

Parental Perspective on Censorship in a New Media World

Samantha Moore

Measurement and Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine if parental mediation and censorship within new media seem to have an impact on adolescent behavior. Data was obtained through a survey of parents or guardians with at least one child between the ages of 8 to 15 years of age.

According to the findings, parents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements within the parental mediation scale, Within the behavior scale, parents either agreed or felt neutral about the statements provided. Overall, it was found that parental mediation and censorship within new media did not impact children's behavior.

Keywords: Parental mediation, censorship, social media, new media

As the years drift by, technology continues to progress. Children of all ages are being introduced to various new media trends by parents, friends, and family. The new media forms can include, TikTok, youtube, social media, as well as, many other easily accessible applications on their technology devices. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of parental mediation and censorship on children within the new media environment. The study will examine parents' perspectives on their personal mediation techniques and the amount of censorship they partake in within new media. In order to protect their children from being exposed to various forms of crude content such as, nudity, vulgar language, and violence. The study will also determine if the parents believe the media is playing a role in their child's behavior.

Literature Review

Parental Mediation

Over the past decade advancements in technology have made it possible for children to have access to most forms of entertainment at the palm of their hands. This can include social media, television, books, educational applications, as well as many others. Due to the potential harm that can be found on the devices, parents are provided ways to mediate children's media use and develop their own parental mediation strategies. In a study conducted by Lee (2012) he refers to parental mediation as, “...a parent’s interaction with children regarding their media use” (p.468). In previous research it was found that children were less frequently exposed to online risks such as content-related risks, privacy risks, and contact risks if parents practiced restrictive mediation strategies often (Lee, 2012). Many factors play into what kinds of mediation should be used. In an article by Seo and Lee (2017) they explain that parental attitudes toward media use,

cultural context, religious beliefs, the age of the children, and the type of media influence parents' decision on how they mediate their children's media exposure.

Online platforms and technology devices often provide parents the opportunity to implement parental controls on children's applications (apps), games, and streaming services such as, Hulu, Netflix, and Amazon Movies.

Parents also develop their own ways to mediate children's technology use. In a study conducted by Bartau-Rojas et al. (2018), they explain that parents used various forms of mediation to control their children's technology use. This included, establishment and application norms (delaying purchase of a cell phone), organizing time and space for internet use (implement time restrictions on children's touch screen devices), and supervision (monitor children's social media). The researchers also found ways parents can support children's internet activities. This includes communication (establishing a bond of trust and showing interest in how children's use the internet), teaching (teach, explain, or advise on internet use), modeling (instruct by example) lastly, stimulation/encouragement (incentive for self-regulation).

Behavior and Attitude

As children begin to rely on technology and media more for education and entertainment purposes it's hard not to wonder whether or not children's behavior and attitudes are impacted by what they're exposed to on social media and touch screens devices. Bartau-Rojas et al. (2018) found that parents believe there are both positive and negative effects of children's media use. The study found that one of parents' primary concerns is the inappropriate content that children can be exposed to on the internet such as violent, pornographic, stereotypical, and drug-related content. Parents also noted concern for inappropriate time and place that children use their devices. One parent within the study mentioned that she noticed children using their devices

during Christmas day. A third concern covered the negative consequences of social difficulties. Parents found that children face communication issues. For example, misunderstandings, problems relating to others, loss of one-on-one/ face-to-face communication, lack of conversation. It was also found that academic performance decreased. Although the research found various negative aspects of children's digital use they also examined positive outcomes. This includes digital competence, self-management, social integration, critical attitude, responsibility, mental development, and spatial orientation.

Not only do children endure positive and negative mental stimulation from media and digital use but they can also face physical changes. Attavar and Rani (2018) conducted a study to assess parental views on how children under 10 years of age access and use digital devices. Within the study they mention some potential negative health effects of excessive digital use that includes obesity, sedentary behavior, poor dietary habits, and poor sleep.

R1: Does parental mediation and censorship within new media play a role in parental beliefs and whether or not it has an impact on adolescent behavior?

H1: Parental perception of new media and its overall effect on children will be positively related to parental mediation and censorship.

Method

Sample. An online Qualtrics survey was distributed via online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, email, as well as some text messages. The participants were attained by the use of a volunteer and convenience sample. The survey was presented to adults who were 18 years or older, with at least one child between the ages of 8-15 years old. There was no specific

age range for participants. All genders and ethnicities were welcome to participate. A total of 30 parents participated in the study. An incentive was not offered to those who chose to participate.

The resulting sample was quite broad in regards to age, ($M = 38.84$, $SD = 7.8$) household income (under \$20,000 = 3%, \$20,000-39,999 = 9%, \$40,000-59,999 = 6%, \$60,000-79,999 = 16%, \$80,000-99,999 = 3%, \$100,000 or more = 6%), and race (Caucasian = 75%, African American = 16%, Asian or Pacific Islander = 3%, Other = 3%). The majority of the participants identified as female ($N = 29$); males were underrepresented ($N = 2$). Participants were asked to identify how many children they had between the ages of 8-15. (1 = 41%, 2 = 25%, 3 = 6%) they were also asked their children's gender and exact age. Out of the total children noted between the ages of 15-8; 15 years of age ($N = 4$), 14 years ($N = 4$), 13 years ($N = 6$), 12 years ($N = 5$), 11 years ($N = 4$), 10 years ($N = 6$), 9 years ($N = 9$), 8 years ($N = 9$). Children's gender was quite close in numbers. Based on parents' responses there were a couple more female children ($N = 23$). Compared to male children were only a few numbers off ($N = 19$).

Procedure. The first page of the survey included a consent form that all participants had to read and agree to prior to beginning the survey. Included on the consent form was the confirmation of agreement confirming that the participant was 18 years or older and whether or not they had at least one child between the age of 8-15. If they chose yes, they could move onto completing the full survey. The second page included various demographic questions including age, gender, household income, and race.

Parental Mediation. Seo and Lee (2017) developed a measure for interviews they conducted in previous research. The measure included questions pertaining to parental attitudes, restrictions, and perspectives on their children's use of touch screen devices. Branching off of their research, a likert scale was developed to examine what parents do to monitor or control

their children's social media use. A five item likert scale was developed on a scale of strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) that included six statements to describe a parent/guardians control of their children's exposure to social media. Initially, the scale included seven items. A correlation was run resulting in ($\alpha = -.280$). Due to a negative alpha result, researchers reviewed statements and were able to determine a statement within the scale that was not reliable. The statement, "My children understand the risks of social media use" was removed and the correlation was re-ran to retrieve a new sufficient result. Overall, it was found that the scale was not reliable ($\alpha = .375$, $M = 1.96$, $SD = .643$)

Behavior. In a study conducted by Lee (2013), he used a likert scale to determine parental perception of the negative influence of internet use. Parents were asked how much they agree/disagree with seven items that describe potential negative influences of the internet/social media on their children. strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). The negative influences included overall impact on children's behavior, exposure to pornographic content, exposure to violent content, negative influences on academic performance, overall amount of censorship, health problems and interpersonal relationships. The specific scale originally included 8 statements. The scale was not reliable ($\alpha = .60$, $M = 2.96$, $SD = .603$). During the analysis process it was determined that the first two statements, "My children spend too much time on social media" and "Content found on social media impact my children's behavior" were not viable due to the negative wording of the statements in comparison to the positively formatted statements such as, "Too much nudity/porographic content can be seen on social media". The negative statements were deleted and responses were removed.

Analysis. After collecting the data each scale was evaluated individually. The first portion of the data focused on the demographic of the participants. The demographic data was

turned into percentages in order to evaluate and compare gender, age, household income, race, and children's age and gender. The second portion of the survey included a likert scale that was developed to measure parental mediation strategies and how strongly they're implemented. With the data collected, a correlation was run and a mean number ($M = 1.96$) was developed to determine the average number that was selected on a (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree scale. The mean helped to determine whether or not the participants agreed, disagreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements. The second likert scale was developed to determine the potential impacts of social media on children's behavior. The researchers ran another correlation to determine a mean for the second scale (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree ($M = 2.96$). Lastly, the final question was to determine what other pros and cons parents notice in regards to their children's new media exposure. The participants' feedback was not included in the data. Researchers were looking for parents input to be used towards future research.

Results

The hypothesis anticipated parental perception of new media and its overall effect on children will be positively related to parental mediation and censorship. A correlation between parental mediation and children's behavior was found to be low, negative, and insignificant ($r = -.18, p = .41$). Based on the data collect, at this time the hypothesis is rejected.

The study examined parental meditation and censorship within new media and whether or not parents believed it had an impact on adolescent behavior. The parental mediation scale found that ($M = 1.96, SD = .643$) this means that out of the participants ($N = 25$) most of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the parental mediation strategies within the statements in the scale. Scale two provided statements to determine if parents believed that their children's behavior was impacted by social media. ($M = 2.96$) the mean determined that the

participants ($N = 26$) either agreed or felt neutral that their children's behavior was impacted by social media. Overall, the data found that parental mediation and censorship do not play a role within the new media environment and parents beliefs of its potential effect on children.

Discussion

Data was collected to examine parental mediation and censorship within new media and whether or not parents believed it had an impact on adolescent behavior. It was found that parental mediation and parental beliefs and its impact on children behavior were not significantly correlated. In previous research, technology use and its overall effect on children were positively related. Attavar and Rani (2018) conducted a study to assess parental views on how children under 10 years of age access and use digital devices. Within the study they mention some potential negative health effects of excessive digital use that includes obesity, sedentary behavior, poor dietary habits, and poor sleep. Lee (2012) conducted a study in order to identify predictors of parental restrictive mediation and to examine the effects of restrictive mediation on children's internet use. He developed a 5-point scale to measure parental perception of the negative influence of internet use. The negative influences included, exposure to pornographic content, exposure to violent content, negative influences on academic performance, health problems, and interpersonal relationship problems. Within the present research, the researchers developed a very similar scale. The scale included the same negative influences seven items and was a 5 point likert scale. The previous findings were ($M = 3.95, SD = .58$). The current research found ($M = 2.96, SD = .603$). The previous research found that participants either agreed or felt neutral about the statements. Within the present study, participants also felt neutral or agreed with the statements on the scale. The parental mediation scale was developed to measure the parental

mediation strategies used to mediate children's media intake. That scale found that participants used strategies to restrict children access to various content on media devices.

Limitations. One of the limitations of the study was the unreliable scales developed. Had the scales been further developed more they may have developed better results. In order to develop better scales researchers could've created better statements within the scales. A total of three statements were eliminated at the time of analysis. Two were negatively worded while the rest in the scale were positive, the other one that was removed was not a viable statement. In other words, it didn't accompany the rest of the statements well. Some of the limitations with the study could've had to do with the lack of participants. Initially the survey had 30 participants some of which were removed due to lack of responses from the participants or they had no children of their own within the age range . The study should've had about 120 participants in total. One of the benefits of the research was that we were able to get parents input on future research.

Directions for future research. In order to better understand the research, when the research is conducted again researchers should have a larger sample. They should also better develop the statements in the scales in order to get more data. At the end of the survey parents were asked what are some other pros and cons of children's new media exposure that weren't mentioned within the survey. Nine parents provided really great feedback. Including, children are losing social skills and have easy access to bullies, becoming obsessed with social media, children are maturing too quickly, social media can help them to not feel alone, gives them a false sense of reality and no religion, technology is important because they're growing up in a technology world. These pros and cons provide future researchers with other characteristics they can think about for their scales or just future research as a whole.

Conclusion

The study examined parental mediation and censorship within new media and whether or not parents believed it had an impact on adolescent behavior. Although the hypothesis was rejected researchers were able to better understand how to better the research in the future. We were also able to determine what parents are concerned about within the new media environment.

Appendix A**Consent Form****What is your annual household income?**

- a. Multiple choice
 - i. Under \$20,000
 - ii. \$20,000-\$39,999
 - iii. \$40,000-\$59,999
 - iv. \$60,000-\$79,999
 - v. \$80,000-\$99,999
 - vi. \$100,000 or more

What is your gender?

- b. Multiple choice
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
 - iii. Non-binary / third gender
 - iv. Prefer not to say
 - v. Other (open ended response option)

How old are you?

- c. Open ended response/fill in

What is your race?

- d. Multiple choice
 - i. White / Caucasian
 - ii. African American
 - iii. Asian or Pacific Islander
 - iv. Middle Eastern / Arab
 - v. Native American / American Indian
 - vi. Hispanic/Latino
 - vii. Other

How many children do you have between the ages of 8-15?

- e. Open ended response

What is your children's age and gender?

(Only include those that are between the ages of 8-15)

- f. Open ended question/fill in response

How many hours on average do your children spend on social media weekly?

- g. Multiple Choice

- i. 1-2
- ii. 3-4
- iii. 5-6
- iv. 7-8
- v. 9-10
- vi. 11 or more

*What do you do to monitor or control your children's social media use?

Respond to each of the following on a scale of "strong agree to strongly disagree"

Likert scale: strongly agree = 1; somewhat agree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; somewhat disagree = 4; strongly disagree = 5.

I limit the amount of social media use my children have access to

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

I have restriction codes on media devices to prevent my children access to explicit content

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

I know my children's social media passwords

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

I encourage my children to get involved in activities that don't involve media devices

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

I have designated times in which the household is "unplugged" and my children don't have access to new media

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

*We are looking for insight into parental attitudes and opinions on their children's social media intake and behavior. Respond to each of the following on a scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Likert scale: strongly agree = 1; somewhat agree = 2; neither agree nor disagree = 3; somewhat disagree = 4; strongly disagree = 5.

Too much nudity/pornographic content can be seen on social media

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

There is too much censorship on social media.

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

There is too much violent content on media platforms.

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Social media doesn't impact my children's behavior.

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Content found on social media isn't harmful to my children's mental health.

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Social media won't influence my children's interpersonal relationships.

1. Strongly agree 2. Somewhat agree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

What are some other pros and cons of children's new media exposure that weren't mentioned within the survey?

Open ended question

(This question is intended for the discussion and recommendations for future research)

Appendix B

Measurement 1

Parental restrictive mediation of children's internet use: Effective for what and for whom?

Parents were asked to respond to nine items on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to five (always). The items included time restriction, restricting access to content, restricting disclosure of personal information, limiting membership registration, prohibiting online shopping, and installation of filtering software. A composite scale of restricting mediation was constructed by averaging the scores of the above nine items.

Child's gender. Boys were coded as '0' and girls as '1'.

Child's age. Children's ages were measured according to social age, i.e. school year. The grades ranged from 1 (fourth grade) to 6 (ninth grade).

Child's low self-control. Low self-control was measured according to the following six components: impulsiveness, simple tasks, risk seeking, physical activities (i.e. dislike of cognitive activities), self-centeredness and temper. Both parents and children were asked to evaluate these six items on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A parent's report of a child's low self-control was used as a predictor of parental restrictive mediation, and a child's report was used as a predictor of time spent online, exposure to online risk and addictive internet use.

Parental perception of the negative influence of internet use. Parents were asked how well they agreed with the five items describing possible negative influences of the internet on their child (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Parental internet skills. Parents were asked to rate their ability for the following ten online activities: finding the information they needed online, exchanging emails, managing a blog or a personal homepage, playing online games, uploading documents, selecting useful information, evaluating online information, searching for news, involving themselves in activities of an online community, and doing online shopping on a scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good) Child's online time. The children were asked to report the average time in minutes spent online per day on weekdays and during the weekend.

Child's exposure to online risks. A composite scale recorded the number of risks encountered (ranging from 0–8). The risks included exposure to pornographic content accidentally, exposure to violent content, giving out personal information, and giving out information about parents. The risks also included contact risks such as online communication with strangers and face-to-face communication with someone first encountered online.

Child's addictive internet use. Addictive internet use was measured by Young's internet addiction scale (1999). The items included 'I use the Internet to escape from depressed or anxious moods', 'I feel more excited when online than when doing offline activities', 'I have made unsuccessful attempts to control my internet use', 'I spend more time online than I intend to', 'I feel restless, moody, depressed, or irritable when attempting to stop internet use', 'I am unable to reduce the amount of time I spend online and the time is actually increasing', 'I feel my academic performance is jeopardized because of internet use', and 'I experience conflicts with family members because of internet use'. Children were asked to rate their agreement with these eight statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

(p. 472-474)

Measurement 2

Emotion Matters: What Happens Between Young Children and Parents in a Touchscreen World

The examiners used a semi structured interview guide. The interview questions covered three key areas:

- 1 - parental attitudes toward their children's use of touch screen devices.
- 2 - parental mediation of their children's use of touchscreen devices.
- 3 - parental emotions regarding their children's touchscreen use and its impacts.

They also established three key points for the observation:

- 1 - the moments when parents gave touchscreen devices to their children and its effects.
- 2 - children's actual use of touch screen devices and the interaction between parents and children.
- 3 - the differences between fathers and mothers in care and control of the children.

(p. 566)

Measurement 3

How Children Under 10-years Access and Use Digital Devices at Home and What Parents Feel About It: Insights from India.

Following Braun & Clarke's guidelines, six themes were initially identified. However, in order to keep the themes inline with the research questions, the themes were further refined. In the end, the following themes were identified:

1. The nature of access and use of digital devices by young children
 2. Parents' attitudes towards digital technologies
 3. Parents' actions to manage and monitor children's digital devices use
- (p. 6)

Measurement 4

Parental mediation of the Internet use of Primary students: Beliefs, strategies and difficulties.

The researchers used a discussion technique to collect data. The questions posed to parents were:

- 1) What positive and negative aspects do you believe consumption of media has at these ages?
- 2) How do you act about your children's consumption of media?
- 3) What do you believe are the main difficulties?

(p. 73)

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