

The Role of Parental Mediation Regarding Tablet Usage Among Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to find out the effect of tablets/mobiles on children's life and the role of parental mediation. Tablets/mobile phones are used frequently to make children busy. Many parents, who have other urgent things to do other than looking after their kids, use this strategy to keep their children occupied. Parents use this technique to make their kids behave and sit quietly at home or even outside the house. This study examined that parents often have conflict with their children about tablet/mobile phones. In this study the theory of reactance has been used. Parents have used three mediation strategies; Active mediation, Restrictive mediation and co-use mediation. This study used survey method to get responses from the respondents. A sample of 400 parents of children aged 8-11 years was gathered through a questionnaire to investigate the relations. The results show that parents often have conflict with their children using tablets/mobile phones. There was a negative correlation between parent child conflict and social use mediation and parent child conflict and tart use and restrictive mediation. While, there was a positive correlation of tablet use with parent child conflict, active mediation, social co use mediation and other factors.

Keywords: Active mediation, Children and parents relationship, Parent-child conflict, Parental mediation, Restrictive mediation, Tablets usage.

Introduction

Early adolescent conflict and parent-child conflict in early years has a rate of 20 times in a month (Smith, Nelson, & Adelson, 2019). Technology is growing faster day by day. Everyone has easy access towards media. Media has made it easy for people to be able to approach anything around the world just by sitting in their homes. The facility of handheld gadgets and internet is available in every house around the globe. Few years back, when these facilities were less affordable, people used to have friendly environments, more get together, children used to go outside and play with their friends and much more.

As time is passing by responsibilities are also increasing day by day, everyone is independent and have access to media technologies. Parents are doing double jobs in order to earn bread for the house. Men aren't the only bread winners now. Women

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are also playing an important role to fulfill the requirements of the house. With increasing responsibilities and less time, parents find it difficult to look after their children like the previous ones. Parents, now a day, provide handheld gadgets to their children.

The usage of smartphones and tablets is increasing widely day by day. They are user friendly, attractive, entertaining and helpful in learning process. The most important aspects of tablets/mobile phones are games and videos among young children. Parents allow children to either watch videos or play games on their tablets/mobile phones in order to fulfill household chores, attend gatherings and events, get time to rest.

There is a wide variety of games and videos available online for toddlers and children. They are able to choose from fiction to action. When a child is able to use a tablet/mobile phone, he/she is also able to choose the type of content he/she is willing to watch. Now-a-days kids are more independent than the earlier ones. They are free to make their own decisions as compared to the kids who were born in the earlier times. Kids now have more liberty to do things that the earlier ones could not do.

The peak conflicting years between child and parent are one to three years. (Canary & Canary, 2013) When parents introduce new gadgets to their children, then it is obvious that the children will adopt new habits and behaviors. Also, there will be new rules in the household (Bulck, Bergh, & Bea, 2005)

The main reason of conducting this research is to study the parent-child conflict that occurs due to the usage of technology devices i.e. tablet/smartphones. The conflicts occur by parental mediation in terms of using tablets/smartphones. There are three types of parental mediation; Active mediation, restrictive mediation and co-viewing. Co-viewing is defined as; parents watch the content on tablet or smartphones with their children. They don't let their children to watch or play any content alone on the tablet or smartphone.

Objective/s of the Study

These are the following objective/s of the research:

- To examine the tablet usage of Children and parental mediation (active mediation, restrictive mediation and Social co-viewing).

Literature Review

New media technologies are now present in each household. Each and every child is exposed to these devices at a very early age. (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, Ólafsson, & Kjartan, 2012) Thus, it fundamentally transforms how parents and children live together. It also has a very strong impact on the parent-child relationship.

The easy access of media at home may pose pressure on parents when it comes to young children. (Abelman, 2006) Almost a decade ago, suggested that as media is becoming more available in our homes, and children have number of options

like cable, internet and other media devices, the control of parents on their children has decreased radically.

The usage of interactive display media such as smart phones and tablets by young kids is growing speedily. Yet, research about the influence of this handy and promptly available source of media time on learning, conduct, and domestic dynamics has wrapped significantly behind its degree of acceptance. Pediatric rules explicitly regarding smart phone device usage by young kids have not hitherto framed, but current studies suggest that a restricted extent of educational interactive media usage is satisfactory for kids of age 2 years.

(A.Christakis, 2014) Fresh guidance is required because mobile media varies from mass media in many ways (e.g. videos, games, and informative apps), interactive abilities, and close ubiquity in kid's lives.

In urban areas, it is very common for children to have a universal exposure to tablets, TV, and smart phones. Now a day, most of the children own their media devices when they reach the age of 4. This pattern of using and adopting media devices has changed the lifestyle of many families. Due to the excess use of gadgets, parent child conflict is a very common issue these days. According to (Canary & Canary, 2013) the peak conflicting years between child and parent are one to three years. When parents introduce new gadgets to their children, then it is obvious that the children will adopt new habits and behaviors. Also, there will be new rules in the household (Bulck, Bergh, & Bea, 2005).

According to scholars, these types of conflict arises due to the children's disobedience to parent's instructions. Many conflicts are shown as a result of parent's resistance made on the requests of children (Smetana, 2011).

In many interviews, parents complain about getting the attention of their child when they are using media devices. Children ignore the parents and eventually conflict arises. This is considered as the main cause of fight between parents and children (Breiner et.al, 2016).

Since television and tablets are sources of technology which are not easily controlled by parents. Now a day, many parents think they are not playing a good role in making their child's values. Controlling technology is totally different from controlling old style approaches for instance oral storytelling and book reading or playing outside (Austin & Weintraub, 2009). Moreover, children can explore and travel the world with the help of tablets and other media devices before their parents. They can do so without even going out of their house (Danovitch, 2019).

Researchers like (Patrikakou, 2016) claimed there are at least four methods through which parents can control how children react to the mass media technology. These methods could be both direct and indirect routes. Parents focus on molding the behavior of children by confirming and disconfirming tablets in the indirect methodology.

On the other hand, (Bandura, 1999) suggests that direct method includes communication patterns of a household. It also includes the general understanding and information seeking patterns of a family. Direct methods are using direct control of parents on children such as making rules for their children. Also, checking the experience of children with tablets by communicating with them and having discussions over different topics.

According to Ren & Zhu (2022), active mediation is more useful when it comes to parenting and controlling the children. Parents can guide their children by categorizing the content they can watch on television. They have to explain how real world is shown in tablets through internet. Secondly, they can condemn the representativeness of several issues highlighted in mass media. Thirdly, they have to guide the children how they can use positive information of mass media in their real lives. In order to do so, they can take their children to places where they can illustrate things they watch on television.

Another study was conducted by (Bradford, Vaughn, & Barber, 2008) which examined the direct and indirect links amid overt and covert inter-parental conflict and children and parent issues. The researchers link these things to the behavioral issues of youth. According to this study, direct links were seen from overt IPC to the antisocial traits. On the other hand, covert IPC reflected antisocial behavior along with depression. The researchers then added parent-child issues in their model. They observed positive associations between conflict and depression along with indirect effect from increase in conflicts between parents and children.

This study further shows that relationship between parent and children has a mediating or indirect role in behavioral issues of children (Belsky, & Jaffee, 2015). This relationship is multifaceted because both children and parents have a very strong effect on each other. If the parents are fighting and they have negative emotions, then one can easily observe the results in children in the form of sadness, anger and fear. The children will be depressed and may involve in criminal activities as well. When we look it from the developmental perspective, it is seen that parents fight more in early years as compared to later in life.

Once parents and children start spending more time together, they fight less and develop good understanding among themselves. They try to resolve issues in respectable ways. This results in emotional closeness and number of daily conflict among them decreases.

(Boyden, 2015) states that children are in development stage, the biological and psychological changes in their bodies forces them to think and act differently from their parents. This is sometimes not acceptable for parents. (Collins & Read, 1990) Or else, they take more time to accept the fact that they have now less control over their children. These issues may lead to increase in parent-child conflicts.

Regular conflict between parents and children over different issues drain parents emotionally and they become less capable in handling conflicts and

responding positively to the emotional needs of their children. (Karney, Bradbury, Sullivan, & Fincham, 1994) The concept of IPC states that it is linked with decrease in moral support and warmth from parents' side. Behavioral control and monitoring is also seen to be reduced in these conditions. On the other hand, increase in physical punishments and verbal criticisms tend to increase when there are more conflicts between parents and children in a household.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of reactance states that, "children may exhibit reactance against their parents' restrictions because they want to retain their freedom to perform the behavior. Based on the assumptions of reactance theory active mediation may elicit reactance among children against the efforts of parents to mediate their children's tablet use" (Brehm and Brehm, 1981). In the age of globalization and technology, everyone is exposed to multiple cultures and they have access to all kind of content, it is becoming difficult to keep an eye on the children that what kind of content or program they are watching and to what kind of media they are exposed. Every household has access to tablets/mobile phone these days, and every child has authority and permission by their parents to use these gadgets at home.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a likely relationship between tablet use and active mediation, restrictive mediation, Social co-viewing, and parent-child conflict.

Methodology

In this study, quantitative research methodology has been used. A survey have been selected as a method to gather responses from the respondents. The toll of data collection is a structured questionnaire. As a universe of the study, parents who have children of age 8 to 11 are being taken. For this study, parents whose children age from 8 to 11 from different schools of Lahore will be taken as population for conducting the survey. A sample size of 400 respondents have been selected through purposive sampling technique that is a non-probability sampling type. The following schools located at Lahore, Pakistan were selected to gather data i.e. Lahore Grammar School (LGS), Beacon house School System, LACAS and American Lyceum. The Gulberg Branch of these schools, Lahore were considered for this study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaire was tested for reliability, and through the use of SPSS 20 the reliability of the scale was found to be above the threshold level of .70, for this purpose the mentioned constructs were collectively checked for reliability (through SPSS), which were reliable for data collection.

Table 1 Distribution of hours and minutes a child uses tablet/mobile phone on an average weekday.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	48	12.0	12.0	12.0
	1	109	27.3	27.3	39.3
	2	109	27.3	27.3	66.5
	3	20	5.0	5.0	71.5
	4	34	8.5	8.5	80.0
	5	4	1.0	1.0	81.0
	6	7	1.8	1.8	82.8
	10	5	1.3	1.3	84.0
	15	6	1.5	1.5	85.5
	20	2	.5	.5	86.0
	30	48	12.0	12.0	98.0
	40	5	1.3	1.3	99.3
	45	3	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows that children use tablets/mobile phones for different time durations on average weekday. 48 children do not use tablet/ mobile phones, 109 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 1 hour, 109 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 2 hours, 20 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 3 hours, 34 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 4 hours, 4 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 5 hours, 7 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 6 hours, 5 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 10 minutes, 6 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 15 mins, 2 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 20 minutes, 48 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 30 minutes, 5 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 40 minutes, 3 children use tablet/ mobile phones for 45 minutes. Most of the children use tablet/ mobile phones for 1 and 2 hours.

H1: There is a likely relationship between tablet use and active mediation, restrictive mediation, Social co-viewing, and parent-child conflict.

The relationship between tablet use and parent child conflict was investigated using “Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient”. At the first instance, it was assured that the assumptions are not violated i.e. normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. In the table given below, a strong, positive correlation between the two variables was found, $r = .17$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of tablet use associated with higher parent child conflict.

Table 1.1 Correlations

		Tablet Use	Parent child conflict
Tablet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.173**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001

	N	400	400
Parent child conflict	Pearson Correlation	.173**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	400	400

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Using the Pearson moment correlation, “it has been found that tablet use and active mediation has a strong, positive correlation, $r = .7$, $n = 400$, $p < .001$, this indicates a high level of tablet use is associated with higher active mediation”.

Table 1.2 Correlations

		Tablet Use	Active Mediation
Tablet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.122
	N	400	400
Active Mediation	Pearson Correlation	.077	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	
	N	400	400

The relationship between tablet use and restrictive mediation was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. “There was a strong, negative correlation between the two variables, $r = .2$, $n = 400$, $p < .001$, with low level of tablet use associated with lower restrictive mediation”.

Table 1.3 Correlations

		Tablet Use	Restrictive Mediation
Tablet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	-.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.679
	N	400	400
Restrictive Mediation	Pearson Correlation	-.021	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.679	
	N	400	400

The result of product moment correlation show that “tablet use and social co-use mediation has a strong, positive correlation, $r = .8$, $n = 400$, $p < .001$, with high level of tablet use associated with higher social co-use mediation”.

Correlations

		Tablet Use	Social co-use Mediation
Tablet Use	Pearson Correlation	1	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085
	N	400	400
Social co-use Mediation	Pearson Correlation	.086	1

Sig. (2-tailed)	.085
N	400

The result of product moment correlation shows that “there is a strong, positive correlation between mediation and parent child conflict, $r = .15$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of active mediation associated with higher parent child conflict”.

Table 1.3 Correlations

		Active Mediation	Parent child conflict
Active Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	.154**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	400	400
Parent child conflict	Pearson Correlation	.154**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	400	400

The result shows “a strong correlation between restrictive mediation and parent child conflict, $r = .20$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of restrictive mediation associated with higher parent child conflict”.

Table 1.4 Correlations

		Restrictive Mediation	Parent child conflict
Restrictive Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	.203**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Parent child conflict	Pearson Correlation	.203**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

The table shows that “there is a negative strong relationship between parent child conflict and social use mediation and parent child conflict, $r = -.24$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with low level of parent child conflict associated with lower social co-use mediation”.

Table 1.5 Correlations

		Social Mediation	co-use Parent child conflict
Social co-use Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Parent child conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.240**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

The results shows that “there was a strong, positive correlation between active mediation and restrictive mediation, $r = .58$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of active mediation associated with higher restrictive mediation”.

Table 1.6 Correlations

		Active Mediation	Restrictive Mediation
Active Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Restrictive Mediation	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

The results shows that “there is a strong, positive correlation between active mediation and social co-use mediation, $r = .48$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of active mediation associated with higher social co-use mediation”.

Table 1.7 Correlations

		Active Mediation	Social co-use Mediation
Active Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Social co-use Mediation	Pearson Correlation	.481**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

The relationship between “restrictive mediation and social co-use mediation was found to be strongly positively correlated, $r = .35$, $n = 400$, $p < .01$, with high level of restrictive mediation associated with higher social co-use mediation”.

Table 1.7 Correlations

		Restrictive Mediation	Social co-use Mediation
Restrictive Mediation	Pearson Correlation	1	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Social co-use Mediation	Pearson Correlation	.356**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

Technology is making drastic change in our lives. It advancing day by day, something new and different is invented every now and then. People opt for these new advancements for the betterment of and comfort in their lives. New technology is provided in various forms and we can see many gadgets in our homes; from refrigerators to TV sets, from washing machines to computers/laptops etc.

Smartphones and tablets are one of the common gadgets. These handled technologies make life easier with just one tap.

This study deals with a very important aspect of modern age. The study is more concerned to find out the parent-child conflict on the use of tablets/mobile phones with regard to the role of parental mediation. A wide range sample of 400 parents from private schools has been studied. The results show some newsworthy facts that are being discussed below.

Tablets and smartphones are among the most popular technological devices which provides ease and comfort to its user. Every household has access to advanced media technologies; every child has exposure towards these handheld technologies at a very initial age (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, Ólafsson, & Kjartan, 2012). The present study finds the use of tablet/smartphones by children in hours and minutes on average weekday and weekend day. The results expose that children use tablets/ mobile phones on weekdays for 1-2 hours on average per day while they use it for 2 hours on average per weekend day.

Every house has different gadgets and the children are very well exposed to every media. Technology has brought comfort for human beings as well as difficulties too. Parents allow children to use handheld gadgets but this has become a cause of conflict between them.

The age group from 1 to 3 has the topmost conflicting years for parents with their children (Canary & Canary, 2013). (Bulck, Bergh, & Bea, 2005) Examined that when children are exposed to new gadgets, they adapt new behavior and habits and this also leads to new rules in the house. The data also shows that 174 children use tablet for more than 1 to 7 hours weekly.

This study adapted the scale to measure the use of tablet/mobile phones by (Valkenburg, Krömer, & AL, 1999). 18% respondents always have conflict with their child because their child has to turn off the tablet while 16% respondents never have conflict with children. 27% respondents always have a conflict with their children for the amount of time spent on tablets/ mobile phones while 15% respondents never have conflict with children. 7% respondents always have a conflict about the content their children watch on tablet/mobile phones while 31% respondents never have conflict with children.

The study examines the relationship among children's tablet/mobile phone use, parental mediation and conflict between parent and children. Moreover, the study tends to explore the social and psychological effect of selfie taking on the youth of Pakistan i.e. to observe the ways that selfie taking is influencing the young people.

The correlation between tablet use and restrictive mediation showed that the use of tablets/mobile phones has decreased with more restrictions. On one hand the restrictive is a good source for decreasing tablet/mobile use among children yet it can be a reason for conflicts between parents and children.

Parents who co-used the tablet with children had less conflict with parents. It is an effective strategy to decrease the conflict between parents and children. This study supports previous studies showing less conflict by participating in activities together. (Dubas & Gerris, 2002). Parents use less co use mediation as compared to restrictive mediation although it results in less conflict. For parents who did not co-use the tablets/mobile phones with their children had more conflicts. Parents tend to apply restrictions instead of using the tablet/mobile phone along with their kids or to impose active mediation (Nikken & Jansz, 2014).

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