Protective Factors in the Use of Electronic Media According to Youth and Their Parents: An Exploratory Study

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## Authors

Campos L.;Veríssimo L.;Nobre B.;Morais C.;Dias P.

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* Social mediation
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## Sample

A total of 1413 people (729 students, aged between 11 and 17 years old, and one of their parents) participated in this study.

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Opportunities of the use of technology in the classroom

# Abstract

The use of electronic media (EM) by youths has been widely described in the literature, indicating the relevance of understanding the factors that can protect against its risks. We aimed to explore the protective role of participating in extracurricular activities (ECAs) and of parental mediation in the use of EM by young people. A total of 1413 people (729 students, aged between 11 and 17 years old, and one of their parents) participated in this study. Youths who engaged in ECAs spent significantly less time per week on EM and perceived that the use of EM devices had less of a negative impact. When parents and their children presented a congruent notion of how much time youth spent on EM, parents perceived EM to have less of a negative impact on their children compared to dyads with discrepant assessments. The hierarchical regression results indicated that regardless of time spent per week on EM, engaging in ECAs was a significant predictor of perceiving a less negative impact, playing a role as a protective factor regarding the use of EM. The ubiquity of EM reinforces the importance of the focus of this study, and its results contribute to creating specific guidelines for parental education and educational policies.

# Outcome

"We tested the role of ECA [extracurricular activities] engagement and parental mediation on the impact of the use of EM [electronic media] by young people. Parental mediation was examined through two indirect variables: the existence of rules defined by parents regarding youth EM use, and the congruency between parents’ and youth’s assessment of time spent by youth with EM. Regardless of time spent per week with EM, engaging in ECAs was a significant predictor of perceiving less of a negative impact of EM, while parents’ definition of rules was only a marginally significant predictor. However, the results showed that parents and youth who are congruent in terms of the assessment of time spent by youth in EM tend to perceive a less negative impact of EM use.
The data in this study were collected in a pre-pandemic COVID-19 period, which reinforces the practical usefulness of the present study, since EM has become the current background of young people. Thus, more than focusing on limiting the time they are connected to EM, it is crucial to involve youth in activities during which they may develop socioemotional skills, empowering them to deal with the risks of using EM. On a socio-political level, our findings highlight the need to provide inclusive access to ECA, particularly for disadvantaged populations. Furthermore, educational strategies related to this subject should prioritize parental education, focusing on the relevance of ECA engagement. It is important to provide information on the positive impact of ECAs for children’s development, which is key for parents’ understanding of the need to create conditions for children to regularly engage in ECAs, and to maintain their interest in these activities. Moreover, the professionals responsible for these activities could benefit from training opportunities aimed at developing socioemotional skills in young people (e.g., self-esteem, self-confidence, problem-solving skills, seeking or offering support and help when needed, emotional control), which may buffer the potential negative impact of the use of EM. In addition, the results from this study reinforce the need to help parents replace the use of predictable restrictive mediation via more effective communication-based mediation regarding EM use" (Campos, L.; Veríssimo, L.; Nobre, B.; Morais, C.; Dias, P., 2021: 3582-83).