

ANALYZING USAGE OF MEDIA DEVICES AND PARENTAL MEDIATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN OF ISLAMABADRehana Munawar¹, Sana Zainab², Aatif Iftikhar³**Original Article**

1. Lecturer Department of Media and Communication Studies, National University of Modern Languages. Email: rmunawar@numl.edu.pk
2. Lecturer, Department of Media and Communication Studies National University of Modern Languages. Email: sanazainab@numl.edu.pk
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communication Studies, National University of Modern Languages. Email: atifikhar@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

This study aims to examine the exposure and use of media devices in children, their usage patterns while reviewing parental mediation as well. This study is particularly focused on children studying in high school who may need media devices as a support for educational purposes as well as for leisure activities. It explores the way parental mediation take place along with the children media usage. Since the use of media devices is drastically increased among children in recent times, it's significant to assess the parent-child utilization of media. Therefore, this study suggests to devise a framework in the form of media literacy to enhance productivity of media devices for both children and their parents. This research has used quantitative method and conducted a survey for data collection from secondary school students based in Islamabad, Pakistan. The findings help to identify the child parent mediation pattern and also highlights the stake of media devices in children's routine activities.

Keywords: Children empowerment, child-parent mediation, media literacy, Media devices, Mediation strategies, protectionist, approach

Introduction

The extreme usage of media in the lives of today's families is an undeniable fact. Due to rapid change and development in communication technology there is an increased usage of media devices among people particularly children. A mobile phone or tablet with internet connection allows children to watch videos throughout the home or outside their homes. For interpersonal communication purposes, parents encourage children to use digital media as a means to study and communicate with their classmates such as Whatsapp. Children are still interacting with these devices even without internet connection, by watching saved videos, photos, and playing app-based games. Research shows that children, regardless of their family's socio-economic status, have access to multiple digital devices.

The rapid growth of technology has paved the way for new ICTs over the last few decades. The increasing accessibility of consumer digital devices has seen a rise in digital media use among children (Ofcom, 2014; Rideout & Gray, 2013). No matter if it's informing, entertaining or connecting

people, facilitating collaborations or helping them mediate in new mediated spaces or merging conventional media in newly mediated platforms, it has a significant impact on individuals in multiple ways (Blanchard & Moore, 2010). Due to COVID-19 that proved to be a blessing in disguise for many to integrate in the mediated sphere, the formal schooling has experienced a fast forward upgrade to digital space but still brought its own challenges too. The way COVID-19 and new ICT have revolutionized the whole life style parental mediation is something that is not only changing the ways of child care but also parent-child interaction too. While referring to the school age children and their parents, contemporary times brought up new opportunities and challenges for them. During Covid-19 pandemic the traditional classrooms are switched to online platforms. Not only education, even social and leisure activities of children are also blended into mediated space. In order to identify the parental mediation, it's important to know that in what way, where, why and how parent-child interaction is influenced by media engagement.

It could be split into two groups when it comes to school age child-parent interaction and media, media for formal schooling and media for leisure activities. For the earlier, the whole education system in Pakistan wasn't relying on media in anyway rather only few institutions were using media in classrooms until COVID-19 forced physical classrooms to closure and the whole system had to be upgraded. School age children have to use mediated platforms to carry out their formal education and parents have to assist them (Demuyakor, 2020). Secondly, when children are forced to stay at home, their leisure activities are also limited to media like gaming, socializing with friends, watching, reading, even producing media content and much more. While spending most of the time at home, they are under their parent's supervision too. Here comes the question of their parent's media literacy where they themselves can critically assess their child's media activities and how it's affecting themselves while mediating in new spaces whether it's for children's schooling or leisure activities.

Literature Review

In recent years, research regarding parental mediation has expanded due to the increasing interest and concerns related to the media exposure and its usage among children. The previous literature has a bulk of research available related to parent-child interaction in the context of media use (Clark, 2011; Mertens & d'Haenans, 2014; Holloway, Green & Love, 2014). Regarding parental mediation of the internet, Livingstone and Helsper (2008) found four types of mediation strategies adopted by parents. The first type is 'active co-use' which conceptualizes elements of active, restrictive mediation, and joint monitoring into one. The second type is 'interaction restrictions' which involves limiting children activities that make them involve to come in contact with people online. The third strategy is 'technical restrictions' that refers to the use of filtering and monitoring software. The last type of mediation is 'monitoring' which refers to parents themselves involved and checking the online activities and messages of their children. Likewise, Nikken and Jansz (2014) identified five similar strategies: shared use, active mediation, restrictive mediation, supervision, and a strategy based on the use of filtering technology or application. It is interesting to note that despite legitimate assumptions, parent education has little to do with mediation strategies (Livingstone et al., 2017). According to Livingstone and Bryne (2018), parents' insufficient knowledge and understanding of the digital world prevents them from successfully checking their children's internet use. A recent research found that advanced media proficiency is positively associated with restrictive and technical mediation (Nikken & Oprea, 2018).

Media has been transformed over the time not only itself but its uses and audience lives too. The uses and impact of media in children has been studied in wide perspective throughout the 19th

century in each of the mediums whether television, cinema or broadcasting. The studies also emphasized on the public concerns on mediated surroundings for young audiences (Wartella & Reeves, 1985). In order to study the mediated spaces and their role in children's lives, historical, sociological and psychological frameworks have been used. Here, media is not just referred to as visual or broadcast media but also includes games, print media as well as the overall popular culture (Messenger Davies, 2010). As the evolution of media is still ongoing and the same applies to the navigation into media spaces. While referring to the scholarship in the particular domain of parental mediation into media spheres, the academia has been working on both positive, negative sides. Although the media has offered much more to enhance creativity, imagination and multi-modal literary activities, but the more exposure to media also amplifies the interaction with advertisements, violence, concentration span, health issues, stereotypical behaviours and relevant addictions. That makes it a concern for both parents and society (Calvert, 2015).

According to Livingstone (1999), the learning process is not just confined to conventional set up rather it's more effective in unconventional settings. It indicates that while having online media platforms where children have access to their study material, having multiple sources and information in various formats engage them in a learning process that goes beyond the course requirement, sparks interest and creativity to learn and express in diverse ways. Not only for educational purposes, rather students have been using media for entertainment too, including video games, listening music, watching movies and so on (Lai, Khaddage, & Knezek, 2013). Having access to mediated spaces where one comes across new media content while keeping learning to navigate through a variety of media messages and ways to process them. So, the transition started before COVID-19 as it's found that both conventional and non-conventional modes of education are boosted because of technology in a revolutionary way (Czerkawski, 2016).

Generally, family is referred to as a primary social unit that has a significant role in child development and leaves a lifelong impact. In any family, parent-child relation sets the foundation for life long bonding where parents not only provide the basic needs rather learn many things for the first time for their child's upbringing and well-being. That contains social, economic, psychological and technological experiences & experiments for all the family members including parents, children and siblings (Ongider, 2013). As the pandemic has affected everyday life on a global level. During COVID-19, it is often assumed that parents and children around the world got more time to spend together. But it has also added more responsibilities for parents to look after the children round the clock and handle other jobs too (Uzun, Karace & Metin, 2021). The ongoing pandemic is not just a health emergency rather it's affecting almost all spheres of life. The international community has always been concerned about educating the masses but during pandemic, education also faced an emergency. So, scholarship in this domain is active not only to smoothen the ongoing crisis rather to acquire sustainability in future too (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020).

Parents having more than one child have to assist each child separately based on their age groups, nature, grade, school requirements. The parental mediation along with children become essential for numerous reasons as to teach as well as to keep an eye on their mediated lives (Collier, 2015). During the pandemic, parental mediation has risen as a new normal worldwide though not a smooth process. Both developing and developed countries are already challenged by a literary and digital divide (West, 2015). COVID-19 has made it compulsory for most of the parents to navigate into the mediated world to ensure the education and other engagements of their children through media. Not only parents but most of the teachers had to step into mediated spheres forcefully to carry on their educational activities (Moorhouse, 2020). It has been also found that intensive use of technological

gadgets and multiple soft wares without parental mediation led it to the dissatisfaction of parents (Lau & Lee, 2021).

In developing countries like Pakistan, not everyone has access to resources, educational institutions or digital space and then, the masses having access also experience inequalities within those accessible resources (Pasha, 2018). Along with new media, the Pakistani government also launched tele-schooling for K-12 to facilitate people not having access to the internet, computers and smartphones (Noor, Isa & Mazhar, 2020). So, children have been using both new media and conventional media for their educational activities. At the same time, the lockdown led to the shutting down the sports clubs and recreational places too. The COVID-19 has limited the people within their home, work from home, classes from home becomes new norms. Somehow a wider number of populations has become part of this abrupt digitalized era. Parents who use to be engaged in household or professional activities are there with their kids (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2021). Children who were using media in limited settings prior to COVID-19, also have to switch to media for both their formal schooling and leisure (UNESCO, 2020). But are they fully equipped to embrace this intensive exposure to media? When it comes to Pakistan, digitalization has been on agenda but practically, it has some limitations too. In such a scenario, many of the parents who had pretty fair exposure to conventional media, have to mediate in digital space along with their children. There are many grey areas as how much exposure to media is appropriate for different age groups of children, how parents can assist them to smoothly navigate in media, if some parental controls are required or desired, how do parents advocate the significance of productive media use while addressing the challenges and to make it sense for the minors as well (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

Child-parent interaction is changed in this whole scenario. Parental mediation is categorized in two parts by Dedkova and Smahel (2020), active where they join their kids, share and get engaged whether its educational or recreational and monitoring where they act as surveillance devices to control and keep check. Sassan and Mesch (2019) has described parental mediation as child-parent interactions with media which could be further divided into three categories: activation mediation, restrictive mediation co-viewing mediation. Throughout the ongoing pandemic, mostly parents have to join and assist the children. For both active or monitoring purposes, parents themselves need to mediate too, learn, explore and examine media messages, tools and devices, their uses and functionality both in terms of technicalities and content. Excessive media exposure during COVID-19 brought serious concerns for parents and their mediated activities with children where mediation rules, parental mediation strategies and restrictions give rise to chances of disagreement as well (Martins, Mares & Nathanson, 2019). In the last few years, scholarship has been active on devising a scale to measure parental mediation and also to consider the strategies parents adopt in this parental endeavour (Nikken & Jansz, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Around the mid 20th century, media education has been advocated through a protectionist approach. During the whole decade of 1960-1970, a significant impact had been generated by scholars like Lev Vygotsky (1964), Postman and Weingartner (1969), and Freire (2009). Overall, the development of media education was directed to the democratization of education models and practices. This movement has been supported by well-known scholars like Freire (1970, 2000), Postman and Weingartner (1969), Vygotsky (1964), and Buckingham (1998). Inspired by scholars like Freire (2009), Postman and Weingartner (1969), and Vygotsky (1964), and Buckingham (1998), Hobbs and Jensen (2009) emphasized that media education is a step towards democratization of education. That paves the way to having all being themselves within the learning process instead of spoon-feeding and

getting guided responses. Len Masterman could be named as the most significant contributor in the earlier media educationists who wished to shift from a protectionist model to a democratic one for education (Buckingham, 1998).

The essence of media literacy itself is more inclined to the constructivist model of learning. Media education requires certain conditions to grow that include non-conventional teaching practices that boost critical thinking among the learners while letting them active, democratic, practical, and interactive activities (Masterman, 1985). The scholars who have been asking for a paradigm shift in pedagogical practices include Buckingham (2003) who highlights the shift from protectionist model to constructing purpose. The overall media industry is more diverse than ever before and studies show that the media users are no more passive than they used to be a few years back.

Normally, the media users are observed to be more “active and selective” in both media usage and interpreting media content (Jensen & Rosengren, 1990). In the same way, an active audience, learner, user is the base of constructivist learning theory that supports this study. As it discusses that children are not passive at all, to develop critical skills to comprehend media content by incorporating constructivist learning practices. Ertmer and Newby (1993) argued that students are not just active processors of data in constructivism rather they are active in producing, interpreting, and meaning-making media content. Jonassen (1991) highlights that we create our realities by our own minds, so both audience and learners are observed as meaning makers. Duffy and Jonassen (2013) explained that the rapid growth of information technology along with the more accessibility of new platforms offered by technology encourages scholars to re-consider constructivism. That’s how the information era and scientific development re-construct new teaching tools and techniques. Not only the data is rapidly getting updated, rather it’s more accessible than ever before. So, the main purpose of education should not be storing content but being able to comprehend and utilize the information to find solutions for real-life challenges. The conceptualization and real-life applicability make media literacy a must consideration in recent times.

According to Lattuca (2005), the constructivism learning theory is raising learners and to produce new knowledge from whatever already exists. The accessibility to media platforms and devices has contributed to students’ learning experience while giving them multimodal learning opportunities where they can analyse data themselves. Tyner (2010) elaborated that existing information and experiences are incorporated to understand media messages in constructivist media literacy.

Research Questions

The present study in the light of previous literature aims to answer regarding media usage patterns of school going children in Islamabad and parental involvement and knowledge among secondary school going children from Grade 6 to 8.

RQ1. What are the digital media practices of school children aged 13-16 years in Islamabad, Pakistan, and what do they think of them?

RQ2. What mediation strategies do Pakistani parents use with children aged 13–16years concerning media use?

Research Methodology

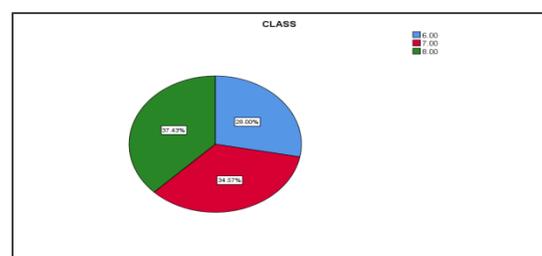
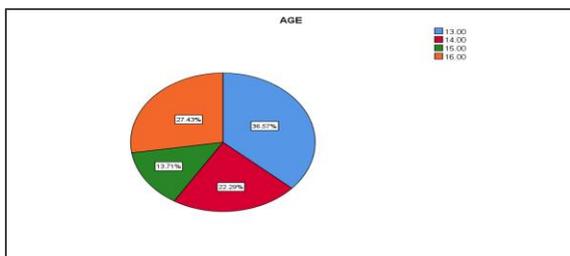
This study has used Quantitative research approach. For this research three secondary schools were selected from Islamabad. Then at each selected school one class from each grade (grades 6 to 8) between the age group of 13 to 16 years were selected through simple random sampling. The

students were given the survey questionnaire to complete at school with the prior permission taken from the principals and return within the class timings. Both the student and a parent signed the informed consent form for the survey. In the survey questions were designed to determine the availability and media using habits of students. The first part of the survey questionnaire is the "demographic information" where respondents are asked questions related to age, gender, and grade that were included in this section. Respondents are asked about the frequency and duration of use of different types of electronic media on daily basis. The responses were kept anonymous so it was not possible to identify the results for individual students.

Respondents were also asked about the number of electronic media in the household, including televisions, VCD/DVD players, computers, laptops, i-pads and game consoles. A separate set of questions asked about the availability of portable devices including mobile phones, CD players, MP3 players, laptops, tablets, internet connectable devices, and handheld game consoles. Finally respondents indicated which devices were available in their bedrooms. Questions about use of phones covered the time spent talking on landlines and mobile phones, and the frequency of using mobile phones for text messaging, taking photos, recording videos, listening to music, connecting to the internet, playing games, watching television, watching movies, and using social networking services. Furthermore, respondents were asked how often their parents enforced rules about their media usage activities at home. Children were asked questions related to their parents' discussion with their children related to media content or whatever activity or content their children are exposed to.

Data Analysis

This study gathered data from 350 respondents out of which gender division includes 106 (30.29%) females and 244 (69.71%) males. Respondents of this study were taken from grade 6, 7 and 8 out of which 98(28%), 121 (34%) and 131(37%) belonged to the grade 6, 7 and 8 respectively. The respondent's age was 13, 14, 15 and 16 years and their respective frequency and percentage was 128(36.6%), 78(22.3%), 48(13.7%) and 96(27.4%).



Devices at Home

In response to electronic devices at home respondents' answers have been noted and analysed separately for every device. Like about Home TV only 30(8.6%) respondentssaid that they do not have a TV at home whereas 320(91.4%) respondents have a TV at home. In response to home computers 65(18.6%) opted no whereas 285(82.4%) have a computer at home. 68(19.4%) do not have a laptop at home whereas 282(80.6%) have one. Interesting IPAD holders are slightly lesser as compared to earlier mentioned electronic devices as 206(58.9%) have IPAD at home whereas 144(41.1%) do not have any and similar kinds of stats have been reported for Tablet. Only 43(12.3%) do not have a mobile phone whereas 307(87.7%) have a mobile phone at home. 151(43.1%) do not

have a game console whereas 199 (56.9%) have a game console. 202(57.7%) students have a DVD player and 148(42.3%) do not have any.

Devices in Bedroom

192(54.9%) do not have a TV in bedrooms whereas 158(45.1%) have one. 248(70.9%) do not have a computer and 102(29.1%) have one in the bedroom. In response to a laptop in the bedroom 227(64.9%) do not have a laptop in the bedroom whereas 123(35.1%) have. Out of 350 respondents 262(74.9%) do not have laptops in bedrooms whereas only 88(25.1%) have. 241(68.9%) have a tablet whereas 109(31.1%) do not have a tablet in the bedroom. Compared to earlier mentioned devices more people have/use mobile phones in bedrooms as 204(58.3%) and 146(41.7%) respectively have and do not have mobile phones in bedrooms. A lot of respondents do not have Game Consoles in bedrooms as 255(72.9%) do not have and only 95(27.1%) have. 125(35.7%) do not have internet in bedrooms whereas 225(64.3%) have. A large number of respondents 262(74.9%) do not have a DVD player and 88(25.1%) have it in the bedroom.

Birthday Preference

Only 53(15.1%) do not consider a mobile phone as a birthday gift preference whereas 297(84.9%) do. Similarly, more students 257(73.4%) prefer a Game Console as a gift and only 93(26.6%) do not. 115(32.9%) do not consider IPAD a preference whereas 235(67.1%) want it a birthday gift. Clothes preference remains almost equal as 179(51.1%) are those who do not opt as a birthday gift whereas 171(48.9%) prefer clothes as birthday present. More students 199(56.9%) did not prefer and less student 151(43.1%) opted for books as birthday gifts. 200(57.1%) selected Tablet as a birthday gift and 150(42.9%) did not. 197(56.3%) did not opt for toys whereas 153(43.7%) did. 109(31.1%), 89 (25.4%), did not prefer Laptops and computers as gifts respectively whereas 241(68.9%) and 261(74.6%) did.

Watching TV

Out of 350 respondents only 68(19.4%) do not watch TV only on a daily basis whereas 282(80.6%) did. Answering time duration of TV watching per day the percentage for 2, 3, 4 and 5 hours is 22.3%, 26%, 31.1% and 20.6% respectively. Out of 350 students 102(29.1%), 177(50.6%), 45(12.9%) and 26(7.4%) watch drama, movie, cartoon and game show respectively. 257(73.4%) watch advertisements on TV and 93(26.6%) do not watch. 111(31.7%), 112(32%) and 108(30.9%) do not insist parents to buy advertised products, get impressed by billboards and watch ads on internet whereas 239(68.3), 238(68%) and 242(69.1%) do it respectively.

Computer

From 350 students 116(33.1%), 122(34.9%), 74(21.1%) and 79(22.6%) do not use personal computer, own laptop, play games on computer, use laptop for homework whereas 234(66.9%), 228(65.1%), 276(78.9%) and 271(77.4%) do it respectively. Students use laptops 82(23.4%), 106(30.3%), 125(35.7%) and 37(10.6%) for 2, 3, 4 and 5 hours respectively. 167(47.7%), 112(32%), 43(12.3%) and 28(8%) students use laptops for gaming, information, downloading videos and doing homework.

Mobile Phones

105(30%), 62(17.7%), 84(24%), 87(24.9%), 222(63.4%), 227(64.9%), 189(54%), 79(22.6%) and 69(19.7%) do not (have mobile or use internet, play games, use Facebook, having a Facebook account, have personal YouTube channel, use WhatsApp for chatting and use WhatsApp for studying) whereas 245(70%), 288(82.3%), 266(76%), 263(75.1%), 128(36.6%), 123(64.9%),

161(46%), 271(77.4%) and 281(80.3%) have it or use it respectively. Out of the 350 students 84(24%), 101(28.9%), 127(36.3%) and 38(10.9%) use mobile phone for 2, 3, 4 and 5 hours respectively.

Game Console

From 350 students only 86(24.6%) and 105(30%) do not play or copy actions of games at home whereas 264(75.4%) and 254(70%) do it respectively. 79(22.6%), 90(25.7%), 128(36.6%) and 53(15.1%) students play games for 2, 3, 4 and 5 hours respectively. 222(63.4%), 106(30.3%) and 22(6.3%) students prefer to play action, entertainment and suspense games respectively which shows young students are more inclined towards games containing aggression.

Internet

73(20.9%), 99(28.3%), 130(37.1%) and 48(13.7%) students use the internet for 2, 3, 4 and 5 hours respectively. In response to talking to strangers on the internet 158(45.1%) opted no whereas 192(54.9) affirmed that they talk to strangers on the internet. While responding to seeing a bad picture on the internet 93(26.6%) told that they do not get disturbed however 257(73.7) answered the question positively. About making friends on the internet 112(32) opted no whereas 238(68%) told that they make friends online. Using the internet for information purposes brought 76(21.7%) no and 274(78.3%) yes responses.

Movies

Out of 350 respondents only 60(17.1%) do not watch movies whereas 290(82.9%) watch movies. 171(48.9%), 128(36.6%) and 51(14.6%) watch action, horror and comedy movies respectively. Only 99(28.3%) students do not copy the action for their favourite heroes whereas 251(71.1%) do.

Parent's Surveillance

S.#	Question	No	Yes
a.	Do your parents aware of your online social activities?	79(22.6%)	271(77.4%)
b.	Is your parent in your friend list on Facebook?	110(31.4%)	240(68.6%)
c.	Do you tell parents in case of online bullying?	108(30.9%)	242(69.1%)
d.	Do your parents control you electronic devices activities?	118(33.7%)	232(66.3%)
e.	Do your parents watch TV with you?	123(35.1)	227(64.9%)
f.	Do your parents discuss TV programs with you?	135(38.6%)	215(61.4%)
g.	Do your parents set time limits for you to play games on computer	123(35.1)	227(64.9%)
h.	Do your parents allow you to watch TV late at night?	175(50%)	175(50%)
i.	Do your parents allow you to use mobile at home?	103(29.4%)	247(70.6%)
j.	Do you have internet related activities discussion with your parents?	115(32.9%)	235(67.1%)
k.	Do your parents sit with you when you use internet?	129(36.9%)	221(63.1%)
l.	Do your parents feel worried when you consume a lot of time on electronic devices?	113(32.3%)	237(67.7%)
m.	Do you take permission from your parent before using devices?	93(26.6%)	257(73.4)
n.	Do your parents' set password on electronic devices?	111(31.7%)	239(68.3%)

Conclusion

This study has attempted to provide a systematic review of high school children's media usage and their parents' involvement in their media related activities. As the use of media devices has become an integral part of our lives, it is important to explore its different aspects and their possible impacts. Consumers are now sanctioned to create, modify and share content. In this modern world the media serves a variety of purposes and thus, raises many concerns too. Information and Entertainment are said to be the most extrusive reasons behind media usage but this study focused on the parental engagement and their knowledge /awareness regarding their children's media usage activities at home.

This paper also examined what strategies parents currently use at home and stressed the need for parent-child interaction. This study emphasized the crucial role of parents to spend time and engage with their children and have more discussions related to their children's media usage. Consequently, the extreme exposure of children towards such devices with or without parents' supervision has paved the way towards media literacy. It is impossible to avoid the mainstream and social media in the 21st century. This is the right time to incorporate media literacy as a subject to be taught in secondary schools in order to empower children *because understanding media messages is important in this era of advanced communication and swift media*. To interpret and analyze media information it is imperative for the future generation to be media literate. In this modern-day majority of children, if they are unable to differentiate between what is right and wrong, mediated and non-mediated, as a result they will have to face much more difficult situation handling media effectively. Being media literate is essential for the media consumer and it is important that everyone take notice of their media literacy. *Moreover, future* research in these areas will advance a more effective media literacy curriculum, program, and outreach for parents. The field of media literacy needs to provide parents with some options for dealing with the media usage of their children and use mediation in ways that encourage media literacy skills in their children.

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