

# PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: EXPLORING MEDIATION STRATEGIES AND STYLES AMONG PARENTS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN KERALA

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## ABSTRACT

*To better understand the interaction between different parenting types—enabler, limiter, and mentor—and their related mediation techniques—active, co-viewing, and restrictive—this study looks at digital parenting styles (DPS) and digital parental mediation strategies (DPM) in Kerala. The research, which makes use of online and offline questionnaires conducted in districts located in northern, central, and southern Kerala, indicates that limiter parents employ restrictive mediation, enablement parents employ a combination of active and co-viewing tactics and mentor parents mostly utilise active mediation. Parenting philosophies and mediation techniques are significantly correlated, according to chi-square and correspondence studies. However, because of the region-specific and survey mode-based sampling, the study is constrained by possible sample bias. To further understand how digital parenting develops, future studies should use longitudinal techniques and a more representative sample.*

**Keywords** – Digital Transformation, Digital Parenting, Digital Parental Mediation Strategies, Digital Parenting Styles, Correspondence Analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has drastically changed many aspects of human life, improving living conditions and simplifying everyday work (Nevado-Peña, López-Ruiz, & Alfaro-Navarro, 2019; Demir & Özmizrak, 2014). Through the pervasive presence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), this transformation influence has not only been integral to adult's daily routines but has also penetrated children's lives, impacting their development (Bardakçı, 2018; Chou, 2012; Yeh, Chang, & Chang, 2011). According to the 2020 Eurostat study, 94% of people between the ages of 16 and 19 routinely use the Internet, demonstrating how common online activity is in this group. An interesting trend is also seen in India, where

the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) reports that around 15% of active Internet users are between the ages of 5 and 11. But as the digital landscape quickly changed, parental concern about protecting their children from online dangers also grew. They voiced concerns about things like exposure to illicit content, cyberbullying, and false information (McAfee, 2022). Particularly in areas like Kerala, where the incorporation of technology into daily life is fast changing, this increasing dependence on digital technologies highlights the vital significance of digital parenting. It is crucial to comprehend the intricate dynamics of digital technology usage and how it affects children's development as they navigate the digital world more and more. With an emphasis on the relevance of digital parenting practices in Kerala, this study intends to explore the complex relationships between digital parenting strategies and digital parenting styles and shed light on how these relations affect each other in the modern digital age.

The strategies that parents use to monitor, control, and oversee their children's media use are collectively referred to as parental mediation (Dedkova & Mýlek, 2022; Durak & Kaygin, 2019). The aim is to minimize potential risks and promote learning possibilities (Dedkova & Mýlek, 2022; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Parental mediation, which was first focused on television viewing, is now also applicable to digital technologies, such as computers, video games, tablets, and smartphones (Clark, 2011). Parental mediation theory by Clark, 2011 suggests that parents implement various interpersonal communication strategies to mediate and mitigate the negative impact of media on their children's lives (Huang et al., 2023; Ling & Yee, 2021; Clark, 2011). The theory suggested that parental media mediation considering mutual participation and respecting children's autonomy would be very effective (Huang et al., 2023; Ling & Yee, 2021; Clark, 2011). Traditional parental media mediation has defined various strategies to mediate with children with restrictive mediation (parents limit and control the time or content of their children's smart device use), active mediation (parents discuss smart device content used with their children to protect them from negative effects),

and co-viewing mediation (parents accompany their children when using smart devices (Huang et al., 2023; Shin & Lee, 2017).

Understanding parental practices in navigating this digital landscape is crucial, especially in Kerala, India, where digital technologies are becoming more and more incorporated into daily life. Research on the interaction between Digital Parenting Styles (DPS) and Digital Parental Mediation (DPM) strategies in Kerala's distinct cultural and socioeconomic context is still lacking, despite the rising importance of digital parenting. Through this investigation, we want to shed light on the intricacies of digital parenting in Kerala and open the door to customized strategies that enable parents to provide their children with pleasant digital experiences in this unique cultural setting. Hence the study aims to investigate the relationship between digital parental mediation strategies and digital parenting styles among parents of school children in Kerala.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital technology has significantly altered family dynamics, particularly in how parents monitor and control their children's internet usage (Wang et al., 2023; Navarro et al., 2022). This shift has spurred extensive research into the effects of various parental mediation techniques on children's behavior and overall well-being (Dedkova & Mýlek, 2022; Alkan et al., 2021).

Parental mediation is defined as the strategies adopted by parents to regulate, discuss, and monitor children's media use (Sciacca et al., 2022; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Warren, 2001). Valkenburg et al. (1999) identified three primary approaches: active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-using. Active mediation involves addressing concerns about media content, answering questions, clarifying appropriateness, and encouraging constructive use, such as teaching social media safety. Restrictive mediation entails setting guidelines for media use without providing justifications, such as time limits or restrictions on online interactions. Co-using refers to sharing media experiences without active conversation, such as playing a game together, which is more challenging with smaller, private digital devices (Sciacca et al., 2022; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

Digital parenting refers to the methods and efforts used by parents to monitor, encourage, and control their children's online and offline behavior (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). In addition to these mediation strategies, Samuel (2015) identified three distinct digital parenting styles: enablers, limiters, and mentors. *Enablers* permit free device usage,

often having multiple gadgets and allowing children to set their own screen time rules, a common approach among parents of teenagers. Conversely, *limiters* impose strict restrictions on device use due to concerns about negative impacts on social development, attention span, and overall health, typically seen in parents of preschoolers. *Mentors* strike a balance by guiding and moderating technology use. They engage in discussions about online safety and connect with their children through technology, a style frequently adopted by parents of elementary school-aged children.

Academics have investigated a variety of facets of digital parenting, from the efficiency of theoretical models in forecasting parental conduct to the particular methods parents employ to control their children's internet usage. These studies emphasize the intricacy of digital parenting, which is impacted by the digital gap, cultural settings, and parental attitudes, among other things.

Young et al. (2024) found that the Health Belief Model was useful in predicting inactivity because of perceived barriers when they used health behavior theories in parental mediation. They determined perceived obstacles and facilitators as important effects using a combination of methodologies. According to research by Akungu et al. (2024), parental support lowers teenage compulsive Internet usage (CIU), whereas concern and supervision raise it. This study emphasized the significance of CIU in inciting parental concern and monitoring, based on the perspectives of adolescents. Karimullah (2023) highlighted how the digital divide affects family interactions and urged parents to supervise their children well. Parental mediation techniques have a variety of consequences on children's well-being and internet usage, according to research by Rudnova et al. (2023). Geršičáková et al. (2023) observed a disparity between perceived and real knowledge, highlighting parents' underestimating of children's internet hazards. In their research of technology's effects on teenagers, Benvenuti et al. (2023) noted both beneficial and detrimental alterations. According to Huang et al. (2023), the best method for limiting teenage smartphone usage is collaborative parental use for learning. According to Chen et al. (2023), active mediation is linked to decreased cyberbullying. In Croatia, children's agency and active mediation were highlighted by Topić et al. (2023). According to Karsay et al. (2022), active mediation promotes well-being and decreases smartphone use while in bed. Cultural impacts on trends in parental mediation throughout Europe were noticed by Kalmus et al. (2022). Roth-Ebner (2022) highlighted parents' conflicted feelings about their children's media usage. According to Sciacca et al. (2022), parental concerns about internet hazards are associated with active mediation. Gender disparities and unique parental mediation techniques were observed by Nagy et al. (2022). Aljasir and Alsebaei (2022)

discovered that restricting techniques and internet safety had an influence on cyber victimization among Saudi teenagers. Positive child behavior has been associated with active co-use and monitoring, according to Ling and Yee (2021). In West Sumatra, active-enabler and restrictive-limiter parenting philosophies were emphasized by Desmita et al. (2022).

Research on parental mediation of digital media usage covers various strategies and their effects on children's behavior, digital literacy, and general well-being. Research emphasizes the value of cultural contexts, digital literacy, and active mediation; however, they frequently concentrate on Western environments. Despite extensive research on the learning habits of digital natives, different disciplines disagree on the effects these learning styles have on socioemotional, cognitive, and health outcomes. Sociologists argue that excessive use of digital media may disrupt socialization processes. However, there is a notable lack of research on how parents manage digital parenting, particularly within Kerala's digital transition. Understanding digital parental mediation and digital parenting styles in Kerala is crucial due to the region's rapid digital adoption and unique socio-cultural dynamics. This underscores the need for studies examining digital parental mediation strategies and digital parenting styles in this specific context. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights for developing interventions that foster positive digital experiences for children in Kerala.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between parental mediation strategies and digital parenting style. A cross-sectional survey approach is utilized to collect data from a sample of parents of school children in Kerala, India.

**Sampling:** The study utilizes a convenience sampling technique to recruit participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across three regions of the state: Kozhikode from north Kerala, Ernakulam from central Kerala, and Trivandrum from south Kerala. The sample comprises of 385 parents with children between the ages of 6 and 17 years old, reflecting the population of interest. Data was collected both offline and online.

**Instruments:** Data collection is facilitated through an adopted questionnaire developed based on existing literature on parental mediation and digital parenting styles among parents of school children. The questionnaire includes validated scales to measure parental mediation strategies (Zlamal et al., 2020) and digital parenting style (Samuel, 2015).

**Data analysis:** Correspondence analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between parental mediation strategies and digital parenting style. Statistical software such as SPSS Version 21 is utilized to conduct the data analysis, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the results.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Digital Parenting Style (DPS) is divided into three categories *enabler, limiter, and mentor*. They reflect the various stances parents take on their children’s digital technology usage. On the other hand, Digital Parental Mediation Strategies (DPM) stands for varying degrees of parental participation or supervision over their children’s online activity. They have been classified into *active, restrictive, and co-viewing*.

Table 1: Chi-Square Tests of DPM & DPS

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.438 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	32.177	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	385		
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.22.			

Source: SPSS Data Analysis

Table 1 presents Pearson Chi-Square statistics examining the correlation between DPS and DPM, where the value of 33.438 with 4 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .000. The .000 p-value indicates a very strong correlation. The Pearson chi-square result is supported by the value of 32.177, which likewise has four degrees of freedom, indicating a substantial connection. The sample size is strong with 385 genuine instances, guaranteeing accurate findings. The test's validity is guaranteed by the minimum anticipated count of 23.22 and the absence of any cells with a count of less than 5.

Table 2: Correspondence Table of DPM & DPS

Mediation_Strategies * Digital Parenting Style- Crosstabulation					
Count		DPS1			Total
		enabler	limiter	mentor	
Mediation Strategies	active	48	42	86	176
	co-viewing	38	13	31	82
	restrictive	23	56	48	127
Total		109	111	165	385

Source: SPSS Data Analysis

Table 2 presents the frequency of cases for each combination (Beh et al., 2014; Brunette et al., 2018). The majority of mentor parents participate in active mediation (86), suggesting that mentors are more likely to actively monitor their children's digital activities. Although less so, active mediation is also used by limiter and enabler parents. Enabler and mentor parents co-view at a fairly comparable rate, with limiter parents co-viewing less frequently. This implies that although limiters engage in digital activities with their children less frequently, facilitator and mentor parents do so more frequently. Limiter parents are more likely to use restrictive mediation (56), which is consistent with their inclination to put stringent limitations on internet usage. Enabler parents utilize the least amount of restrictive tactics, whereas mentor parents use them more.

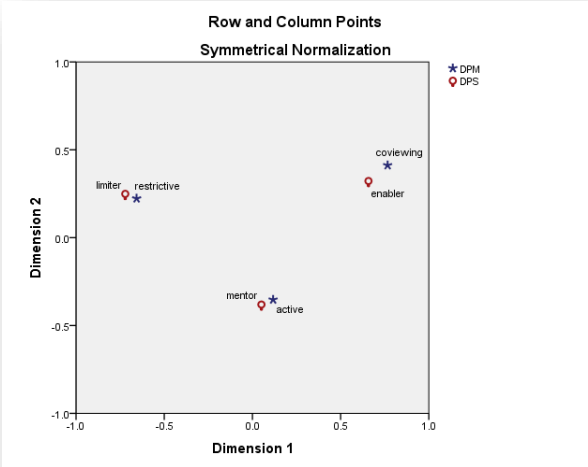
Table 3: Summary of DPM & DPS

Summary								
Dimension	Singular Value	Proportion of Inertia	Confidence Interval	DPM	DPS	Coviewing	Enabler	Active
1	.274	.862	.049	limiter	restrictive			
2	.109	.138	.051	mentor	active			
Total		1.000						

Source: SPSS Data Analysis

Table 3 summarizes the relationship between Digital Parental Mediation (DPM) and Digital Parenting Style (DPS). In the case of dimension 1, the singular value is .274

with an inertia of .075. This dimension accounts for 86.2% of the total inertia, indicating that it explains the majority of the variance in the data. Similarly, in dimension 2 the singular value is .109 with an inertia of .012, accounting for 13.8% of the total inertia. Combined with Dimension 1, it explains 100% of the variance. A chi-square value of 33.438 with 4 degrees of freedom and a significance level (Sig.) of .000 is equivalent to the total inertia value of .087. This validates the chi-square test's finding that there is a strong correlation between DPM and DPS (Beh et al., 2014; Brunette et al., 2018).



Source: SPSS Data Analysis

Figure 1: Biplot for DPM & DPS

In the biplot (Figure 1), each quadrant represents a combination of Digital Parental Mediation (DPM) and Digital Parenting Style (DPS) strategies. The first quadrant features "Enabler" and "Co-viewing" which proposes a parenting approach that promotes digital involvement and cooperative viewing. The second quadrant, which contains the strategies "Active" and "Mentor" denotes an involved parenting approach that incorporates both mentorship and active mediation. The third quadrant, denoted as "Limiter" is a parenting approach that combines specific mediation techniques with digital access restrictions. The third quadrant, which is associated with the strategy "Restrictive" suggests a parenting style that emphasizes restriction over active mediation. The various combinations of DPM and DPS that each quadrant represents shed light on the complex interactions between these factors.

## 5. DISCUSSION

There is a clear correlation between digital parenting styles (DPS) and mediation techniques (DPM) according to the chi-square statistics. Enabler parents strike a mix between active

and co-viewing techniques, limiter parents choose restrictive mediation, while mentor parents mostly utilize active mediation. Table 2 illustrates this pattern, which demonstrates how parenting approaches influence mediation techniques. This is supported by the summary statistics in Table 3, where Dimension 1 contributes the largest variance explanation and Dimension 2 makes a lesser but substantial contribution. These findings are supported by the high chi-square value, which highlights how crucial it is for academics and practitioners to comprehend how DPS and DPM relate to one another.

In light of Kerala's digital transformation, the findings shed light on how parents are adapting their parenting styles and mediation strategies to navigate the digital landscape effectively. The investigation of Digital Parenting Styles (DPS) and Digital Parental Mediation Strategies (DPM) in the state indicates a strong correlation between parenting philosophies and mediation techniques. The chi-square test verifies that parenting philosophies such as facilitator, limiter, or mentor have a significant impact on the selection of mediation tactics, whether they be active, co-viewing, or restrictive. Enabler parents strike a mix between active and co-viewing techniques, whereas mentor parents mostly utilize active mediation—interacting with their children's digital activities directly. Restrictive mediation is mostly used by limiter parents to impose stringent rules on their children's usage of technology. The results of the correspondence analysis highlight the central role that active participation plays in digital parenting, with Dimension 1 accounting for most of the variance in the data. These results underscore the need for culturally appropriate digital parenting tools and initiatives that cater to the particular requirements and practices of local families. They also imply that parenting styles have a key role in how parents in Kerala manage their children's digital devices.

## 6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The insights gained from the analysis of Digital Parenting Style (DPS) and Digital Parental Mediation (DPM) have several important implications for academics, educators, parents, and legislators as they navigate the digital terrain.

1. **Tailored Digital Parenting Programs:** Establishing and providing digital parenting programs that address the various reported styles—enabler, limiter, and mentor—should be the focus of organizations and educational institutions. These systems should be tailored to meet the unique requirements of every parenting approach to maximize their efficacy and applicability in overseeing children's digital activity.

2. **Training for Active Engagement:** Since active mediation is the primary method used by mentor parents, training initiatives should place a strong emphasis on active engagement techniques with children's internet usage. This covers methods and resources for developing cooperative digital experiences and encouraging honest dialogue about technology.
3. **Support for Balanced Approaches:** Resources should concentrate on balancing technology use and promoting healthy digital connections for enabler parents who utilize both active and co-viewing tactics. It might be helpful to offer advice on how to manage digital content and use co-viewing to strengthen family ties.
4. **Techniques for Restrictive Mediation:** Training on how to create appropriate digital boundaries and comprehend the possible effects on their children's technology use would be beneficial for limiter parents, who support restrictive mediation. A balanced approach may be achieved by providing advice on how to manage screen time and promote appropriate digital behavior without placing undue restrictions on it.
5. **Policy and Resource Development:** Using these findings, advocates for digital literacy and policymakers should create resources and policies that facilitate successful digital parenting. As part of this, guidelines for implementing best practices in digital mediation and technology use in schools and community organizations will be created.
6. **Research and Feedback:** To stay up to date with changing parenting styles and technological advancements, it might be beneficial to routinely gather input from parents and carry out follow-up studies. This way, digital parenting techniques can be improved and refined over time.

## 7. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FURTHER SCOPE

The study of Digital Parenting Styles (DPS) and Digital Parental Mediation Strategies (DPM) in Kerala highlights the significant link between parenting philosophies and digital mediation techniques. The results show that limiter parents choose restrictive mediation, enabler parents use a combination of active and co-viewing tactics and mentor parents mostly utilize active mediation. These findings emphasize the need for digital parenting programs that are culturally sensitive and meet the various demands of various parenting philosophies.

However, the study has some limitations. The sample may not accurately reflect the varied socioeconomic and cultural environment of the entire state of Kerala because it was taken

from one district in each of the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. The use of online and offline surveys may result in sample bias since various demographics may have varying access to digital platforms and levels of desire to participate, which might lead to the under-representation of particular groups. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design makes it more difficult to determine the causal linkages between mediation techniques and parenting philosophies.

To improve generalizability, future studies should examine digital parenting in a wider and more varied spectrum of Keralan districts. Studies using a longitudinal design may shed light on how digital parenting techniques change over time. Furthermore, studying socioeconomic and cultural aspects will provide a more thorough comprehension of digital mediation techniques. Extensive research on the efficacy of customized intervention initiatives may aid in improving support tactics.

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