Parental mediation of adolescent Internet use: Combining strategies to promote awareness, autonomy and self-regulation in preparing youth for life on the web

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## Sample

357 adolescents, ages 12–
18 (M = 14.95, SD = 1.33). Of them, 188 (53%) were female. Another survey conducted
The study conducted among 156 young adolescents, ages 9–11 (M = 9.96, SD = 0.78), of them 85
(54.5%) were female. The latter was conducted with the presence of respondents’
parents, who answered the survey on behalf and according to their children’s answers. Altogether, nineteen
adolescents were interviewed (ages between 10 and 17.5), eleven of whom were girls.
Twenty-five parents were interviewed, nineteen of whom were women and nine of whom
were also teachers (eight female and one male),

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

The study examines parental mediation strategies of adolescent Internet use and their
relation to adolescent age, concerns of online risks, online activities and risky behavior.
Prior research on parental mediation is inconclusive about the effectiveness or superiority
of any mediation strategy. Additionally, concerns and awareness of risks were not
previously studied with respect to mediation strategies. A mixed-method study involved
a survey of 357 adolescents ages 12–18 and 156 young adolescents ages 9–11, followed
by semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers and adolescents. Various behavioral,
attitudinal, perceptual and habitual aspects of adolescent Internet use and types of
parental mediation were measured. Results illustrate how parents combine mediation
strategies in a variety of formats and contexts. Restrictive mediation correlated with
increased adolescent concerns, suggesting an internalization of risks and consequences
of Internet use. However, restrictive mediation correlated with decreased Internet
activity and increased risks, possibly due to lack of adolescent experience and autonomy
in navigating online risks. Conversely, active mediation correlated with increased
Internet activity of any sort, which enables experimentation and autonomy in using
the Internet, and did not correlate with risk. The study compares mediation strategies
with parenting styles and concludes that a balanced combination of restrictive and active
mediation, arguably supplies the best grounds for adolescents to develop a strong set of
norms and boundaries and be able to self-regulate their own Internet activities.

# Outcome

The interviews revealed that parents combine methods of mediation. Most interviewees
used a combination of restrictive and active mediation. While some parents,
especially parents who are educators as well, described some predefined, developed
and organized strategies for Internet safety education at home, sometimes by employing
quite original and creative activities, others initiated discussions or set restrictions in
response to unexpected events and dilemmas they encountered (Steinfeld, 2020) Additionally, as
adolescents grow up, parents employ less mediation, of any sort. The survey results reveal that adolescent concern of online risks is associated with restrictive mediation, and active mediation is not a
significant predictor when combined with other variables. This finding suggests that
restrictive mediation is more efficient in raising awareness and considerations of online
risks among adolescents. Expressing concern over Internet risks does not mean that a
child will be more or less careful, or know how to handle these threats better, but it does
mean that she is aware and alert to these threats. All types of Internet activities found to be
positively associated with active mediation and negatively associated with restrictive
mediation. However, Internet risks are mostly positively associated with restrictive mediation. Active mediation does not correlate with risks, with the exception of cyberbullying perpetration,
where active mediation negatively predicts perpetration.