A study of the relationship between parental mediation and adolescents’ digital skills, online risks and online opportunities

# Keywords

* Digital skills
* Parental mediation
* Online risks
* Online opportunities

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## Topics

* Social mediation
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms
* Internet usage, practices and engagement

## Sample

The sample was made up of 1.446 Spanish pupils of secondary education (49% boys) between 12 and 18 years of age (M = 13.9, SD = 1.28). Data were collected at thirteen Spanish schools in both rural (seven schools) and urban (six schools) areas of Spain (51% respondents from a rural school).

## Implications For Parents About

* Parental practices / parental mediation
* Parental digital literacy
* Parenting guidance / support
* Other

## Other Parent Implication

The need of digital literacy for parents to positively guide children´s online experiences and acquire digital skills; the need of promoting and teaching appropriate enabling strategies among parents to increase children´s online opportunities

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

In recent years, discussions have sparked about the risks and opportunities that digital technologies may have for adolescents. Some researchers argue that the best way to increase online opportunities and avoid online risks is to increase adolescents' digital skills. For this reason, the first goal of this study was to examine how adolescents' digital skills are related to their online opportunities and online risks behaviours. A second goal was to examine the influence of two ways of parental mediation (active and restrictive) on the level of teenagers’ digital skills, and subsequently their online opportunities and online risks. Finally, we intended to establish the validity and the structure of the Digital Literacy Scale. Using data from a cross-sectional survey of 1.446 Spanish secondary school pupils, we found that more digitally skilled adolescents take more opportunities, and experience more risks. Digital literacy mediates the relationship between restrictive (but not of active) parental mediation and online risks and opportunities. Furthermore, the Digital Literacy Scale was shown to be valid in terms of construct validity. The findings suggest that digital literacy remains essential as it lets teenagers take more opportunities, and that parents should opt for other ways of mediation rather than restrictive mediation.

# Outcome

This research examines the relationship between adolescents’ digital skills and online risks and opportunities. Rodríguez de Dios et al. (2018) highlight that coinciding with previous studies, findings show that the more skilled teenagers are, the more online opportunities they take and the more skilled they are, the more online risks they experience. The second aim of this research was to study the influence of two types of parental mediation (active and restrictive) on the level of teenagers' online opportunities and online risks behaviours, indirectly through digital skills. Rodríguez de Dios et al. (2018: 193) found that "adolescents' digital literacy mediates the influence of restrictive, but not of active parental mediation on online risks and opportunities". Results also show that restrictive parental mediation reduces adolescents’ digital skills, and as such reduces both their online risks as well as online opportunities.

The authors conclude that "parents are not actively contributing to their children's development of digital skills and a subsequent effective use of digital devices and online opportunities" (Rodríguez de Dios et al. 2018: 194), addressing that through restrictive mediation and the control of adolescents' activities and time online, parents are holding back the development of digital skills. Results show that active mediation has no relationship with digital skills and the authors argue that it may be the case that parents are not digitally literate themselves and, therefore, not able to teach their children digital skills. Rodríguez de Dios et al. (2018) suggest that future research should further investigate whether parents indeed currently lack the knowledge to teach their children digital skills, but if this is the case, "we need to focus more on improving parents digital skills and provide them tools for parenting in a digital age" (p. 194).

[Translated and adaptaded by the coder, based on the original text]