78 | 6 | 94 |
| | Location picture/video | 1121 | 72 | 7 | 93 |
| | Picture of family | 687 | 44 | 20 | 80 |
| | Personal info | 382 | 25 | 44 | 57 |
| | Login | 187 | 12 | 48 | 52 |
| | Substance use | 189 | 12 | 52 | 48 |
| **5c Info: People met online** | Personal info | 179 | 12 | 39 | 62 |
| | Login | 112 | 7 | 40 | 60 |
| | Location picture/video | 363 | 23 | 41 | 60 |
| | Picture of self | 371 | 24 | 47 | 53 |
| | Substance use | 127 | 8 | 49 | 51 |
| | Picture of family | 199 | 13 | 53 | 47 |

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| 5a Info: Social Media | Location picture/video | 903 | 58 | 13 | 87 |
| | **Picture of self** | **884** | **57** | **17** | **83** |
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| | Personal info | 248 | 16 | 56 | 44 |
| | Substance use | 169 | 11 | 56 | 44 |
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**Objective knowledge**

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# Objective knowledge: Results

**7 logistic regressions**

| | Sexual | Aggression | People Met Online | Harmful Content | Information Disclosure | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sexting Received | Aggression Received | Interaction | Cyberhate | Social Media: Picture of Self | Private Msg.: Personal Info | Met Online: Picture of Self |
| **Predictor** | **OR** | **OR** | **OR** | **OR** | **OR** | **OR** | **OR** |
| Intercept | 7.7 | 2.67 | 0.56 | 27.48** | 1.62 | 21.67 | 5.62 |
| Active Mediation | 0.91 | 0.99 | **0.77**** | 1.13 | 0.91 | 0.79 | 0.92 |
| Restrictive Mediation | 0.85 | **0.75**** | 1.00 | **0.81*** | 0.94 | 1.03 | 1.08 |
| Monitoring | 1.17 | 1.12 | 1.05 | 1.01 | 1.11 | 1.04 | 1.04 |
| Technical Restrictions | 0.91 | 1.04 | 1.13 | 1.09 | 0.87 | 0.86 | 1.12 |
| Technical Monitoring | 1.14 | 1.05 | 1.05 | 1.03 | 1.10 | 1.16 | 1.05 |
| Adolescent Sex (Male) | 0.82 | 0.96 | **0.70*** | 1.02 | 0.70 | 0.90 | **0.49**** |
| Adolescent Age | 0.95 | 1.13 | 1.08 | 0.94 | **1.32**** | 1.01 | 0.97 |
| Parent Sex (Male) | 1.53 | 0.95 | 1.15 | **0.64**** | 0.88 | 1.10 | **1.64*** |
| Parent Age | 0.98 | 0.97 | 1.01 | **0.97*** | 0.97 | 0.96* | 0.97 |
| Model $\chi^2$, *df* = 9 | **7.59 *ns.*** | 18.74* | 25.89** | 24.56** | 22.20** | **11.29 *ns.*** | 22.32** |
| Nagelkerke Pseudo-$R^2$ | .03 | .04 | .05 | .04 | .04 | .04 | .08 |
| *N* | 288 | 635 | 718 | 753 | 883 | 381 | 371 |



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# Discussion

- Underestimating is more common for less prevalent activities/experiences

- Parental mediation strategies not sufficient to keep parents informed
  - Associated with a higher perception of knowledge
  - Mostly not associated with "objective" knowledge
  - False sense of being informed – especially monitoring

- Adolescent information management strategies (Lisztwan Honusová et al., 2026)
  - Monitoring ↔ more disclosure, but also more secrecy and lying – strategic disclosures?
  - Restriction ↔ less disclosure
  - Active mediation ↔ more disclosure, less secrecy, and lying BUT not related to better knowledge (?)

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# Thank you!

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**Project PARKA**
Parental Knowledge of Early Adolescents' Online Social Lives: The Role of Parental Mediation

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