

Mediation strategies between parenting styles and children's use of digital media

"Positions and Activation Mechanisms for Protection from Digital Risks"

إستراتيجيات الوساطة بين الأنماط الوالدية واستخدام الأبناء للوسائط الرقمية
"التموضعات وآليات التنفيل للحماية من المخاطر الرقمية"

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Abstract:

The concept of parental mediation pertains to the regulation by parents of their children's interactions with digital media. Mediation relies on many strategies that constitute an interactive system, including restricted mediation, monitoring, and active enabling mediation. If parents employ mediation strategies to safeguard their children from digital risks and facilitate their secure engagement with media, thereby enabling them to capitalize on the opportunities available to digital citizens, this is connected to the parental styles that influence their utilization of mediation tools. This discussion seeks to elucidate the interactions among fundamental variables in parental mediation, the alignment of mediation strategies with parenting styles and children's digital media usage, and the principal factors influencing parents' selection of mediation strategies. Subsequently, offering insights and recommendations that may enable parents to implement ways that allow children's positive, conscientious, and responsible engagement in digital settings.

Keywords : Mediation strategies ; parenting styles ; digital media ; digital risks

ملخص:

يستخدم مفهوم الوساطة الوالدية للدلالة على إدارة الآباء للعلاقة بين أبنائهم والوسائط الرقمية التي يستخدمونها. وتقوم الوساطة على استراتيجيات عدة تشكل منظومة متفاعلة تجمع بين وساطة تقييدية، مراقبة، ووساطة نشطة تمكينية. وإذا كان توظيف الوالدين لإستراتيجيات الوساطة يتغى لديهم التدخل لوقاية الأبناء وحمايتهم من المخاطر الرقمية وضمان ولوجهم الأمن للوسائط والإستفادة من الفرص التي تتيحها لمواطنيها الرقمييين فإن ذلك يرتبط بالأنماط الوالدية التي تحكم توظيف الوالدين لأدوات الوساطة.

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وعليه، يأتي طرحنا لهذا الموضوع متوخيا مكاشفة التفاعلات بين هذه المتغيرات الأساسية في الوساطة الوالدية، وكذا تموضع استراتيجيات الوساطة بين الأنماط الوالدية واستخدام الأبناء للوسائط الرقمية، وأهم المحددات التي تحكم تبني الوالدين إستراتيجيات الوساطة. ومن ثم تقديم بعض الرؤى والمقترحات التي قد تمكن الوالدين من توظيف إستراتيجيات تسمح للأبناء بانخراط إيجابي بوعي ومسؤولية في البيئات الرقمية.

-الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات الوساطة؛ الأنماط الوالدية؛ الوسائط الرقمية؛ المخاطر الرقمية.

Introduction:

The contemporary world has witnessed astonishing developments in the field of technology and communication, manifested in the virtual digital worlds parallel to the real world and in digital media with its various tools such as networks and digital communication platforms which allow individuals to access their environments and interact within their virtual communities, where there is freedom and no boundaries, multiple identities, and overlapping values.

Despite the opportunities and advantages these virtual environments provide through digital media, such as learning, openness to others, and social interaction, there are warnings against the misuse of their content or excessive use and addiction, especially among children and adolescents. Their increasing engagement, frequent and incorrect use of digital media lead them to several risks such as addiction, bullying, extortion, crime, harassment::.

What statistics have actually recorded for those exposed to the dangers of digital media, especially social networks, due to their misuse, interaction with digital content, or addiction to them, is alarming and threatens the mental and physical health of these groups.

A study conducted by the "Digital Intelligence Institute" (2018) found that 38 000 children in 29 countries (56%) were exposed to at least one online risk, including grooming, identity theft, and loss of privacy. In developing countries, 47% were victims of cyber-bullying, 11% were addicted to games, and 17% engaged in online sexual behavior (Al-Maamari, 2021).

This necessitated the protection and prevention of children and adolescents from the misuse of digital platforms and networks, placing families before significant challenges to confront the dangers of improper use of social networks and ensure positive integration into their virtual worlds. Parents found themselves in a struggle between enabling their children to access virtual social networks and benefit from their educational, social, and informational services. This is to keep up with the times, and restricting their activities to protect them from various dangers associated with the misuse of these media. In response to this change, various parental styles have emerged. In this regard, researchers have observed within the digital world different parental styles of control, some of which are restrictive, others empowering, and some are advisory, and others, in the context of children's use of digital media.

The concept of parental mediation refers to "parents managing their children's relationship with media, which goes beyond imposing restrictions to include

strategies of dialog and interpretation." (Livingston & Helsper, 2008, p. 3)

Parental mediation includes many strategies that parents use to protect their children from the pitfalls of social networks. The classifications that have been designed to include parental mediation strategies in the theoretical literature are numerous. Among these strategies are: active mediation, educational mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing.

In light of the parental style and parental mediation strategies, the question of the different interactions between these determinants and children's digital behavior has arisen with urgency. Our research found that the examination of these variables was conducted in Western contexts within theoretical literature and empirical studies, resulting in models that explain this relationship and the existence of influences between them in light of other determinants also presented in a culturally and socially in-depth context.

However, the treatment of these interactions within Arabic contexts in both theoretical and empirical academic literature has been limited to examining parental patterns and models in digital environments, as well as parental mediation strategies—such as restrictive, active, enabling, and monitoring strategies, among others... separately, without analyzing the interactions between mediation strategies as a mediating process between the parental style and its impact on children's use of digital networks. Within the limits of our review, we have not found any research addressing the mediating role of parental mediation strategies between the parental style and children's use of digital media.

Based on the above, we attempt within this discussion to reveal the positioning of parental mediation strategies between parenting styles and children's use of digital media such as communication platforms and others, as well as the conditions and mechanisms for implementing mediation strategies in a way that contributes to their safe and healthy employment.

1. Concept of parental mediation:

In terminology, is an educational approach taken by parents to instill and develop correct behavior and build character in their children.

Building on this general definition, the "French National Committee for Parenting Support" defined it as the sum of the methods employed by parents, whether in their material, psychological, moral, legal, cultural, or social dimensions. The more power parenting has in shaping a child's personality, the more psychological, social, and health problems have been linked to it and its direct (conscious) or implicit educational practices, through the behavioral models it provides to our children or through the emotional channels through which we conduct our interactions. (Al-Azoozi, 2022)

In this sense, parental mediation is an educational upbringing based on various forms of care that influence the child's personality in its cognitive, emotional, and skill components.

However, parental mediation is a type of upbringing associated with digital media. Although it has been present in previous literature to describe parental intervention to protect their children from screen dangers, its use as a concept has transitioned to the digital age, encompassing computers, tablets, and smartphones.

Accordingly, the parental mediation theory proposed by "Clark" in 2011 includes the strategies used by parents to monitor and supervise their children's use of digital media with the aim of reducing potential risks (Arya & Sreejith, 2024).

In addition, it includes "the various ways in which parents try to manage and monitor their children's interaction with media, teach them how to use digital media safely, and deal with internet challenges such as inappropriate communication and security threats resulting from password breaches, spyware, misuse of personal information, harmful content, and cyber theft." (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023, p. 3)

Nevertheless, there are many risks that children and adolescents face, especially when they enter the digital world and engage as digital individuals without protective measures, making them susceptible to various problems such as bullying, harassment, and extortion.

On the other hand, the term "mediation" is widely viewed as embodying parents' management of the relationship between their children and the media; it is beneficial in that it expands the role of parents beyond merely imposing restrictions to also include conversation and interpretation strategies as well as monitoring activities. (Livingston & Helsper, 2008, p. 3)

Ultimately, the goal of adopting parental mediation strategies is to protect children from the dangers of digital media and social networks, while simultaneously ensuring positive integration into their worlds and benefiting from the learning opportunities they provide.

2. Digital risks: Digital risks:

The concept of digital media is a comprehensive term encompassing several digital components such as social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, smartphones or tablets, video, and search engines. The use of these digital components may vary according to the age group of the individuals accessing them. (Klein, 2023, p. 72).

Communities have witnessed astonishing changes in various aspects of life with their entry into the world of digital media and their engagement in its spaces. Internet networks and mobile devices, which are an integral part of the "Internet of Things," have enabled communication, interaction, integration, openness to diverse cultures, and the expansion of users' horizons. However, they have also resulted in numerous problems, posed many risks, and revealed their shortcomings, especially in the context of a global system that eliminates temporal and spatial boundaries.

Many problems are associated with these media, and the misuse of them, especially social networks and platforms that has had several effects, including:

- **Dissemination of pornography:** This involves luring children and adolescents and inciting them to engage in sexual activities through electronic means, enticing them to commit these acts, and obtaining images and video footage illegally to exploit them in sexual activities.

- **Blackmail:** This involves certain temptations where the blackmailer obtains very private photos, locations, and conversations, and uses them to extort money, sexual favors, or similar.

- **Spam:** The recipient is randomly contacted through advertising campaigns, being asked to click, which causes harmful files to be downloaded onto their device, or they are directed to another site to steal their personal data.

- **Hacking:** The user creates vulnerabilities in the security system, allowing the hacker to access the information illegally. The hacker then seizes the information, alters or deletes it from the site, achieving the destructive goals they seek. (Al-Sha'er, 2015, p. 58)

These risks and others are faced by children in light of the misuse of digital media, which may occur without their awareness of the dangers or due to weak digital skills. In the absence of protective programs, parental leniency, neglect, and the lack of parental supervision, the situation becomes more dangerous for children, especially those who are given the freedom to create accounts on social platforms and use applications without awareness of their risks and safe usage mechanisms.

Accordingly, thinking about ways to protect children and safeguard them from its dangers, as well as the optimal use of social networks, has become a necessity for educational intermediaries and bodies responsible for the care and protection of children and adolescents.

The family, as an important agent in upbringing, is today required, in light of this global digital transformation, to respond to this change and engage with it positively by adopting an education that aligns with this global factor that has imposed itself on the lives of families and communities, forcing them to seek appropriate tools and methods to prevent threats to their children's lives. Parents today face the challenge of protecting their children from the risks of misuse of the digital world while simultaneously enabling them to benefit from the positive opportunities that the digital world offers.

That is, retreating into oneself and refusing to embrace the digital world and demonizing it can deprive children of learning, knowledge, and the benefits of communication with others. On the other hand, opening up to the digital world, immersing oneself in its virtual realms, and engaging in digital communities without protective tools is a gamble with dire consequences.

Samuel emphasizes in this context that "we cannot prepare our children for the future world by reverting them to our childhood world." It is not our role as

parents to take away phones, but to bring them out and teach our children how to use them consciously, safely, and responsibly. The most effective strategy is not to reject technology, but to embrace it and guide its use wisely. (Samuel, 2015).

3. Parenting styles and challenges of digital media:

The family structure has undergone numerous changes influenced by various factors, and with the world's shift toward the digital revolution and the emergence of virtual communities, parents are now faced with the challenge of confronting a new, enticing, and attractive environment filled with risks. The focus has shifted to: How do we raise our children in the age of virtual spaces and the dominance of digital media and social networks in our daily lives? And how do we protect our children from the danger of poor integration into its communities and virtual worlds? And how can we enable them to deal with it efficiently and effectively, especially in light of the digital risks they are exposed to?

It seems that facing these challenges is a difficult task for education, putting parents in a constant struggle with their children as they try to balance the educational and social benefits of media use with the negative effects that some content or intermediary interactions may leave on children's attitudes, behavior, and safety. (Livingston & Helsper, 2008).

They are required to protect their children from the dangers of the internet and its digital media amidst its widespread presence and the speed and ease of access to it, while at the same time enabling them to access it for healthy and safe use.

In light of this situation and the corresponding responses of parents within different parenting styles to deal with children using media or social networks, "Alexandra Samuel" (Samuel, 2015) recorded, in her classification and according to the study she conducted, three parenting styles in the digital age, which are:

*** Digital Enablers:** These are the parents who give their children a lot of time in front of devices and allow them access to them, driven by the enthusiasm surrounding them and their applications. These parents derive their guidance from how other children and families use technology.

*** Digital Limiters:** They are the ones who reduce their children's use of technology. This style is similar to the authoritarian parenting approach, where parents impose many rules but without effective dialog with children about internet use.

*** Digital Mentors:** They play an active role in guiding their children's use of the internet. Digital mentors communicate openly with their children and engage them in learning to use the internet effectively, which aligns with an authoritarian parenting style.

Thus, digital parenting is centered between restrictive parenting and enabling parenting. The guiding style combines freedom without neglect and monitoring without coercion. It is the model that sees valuable opportunities in the digital

world that we should not deprive our children of, and risks that we must protect them from, establishing effective digital parenting.

The adoption of any parenting style by parents in their dealings with their digital children is linked to their awareness of the digital world, their understanding and knowledge of it, and the skills they possess and rely on to protect their children from the improper and harmful use of digital networks.

Studies indicate that parenting style is influenced by parents' digital competence. Parents with digital skills have media literacy, possess higher self-confidence, the ability to predict risks, and create plans to address them. As for parents who doubt their digital skills, they tend to adopt more restrictive attitudes, and as their skills increase, so does their mediation in controlling media use. (Üstündağ et al., 2021)

According to the above, the positive style is one that combines independence and restriction, which is supported by research indicating that the authoritative (balanced) educational approach is a protective factor against the use of prohibited substances and digital content and addiction to them.

Authoritarianism that balances warmth and firmness enhances children's emotional and social development and provides effective tools for dealing with digital environments. In contrast, authoritarian or indulgent parenting styles, characterized by either excessive control and strict rules without fostering understanding or critical thinking, lead to rebellion in children. Indulgent parents may fail to set necessary boundaries, leaving children unprotected from the negative consequences of excessive internet use. (Liu et al., 2025)

Children cannot avoid interacting with the internet as part of their daily lives. Therefore, it is essential for parents to adopt a flexible parenting style that balances parental supervision and independence in using the digital environment, as restrictions deprive children of learning opportunities, social interaction, and even the acquisition of digital skills. Additionally, granting freedom to connect with digital networks and engage in various activities without restrictions complicates the roles of prevention and protection.

According to "Vingston," the means of upbringing influence this decision, as policymakers often advise parents to restrict children's internet use out of concern for risks, without realizing the cost of this restriction in terms of depriving them of digital opportunities. Conversely, teachers encourage parents to empower children to use the internet, but they do not realize that this may also bring more risks. (Livingston et al., 2017)

However, adopting a balanced parenting style may not achieve the desired results without mediation, as protection requires mediation tools that link the parenting style with children's use of the digital world.

4. Parental mediation strategies:

Researchers have endeavored to develop parental mediation strategies, considering them as a mediator between parenting and children's use of digital

media.

Strategies of mediation are viewed as "means by which parents reproduce family values in the face of external cognitive systems". (Livingston & Helsper, 2008, p. 4)

It acts as an intermediary variable in the relationship between parents and digital children, emerging as a fundamental shield against the misuse or mishandling of digital materials.

This is achieved through content monitoring and fostering internal autonomy in children, and monitoring contributes to reinforcing the guidelines, rules, and values set by parents regarding the proper use of the internet. (Giovanelli et al., 2025, p. 13)

Conversely, the absence of digital parental mediation can lead to negative effects resulting from parental neglect, whether they are capable of it or lack the ability to do so.

In this context, some studies indicate that excessive use of digital technologies—especially in the absence of parental mediation—not only correlates with exposure to violent or sexual content but also has negative repercussions on an individual's mental health. (Giovanelli et al., 2025, p. 13)

Based on the importance of parental mediation tools, researchers have developed strategies for parental mediation, and among the most prominent and common of these strategies, we mention:

4.1- Monitored Mediation Strategy:

Restrictive mediation is one of the strategies that parents adopt as mediators in dealing with their children in the digital environment. It is characterized by strict enforcement of rules and control over the child's digital activities, such as determining when the child can use the tablet and setting time limits for using digital devices (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). Restrictive mediation may prevent children from freely accessing social networks as it restricts and limits their digital activities, especially for young children. The forms of restriction manifest in setting time limits, establishing rules, and banning certain content or activities with the aim of protecting them from misuse, inappropriate engagement with digital content, or addiction to it.

On the other hand, "Khurana et al." (2015) showed in their study in the United States on children aged 12 to 17 that restrictive mediation reduced the risks of internet use, such as exposure to cyber-bullying (Livingston et al., 2017). However, this restriction may deprive digital natives of the opportunity to explore the digital world and benefit from what it offers in the realm of information technology, as well as the endless openness to the world of people, things, and cultures. Restrictive mediation may reduce digital risks, but at the same time, it diminishes digital opportunities and negatively impacts these opportunities.

Some studies have shown that parental mediation plays an important role in

shaping children's perceptions of media. Positive beliefs and attitudes toward digital devices encourage children to use them regularly and effectively, while negative attitudes from parents limit children's online activities and may also affect their future digital behavior. (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023).

Parents' attitudes and negative perceptions about digital media, such as social networks and others, may lead to depriving children of digital opportunities. Some studies have proven the negative relationship between restrictive mediation and digital opportunities, and this included many aspects such as:

Access to global information, educational resources, entertainment, social interaction with friends, freedom of identity expression, content creation, and civic or political participation. (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023, p. 6).

We believe that this is related to high levels of restriction that deprive children of many opportunities offered by the virtual world and lead to negative effects on children, such as violence and resistance to not accessing prohibited sites. Moreover, strict restrictions may reduce the demand for support, advice, and participation from parents, which prevents the use of other mediation strategies when parents rely heavily on monitoring and restricting their children's online activities.

4.2- Co-use mediation:

Co-use mediation, also known as co-viewing, is one of the strategies adopted in parental mediation. This type of mediation has been mentioned in theoretical literature when discussing parental mediation in children's television viewing, and this parental mediation has been adopted in interacting with digital media content.

Co-use involves parents sharing media use with their children, and it does not require parents to provide explanations in joint mediation. This approach is often associated with non-verbal communication and implies parental approval of the content quality. (Naab, 2018)

The parents' stance on content in co-viewing does not appear, even if the participation indicates acceptance of the digital content, because it does not include comments or reactions of rejection from the parents, which could lead to negative effects due to repeated viewing of certain content or addiction to it.

Some researchers believe that co-viewing may increase the likelihood of negative effects from digital media, as the absence of discussion from parents is interpreted as a form of "implicit approval" of the content (Mendoza, 2009). This sharing becomes dangerous when inappropriate content is shared, such as parents sharing content with their children that includes scenes of violence or pornography.

Nathanson (1999) expressed this by saying:

"When parents watch negative content with their children and do not say anything that contradicts what is being shown, children may interpret their parents' presence as a sign of approval of the content and that the activity is

valuable and beneficial." Therefore, parents should be aware that the common advice 'watch with your children' may lead to undesirable outcomes if parents do not oppose the negative messages presented during joint viewing. (Clark 2011, p. 32).

But how can co-viewing be considered a strategy in parental mediation if it involves sharing without discussion or verbal communication?

We believe that co-viewing can be effective if the content or networks that children use to watch digital content are positive; co-viewing can enhance the acceptance of children's behavior, and parents can send a silent and subtle message that what they are watching is appropriate and acceptable.

Moreover, involving parents and sharing viewing experiences can strengthen the emotional bonds between parents and children, and move the media pattern away from the neglect some parents exhibit in their interactions with their digital children.

Although co-viewing is not an explicit form of mediation, it provides an opportunity for interaction and sharing between parents and children regarding digital content, which can serve as a starting point for building critical thinking and deeper communication about digital media. (Mendoza, 2009)

4.3-Active mediation:

Active mediation is among the most important strategies adopted in parental mediation, which is based on dialog, discussion, and digital guidance. It involves discussions between parents and children regarding the use and content of media. However, the term "active mediation" does not accurately reflect the purpose of the dialogic process, which is why synonymous terms such as "guidance," "evaluative," and "interpretive" have been adopted to enhance the clarity of the concept. (Jiow et al., 2017, p. 312). That is, it relies on dialog and discussion, evaluating digital content, and providing an explanation for accepting or prohibiting the use of interaction methods with digital networks, especially communicative ones.

Thus, active mediation involves parental or one parent's interventions in sharing or adopting digital activities, encouraging their children's use of it, and intervening in cases of misuse, whether out of curiosity or lack of knowledge. This intervention is not only to prevent usage but also to convince children of the associated risks and explain how to solve problems arising from digital misuse.

Parents, within the framework of active mediation, explain and discuss digital content with their children, focusing on negotiating between the child and the parents regarding the positive, negative, and neutral views of the media. This can enhance the child's understanding of content and critical thinking, and reduce media-related aggressive behavior. (Naab, 2018)

Active mediation is positively associated with digital opportunities, and it also helps prevent children from adopting positive attitudes toward pornographic

content or consuming prohibited substances such as drugs, excessive alcohol, and smoking. (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023, p. 6). It includes promoting safe usage and providing positive opportunities through which children learn digital skills; that is, controlling technology in terms of usage and solving related problems, in addition to safe usage and protecting oneself from the risks of misuse.

Nathanson classified active mediation into:

-Active positive mediation: that is, parents praising or endorsing certain content.

-Active negative mediation: It involves criticizing certain content and discussing the negative effects of specific content, such as violent content.

Parents can use a combination of positive and negative mediation, or neutral mediation. (2009, Mendoza). However, despite the fact that active mediation is positive in its procedures and parental mediating operations, there are those who see the possibility of combining both restrictive and active mediation. Valkenburg et al. (2013) propose this approach, because "parents who impose rules and require their children to follow them may be more successful if they encourage the child's independence". (Livingston et al., 2017, p. 7).

4.4- Supervised Mediation:

Supervised mediation is classified among the mediation strategies that can help manage the risks that children may be exposed to through their virtual interactions on social networks and digital sites. Supervision is defined as direct oversight by a nearby adult, and this type of interaction involves the use of technical restrictions or filters (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023, p. 6). Monitoring also includes assessing children's exposure to unsafe interactions. This includes reading text messages, reviewing browsing history, or using tracking software as a strategy to help parents know what their children are doing online and monitor their activity to ensure their safety. (Nagy et al., 2022).

Surveillance aims to protect children and shield them from the risks of unsafe access to virtual sites, through discussion and persuasion about the consequences of improper engagement with digital content.

Thus, monitoring does not necessarily mean adopting a restrictive mediation approach; rather, it can facilitate better discussions between parents and children and lead to the safe use of media, which should be considered a form of active mediation. (Jiow et al, 2017).

When monitoring is based on discussion, dialog, and openness between parents and their children regarding their opinions, ideas, and attitudes, it does not lead to the annoyance of children, especially teenagers, with their parents' monitoring because the dialog is based on persuasion. Therefore, parental monitoring of children's activities is less effective if it solely originates from the parents, as in this case it becomes restrictive, compared to when it originates from the adolescent themselves through their voluntary disclosure and open

communication with their parents. (Arya & Sreejith, 2024).

4.5-Enabling Mediation:

Enabling mediation is considered one of the most important modern strategies classified under active mediation, and the identification of this strategy is attributed to Livingstone.

Empowerment mediation is viewed as more comprehensive and complex than active mediation. It focuses on establishing frameworks that ensure safe internet usage, while providing sufficient freedom to benefit from the opportunities and positive impacts resulting from healthy usage. It not only includes an active mediation strategy but also employs technical control and monitoring. This form of parenting practices empowers children, supports their active participation, and strengthens the positive impact of acceptable internet use. (Livingston et al., 2017, p. 7)

Thus, the enabling strategy is based on empowering children with the internet by granting them the freedom to access its virtual worlds while providing guidance and supervision to ensure safe usage and benefit from learning, knowledge, social participation opportunities, and more.

Therefore, some see that empowering mediation is more complex than "active guidance," as active guidance includes not only safety-related guidance but also sometimes involves activities that may seem restrictive, such as technical control and parental monitoring. However, these aim to build a safe framework to encourage positive internet use by children. (Livingston et al., 2017, p. 7). Further, empowering children and adolescents in the digital world with guidance and advice, as well as monitoring and restricting their use of certain websites and virtual networks, makes empowering mediation more comprehensive and effective. In this regard, some studies confirm that empowering mediation is more effective in promoting safe and positive online experiences for children, as it builds trust and open communication between parents and children. (Naab, 2018).

But the question that urgently arises in this context is, "Which mediation strategy should we adopt?" And can we adopt active or empowering mediation, or regulatory and restrictive mediation and joint learning, or should we combine them? There is no doubt that our answer needs scientific support and an investigation into what has been presented in the academic literature.

According to research and study results, relying on a specific strategy in all situations and under all circumstances may not lead to positive outcomes. Therefore, researchers recommend what they call mixed mediation.

Relying on a single pattern in mediation strategies may not achieve the goal of parental mediation. Since digital environments contain elements that positively enhance children's skills, as well as those that negatively impact their thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and mental health, the appropriate strategy for parental mediation is one that combines all these strategies. This includes

restricting their digital activity to protect them from prohibited sites or potential abuses, active mediation that allows them to open up to the digital world, supervisory mediation that can protect children from the risks of misuse of platforms and digital networks, and participatory learning mediation aimed at acquiring digital self-skills and competencies with parental involvement. Any mediation that combines different strategies—active, participatory, based on monitoring and restriction in specific situations and under certain conditions.

Smahelova et al. (2017) mention that parental mediation is not a fixed behavior, but rather multiple mediation strategies can be used simultaneously depending on certain factors." The strategies are formed through the mutual interaction between parents and children. Therefore, it is essential to study the factors influencing these strategies, to enable parents to adopt more effective strategies in regulating their children's media use. (Üstundag, 2021, p. 702)

The mediation strategy, in addition to the parental style, is governed by several determinants that can affect children's use of digital networks. Moreover, its adoption is influenced by various factors, conditions, and situations. Therefore, it is incorrect to adopt a specific mediation strategy in all circumstances and situations.

5. What kind of parenthood for what kind of mediation?

What pattern for what strategy? A question that is urgently raised when it comes to facing the challenges of the digital world and ensuring the safe and positive integration of children into virtual realms. To answer this question, we first need to explore the relationship between parenting styles and mediation strategies.

Some studies indicate a strong relationship between patterns and mediation strategies, as parental mediation acts as an intermediary factor in this relationship. Where authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting styles influence mediation strategies, which in turn affect children's interaction with digital media, such as internet addiction. (Liu et al., 2025, p. 3).

The parenting style determines the form of mediation that parents adopt in their interactions with their children who use digital networks and virtual social media, which in turn affects the children's health behavior and safety.

These interactions between the three variables were placed by researchers within multiple models, including the model proposed by "Valcke et al. (2010)," which is based on the work of "Baumrind et al." It is one of the most common models. "Valcke" linked parental mediation to parenting styles and clarified in his study that the parenting style directly affects the type of digital mediation adopted by parents, which results in children's digital experiences, opportunities, and potential risks. (Martínez et al., 2020, p. 67). This model includes two axes: parental control and parental warmth, leading to four styles of mediation:

- **Authoritative:** Parents set clear rules and explain them.
- **Authoritarian:** Parents set rules without explanation and expect

obedience.

- **Permissive:** Parents do not set clear boundaries but sometimes negotiate.

- **The indifferent:** Parents do not intervene in children's digital practices. (Brito et al., 2017, p. 4)

According to this model, some studies have investigated the relationship between each parenting style and mediation strategies. For instance, a study by "Liu et al. (2025)" revealed a strong positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and active mediation. This was evident in parents engaging in digital activities to guide their children's online behavior by setting appropriate boundaries and discussing the potential risks and benefits of their media use. Conversely, a negative correlation was found between the permissive parenting style and active mediation, as these parents are less involved in guiding their children and grant them greater freedom without significant supervision. Additionally, a correlation was found between the authoritarian parenting style and the mediation pattern; authoritarian parents are less inclined to use encouraging methods and active mediation strategies to raise their children's awareness of internet risks. This leads to a counter-reaction from the children as a means of emotional compensation through frequent use of digital media and addiction to it.

According to Samuel's model, other studies, including one by "(Arya & Sreejith, 2024)", found a relationship between parenting styles and parental mediation, indicating that:

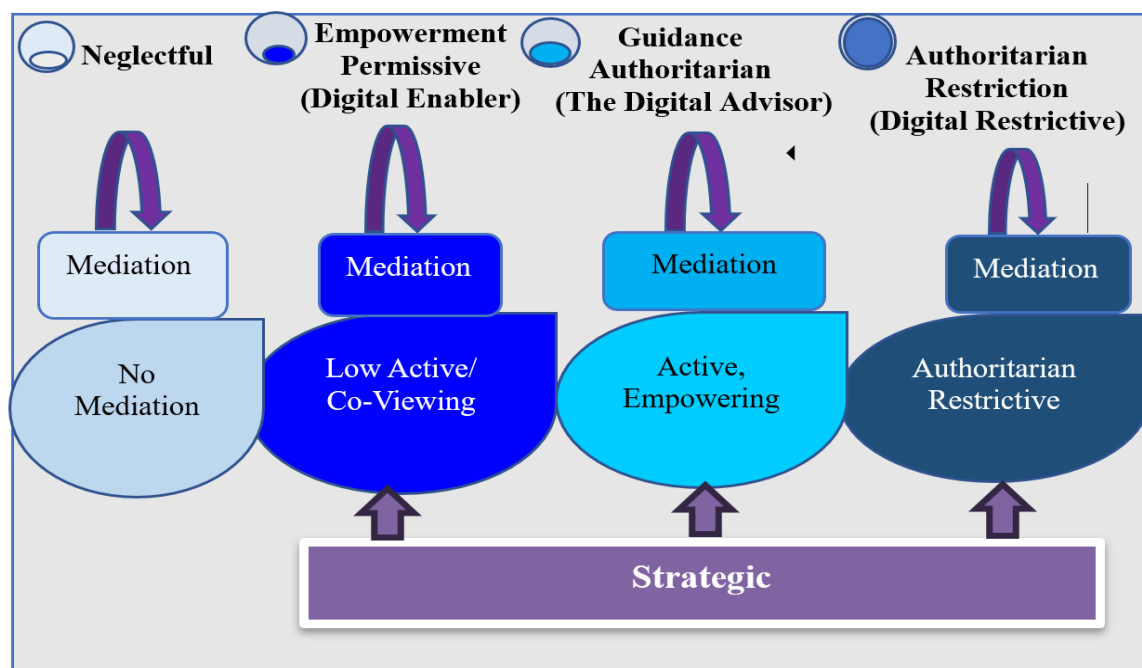
"Limiter parents" use restrictive mediation to impose strict rules on their children's technology use.

"Enabler parents" use a combination of weak active mediation with co-viewing.

"Mentor parents" primarily rely solely on active mediation and interact directly with their children's digital activities.

Based on the findings of previous studies and the models established for the mediation position between parenting style and children's use of digital media, the following diagram can be presented:

Figure N° 1: nd mediation strategies a between A diagram illustrating the correlation tylesparenting s



Based on the above, it can be said that the relationship between parenting styles and digital mediation strategies is not linear because there are other variables that affect the interaction between these three determinants, even though mediation strategies position themselves as a mediating process between parenting styles and children's interaction with the digital environment. Given this correlation, an authoritative guiding style based on digital advice may be optimal, with mediation relying on diverse and interactive strategies that change according to content, media, and the usage by children and adolescents.

Research into the various interactions between these variables still requires extensive studies to understand the different relationships between parenting styles and mediation strategies, and to uncover the various changes or determinants that govern these relationships, such as beliefs and digital self-efficacy... And others

Some studies show that the effectiveness of mediation strategies (whether restrictive or active) depends on the interaction of several factors, including the digital skills and competence of parents, their beliefs, their use of technology, and some characteristics of the children such as age and digital competence. (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020).

6. Mechanisms for activating parental mediation strategies:

We mentioned earlier that mediation strategies are of great importance in terms of their effectiveness in enabling children to use digital networks in a healthy and safe manner. In addition, to ensure the adoption of the mediation strategy and the establishment of an authoritative parenting style based on digital advice aimed at protecting children from digital risks and instilling in

them proper digital behavior, we propose some measures, the most important of which are:

- **Forming and Building Awareness:**

The family today is first required to be aware of the roles they must play to protect their children from the dangers of digital devices, as lack of awareness of the risks of their misuse may jeopardize their children's safety and mental and physical health... It is tasked with preparing them for the digital world, with all its complexities and the potential for influence that may surpass the parents' ability. But unfortunately, we may find that parents are not sufficiently aware of what children face through their interaction with modern communication tools, and conversely, many children may not understand what they should do and what they should avoid...

To overcome these obstacles, parents must undergo training to acquire digital competence for the optimal implementation of mediation strategies. We believe that the first steps that can be taken in this regard is to raise parents' awareness of the importance of adopting an upbringing that aligns with the existence of virtual worlds parallel to the real world (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). Parents' beliefs and representations about the internet and its various media and virtual communication networks influence their parenting style and the strategy they adopt in the mediation process. This is what the study (Brito, & all, 2017) concluded. That parents' perceptions and attitudes towards technology play a significant role in determining the type of parental mediation that will be adopted when children interact with digital technology. (Wahyuningrum et al., 2020).

Negative perceptions of parents towards digital media, especially those that rely on social interactions within communication platforms, may lead to restricting children's access to them. Conversely, the lack of awareness of the risks that children may face due to insufficient knowledge of protection and digital security methods leads to neglecting their supervision, being lenient with them, and allowing them to use these platforms freely. On their part, Byrne and Livingston (2018) believe that the parents' lack of knowledge about the internet world poses a significant obstacle that prevents them from effectively managing their children's internet usage.

- **Teaching digital skills:**

The control parents have over their children's use of the digital world and the implementation of appropriate mediation strategies is based on an understanding of digital risks and opportunities, as well as digital competencies or skills possessed by the parents that enable them to engage with their children and help them benefit from the services offered by the digital world and its media to its digital citizens.

Researchers believe that parental mediation practices can also be influenced by parents' digital skills. Possessing digital skills may make parents more aware

and cognizant of the opportunities offered by media, leading them to use less restrictive mediation and more active mediation with their children. Additionally, they also engage in two types of mediation specific to internet use: technical mediation and monitoring. (Sciacca et al., 2022, p. 3).

There is no doubt that the lack of awareness is the beginning of the dangers of the virtual world and their magnitude, and how children can become victims of bullying, extortion, cyber violence, and more. Similarly, the lack of knowledge about control and monitoring methods in these realms, along with parents' lack of essential skills to manage technology, creates a digital gap between them and their children, resulting in difficulty in empowering children in the digital space without harming them.

The parents' lack of proficiency in using digital technology compared to their children makes it difficult for them to monitor or guide their children's use of these tools effectively. Although parents have begun to recognize the importance of positive interaction with digital technology and guiding children to use it in a beneficial and safe manner, there is still a significant gap in digital skills between the two generations. This gap leads to challenges in effective communication and explaining the risks and benefits of the internet and its digital media. (Wahyuningrum et al., 2020).

Therefore, teaching digital skills to parents becomes an essential part of reducing the digital divide between parents and children, protecting children from the misuse of digital media, and ensuring its safe use.

Researchers believe that to bridge the digital gap between parents and children, parents must be more competent and aware of the risks related to information and communication technology than their children. (Balakrishnan & Charania, 2023, p. 9). Learning these skills can help in the optimal use of parental mediation strategies, as parents become aware of when to restrict their children's online activities or allow them. Conversely, the lack of technical expertise among some parents may hinder the application of parental mediation strategies, especially given the overwhelming diversity of content available online, which has become particularly concerning for parents.

The lack of digital skills among parents affects their use of mediation strategies, and studies have shown that less skilled parents tend to restrict their children's activities and interactions in the digital environment. As for the more skilled parents, they prefer empowerment, which indicates that empowerment requires higher skills. Parents also restrict internet use when they see their children are less skilled, and grant empowerment whenever they see their children are more competent. (Livingston et al., 2017).

Therefore, training in digital skills by those responsible for family care programs, and providing guidance on safe digital activities, becomes extremely important if we want to ensure openness to digital environments and benefit from what they offer intellectually, culturally, and socially while preserving the

self-identity of children and adolescents.

This can only be achieved by developing educational programs targeting parents, aiming to equip them with digital competence to help their children learn digital skills, be aware of the risks, and solve related problems skillfully, thus protecting them from digital exclusion that could deprive them of learning opportunities available within digital media.

Livingston and Byrne believe that to avoid a vicious cycle of digital marginalization, digital literacy education should be provided for both parents and children. Policies aimed at addressing the digital exclusion of children should work to support their digital skills as well as their parents' digital skills. (Livingston & Byrne, 2018, p. 28).

- **Training on Mediation Strategies:**

Empowering parents with balanced mediation strategies is associated with the effectiveness of training and training programs directed at them. It is essential to equip them with mediation strategies and the mechanism to integrate them, that is, monitoring and participation without imposing excessive restrictions, allowing for active, enabling, and participatory interaction between them and their children on digital platforms.

Studies indicate that active mediation is the most effective in reducing risks. Therefore, it recommends providing training programs that enhance parents' knowledge and understanding of digital risks, and develop their skills and self-confidence in using digital media. (Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2019).

Yet, parents adopt mediation strategies, as we mentioned earlier. It is influenced by parenting styles, and therefore, adopting an authoritative, supportive digital parenting style for children and adolescents is optimal, relying on enabling, active, and participatory mediation strategies...

- **Modeling:**

The acquisition of healthy digital behavior by children depends on the presence of role models that must possess certain qualities in the "ideal" model, such as emotion, model attractiveness, competence in terms of skills in using the internet and safe access to various digital networks, and the skill of confrontation and self-protection of privacy from various violations and risks, which are essential skills for healthy and safe interaction with digital media.

It is important for parents to provide a model of healthy online behavior by demonstrating responsible use, respecting privacy, and setting boundaries for themselves and their children. This not only helps protect personal information but also teaches children the importance of digital etiquette and digital safety. (Livingston & Byrne, 2018, p. 23).

Imitation is not limited to visible behavior; it also includes attitudes and emotions related to technology. And because digital parental models influence children's behavior and digital habits, parents must pay attention to this and strive to demonstrate positive and responsible behavior in their internet use to

provide a safe environment.

Children and adolescents identify with their parents and absorb values and standards through their parents' behavior and attitudes. Therefore, parents must demonstrate appropriate digital behavior to their children by showing responsible and conscious use of technology so that the children can emulate them. Parents can teach their children how to interact with the digital world in an appropriate and safe manner. (Livingston & Byrne, 2018, p. 22).

Based on the above, adopting parental mediation suitable for the demands of the parallel digital world requires numerous measures from educational bodies and intermediaries responsible for raising the child, such as the family, school, educational program designers, media, etc. In this regard, O'Neill (2014) believes that the search for the "magic strategy" in digital parental mediation, which enables the child to use digital media, allows them to make the most of online opportunities while avoiding their risks, is a "shared responsibility" among all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and internet policymakers. These policies must ensure a digital environment that respects children's rights and meets their needs, competencies, and values. (Martínez et al., 2020).

The various programs and digital networks offered by the virtual digital world remain relatively dangerous, so it is important that monitoring and electronic empowerment adhere to cultural privacy and are designed according to the nature and culture of the society, taking into account its values and beliefs, and responding to the updates and developments occurring in the digital world.

This calls for further future research on community-specific factors, including cultural values related to child-rearing and societal perception of risks, which can influence parental mediation. (Livingston et al., 201)

In light of the scarcity of studies that have examined the various variables governing digital parental mediation, it can be said that interpreting these determinants in the digital environment and predicting their impacts on children requires theoretical and empirical analytical studies in light of local social and cultural contexts.

- Conclusion:

The opportunities and risks brought by digital media within their communication networks have forced the family today, as an important mediator in upbringing, to confront its challenges and seize its stakes, through balanced parenting that is inseparable from mediatory strategies to regulate and guide the digital behavior of children and adolescents.

Effective mediation is not just a tool; it is a plan organized in its various integrated methods within an empowering mediatory approach based on dialogue, guidance, and positive participation. This ensures the conscious and responsible use of these platforms, achieving a balance between openness to the virtual world and maintaining the safety and values of children.

Furthermore, if research has identified a mediating position for parental

mediation strategies between parenting styles and children's use of digital media, several variables, the most important of which are parents' digital awareness, competence, and skills, as well as their ability to model appropriate behavior, can determine the effectiveness of implementing these strategies.

There is no doubt that ensuring the positive impact of these determinants on children's interactions on digital platforms can only be achieved by focusing on training families in the field of parental mediation to build awareness, correct perceptions, and representations, as well as training in digital skills and modeling them to impart to children, and also the mediating strategies to protect children and enable them to positively integrate into digital networks and social media.

Based on the above, there is a need for in-depth approaches and studies that explore the various interactions between parenting styles and forms of digital mediation, as well as other variables that govern this relationship, especially in Arab contexts that still lack comprehensive explanatory models of parental mediation in light of local cultural and social peculiarities. One of the most prominent challenges that parenting will face in the near future is the mediation strategies suitable for the era of artificial intelligence and its various applications and programs, along with other challenges that will arise from the astonishing advancement of technology. This requires responding to change by keeping pace with it and adopting a development approach at the level of guidance and training programs for parents to enhance their awareness and digital competence, ensuring safe integration for children in virtual environments.

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