Gli smartphones stanno trasformando le pratiche comunicative tra genitori e figli? Uno studio qualitativo crossgenerazionale sul confronto tra le rappresentazioni di genitori e preadolescenti

Engl. transl.: Are smartphones transforming parent-child everyday life practices? A cross-generational qualitative study comparing parents’ and early adolescents’ representations

# Keywords

* Smartphones
* everyday life practices
* early adolescents
* family dynamics

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## Topics

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

## Sample

Fifteen parents (9 mothers, 6 fathers; M = 46.07; SD = 4.25) and 15 early adolescents (7 females, 8 males; M = 11.73; SD = 0.46).

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Over the last decade, a substantial number of studies has aimed to understand the role of smartphones in parent-child communication as well as in youth cultures; however, little attention has been given to the systematic analysis of what dimensions of parent-child everyday life communication and practices have been transformed by the usage of smartphones. The present study builds upon the Couple and Family Technology Framework (CFTF), to investigate parents’ and children’s representations of the impact of smartphones on family struc ture and process as well as the similarities and differences between parents’ and children’s representations. Fifteen parents (9 mothers, 6 fathers; M = 46.07; SD = 4.25) and 15 early adolescents (7 females, 8 males; M = 11.73; SD = 0.46) participated in six focus. The analyses showed that: (a) parents of early adolescents use smartphones’ for several everyday life tasks; (b) according to both parents and children smartphones facilitate organizational tasks; (c) smartphones have more impact on family structure dimensions (especially, family rules and roles) than on family process dimensions (intimacy, formation and maintenance of relationships); (d) parents and children’s representations diverged only on structure dimensions; (e) gender differences with respect to smartphones representations emerged on both parents and children’s groups. These findings pave the way for further investigations on the role of smartphones in family dynamics and their practical implications on parents and children’s everyday life practices.

# Outcome

"Findings accounted for specific topics which provide
further evidence on the ways mobile devices are re-shaping contemporary
families’ everyday life practices and family relational dynamics in terms of both
structure and process aspects.
Overall, according to both parents and children, smartphones have an impact
on the structure more than on the process dimensions. In other words, smartphones
seem to influence first of all dimensions related to family power, in particular
family rules and roles, more than intimacy and formation and maintenance
of relationships. Parents’ representations, in particular, referred to the fact
that smartphones are ubiquitously present in their own lives, not only in those of
their children. Both parents and children acknowledged that smartphones are facilitating tools, above all for organisational tasks, in that they allow to save time
and coordinate with others being them family members or friends, and especially
through text-message based chat groups. In other words, they support microcoordination
activities for the accomplishment of everyday life tasks (Ling
Lai, 2016).
[...] Not surprisingly, differences between parents and children were found on dimensions
related to practices of regulations (parental mediation), specifically control
and monitoring. Children seem to be aware that parents set regulations because
concerned for online risks that can affect children’s wellbeing; however, they perceived
parental mediation as restrictive and as a limitation to their emancipation
to the extent that they regret not having lived in a pre-technological era in which
children were not pressured by parental control via phone calls and text messages.
In so doing, children highlighted the ambivalent nature of smartphones, which, on
the one hand afford autonomy and emancipation, and on the other, favour control
and intrusion from parents (Mascheroni, 2018). [...] In conclusion, according to both parents and children, smartphones are introducing
transformations in everyday life practices; these transformations become
observable in the re-configuration of family structure, namely rules, roles and
boundaries. From a cross-generational perspective, the differences between parents
and children were limited and confined to issues of power and negotiations
about the regulations imposed by parents on smartphone usage. Negotiations
and challenges to family hierarchy characterize family dynamics during adolescence
(Everri, Fruggeri, Molinari, 2014); therefore, smartphones amplify
these dynamics. Furthermore, the metaphor of smartphones as  distance regulators
  provided by children signals that these devices support individuation, a
central developmental task in adolescence." (Messena et al., 2019, pp. 19-21).