Fighting over smartphones? Parents' excessive smartphone use, lack of control over children's use, and conflict

# Details

## DOI

10.1016/j.chb.2020.106618

## Issued

2021

## Language

English

## Volume

116

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Matthes J.;Thomas M.;Stevic A.;Schmuck D.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Computers in Human Behavior

## Publisher

Elsevier BV

## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Content-related issues
* Risks and harms
* Other

## Sample

In the first survey wave, 822 parent-child pairs took part. The sample consisted of parents aged between 23 and 69 years (M = 42.94; SD = 7.10) and 57.2% were women. Children were aged between 10 and 14 years with a mean age of 12.09 (SD = 1.37) and 51.1% were girls.
In the second survey wave, a total of 384 parent-child pairs finished the survey with an attrition rate of 53%. Parents' age mean was 43.57 (SD = 6.89) and 53.4% were women. Children's mean age was 12.37 (SD = 1.48) and 46.6% were girls.

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

* Stepping up awareness and empowerment
* Creating a safe environment for children online
* Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Awareness for the needs of parents

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

Parental regulation of children's smartphone use is typically associated with conflict. To explain conflict, this paper focused on parents' own smartphone use. A panel survey among parent-child pairs (NTme2 = 384) revealed that parents' excessive smartphone use at Time 1 was associated with a lack of control over children's smartphone use at Time 2. Lack of control over children's smartphone use, in turn, was related to conflict about the smartphone from children's and parents' perspectives over time. The relations with conflict were independent of whether parents thought that smartphones have negative effects on children. Overall, findings stress that both, children's and parents' smartphone use, need to be considered when explaining technology-related family conflicts.

# Outcome

"These limitations notwithstanding, we believe our findings bear several important implications for parents and researchers alike. When it comes to the perspective of parents, they may be unaware that their own excessive smartphone use can have direct consequences for situations in which there is “fighting over the smartphone” with their children. Therefore, parents need to be better educated about the effects of their own behaviors and the limited resources they may have as a consequence of excessive smartphone use. Easily accessible intervention programs, online education platforms, or easy-to-use applications directly targeting parental smartphone use in a family context may help parents to better understand how their own behaviors may shape family conflict.
Research on the effects of smartphone use is called to take a more comprehensive perspective, involving not only parents' regulation and mediation strategies and how children perceive them but also parents' smartphone use habits, their available cognitive and emotional resources following from their own smartphone use, and their feelings of a lack of control. Overall, we conclude that both, children's and parents' smartphone use, need to be considered when explaining technology-related family conflicts."
(Matthes et al., 2021, online)