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Laila Nukiry

The Effect of Parental Mediation Strategies on the Autonomy of Opinion Formation of Adolescents in Beirut

A Comparison Between Secular
and NonSecular Schools

ARMA, Arab Master's Programme in Democracy
and Human Rights

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Foreword

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- Nukiry, Laila, *The Effect of Parental Mediation Strategies on the Autonomy of Opinion Formation of Adolescents in Beirut: A Comparison Between Secular and Non-Secular Schools*. Supervisor: Carol Al-Sharabati, Saint Joseph University, Arab Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ARMA), coordinated by Saint Joseph University (Lebanon).

- Salakhunova, Alina, *Decentralization and Renewable Energy Policy in Central Asia: Exploring the Role of Local Governance and Community Participation*. Supervisor: Sergey Sayapin, KIMEP University (Almaty, Kazakhstan). The Master of Liberal Arts in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS - GC Central Asia), coordinated by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

- Torres Cuenca, Laura, *El camino del retorno. Experiencias de mujeres rurales víctimas del conflicto armado en el proceso burocrático de ingreso al Registro de Tierras Despojadas y Abandonadas Forzosamente para el departamento del Cesar, Colombia*. Supervisor: Ezequiel Fernández Bravo, Universidad Nacional de San Martín - Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (UNASAM-CONICET). Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA), coordinated by National University of San Martin (Argentina).

Biography

Layla Nukairy holds a degree in Economics from Damascus University and a Master's in Democracy and Human Rights from Saint Joseph University, Beirut. Her work focuses on Syria and Lebanon, with a strong emphasis on research and advocacy in women's rights, children's rights, and ethical journalism. Layla has actively contributed to initiatives that promote women's economic, political, and social empowerment. As a fellow with Every Woman Treaty, she advocates for the adoption of a protocol to protect women from violence, complementing CEDAW. Her research includes studies on children's school enrollment, children's digital protection and autonomy, and youth workforce development in Tripoli.

Abstract

This empirical study investigates the impact of parental mediation strategies on the autonomy of opinion formation by adolescents aged 13-17 in Beirut. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires administered to both adolescents and parents. It explores the types of parental mediation strategies and parental practices that affect the autonomy of opinion formation of the child in the digital realm, focusing on supporting their freedom of expression and critical thinking skills.

The study sheds light on the intricate relationship between social media usage, parental mediation, and adolescent autonomy in shaping opinions; it addresses child digital rights under the UNCRC and General Comment 25 in relation to parental mediation strategies and underscores the importance of adopting balanced and communicative mediation strategies that respect adolescents' growing independence while providing essential guidance to help them navigate the digital landscape.

The findings indicate that while parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's online experiences and fostering critical thinking and self-expression, no significant relationship was found between parental mediation strategies and adolescents' critical thinking skills or autonomy of opinion formation. Additionally, no significant differences were observed in parental mediation strategies between secular and nonsecular schools. However, the research highlights a gap between parental approaches and adolescents' perceptions, underscoring the need for more effective implementation of mediation strategies. This study offers valuable insights for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to enhance young people's digital literacy and autonomy in the digital age.

Dedication

To my cherished family and dearest friends,

This thesis is a reflection of the love, support, and unwavering belief you have all shown me throughout this journey. My deepest gratitude goes to my mother, Ahlam Sedawi, whose values of hard work and perseverance have shaped me. Your sacrifices and encouragement made this achievement possible, and your faith in me has been my driving force.

To my beloved siblings, Victoria, Nassif, and Grace, who have been my constant companions, offering wisdom and humour when I needed them most.

I also dedicate this work to my amazing friends, Ghady, Lara, Maysoun, Klara, Sandra, Rana, Amera, Christabelle, Carla, and Hasan, whose friendship has been a source of joy and inspiration. Your belief in me has given me the confidence to push through even the toughest times.

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I am grateful to the Global Campus of Human Rights - Arab World, for their dedicated efforts in educating me about human rights and democratisation. Their commitment to fostering knowledge in these critical areas has greatly enriched my research and understanding.

The Institute of Political Science at Saint Joseph University does not intend to give any approval or disapproval to the opinions expressed in this thesis. These opinions belong solely to their author.

Table of Abbreviations

SDT	Self-Determination Theory
PI	Promoting Independence
PVF	Promoting Volitional Functioning
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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1. Introduction

Social media expose audiences to vast content, including information, perspectives, and ideas that directly influence their opinions. For young people, this content plays a significant role in shaping their developing minds. Given the growing risks children encounter online, parents often intervene in their children's social media consumption and activities to protect them, potentially affecting their autonomy of opinion formation.

Research problem and significance

As the internet and social media platforms have rapidly advanced and evolved, they have increasingly become a part of everyone's daily routines, including children's. This growing consumption heightens associated risks, especially for children, necessitating swift updates to laws and the establishment of new regulations to govern the digital world and mitigate these risks. Given the limitations of government regulations in controlling the fast-paced media and communication landscape, parental mediation strategies have become increasingly important within public policy frameworks, particularly in efforts to protect children from media-related harm.¹

Social media platforms have been accused of impacting the audience's opinions, which significantly shape the public discourse. This was highlighted in the recent conflict between the US and China over TikTok, where the American government accused TikTok of influencing the social and political opinions of

¹ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, 'Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use' (2008) 52 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 581.

young people, viewing it as a potential threat to its national security.² In the Lebanese context, a similar concern is reflected in this study's survey, where over 75% of the parents who participated in this study's survey believe that people's opinions are influenced by the content they view on social media. Interestingly, 42% of them also agreed that their own views are influenced by the content they consume on social media. Moreover, 80% of the parents agreed that social media plays a significant role in shaping their children's opinions, with only 16% opposing this view.

This high level of agreement among parents may be attributed to two key factors. First, it is evident that different generations engage with social media differently. In 2023, research by GITNEX revealed that millennials born between 1981 and 1996 spend an average of two and a half hours daily on social media, and (87%) use Facebook regularly.³ In contrast, Generation Z, comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (ages 12-27), spends over four hours daily on social media, as noted in the Morning Consult report in 2024. Over 80% of this generation spends time on YouTube, making it their most used platform, followed by Instagram (75%), TikTok (69%), and Snapchat (63%).⁴

These findings highlight that children spend around twice as much time as adults on social media, amplifying its influence and risks on their lives. Secondly, adolescents between 10 and 18 years old are at a stage in their cognitive development where they witness improvements in sophisticated and conceptual thinking, changes in their relationship with their parents, and a desire for more autonomy and independence while also leaning toward their peers for support. At this stage, their identities are shaped by their exploration and commitment to different roles and ideologies.⁵

² Wanning Sun, 'TikTok Tensions Are a New Front in US-China Tech Wars' (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.59425/eabc.1719698400>>.

³ Jannik Linder, 'Key Millennials on Social Media Statistics: Brand Loyalty, Buying Behavior' (2024) Gitnux <<https://gitnux.org>> accessed 23 May 2024.

⁴ Monique Thomas, 'Gen Z's Social Media Usage in 2024' (2 February 2024) Later <<https://later.com/blog/gen-z-social-media-usage/>> accessed 29 April 2024.

⁵ The Human Development Teaching & Learning Group, 'Puberty & Cognition' in The Human Development Teaching & Learning Group Human Development (Portland State University Pressbooks, 2020) <<https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humandevlopment/chapter/puberty-cognition/>> accessed 24 June 2024.

As a result, adolescents are particularly susceptible to the content they consume on social media, as well as to their online interactions and activities. Their developmental stage further intensifies this influence. During this period, parents play a significant role in shaping their children's online experiences. However, their well-intentioned efforts to protect their children through various mediation strategies may impact the autonomy of their children's opinion formation in different ways. A more conversational and less conformist approach may promote this autonomy, while a more restrictive, less conversational approach could limit it. These mediation approaches might also vary depending on parents' religious affiliations, potentially affecting their conservatism in applying these strategies. Lindelof's research demonstrated that religious organisations rely on shared core principles to guide media viewing decisions.⁶ This suggests that the school's affiliation may also influence parents' mediation strategies.

This study aims to explore the extent to which parental mediation strategies regarding social media usage influence children's autonomy in opinion formation and their abilities to critically assess information. It will focus on adolescents aged 13-17, recognising this stage as crucial for the development of opinions, and critical thinking skills as adolescents increasingly seek autonomy. Also, it will explore whether there will be variations in parental mediation strategies between secular and nonsecular schools, potentially leading to differing levels of independence in opinion formation.

The research will explore how mediation strategies affect children's abilities to form their opinions autonomously and which parental mediation strategies are more successful in supporting the children's autonomy in opinion formation.

⁶ Christopher Layton and David Hansen 'Religion and Gender in the Impact of Parental Mediation on Self-censorship and Attitudes toward Mediation' *Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2013, 1, Article 170) <<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur/vol2013/iss1/170>> accessed 20 August 2024.

Research hypothesis

H1: Parental mediation strategies aimed at safeguarding children (13-17 years) on social media influence their autonomy in opinion formation.

H2: Restrictive parental mediation limits the ability to critically assess information.

H3: Additionally, the research hypothesises that there will be variations in parental mediation strategies between secular and nonsecular schools, potentially leading to differing levels of autonomy in opinion formation.

H4: Different styles of mediation will impact the hypothesis above. The more conversational and less conformist approach is more likely to preserve autonomy. In contrast, the less conversational and more conformist approach will be the most restrictive on the autonomy of opinion formation of the child.

Definitions and terminology

In this thesis, the term “child” refers to any person under the age of 18, as defined by Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).⁷ The United Nations define the stage of adolescence as “those between the ages of 10 and 19”. This period is recognised as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, marked by significant growth and development.⁸

According to the Glossary of Terms Relating to Children’s Digital Lives, the term Parent “Is used synonymously with “carer” or “caregiver” or “guardian” to refer to the adults most closely involved in or responsible for a child’s welfare and upbringing. This can include biological parents living separately from the child or step-parents or foster parents living with the child”.⁹

⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990)

⁸ UNICEF, ‘Adolescents: Overview’ UNICEF Data (no date) <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/adolescents/overview/>> accessed 3 September 2024.

⁹ A Atabey, K Pothong and S Livingstone, Glossary of terms relating to children’s digital lives (2023 Digital Futures Commission, 5Rights Foundation) <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/119728/>> accessed 6 June 2024.

The concept of “responsibility” in this context refers to the “Capability of fulfilling an obligation or duty; the quality of being reliable or trustworthy; the state or fact of being accountable for actions; liability for some action”.¹⁰ Moreover, “Safeguarding” refers to the “actions taken to promote children’s welfare and protect them from harm”.¹¹

Moreover, the term “digital literacy” refers to the ability to reach, organise, comprehend, integrate, communicate, assess, and produce information effectively and securely using digital technologies. These skills are crucial for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship, incorporating various competencies often identified as “computer literacy,” “ICT literacy,” “information literacy,” and “media literacy.”¹²

Lastly, this research compares secular and nonsecular schools in Beirut. “Secular” refers to “not related specifically to religion or to a particular religious group”.¹³ This means that secular schools operate independently of religious influence, focusing on a curriculum that does not include religious teachings or practices. In contrast, nonsecular schools incorporate religious values, teachings, or practices into their educational approach.

Research structure

This thesis begins with an introduction that explains the research problem and its significance, presenting the research question and hypotheses. It will also provide definitions of key terms used throughout the research.

The second chapter is the literature review, which will cover previous research on parental mediation strategies, the influence of religious affiliations on parental mediation in TV viewing, the autonomy of the child, and the autonomy of children under the lens of paternalism. It will also highlight the existing research gap.

¹⁰ A Atabey, K Pothong and S Livingstone, Glossary of terms relating to children’s digital lives (2023 Digital Futures Commission, 5Rights Foundation) <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/119728/>> accessed 6 June 2024.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² ‘TVETipedia Glossary’ (UNESCO-UNEVOC <<https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/lang=en/show=term/term=Digital+literacy>> accessed 30 May 2024.

¹³ Education Bug, ‘Secular vs. Sectarian Schools’ (n.d.) <www.educationbug.org/a/secular-vs-sectarian-schools.html> accessed 10 August 2024.

The third chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research, introducing a new categorisation of parental mediation strategies that considers the parents' intentions while analysing their impact on the child's autonomy. This chapter will also present the main theories that underpin the analysis of parental autonomy support as part of their efforts to mediate and protect their children in the digital world. Additionally, it will discuss relevant articles from the CRC Convention and General Comment 25, emphasising the parents' role in fulfilling, respecting, and protecting their children's digital rights while fostering their autonomy.

The fourth chapter will present the research results derived from parent and child surveys, analysing the data in light of the theoretical framework.

The fifth chapter will summarise the findings and discuss the results from a child rights perspective.

Finally, the conclusion will summarise the research, offering recommendations for parents and the Lebanese government and suggestions for future research, taking into account this study's limitations.

2. Literature review

2.1 Previous literature

To provide a comprehensive historical, theoretical, and academic overview of parental mediation strategies, it is essential to define this concept. Although it has various definitions, it can be summarised as “any behaviour adopted by parents in endeavour of reducing the negative effects of media upon children. It is the way parents manage the relation between the children and media by means of controlling, supervising, and interpreting the media content with the children”.¹⁴

Parental mediation strategies, as discussed by Warren, can be viewed from an ecological approach as tools that families use to reinforce their values in response to external influences. Parents aim not only to protect their children but also to promote family values.¹⁵ Alternatively, researchers like Austin, Kunkel & Wilcox, and Nathanson view these strategies from a socio-cognitive perspective, emphasising their role in enhancing children’s media literacy, which can help mitigate the harmful effect of media.¹⁶

By combining both ecological and socio-cognitive perspectives, parents can create a more comprehensive approach to guiding their children’s media consumption. This dual approach allows parents to not only shield their children from harmful

¹⁴ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, ‘Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers’ Internet Use’ (2021) 20 İlköğretim Online 4964.

¹⁵ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, ‘Parental Mediation of Children’s Internet Use’ (2008) 52 Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 581.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

content but also empower them to critically analyse and navigate media content. By fostering a balance between protection and education, parents can equip their children with the skills needed to make informed decisions independently.

Studies on parental mediation strategies in media began with scholars categorising parental methods for controlling their children’s television views to protect them from its negative influence. In 1999, Valkenburg et al identified three primary mediation mechanisms:¹⁷

01 —“Active mediation” is a strategy that involves parents engaging in regular discussions, assessments, and interpretations of televised content with their children.

02 —“Restrictive mediation” refers to parents establishing certain restrictions and limitations around the child’s access to media content, including what, when, and how long they can watch.

03 —“Co-viewing” refers to the practice of parents watching television with their children.

This categorisation was beneficial for the mediation of parents in their children’s television consumption, video game playing, and internet usage.

Studying the effectiveness of parental mediation strategies regarding television viewing did not provide a definitive answer. However, it has been shown that different types of mediation strategies have various impacts. Active mediation can make children more critical of what they watch and may reduce the likelihood of adopting negative behaviours toward others.¹⁸ Co-viewing has been perceived as equally or even more effective, but only in certain circumstances. On the other hand, restrictive mediation’s

¹⁷ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, ‘Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers’ Internet Use’ (2021) 20 İlköğretim Online 4964.

¹⁸ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, ‘Parental Mediation of Children’s Internet Use’ (2008) 52 Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 581.

effectiveness varies depending on the degree of restriction. Some argue that this approach reduces the risks associated with the content viewed on television, although this is primarily due to reducing overall media use.¹⁹

Because there is a significant difference between the risks associated with television and internet consumption, Livingstone and Helsper introduced a new categorisation of parental mediation strategies. They emphasised that internet use is less shared than television, especially with technological advancements and the increased use of mobile phones over personal computers or laptops. This shift provides children with more personal space and reduces parents' ability to keep an eye on their online behaviours and the content they view. Moreover, it limits the opportunities for co-using the internet with their children. The interactive nature of the internet also presents higher risks compared to television as it allows users to engage directly with the content. It offers a real-time communication, content creation, and personalised interactions. For example, children can interact with strangers, potentially exposing them to risks like cyberbullying, grooming, or exposure to inappropriate content. Consequently, the two scholars identified new categories of restrictive mediation:²⁰

01 – Restrictions on interaction:

limiting communication with others online, such as calling, chatting, and emailing.

02 – Access limits:

regulating how much and when the internet can be used.

03 – Content restrictions:

controlling which content can be downloaded or viewed.

With the advancement of technology, more bespoke methods of internet regulation have emerged, including the use of technical tools such as software and filters to restrict or block a child's access to certain websites, content, or activities. Additionally, the monitoring strategy has been recognised as a primary mediation

¹⁹ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, 'Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use' (2008) 52 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 581.

²⁰ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, 'Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers' Internet Use' (2021) 20 *Ilkögretim Online* 4964.

tool for children’s internet use, involving tracking and viewing their online activities, such as reviewing browsing histories. Finally, supervision has also been identified as another important tool, where parents stay nearby or keep an eye on their children while they are online.²¹

Nevertheless, there is a degree of overlap between certain strategies and varying interpretations of their definitions, resulting in variations in their categorisation and evaluation. As it is impossible to co-use the internet without discussion and communication between the parent and the child, the co-usage of the internet and active mediation do not appear to be distinctive strategies. This crucial point complicates the distinction between active mediation and co-using strategies. Consequently, they refer to them as active co-users. In contrast, Sonck, Nikken, and de Haan do not endorse active co-usage as a novel approach. Additionally, the active mediation was divided into two categories based on the intention of the parents: active mediation for internet use and active mediation for internet safety, which involves a discussion about online safety with the child.²²

In Lebanon, previous research was conducted in 2016 by SMEX in collaboration with the Higher Council for Childhood of Lebanon’s Ministry of Social Affairs, which examined parental involvement in their children’s online activities among 157 youths aged 14 to 22. Their findings revealed that 47% of participants reported having parental rules regarding their online behaviour, although these rules were not actively enforced. Only 13% of them mentioned that their parents used active mediation strategies, such as OGERO’s “Parental Protection” service, to block access to certain websites. In contrast, 38% of children reported having complete freedom in their online activities without any time or access restrictions. Additionally, 78% indicated that their parents did not use administrative accounts to manage their use of electronic devices.²³ However, this research did not study these strategies’ effectiveness or impact on Lebanese youths.

²¹ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, ‘Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers’ Internet Use’ (2021) 20 *Ilkogretim Online* 4964.

²² *ibid.*

²³ Lara Bitar, ‘Youth, Internet, and Technology in Lebanon: A Snapshot’ (29 July 2020) SMEX <<https://smex.org/youth-internet-and-technology-in-lebanona-snapshot/>> accessed 5 May 2024.

Studying the impact of parental mediation strategies is still ongoing; Berson and Berson found that talking with teenage daughters can lower contact risks online. Mitchell et al discovered that software restrictions were more effective than parental monitoring in reducing risks.²⁴ While these studies have examined how parental mediation strategies impact children's protection in the digital environment, they have not fully addressed how these strategies affect children's development, well-being, and autonomy.

Furthermore, demographic factors such as a child's age, gender, religion and the parent's gender, education, and occupation were assessed as factors affecting the choice of parental mediation strategies. Research shows that parents tend to use more mediation for younger children than older ones, with restrictions decreasing as the child grows older. The impact of a child's gender on mediation strategies is inconsistent, with many studies by Gentile et al, Livingstone et al, Nikken and Jansz, and Symons et al, indicating that girls receive more mediation than boys, while other studies by Livingstone and Helsper, and Lee find no significant relationship. The parent's gender also plays a role, with mothers generally applying more mediation strategies, including restrictions and parental control, than fathers.²⁵

Sonia Livingstone and Helsper conducted previous research to determine which parental mediation strategies parents employ to regulate their children's internet use and whether these strategies are associated with a reduction in the risks that teenagers may face online. In 2004, they conducted in-person interviews with children aged 9 to 19 to develop a survey for children and parents of children in the same age group in the United Kingdom. The study discovered that parents employ a variety of mediation strategies, but favour social forms of mediation, such as active co-use, over technical restrictions and monitoring. Additionally, it demonstrated that the reduction of risks is not always achieved by increasing mediation, except in instances where parental restrictions on user-user interaction substantially reduced online risks.

²⁴ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, 'Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use' (2008) 52 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 581.

²⁵ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, 'Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers' Internet Use' (2021) 20 *Ilkögretim Online* 4964.

Hence, further research is required to ascertain the advantages of these practices, as neither active co-use nor software-based strategies, such as filtration and monitoring, were effective in mitigating risks.²⁶

Another recent study was conducted in 2021 by Anju Rani and Dr Mani Shreshtha on the adoption of parental mediation strategies for teenager's internet use in India.²⁷ The research methodology relied on questionnaires targeting children and parents of children between the ages of 13-17. It categorised mediation into four strategies: discussion, restriction, monitoring, and technical mediation. The research's findings revealed that technical mediation is the most common, with monitoring being the least.

The study also proved that demographic factors, such as the child's age and gender, significantly influence mediation strategies. Parents impose more restrictions on younger children and girls, especially concerning online interactions. Interestingly, fathers were more likely to use technical mediation than mothers, possibly due to higher digital literacy levels. The study also noted that mediation decreases as children grow older, aligning with previous research. The findings suggest that parents should adopt social strategies like active mediation over restrictive ones to enhance online opportunities while minimising risks.

Comparing both studies reveals that as technical mediation tools have evolved. Parents are increasingly relying on these tools instead of monitoring and social forms of mediation, as observed in the 2004 research by Sonia Livingstone and Helsper.²⁸ Growing reliance on technical tools suggests that parents are less engaged in dialogue and discussion with their children, which are vital components of monitoring and social mediation. This shift may limit opportunities to educate children about the content they encounter online, the associated risks, and how to protect themselves. While technical tools can provide options like content filtering, which can expose the child to specific content that aligns with parental values, this approach may limit a child's ability to explore diverse content and critically assess different perspectives.

²⁶ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, 'Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use' (2008) 52 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 581.

²⁷ Anju Rani and Mani Shreshtha, 'Adoption of Parental Mediation Strategies for Teenagers' Internet Use' (2021) 20 *İlköğretim Online* 4964.

²⁸ Sonia Livingstone and Ellen J Helsper, 'Parental Mediation of Children's Internet Use' (2008) 52 *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 581.

In a study examining the impact of religious affiliation on parental mediation in television viewing, Christopher Layton and David Hansen found significant differences based on religion. Mormons reported lower levels of co-viewing compared to Catholics and Protestants and also watched less television as children than these other groups and those without religious affiliation. Protestants reported higher levels of restrictive mediation than both Catholics and those without religious affiliation. While no significant differences were found between religious groups in terms of instructive mediation overall, Catholics reported higher levels of instructive mediation than Mormons.²⁹ These findings support the hypothesis that religion influences parental mediation styles. Therefore, this study will assess this aspect by conducting a survey in secular and nonsecular schools and comparing the findings to evaluate the differences in parental mediation strategies.

Although maintaining family values is essential for preserving family cohesion, restricting exposure to varied viewpoints might hinder the child's development of critical thinking skills and autonomy. As a result, the child's overall growth and ability to form independent opinions and beliefs may be compromised, potentially affecting how they interact with the broader community. Therefore, understanding the effects of parental mediation strategies on a child's development and autonomy requires understanding the parental role in the child's development and independence.

Recent research conducted in 2023 on the influence of parental role orientation on children's personality formation included interviews with five parents from China. Parental role orientation refers to the "beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that parents adopt when it comes to their roles as parents."³⁰ The study revealed that parents' roles and responsibilities are crucial in shaping their children's personalities. It emphasised that effective

²⁹ Christopher Layton and David Hansen 'Religion and Gender in the Impact of Parental Mediation on Self-censorship and Attitudes toward Mediation' *Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2013, 1, Article 170) <<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jur/vol2013/iss1/170>> accessed 20 August 2024.

³⁰ Zeijing Meng, Loy Chee Luen and Noraini Hj Zainal Abidin, 'Parental Role Orientation's Influence on Children's Personality Formation' (2023) *1 International Journal of Education & Technology*.

parenting should involve emotional support, discussion, guidance, trust, and a strong sense of parental responsibility to foster favourable cognitive skills and social development, ultimately promoting the child's well-being and autonomy.³¹

Autonomy refers to “self-determination” or “self-management” and encompasses various aspects, such as freedom of action and moral responsibility. Scholars like Freeman define autonomy as the ability to make appropriate and independent life choices. To assess autonomy, it is essential to look at two main factors:³² cognitive skills, and the willpower to acknowledge one's independence. Cognitive skills involve the ability to think rationally and morally when faced with choices and the willpower to act according to one's deliberate desires rather than immediate impulses.

Children's autonomy is a controversial topic, scholars often view children as individuals enjoying limited independence. This perception is rooted in the idea that children do not possess the same rights to self-expression as adults and cannot reason and make decisions in their best interests. Thus, they should not be allowed to act autonomously until they become rational. Additionally, concerns were raised about the consequences of granting children too much autonomy, including the potential erosion of parental authority and the risk of exposing children to risks. However, it is acknowledged that children possess a certain degree of autonomy, primarily regarding their capacity for rational cognition, morality, and willpower, as these conditions also apply to them.³³

This argument is supported by the research of Stipek et al, who argue that children begin to develop self-reflection abilities before the age of three, which enables them to reflect on and control their desires. They suggest that children can engage in causal reasoning and both inductive and deductive reasoning, which are indicators of autonomy. Additionally, children demonstrate

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Ting Ke, 'The Development of Children's Autonomy and Reasonable Paternalistic Intervention' (2023) 10 *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

³³ *ibid.*

a certain level of willpower, as they can exercise self-control, delay gratification for rewards, and persist in learning skills despite challenges. These abilities suggest that children possess a degree of autonomy.³⁴

Studying the autonomy of children under the scope of paternalism adds another layer of contradictory opinions. Some scholars argue that paternalistic interventions might restrict children's choices and hinder their autonomy. Kleinig suggests that making poor decisions is crucial for personal development. Mill adds that individuals, including children, are best suited to judge their own interests, and thus paternalism restricts their autonomy. However, paternalistic intervention does not always limit autonomy. Kultgen asserts that moral autonomy depends on rational choices, and parents' intervention in irrational choices might not diminish autonomy. While children can sometimes make good decisions on their own, they may struggle to achieve their goals and may make choices that are not in their best interests. Meanwhile, adults often better understand what benefits children. Additionally, having too many choices can overwhelm children, leading to poor decisions and potentially harming their self-confidence and autonomy. Paternalistic intervention can help children focus on essential matters, reduce mistakes, and avoid unnecessary distractions. Moreover, not everyone learns from their mistakes. Their choices might reinforce negative behaviours, making paternalistic guidance necessary.³⁵

Furthermore, some scholars argue that paternalistic intervention may undermine respect for children's autonomy by imposing adult values. Vandever suggests that while such intervention might protect a child's interests, it may fail to respect their independence. However, children's values are inevitably shaped by their parents, who play a vital role in this process. While it is crucial to avoid indoctrinating children into their parents' worldview, not all paternalistic interventions are disrespectful. When parents guide children's actions to align with their true desires, it can enhance self-esteem and support personal goals, showing that reasonable paternalism can contribute positively to a child's development.³⁶

³⁴ Ting Ke, 'The Development of Children's Autonomy and Reasonable Paternalistic Intervention' (2023) 10 *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

Based on the previous debates, the concept of reasonable paternalism has emerged. This approach dictates that parental interventions should be “child-centred”,³⁷ with the primary goal of supporting rather than controlling the child. In other words, parents should recognise and address the child’s needs and interests, balancing freedom with guidance to protect and foster the child’s autonomy rather than imposing their own values or disregarding the child’s interests.

This research will draw on the various theoretical perspectives and empirical findings discussed, exploring how parents balance protection and empowerment in the digital age, especially with the unique risks posed by internet use compared to traditional media. Moreover, it will consider demographic factors, such as age and types of mediation strategies, especially with the advancement of technical tools.

Ultimately, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how parental mediation strategies contribute to or hinder the development of children’s ability to navigate media content and form their own opinions. Also, it will compare the mediation strategies parents follow in secular and nonsecular schools. This understanding is crucial for developing more effective parental guidance practices that support children’s wellbeing, autonomy, and capacity to engage critically with the world around them.

2.2 Literature gaps

While previous research conducted by SMEX in 2016 explored parental mediation strategies, it was an exploratory study limited to the adolescents’ perspective and conducted before TikTok gained popularity. This study aims to bridge that gap and explore the impact of parental digital mediation strategies on children’s autonomy in forming their own opinions in Beirut.

The research will focus on two key factors: the child’s ability to freely express their opinions and views, and their capacity to critically assess the content they encounter online. As previous theories have established a link between cognitive skills,

³⁷ Ting Ke, ‘The Development of Children’s Autonomy and Reasonable Paternalistic Intervention’ (2023) 10 Humanities and Social Sciences Communications.

self-expression, and autonomy, this research will assess these abilities within the framework of social media use and parental mediation strategies, an area that has not yet been explored. Additionally, it will investigate potential differences in mediation strategies between parents in secular and nonsecular schools, a topic that remains largely unexamined. While previous studies have looked at these strategies and their effectiveness, the specific impact on adolescents' autonomy in opinion formation has not been thoroughly studied.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings of this thesis. First, mediation strategies will be categorised according to a study that incorporates the parenting dimension, directly linking these strategies to their impact on child autonomy. Parental autonomy support practices that either support or suppress child autonomy will then be analysed through the lenses of Separation-Individuation Theory and Self-Determination Theory. Lastly, parental mediation strategies in Lebanon will be assessed within the broader context of children's digital rights, as outlined by the UNCRC and General Comment 25.

3.1 Theoretical framework on mediation strategies

The questions related to parental mediation strategies in the adolescent and parents' questionnaire, in addition to the analysis of the findings, are based on a 2019 study by Zaman, Nouwen, and Van Leeuwen on online parental mediation strategies. The study investigates parental mediation behaviours in light of parenting dimensions. These dimensions reflect parents' intentions, such as feelings, goals, and thoughts, to assess better the overall effect of mediation practices on adolescent autonomy. The study explores the mediation tools, the reasoning behind their use, and how they are used. It distinguishes between mediation practices, parenting dimensions, mediation tools, and the overall impact on the child-parent relationship and the child's autonomy and differentiates between various parental mediation practices ranging from monitoring, active mediation, and restrictions through several parenting dimensions, including proactive control, reactive

control, parental support, and psychological control. The following table summarises the mediation practices, the parenting dimensions, and the tools parents use under each dimension, along with the effect on the adolescent's autonomy:³⁸

Parental mediation practices	Parenting dimensions	Tools used	Effects on adolescent's autonomy
Monitoring	Behavioural control: Proactive	Filtering and blocking certain content and parental software, as well as helping set up privacy settings.	Limits autonomy if not coupled with discussion and support; adolescents can feel controlled and restricted.
	Parental support: Monitoring is based on a trusting relationship. Parents are empathetic to the adolescent.	Monitor from a distance, initiating open communication and showing empathy to adolescents.	Promotes autonomy by fostering a relationship of trust and responsibility.

³⁸ Bieke Zaman, Marije Nouwen and Karla Van Leeuwen, 'Challenging Adolescents' Autonomy' in Leila Green at al, *The Routledge Companion to Digital Media and Children* (Routledge 2020) 195.

Parental mediation practices	Parenting dimensions	Tools used	Effects on adolescent's autonomy
Active Mediation (Communication, Co-use)	Parental Support: Monitoring is based on a trusting relationship. Parents are empathetic to the adolescent.	Joint media use, initiating discussions and dialogue.	Enhances autonomy by promoting self-regulation and informed decision-making. Parents are more aware of their children's media use, without them experiencing this behaviour as controlling
	Behavioural Control- Proactive: monitoring in order to minimise online risks, but without supporting autonomy.	Discussions and co-use of medial platforms to control and prevent or minimise the risks associated with online activities without supporting autonomy.	Restricts autonomy and weakens the parent-child relationship.
Restrictions	Behavioural Control- Proactive: monitoring in order to minimise online risks, but without supporting autonomy.	Parental software, privacy settings, content filters, parental software, privacy settings.	Limits autonomy.
	Behavioural Control: Reactive	Reactive corrective measures (e.g., taking away devices, blocking access post-incident)	Significantly limits autonomy and can be seen as arbitrary and punitive.
	Psychological Control	Threats with restrictions, guilt inducement, and emotional manipulation.	Severely restricts autonomy, leads to adverse psychological impacts and reduced intrinsic motivation, and has a negative influence on the development of the adolescent.

Table 1: Matrix of parental mediation practices, parenting dimensions, tools, and effect on the autonomy

Monitoring:

01 —Proactive behavioural control:

This includes controlling and monitoring the adolescent's digital activities to minimise or prevent online harm. It hinders the child's autonomy if not coupled with discussion and explanation of these measures. This dimension includes filtering and blocking certain content using parental software and helping set up privacy settings.

02 —Parental support:

This type of monitoring is based on a trusting or distant monitoring relationship. This mediation practice is based on discussion and communication. It ensures that parents are respectful of adolescents' needs and autonomy. Under this practice, parents usually are empathetic and initiate discussions to support the teenagers and respect their independence.

Active mediation (communication, co-use):

01 —Parental support:

Parents' active mediation includes open discussions and co-use of media, where parents show genuine interest and initiate conversations or shared activities without being controlling. This method enhances adolescent autonomy by promoting self-regulation and informed decision-making, as it respects the adolescent's perspectives and encourages mutual understanding.

02 —Proactive behavioural control:

In this model, parents' primary motivation for communication and co-use is controlling and preventing risks without supporting the child's autonomy. This can restrict the adolescent's autonomy by framing interactions around supervision and risk aversion.

Restrictions:

01 —Reactive behavioural control:

When parents' control is mainly corrective, used as a response to unacceptable behaviours, this dimension does not consider adolescents' needs and autonomy.

02 —Psychological control:

This combines threats with restrictions. It is a form of manipulation, in which parents pressure adolescents to feel, act, or think in a certain way. Guilt and shame are the most common forms of coercion. This form of mediation has a negative impact on teenagers' development as it restricts their rights and suppresses their need for autonomy by imposing expectations on their compliance.

03 —Proactive parental mediation:

This form of control includes restrictive measures designed to protect children from online risks associated with their activities, but it does not support the child's autonomy. The methods employed involve filtering and blocking content, using parental control software, and setting privacy settings to prevent exposure to negative media influences.

This study assumes that communication and dialogue are essential for supporting autonomy using various tools. Even proactive restrictive dimensions may have a less negative influence on a child's autonomy if they are accompanied by communication and dialogue, which fosters a child-parent bond and reinforces trust and responsibility. To understand how these parental strategies and dimensions affect the autonomy of the child, the research will delve into the leading theories on the development of independence and the factors that promote this characteristic within the child.

3.2 Theoretical framework on parental autonomy support

There are two theories that will guide this study on how parents support their children's autonomy: self-determination theory (SDT) and separation-individuation theory. These theories outline different ways parents can support autonomy: promoting independence (PI) and promoting volitional functioning (PVF). PVF is a parental strategy involving parents guiding and supporting adolescents in their decision-making process rather than imposing solutions or relinquishing control. This approach enables

adolescents to experience a sense of self-determination when addressing personal issues. It is a method of autonomy support where parents suggest alternatives, connect them to the adolescents' values and goals, and allow the adolescents to resolve issues independently.³⁹

3.2.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was developed by Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan. It delves into the exploration of self-autonomy based on two types of motivation: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation.

- **Autonomous motivation** refers to doing something that aligns with the person's values and opinions, including internal personal derives and certain external kinds of motives.
- **Controlled motivation** encompasses “external regulations”, such as when a person acts based on their expectation of facing punishment or external reward, and “introjected regulations”, when a person acts to meet their own internal pressures, like trying to avoid feeling guilty or gain self-approval.⁴⁰

SDT proposes that the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are fundamental and universal. The theory's viewpoint on parental autonomy support emphasises the promotion of volitional functioning (PVF), which involves understanding children's perspectives, providing explanations, avoiding control, and offering choices. PVF frames autonomy development in terms of alignment between beliefs and actions, recognising that this alignment only occurs when individuals are free from external control. It is considered significant in diverse cultures that prioritise interdependence over individualism.⁴¹ The theory identifies two primary individual differences:

³⁹ 'Promotion of Volitional Functioning (PVF)' <www.psychology-lexicon.com/cms/glossary/49-glossary-p/15018-promotion-of-volitional-functioning-pvf.html> accessed 5 July 2024.

⁴⁰ Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, 'Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health' (2008) 49 *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie Canadienne* 182.

⁴¹ Amy McCurdy and Marta Benito-Gomez, 'Measurement of Parental Autonomy Support: A Review of Theoretical Concerns and Developmental Considerations' (2020) *Journal of Family Theory & Review*.

01 —Causality Orientations:

This refers to how people generally approach motivation and behaviour regulation, of which there are three types:

- **Autonomous orientation** is when people feel self-directed and make choices based on personal interests and values. This develops when all three basic needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy) are consistently met.⁴²
In this theory, competence refers to the “desire to seek out and master challenges and interact effectively with the environment,” relatedness is the “desire to form and maintain strong bonds with others,” and autonomy is the “desire to feel choiceful and experience “ownership” of one’s actions.”⁴³
- **Controlled orientation** is when people feel pressured to act in specific ways due to external rewards or punishments. It develops when the needs for competence and relatedness are somewhat met, but the need for autonomy is not.
- **Impersonal orientation** occurs when people feel a lack of control and motivation. It develops when all three basic needs are generally unmet.⁴⁴

02 —Aspirations or life goals:

Refers to long-term goals that guide people’s activities. Aspirations are influenced by how well basic needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy) are met. These goals fall into two categories. First, intrinsic aspirations are goals related to personal growth, relationships, and helping others, such as developing

⁴² Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, ‘Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health’ (2008) 49 *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie Canadienne* 182.

⁴³ Sakhavat Mammadov and Dogan Tozoglu, ‘Autonomy Support, Personality, and Mindset in Predicting Academic Performance Among Early Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Self-Determined Motivation’ (2023) 60 *Psychology in the Schools* 3754.

⁴⁴ Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, ‘Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health’ (2008) 49 *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie Canadienne* 182.

close relationships, contributing to society, and personal development. Second, extrinsic aspirations are the goals related to external rewards and recognition, such as seeking wealth, fame, and physical attractiveness.⁴⁵

3.2.2 Separation-Individuation Theory

While PVF's focus on aligning children's actions with intrinsic motivations may not directly address the need for independence and self-reliance, particularly at developmental stages where these traits become more critical. Separation-Individuation Theory fills this gap by promoting the necessary distance and individuation processes that prepare adolescents for the challenges and responsibilities of adulthood, which PVF does not explicitly address. This theory emphasises the importance of adolescents distancing themselves psychologically and emotionally from their parents to achieve autonomy.

The Separation- Individuation Theory's perspective on parental autonomy support, emphasises Promoting Independence (PI) as it states that the promotion of healthy autonomy development involves adolescents letting go of childhood dependencies and taking responsibility for their own lives and decisions. It does not exclude the possibility of having a secure attachment and relationship between a parent and a child. Instead, it suggests a gradual shift from emotional dependencies, which is the central aspect of childhood, to an emotional relationship between self-sufficient adults.⁴⁶

According to this theory, parents promote independence by encouraging self-expression, decision-making, and problem-solving. However, the implementation of this theory cannot be universal as it suits more individualistic Western societies and might not fit all cultural contexts.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, 'Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health' (2008) 49 *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie Canadienne* 182.

⁴⁶ Amy McCurdy and Marta Benito-Gomez, 'Measurement of Parental Autonomy Support: A Review of Theoretical Concerns and Developmental Considerations' (2020) *Journal of Family Theory & Review*.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

3.2.3 Measuring parental autonomy support

Due to the importance of autonomy as a critical psychosocial challenge from infancy through adolescence, researchers have extensively studied the factors that promote successful autonomy development. Parenting emerges as a significant and consistent predictor of this development. Parents who encourage exploration, offer choices, and support independent decision-making in line with personal preferences and values are considered to exhibit high levels of autonomy support. However, the manifestation of these behaviours varies greatly depending on the child's age.⁴⁸

Therefore, parental autonomy support was measured across several developmental stages: infancy/early childhood (15 months - 3 years), middle childhood (7-12 years), early adolescence (10-13 years), middle adolescence (14-17 years), and late adolescence (18- mid-20s).⁴⁹

Parental autonomy support in early and middle adolescence:

When discussing early and middle adolescents, we refer to children aged 10-13 years (early adolescence) and 14-17 years (middle adolescence). During this phase, adolescents strive to develop an autonomous identity separate from their parents. They also spend more time with peers than with family, requiring a balance between parental authority and adolescent independence.⁵⁰

In this period, parental autonomy support involves encouraging self-endorsed decision-making and helping adolescents align their actions with their values. Hence, PVF becomes more critical for positive adolescent adjustment. Promoting parental autonomy support for adolescents at this age could include many practices, such as:⁵¹

- Communicative support: engaging in conversations about decision-making, listening to adolescents' views, and showing empathy.
- Emotional support: assisting with emotional processing and regulation.

⁴⁸ Amy McCurdy and Marta Benito-Gomez, 'Measurement of Parental Autonomy Support: A Review of Theoretical Concerns and Developmental Considerations' (2020) *Journal of Family Theory & Review*.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

- Cognitive support: helping adolescents develop independent views, opinions, and beliefs.
- Decision-making support: including adolescents in decision-making processes and supporting their choices.

Adolescents often desire more autonomy earlier than their parents are willing to grant, leading to differing views on autonomy support. During early and middle adolescence, parents must balance supporting independence with maintaining a connected relationship. Effective parental autonomy support is linked to higher self-regulation, better social adjustment, and a lower risk of having depressive symptoms. Although generally stable, this support changes during adolescence as parents renegotiate authority, often giving younger adolescents fewer opportunities for autonomous decision-making compared to older adolescents.⁵²

3.2.4 Application of the theories, measurement challenges, and gaps

Researchers rely heavily on adolescent reports to assess parental autonomy support during early and middle adolescence. This reliance is due to the adolescents' abilities to complete self-report questionnaires. Hence, parental reports and observational assessments have become rare. This makes it hard to distinguish between actual parental autonomy support and adolescents' perceptions of it and determine how well adolescents' reports match their parents.⁵³

This research addresses this gap as both adolescents and parents were asked to assess the difference between the actual parental autonomy support and adolescents' perceptions of it. However, the differentiation between PI and PVF measures might pose a challenge in assessing autonomy support accurately.

Therefore, the research investigates the impact of parental mediation strategies on adolescents' autonomy in opinion formation, guided by the principles of separation-individuation theory and SDT. These theories assess the impact of parental autonomy support practices on the child's overall autonomy. However, this

⁵² Amy McCurdy and Marta Benito-Gomez, 'Measurement of Parental Autonomy Support: A Review of Theoretical Concerns and Developmental Considerations' (2020) *Journal of Family Theory & Review*.

⁵³ *ibid.*

research will focus on the cognitive support practices and communication practices that directly influence adolescents' independence of opinion formation, as the SDT theorists highlight that individuals under control feel pressured when independently forming their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

To achieve this, the questionnaire included questions in both the adolescent and parental surveys to evaluate how parental autonomy support practices influence their children's online activities. The practices assessed include communicative and cognitive support in the digital sphere, as well as overall parental mediation strategies. The parents' responses were compared with the children's self-assessments of their cognitive skills, focusing on their critical thinking abilities in social media and their comfort in expressing themselves freely to determine the impact of their parents' communicative and cognitive support. Additionally, the survey examined the adolescents' perception of their parents' involvement in their online activities. Although the research does not adequately assess emotional and decision-making support, some of the results provide indicators related to these variables.

3.3 Child digital rights and parental mediation under the UNCRC and General Comment 25

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) established essential principles for children's rights, which have been further clarified and adapted to the digital environment through General Comment No 25, adopted in March 2021. This General Comment underscores the profound and growing significance of the digital environment in children's lives, as it will enable them to further exercise their civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights.⁵⁴

The General Comment introduces a digital lens to the UNCRC's rights, guiding State parties and parents on how to protect, respect, and fulfil these rights in the digital world. The Comment emphasises four key principles that should guide the implementation of children's rights in the digital environment:⁵⁵

⁵⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

⁵⁵ *ibid*, General Principles.

01 —NonDiscrimination:

ensuring equal access to digital technologies for all children, with proactive measures to prevent discrimination, especially for vulnerable groups.

02 —Best Interests of the Child:

prioritising children’s rights in all actions related to the digital environment, ensuring their protection and empowerment.

03 —Right to Life, Survival, and Development:

balancing the protection of children from digital risks with the recognition of digital technologies’ role in their development.

04 —Respect for the Views of the Child:

encouraging active participation in digital matters, promoting children’s ability to express opinions, and ensuring their voices are heard in policy and service development

Children’s digital rights are a shared responsibility between state parties and parents or caregivers. State parties must regulate, enforce laws, and respect children’s rights. Meanwhile, Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) emphasises the state’s obligation to support parents and caregivers in the upbringing and development of their children, ensuring that the child’s best interests are their primary concern.⁵⁶

In the context of the digital age, General Comment No 25 extends the principles of Article 18, stressing that states should ensure parents and caregivers possess the necessary digital literacy and resources to effectively guide and support their children in navigating the digital environment. This guidance is essential for protecting children from online risks and fostering their autonomy, privacy, and responsible digital engagement. It states, “Such guidance should support parents in sustaining an appropriate balance between the child’s protection and emerging autonomy, based on mutual empathy and respect, over prohibition or control”.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990).

⁵⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children’s Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

The General Comment acknowledges that in the digital environment, it is essential to consider the evolving capacities and skills of children as they gain independence and agency. This progression affects how they interact with digital spaces. Therefore, it is necessary that parents employ age-appropriate protection measures. These methods should be informed by up-to-date research across disciplines. Additionally, it stresses the state's responsibility of supporting the parents in this mission and raising their awareness of the importance of balancing protecting their children and respecting their capacities, privacy, needs, and autonomy.⁵⁸

These interpretations emphasise the need for continuous research on the impact of parental mediation tools on a child's overall development and autonomy. They also highlight the parents' responsibility to respect and fulfil the child's digital rights and employ methods appropriate to their cognitive skills and capabilities.

This chapter will explore the interplay between children's digital rights and the parental role in realising these rights while also addressing the controversial debates surrounding them. It will examine the most related articles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and General Comment No 25 that directly impact children's protection and autonomy in opinion formation. It will cover digital access to information, the right to opinion formation, expression, and being heard in the digital world, as well as freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in the digital sphere. Additionally, the chapter will discuss children's right to privacy in the digital world and their protection from digital violence and economic, sexual, and other forms of exploitation.

Access to information

Article 17 of the CRC emphasises a child's right to access information and the state's obligation to encourage the production and dissemination of child-friendly content to facilitate the child's access to a wide range of information while protecting them from harmful material.⁵⁹ The article is broad and open to interpretation, covering both traditional and online media. It encounters difficulties in the digital realm, specifically in striking a balance

⁵⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021). IV. Evolving capacities.

⁵⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Article 17.

between children’s entitlement to access knowledge and the imperative to safeguard them from detrimental content. There are legal limitations on harmful media, but these limitations must be reasonable and not excessively limit children’s rights to engage in such media. There are instances where children’s ability to obtain information may clash with society or parental standards, particularly in regard to subjects like sexual health and identity. Another obstacle lies in guaranteeing that children are provided with information that is suitable for their age on their rights, particularly their digital rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child highlights the importance of easily obtainable, impartial information, particularly concerning health, sexuality, and civil rights. It is important for states to promote the production of a wide range of content and guarantee that children have convenient access to this knowledge on the internet.⁶⁰

General Comment No 25 recognises that the digital environment offers a unique opportunity for children to exercise this right and further elaborates on the responsibilities of State parties, ensuring that this access is broad, diverse, and tailored to children’s evolving capacities. This involves promoting the creation and dissemination of age-appropriate content from various national and international sources, particularly for children with disabilities and those from minority groups.

While safeguarding children from harmful and untrustworthy content is crucial, such protections must not infringe upon their rights to access information. The General Comment underscores the need for a balanced approach, where content labelling and guidance are provided to help children and their caregivers navigate the digital environment safely.⁶¹

The committee interpretation emphasises, “Content controls, school filtering systems and other safety-oriented technologies should not be used to restrict children’s access to information in the digital environment; they should be used only to prevent the flow of harmful material to children”. This highlights the importance of striking the right balance between protection and

⁶⁰ Eva Lievens and others, ‘Children’s Rights and Digital Technologies’ in Liefwaard, Ton and Kilkelly, Ursula, (eds.) *International Human Rights of Children*. International Human Rights (Springer 2018) < <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/84871> > accessed 9 June 2024.

⁶¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children’s Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

empowerment; this responsibility lies heavily on the parents and caregivers who play a critical role in mediating their children's access to information in the digital world. While state parties are responsible for creating a safe and informative digital environment, parents are on the front lines, making daily decisions about what content their children can and cannot access.

Parents often find themselves in a delicate position, where they must protect their children from potentially harmful content while also ensuring that they do not overly restrict access to valuable information that is essential for their children's development.

Content moderation practices should be designed to protect children's rights without unnecessarily limiting their access to information. This requires parents to be informed and proactive, understanding not only the risks of the digital environment but also its potential to be a rich source of knowledge and personal growth for their children.

The right to opinion formation, expression, and to be heard

Article 12 of the CRC mandates that States ensure children's right to be heard and express their opinions freely in all matters affecting them, taking into account their age and maturity.⁶² This article underscores the importance of recognising children's capacity to form their own views and ensuring that their opinions are given due consideration.

Article 13 further solidifies this by emphasising freedom of expression, which allows children to seek, receive, and share information and ideas, including speech, writing, print, art, and digital platforms. This provision is crucial for children's development, as it guarantees their right to access information, cultivate critical thinking skills, and express their thoughts and ideas. While this right is essential, it is subject to minimal restrictions aimed at protecting national security, public order, public health, morals, and respecting the rights and reputations of others.

⁶² Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Articles 12, 13.

General Comment No 25 on children’s digital rights extends these freedoms into the digital realm, acknowledging that the digital environment offers significant opportunities for expression, particularly for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations. The digital space, with its vast array of platforms and tools, empowers children to share their voices, engage in discussions, and participate in matters that concern them on a global scale.⁶³

It also elaborates on the limitations and responsibilities that come with this right in the digital context. For example, parents may impose restrictions like safety filters to protect their children from harmful content or online predators. These restrictions, while necessary, must be lawful, proportionate, and clearly communicated to the child. It is essential that these measures do not overly restrict the child’s freedom of expression or hinder their ability to engage in the digital world.⁶⁴

Effective parental mediation involves setting boundaries that protect the child, while still allowing them the freedom to explore and express themselves. This might include monitoring online activities to some extent and having open discussions about the risks and responsibilities associated with digital expression. Parents should also ensure that any restrictions are transparent and understandable, helping children grasp why certain measures are in place.

Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion

Article 14 of the CRC emphasises the State’s obligation to respect children’s freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It also acknowledges the essential role of parents or caregivers in guiding children to exercise these freedoms according to their evolving capacities.⁶⁵ This article is particularly relevant in the context of the digital environment, where children’s beliefs and values can be shaped, expressed, and sometimes challenged.

In the digital age, General Comment 25 further discussed the state’s responsibility to safeguard these freedoms by ensuring that the digital environment is designed and regulated to respect children’s rights. This includes implementing robust data protection regulations and design standards that prevent the use

⁶³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children’s Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Article 14.

of technologies, such as emotional analytics or automated inferences, from manipulating or interfering with a child's freedom of thought, conscience, or religion. These protections are crucial to ensuring that automated systems do not influence children's behaviour, emotions, or beliefs, nor limit their opportunities based on their personal or religious convictions.⁶⁶

Moreover, any limitations imposed on their right to manifest their beliefs in the digital space must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate, ensuring that children can freely express and explore their beliefs without undue interference or discrimination.⁶⁷

Parents and caregivers play a vital role in mediating their children's digital experiences, particularly in the sensitive areas of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. As children navigate the digital world, they encounter a vast array of content, ideas, and influences that can shape their beliefs and values. Parental mediation is essential in helping children process and understand these influences in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities.

Parents can support their children's autonomy by encouraging them to ask questions, express doubts, and explore different viewpoints, all within a safe and supportive environment. By doing so, parents not only protect their children but also empower them to develop a solid and independent sense of identity grounded in their own freely chosen beliefs and values.

Right to privacy

Article 16 of the CRC grants children the fundamental right to privacy, ensuring legal protection against arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home, or correspondence. This right is vital for safeguarding children's dignity and personal integrity, allowing them the space to develop their identity and personal relationships free from intrusion.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Article 16.

General Comment No 25 elaborates on the application of Article 16 in the digital environment, acknowledging that children's personal data are frequently collected, processed, and shared by various entities, including public institutions, private businesses, and even family members.⁶⁹

In this context, the right to privacy is not only a matter of protecting children from direct intrusions but also involves safeguarding their personal data from exploitation, ensuring that any data processing is lawful, transparent, and proportionate. It also emphasises that children must be informed about their privacy rights, including their rights to access, control, and consent to the use of their personal data. It also underscores the importance of protecting children's privacy across all settings, including online spaces, and ensuring that surveillance or data processing does not infringe on their other rights.⁷⁰

It further highlights the need for respect toward children's use of avatars or pseudonyms online, as these tools can protect their privacy and enable them to explore the digital world safely. Importantly, it advocates for the availability of services that support children without requiring parental consent, ensuring that privacy and protection standards are upheld.⁷¹

Parents and caregivers have a critical role in respecting and safeguarding their children's right to privacy, particularly in the digital world. Balancing a child's right to digital privacy with the need for parental, societal, and governmental protection poses significant challenges, particularly in the digital environment. While it is crucial to protect children from online risks, this must not come at the expense of their rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and association. For example, the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires parental consent for processing children's data, could restrict teens' access to information and social interaction. As data collection becomes more automated, the reliance on parental consent is increasingly problematic.⁷²

⁶⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² Eva Lievens and others, 'Children's Rights and Digital Technologies' in Liefwaard, Ton and Kilkelly, Ursula, (eds.) *International Human Rights of Children*. International Human Rights (Springer 2018) < <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/84871> > accessed 9 June 2024.

Additionally, the practice of “sharenting,” where parents share images and videos of their children online without their consent, further complicates the issue. This practice conflicts with the child’s right to privacy, as Article 16 of the UNCRC outlines. Although some view “sharenting” as a form of parental self-representation, it often exposes children’s lives to the public without their input. Parents should prioritise their child’s best interests and involve them in decisions about sharing personal information.⁷³

The right to protection from digital violence against children

Article 19 of the CRC emphasises that States Parties must implement laws, policies, and educational initiatives to protect children from all forms of physical or mental harm, including violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, particularly while under the care of parents, guardians, or other caregivers. These protective measures should include creating social programs that provide support for both children and their caregivers, as well as establishing systems for preventing, identifying, reporting, investigating, treating, and monitoring cases of child maltreatment.⁷⁴

The General comment introduces new avenues for violence against children in the digital world, including sexual exploitation, cyberaggression, and the promotion of self-harm. Such risks are heightened during crises like pandemics when children spend more time online. Offenders, including those within a child’s circle of trust, may use digital platforms to solicit, abuse, and exploit children, with activities ranging from the live streaming of abuse to cyberbullying and coercion into creating sexualised content. States parties are urged to adopt and enforce strong legislative and regulatory measures to protect children from all forms of violence in the digital space, recognising the evolving capacities of children. Additionally, nonState groups, including terrorist

⁷³ Eva Lievens and others, ‘Children’s Rights and Digital Technologies’ in Liefwaard, Ton and Kilkelly, Ursula, (eds.) *International Human Rights of Children*. International Human Rights (Springer 2018) < <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/84871>> accessed 9 June 2024.

⁷⁴ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Article 19.

organisations, may exploit the digital environment to recruit children, and states must ensure that such recruitment is prohibited and that children involved are treated primarily as victims within the justice system.⁷⁵

While states are responsible for implementing laws and programs to protect children from physical and mental harm, parents are often the first line of defence in identifying and addressing potential dangers. This includes being vigilant about the content their children access online, monitoring their interactions, and guiding them on safe digital practices.

In the context of the digital environment, where new forms of violence such as sexual exploitation, cyberaggression, and the promotion of self-harm can emerge, parents must educate themselves on the risks associated with digital platforms, engage in open conversations with their children about online safety, and use appropriate parental controls and mediation strategies. This involves balancing the need to protect their children while also allowing them to develop autonomy and critical thinking skills.

Protection from economic, sexual and other forms of exploitation

Articles 32, 34, and 36 of the CRC mandate that the state must protect children from all forms of economic, sexual, and all forms of exploitation. This protection is fundamental to ensuring the safety and well-being of children, particularly in the context of their interactions with adults responsible for their care.⁷⁶

General Comment No. 25 extends these protections into the digital environment, emphasising the need to safeguard children from various forms of exploitation, including economic, sexual, and criminal exploitation, which have become increasingly prevalent online. States parties are called upon to review and enforce laws that specifically address these digital risks, ensuring that robust age verification systems and effective anti-trafficking measures are in place. Additionally, legislation must address cybercrimes, upholding high standards for cybersecurity and privacy to protect children in the digital realm.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

⁷⁶ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), Article 32, 34, 36.

⁷⁷ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No 25 (2021) on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment (2021).

In this context, the role of parents and caregivers in digital mediation is crucial. They are responsible for guiding children in navigating the digital environment safely, while also fostering their independence. This involves educating children about online risks, setting appropriate boundaries, and monitoring their online activities in a way that respects their evolving capacities and need for independence. Parents should aim to create a supportive environment where children feel empowered to explore the digital world but are also aware of potential dangers and how to avoid them.

In conclusion, the digital environment, with its opportunities and risks, requires a careful approach to upholding children's rights while ensuring their protection. General Comment No. 25 highlights the need to balance children's autonomy, privacy, and freedom of expression with necessary safeguards. Parents and caregivers, guided by state obligations, are crucial in mediating children's digital experiences, ensuring they are protected while also empowered to access information, form opinions, and engage responsibly online.

The discussed articles and the interpretation of the General Comment provide a solid foundation for analysing the results of parental mediation strategies applied by parents in Beirut. They offer an international child rights perspective on recommended parental mediation approaches, emphasising the balance parents must achieve between protection and empowerment. This serves as a vital framework for evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies in the digital age.

This chapter provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysing the results and findings of this research, drawing on key theories such as Self-Determination Theory and Separation-Individuation Theory, in addition to the perspective of child rights. These theories serve as a foundation for understanding the relationship between parental mediation strategies and adolescent autonomy in opinion formation. This research will also explore the extent to which these theories align with the empirical evidence, examining whether the anticipated correlations between parental mediation and adolescent autonomy are supported. In doing so, it will provide a nuanced evaluation of the relevance of these theoretical models within the context of this research.

4. Methods

4.1 Research design and data collection methods

This research utilises a quantitative and comparison approach by developing two questionnaires: one targeting adolescents aged 13 to 17, and another targeting parents of adolescents from the same age group. This methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of the influence of parental mediation on a child's autonomy in opinion formation, particularly in the context of social media usage. By capturing perspectives from both adolescents and parents and comparing the results in secular and nonsecular schools, this approach provides a complete picture of parental mediation strategies, child protection in the digital sphere, and their overall impact on the child's autonomy in forming opinions.

The parents' questionnaire, which included 24 multiple-answer questions, assessed their mediation strategies, involvement in developing critical thinking skills, and support for their children's right to expression. The adolescents' questionnaire, which included 23 multiple-answer questions, explored their social media usage, comfort level in expression and critical thinking, and perceptions of parental mediation practices.

The Self-Determination Theory, Separation-Individuation Theory, and the perspective of child rights guide the design of the research instruments, particularly the surveys administered to parents and adolescents. These theories informed the development of research questions and hypotheses by providing a framework for understanding the dynamics between parental mediation strategies and adolescent autonomy in opinion formation. For example, Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which were reflected in

questions that explore how parental mediation supports or hinders a child's independent thinking. Similarly, Separation-Individuation Theory informed questions about the adolescents' ability to express opinions without undue parental influence. The child rights perspective, specifically the balance between protection and empowerment from the CRC and General Comment 25, shaped questions on parents' responsibility in managing their children's digital activities while fostering autonomy. By integrating these theoretical models, the surveys targeted key aspects such as how mediation practices impact adolescents' critical thinking, comfort in self-expression, and the development of independent opinions in both secular and nonsecular school environments. Furthermore, these theories narrowed the scope of analysis based on their guiding principles on parental autonomy support.

Pilot testing was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of both questionnaires and to confirm that the language used in the surveys was comprehensible for adolescents aged 13-17, who encompass different cognitive and linguistic development levels. The pilot testing involved a sample of 10 adolescents and 10 parents. This preliminary phase allowed for identifying and correcting any ambiguities or misunderstandings in the questions, ensuring clarity and appropriateness for the target age group. Feedback from the pilot participants was instrumental in refining the questionnaires, thereby enhancing the overall quality and accuracy of the data collection instruments.

4.2 Sampling techniques

The sampling procedure for this research was meticulously designed to capture a diverse representation of adolescents and parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds and educational environments. Given the difficulty of accessing public schools without official permission, the sample was drawn entirely from private schools in different areas of Beirut. These schools varied in tuition costs to reflect different social levels, providing a comprehensive perspective on the experiences and responses of children from varied socioeconomic backgrounds.

Therefore, three private schools in Beirut, including two secular schools, were randomly selected. Consequently, 94% of the adolescent sample was drawn from these schools, representing a mix of secular and nonsecular environments. To ensure a balanced age representation, 6% of the sample included 17-year-old adolescents reached outside school settings.

Due to low response rates from parents within schools, around 60% of parental responses were collected randomly from the broader parent population in Beirut, ensuring a comprehensive dataset. The sample demographics considered variables such as age, gender, socioeconomic status.

A mixed approach was used to collect data from parents. While the sampling was random, the researcher also engaged directly with some parents to explain the questions, ensuring clarity and completeness of responses. This face-to-face interaction was supplemented with data collection via social media dissemination to enhance the response rate and representativeness of the sample.

The questionnaires were designed in both English and Arabic using KoBoToolbox, included multiple-choice questions for quantitative data collection, in addition to open-ended questions when needed. KoBoToolbox facilitated data collection without internet connectivity and ensured data security and confidentiality. Data from adolescents was collected via personal school visits, with questions explained and simplified to accommodate varying levels of comprehension and language proficiency.

4.3 Data analysis methods

Two types of analysis will be included in this research. In addition to running a correlation coefficient to test the hypothesis, the data will also be compared to the theoretical expectations of the previously discussed models to evaluate how well the empirical results align with them.

4.3.1 Quantitative data processing and visualisation

Quantitative data was thoroughly exported and cleaned using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarise the survey data. Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to explore the relationships between variables such as parental mediation strategies, the respondents' demographics, type of school (secular and nonsecular), adolescents' critical thinking skills, and autonomy.

Power BI's advanced data visualisation tools were leveraged to create interactive charts and graphs, which facilitated a detailed examination of trends, patterns, and differences in the data. This approach provided a robust framework for analysing the quantitative aspects of the research questions and presenting the findings in a clear and accessible manner.

4.3.2 Hypothesis testing

The data collected from adolescents and their parents were codified and analysed to test the research hypotheses. The responses were divided into three main variables:

- The independent variable, which is the mediation strategies (X)
- The first dependent variable, which is cognitive skills (Y1)
- The second dependent variable is the ability to self-expression (Y2)

These two dependent variables (cognitive skills and ability to self-expression) collectively create the dependent variable: The Child's Autonomy in Opinion Formation.

Independent variable: parental mediation strategies

The independent variable, parental mediation strategies, was constructed based on the collective score from children's and parents' responses to four key questions:

Q1: Frequency of discussing social media usage.

Q2: Frequency of discussion of viewed content on social media, including popular and trendy content.

Q3: What parental mediation tools are used? (multiple answer questions with seven options; respondents could choose more than one answer).

Q4: What restrictions are imposed on social media content (multiple answer questions with four options, respondents could choose more than one answer).

**Dependent variables (autonomy of opinion formation):
cognitive skills + ability to expression)**

— Cognitive skills (Y1):

The cognitive skills variable was constructed based on the collective score from children's responses to six questions:

Q1: Do you use social media to find out about news and events?

Q2: Are you confident in being able to verify the credibility of what you view on social media?

Q3: What do you do when you see something on social media that's hard to understand or makes you wonder?

Q4: How much do your parents stop you from engaging with different opinions on social media to keep you safe?

Q5: Do your parents stop you from talking to friends on social media if they think your friends might affect your opinions?

— Ability to self-expression (Y2):

The freedom of expression variable was constructed based on the collective score from children's responses to three questions:

Q1: Are you comfortable sharing opposing opinions or arguing on social media?

Q2: What usually happens when you and your parents talk about something you see differently on social media?

Q3: Are you okay with sharing your opinions and views, even if they oppose your parents'?

— Composite variable: autonomy

The autonomy variable was built on a composite score of the two dependent variables: cognitive skills and freedom of expression.

4.3.3 Codification and scoring

The codification of responses was based on the effect of each mediation tool on the child's autonomy in opinion formation, their level of comfort in expression, and their cognitive skills assessment, according to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Separation-Individuation Theory. The responses were codified as follows:

Mediation strategies:

- Strategies restricting the independence of the child: -1
- Strategies supporting the autonomy of the child: 1
- Strategies restricting the autonomy of the child if not accompanied by discussion: Scored based on parental responses about engagement in discussions (1 if yes, -1 if no)

Cognitive skills and ability to self-expression:

- Low cognitive skills and low critical thinking skills: -1
- Neutral responses related to cognitive skills: 0
- High cognitive skills and high critical thinking skills: 1
- Restricted abilities to express themselves: -1
- Neutral responses related to the ability to expression: 0
- High abilities to express themselves: 1

The variables were then summed to create composite variables reflecting mediation strategies, cognitive skills, and abilities of expression. The values of these variables ranged from -6 to 9 for mediation strategies and from -4 to 10 for autonomy. This composite scoring allowed for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between parental mediation strategies and the development of children's autonomy in opinion formation.

Additionally, the type of school was codified using the binary codification method (0,1) to run a correlation test between mediation strategies and the type of school

4.4 Ethical considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards throughout all stages. Anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured, with participants informed of their right to withdraw at any point. Parental consent was obtained through collaboration with schools, which included disseminating letters explaining the research objectives, requesting permission for children's participation, and signing the permission letters. A barcode on the letters was included, which allowed parents to scan and participate in the parental survey as well.

The questionnaires were designed in neutral language to avoid bias and were available in both English and Arabic. Furthermore, the data collected was devoid of personal identifying information, and stringent measures were implemented during data storage and analysis to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

5. Results

This chapter presents the insights derived from the data analysis of two datasets collected through surveys with adolescents and parents. It begins by exploring the demographics of the respondents, followed by their usage patterns and preferences for social media platforms.

Then, the research examines the findings on parental mediation strategies, adolescents' cognitive skills, and their ability to express themselves and the parent's practices, which support or suppress these abilities—key indicators of autonomy in opinion formation according to the previous theories. It explores how parental involvement and practices either supports or suppresses these capabilities, influencing the level of autonomy in adolescents.

This chapter provides a comparative analysis to delve deeper into the alignments and disparities in the parents' and adolescents' responses. It analyses digital parental mediation strategies from both perspectives and explores how adolescents perceive and interact with their parents' practices. Finally, it tests the hypotheses of this research by running a correlation coefficient test on the research variables.

5.1 Demographics of respondents

5.1.1 Adolescent respondents

The research gathered 220 responses from adolescent students aged 13-17. 52% of the respondents identified as female, whereas 47% identified as male, and 1% as other.

The responses came from a diverse range of students across grades 7-12. All data were collected from schools in Beirut, with 94% of the responses from three primary private schools and the remaining 6% from six other schools in the city. To assess the differences in responses between secular and nonsecular schools, the data was equally divided between responses from students in secular and nonsecular schools.

5.1.2 Parent respondents

In addition to responses from adolescents, 120 responses were collected from parents of adolescents aged 13-17 residing in Beirut. The parents' ages ranged from their 30s to 50s, with 59% in their 40s, 27% in their 30s, and 14% in their 50s. Gender distribution revealed a notable disparity: 79% of respondents were mothers, and 21% were fathers. This disparity may be attributed to 33% of the responding mothers not working and primarily focusing on home and childcare. These findings suggest that mothers play a more significant role in monitoring their children's online activities compared to fathers.

Due to the challenges encountered in collecting data from parents, as discussed in the limitations section, there was an imbalance in the types of schools represented in the parents' responses. Specifically, 64% of the responses came from parents of children attending secular schools; in comparison, only 36% were from parents of children in nonsecular private and public schools. Furthermore, 54% of parents reported having female daughters, while 46% reported having male sons.

5.2 Social media usage among adolescents and parents

5.2.1 Usage patterns



Figure 1: Adolescents' average hours spent on social media daily

The data reveals that social media is a significant aspect of adolescents' lives, consuming a large portion of their daily routines. Both adolescents' self-assessments and parents' evaluations indicate a consensus on the average duration of social media use, which is approximately five hours per day. Parents' awareness of their children's social media habits suggests they are paying attention to their children's online activities and their daily excessive time on social media.

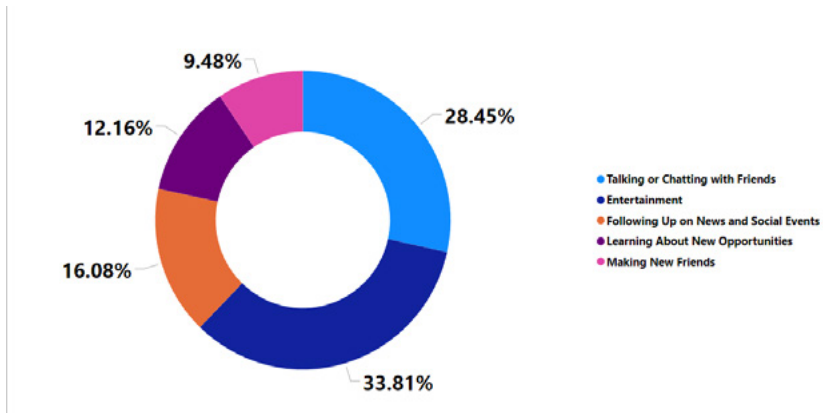


Figure 2: Adolescents' primary uses of social media

It also shows that adolescents predominantly use social media for virtual communication and entertainment, above all other purposes. The questionnaire invited adolescents to select multiple reasons for their social media usage. The results show that 34% of adolescents use social media for entertainment, while 28% use it primarily for communication, such as talking or chatting with friends. Only 16% use social media to stay updated on news and social events, 12% rely on it to discover new opportunities, and a small fraction, 9%, to cultivate new friendships.

5.2.2 Platform preferences

When adolescents were asked about their favourite social media platforms, TikTok emerged as their top choice. Instagram followed as the second most popular platform, with YouTube and Snapchat coming in third and fourth, respectively. Additionally, many respondents highlighted their significant engagement with online interactive games such as PUBG, Fortnite, and Jawaker. Most parents affirmed this preference order, demonstrating their awareness of where their children spend most of their online time.

When parents were asked about their social media preferences, they identified Facebook as their top platform, followed by Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. This response highlights a distinct contrast between parents' and children's social media preferences. While both groups converge on Instagram and YouTube as shared interests, children notably prefer TikTok, whereas parents predominantly favour Facebook.

These findings indicate that parents may be less aware of their children's activities on TikTok, including what they view and their interactions, such as liking, commenting, reposting, or even publishing their own short videos. This is significant because parents reported monitoring their children's activities on social media as one of their main mediation tools, as revealed later in the mediation strategies section.

5.2.3 Variations in social media usage between adolescents and parents

This divergence highlights generational differences in social media usage and preferences, which can be attributed to several factors. Such as:

- **Age demographics and platform appeal:** TikTok currently has immense popularity among younger users, particularly those in the Gen Z demographic, due to its short-form video content that is highly engaging and easily consumable. Research indicates that TikTok’s algorithm, which quickly adapts to user preferences and serves highly personalised content, appeals to the younger audience’s desire for quick entertainment and trends.⁷⁸ In contrast, Facebook’s user base has been aging over the years, with a significant portion of its users now being older adults, including parents. Facebook’s appeal lies in its comprehensive features, including community groups, event pages, news dissemination, and long-form posts, which cater to a more mature audience looking for diverse functionalities and connections with family and friends.⁷⁹
- **Content consumption and social interaction:** The common ground found in Instagram and YouTube reflects the platforms’ broad appeal across age groups. Instagram’s visual-centric nature and YouTube’s vast array of video content cater to varied interests, making them popular among both children and parents. Additionally, Gen-Z prefers TikTok for its viral challenges, music integration, and short video format, which aligns with their fast-paced content consumption habits.⁸⁰ On the other hand, parents favour Facebook for its comprehensive social networking features that support in-depth interactions and information sharing.⁸¹

This pattern of social media use indicates that while the overlap in platform usage, such as Instagram and YouTube, allows parents to oversee some of their children’s online activities, the preference gap between Facebook for parents and TikTok for adolescents illustrates a disconnect. This disconnect affects the types of content consumed and influences the opinions formed by both groups,

⁷⁸ Yuxin Yang, ‘Understanding Young Adults’ TikTok Usage’ (2020) UCSD Department of Communication.

⁷⁹ ‘Facebook User & Growth Statistics’ (23 February 2024) Backlinko <<https://backlinko.com/facebook-users>> accessed 10 August 2024.

⁸⁰ Yuxin Yang, ‘Understanding Young Adults’ TikTok Usage’ (2020) UCSD Department of Communication.

⁸¹ ‘Facebook User & Growth Statistics’ (23 February 2024) Backlinko <<https://backlinko.com/facebook-users>> accessed 10 August 2024.

making it harder for parents to fully understand and monitor their children's online behaviour.

5.3 Research findings on parental mediation strategies

The surveys conducted with adolescents and parents explored parental mediation strategies, the various tools and approaches parents use to protect their children from different types of online risks, and the overall effect on adolescents' autonomy. Both surveys included questions about the parental mediation tools used to assess the types of parental mediation strategies for children's online communication and interaction with peers and parental restrictions on viewing certain content on social media. It also explores the level and type of communication and discussion between the parents and children as it is considered an important mediation tool. The analysis will provide insights into the overall effect on the autonomy of forming adolescents' views.

5.3.1 Parental mediation tool

The questionnaires directed to both groups listed various mediation tools parents might use to protect their children digitally. The table below presents the difference between the adolescents' and parents' answers to the use of digital parental mediation tools:

Mediation Tool	Adolescent's Response	Parents Response
Monitoring who they talk to or chat with	23%	28%
Regularly checking browsing history	10%	17%
Monitoring content and interactions online	17%	16%
Imposing time restrictions	12%	17%
Applying no mediation tools	21%	9%
Applying content filtering	4%	5%
Using parental control software to block access to certain websites	12%	8%

Table 2: Adolescents' v parents' responses on the usage of parental mediation tools

Adolescents' and parents' answers closely align, with some variations explained by the data itself. The parental mediation practices are categorised as Monitoring, Active Mediation, and Restrictive. Additionally, the findings will be studied through the lens of SDT and separation-individuation theory.

According to the responses, the most common approach involves monitoring who children talk to or chat with online, reflecting concerns about the nature of their social interactions. Another notable approach is monitoring content and online interactions, where parents actively oversee their children's online activities, including the posts, pictures, and videos they share, as well as their interactions like sharing, liking, and commenting. These parental mediation practices fall under Active Mediation Practices and the dimension of parental support. It shows that parents respect adolescents' needs and autonomy, as they are monitoring from a distance and might be providing guidance when needed through communication.

Implementing time restrictions is also a common strategy, with parents setting rules for the amount of time spent online or using social media at specific times during the day. This mediation tool is categorised as a restrictive mediation approach, and aligns with reactive behavioural control dimension. This practice might include taking away the child's device after the agreed-upon time as a reaction, consequently hindering the child's autonomy.

Interestingly, there is a 5% higher response rate from parents than children regarding checking browsing history. This discrepancy suggests that parents might be using secretive approaches to monitoring their children's social media use without breaking their trust. This is further supported by the children's responses, with 21% stating that their parents trust them and do not use any mediation tools, compared to only 9% of parents who claimed they did not use any mediation tools. This implies that some parents might be discreetly monitoring their children's interactions to maintain trust. This Proactive Parental Mediation practice aims to protect children from online risks without necessarily supporting the child's autonomy. It may align with controlled motivation in SDT, where actions are driven by external pressures rather than the child's own values. Without open communication, this approach can undermine the development of critical skills and autonomy as it might be accompanied by reactive, proactive, or psychologically controlling behaviour.

Furthermore, 9% of parents reported not imposing any content restrictions. This group might prioritise open communication and trust. However, they may also be neglectful or do not understand social media well enough.

Finally, parents and children indicated that only 8% of parents rely on tools such as content filtering or parental control software. This finding highlights that parents rely less on proactive behavioural control practices. This indicates that parents are not limiting their children's autonomy, and children feel less controlled and restricted by their parents.

In conclusion, 44% of parents support their children's autonomy by relying on parental support practices. 17% use a restrictive approach, leaning toward reactive behavioural control, which suppresses the child's autonomy. Finally, 34% might restrict their independence if their practices are not supported by discussion. However, to investigate the effect of proactive behavioural control, the research will study the level of debate between the child and the parent in the section evaluating discussion and dialogue as a primary mediation tool.

5.3.2 Parental restrictions on navigating specific content

Type of content	Parents' Responses	Adolescents' Responses
Sexual	51%	51%
Political	14%	12%
Social	5%	6%
Religious	15%	14%
None	18%	15%

Table 3: Adolescents' v parents' responses on the content restrictions

The data collected from adolescents and parents provide valuable insights into the parental restrictions imposed on online content, revealing significant alignment between the responses from both groups.

According to the findings, half of the respondents from both groups reported restricted access to sexual content, reflecting a common parental concern about exposing their children to adult material. This suggests a widespread effort to protect children from inappropriate content for their age.

Nearly 15% of parents impose restrictions on religious content that does not align with family beliefs. This indicates a desire to maintain and reinforce spiritual and cultural values within the family, ensuring that children are exposed primarily to ideologies consistent with their upbringing.

Approximately 12-14% of parents restrict access to political platforms that do not align with family opinions. This reveals a substantial concern among parents about political influence and highlights a protective stance to preserve family political beliefs. Such restrictions may aim to shield children from conflicting viewpoints or political indoctrination. This potentially stifles adolescents' exploration of diverse viewpoints.

Between 5-6% of parents restrict platforms discussing specific social issues. This behaviour likely stems from a desire to prevent children from engaging with complex social issues that could shape their opinions at a young age. Parents might believe that shielding children from these discussions helps maintain a controlled environment for their moral and social development.

Interestingly, 15-18% of parents do not impose any content restrictions. This group may prioritise open communication and trust, allowing their children to explore online content freely while guiding them through discussions. However, they may also be neglectful or do not understand social media well enough. This approach can foster independence and the development of critical skills necessary for navigating and assessing online content independently if accompanied by discussion between the parent and the child.

Overall, the common thread among these strategies is the underlying intention to guide and influence children's development in a manner consistent with family values and beliefs. This parental control is classified as proactive monitoring or restrictive proactive practice. Depending on the parent's intention, it is considered restrictive if aimed solely at controlling the child and minimising risk without supporting autonomy, in other words, if the restrictions were not explained to the child. On the other hand, it is regarded as proactive monitoring if it includes support

for the child's autonomy by communicating these restrictions to the child and removing them gradually depending on their capabilities and cognitive skills. However, the level of discussion will be evaluated while investigating it as a primary tool later in this chapter.

5.3.3 Communicative support practices as a main mediation tool

Discussing social media content

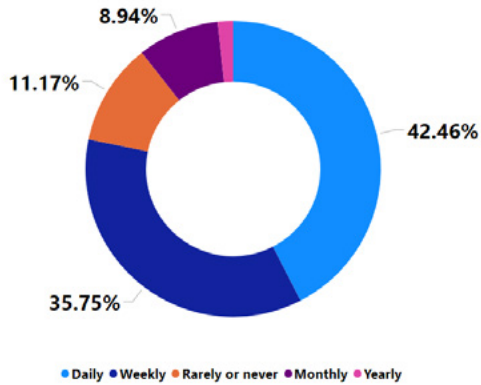


Figure 3: Adolescents' report on the frequency of discussing social media content with parents

When investigating more supportive approaches in parental mediation, which is classified as Parental Support Behaviours, both the adolescents and parents were questioned in the surveys about the frequency of discussions between them on daily news, events, or popular topics on social media. The results found that the largest segment of adolescents, approximately 78%, reported that their parents engage in these conversations daily or weekly. Similarly, 82% of parents indicated they engage in these discussions with their children just as frequently. This high level of frequent talks suggests that a significant majority of parents are

employing active mediation strategies by fostering an open communication environment. The communication approach supports the child's autonomy and critical thinking skills, as it encourages mutual understanding and shared media experiences.

Conversely, the remaining respondents from both groups stated that they either, on a monthly basis, rarely or never engage in such discussions. This group may fall under the classification of Reactive Behavioural Control or Proactive Parental Mediation, where communication is not prioritised. They might be focusing more on control and restriction rather than open dialogue and mutual understanding which hinders the child's autonomy.

The alignment between the responses reported by both adolescents and parents reflects a consistent practice of active engagement in their children's online experiences. In terms of Separation-Individuation Theory, the strategies that involve open communication and support align well with promoting independence (PI). Encouraging self-expression, decision-making, and problem-solving are critical aspects of this theory. The less restrictive approaches that involve open discussions can help adolescents distance themselves from childhood dependencies and develop a sense of self-sufficiency while maintaining a secure attachment with their parents.

Discussing social media usage

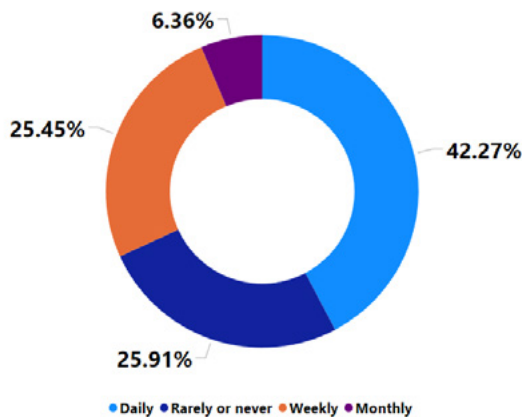


Figure 4: Adolescents' report on the frequency of discussing social media usage with parents

The data indicates that a significant number of parents discuss social media usage and their children's online activities daily, with 42% of adolescents and 46% of parents reporting they had regular conversations. Additionally, 25% of adolescents reported discussing these topics about once a week with their parents. This frequent interaction aligns with active mediation practices, where parents use open dialogue to support their child's independence and critical thinking skills. These discussions help in fostering a relationship of trust and mutual understanding.

Meanwhile, 31% of parents reported sometimes initiating discussions about their children's online activities and usage. This group might fall under proactive behavioural control. While they do engage in communication, it may be potentially driven by specific concerns or incidents rather than a continuous dialogue. This approach shows some level of support for the child's autonomy but is less consistent.

Furthermore, 18% of parents reported only engaging in these conversations when their children seek their opinions. This behaviour suggests reactive behavioural control, where parental engagement is dependent on the child's initiative. This approach might support autonomy but does not ensure the child's need for parental guidance and protection to support their social media experience.

In contrast, 31% of adolescents stated that on a monthly basis, rarely or never discuss their social media usage or online activities with their parents. In comparison, only 5% of parents reported the same. The notable difference between adolescents and parents in reporting the frequency of discussions points to a perception gap. Adolescents might feel that the talks are either insufficient in frequency or depth, perceiving a lack of meaningful engagement. On the other hand, parents might believe that even occasional or brief mentions are adequate. This discrepancy suggests that while parents might think they are providing enough support, adolescents may not feel the same level of engagement or guidance. Additionally, it could suggest that parents' responses were shaped by a desire to align with social expectations associated with their role as primary caregivers.

Analysing these findings indicates that parents lean toward active mediation. According to SDT, regular discussions about social media between parents and adolescents can support the child's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Frequent and open communication aligns with PVF, where children feel their perspectives are understood and valued, fostering autonomous motivation. On the other hand, less frequent and more reactive discussions may meet some of the child's needs for relatedness but might not fully support their autonomy and competence, as these interactions can feel more controlling or insufficiently supportive. The perception gap between parents and adolescents further underscores the importance of aligning parental practices with the child's need for meaningful and consistent engagement to fully support their self-determined motivation and overall well-being.

Parent's engagement in discussions about controversial or sensitive topics

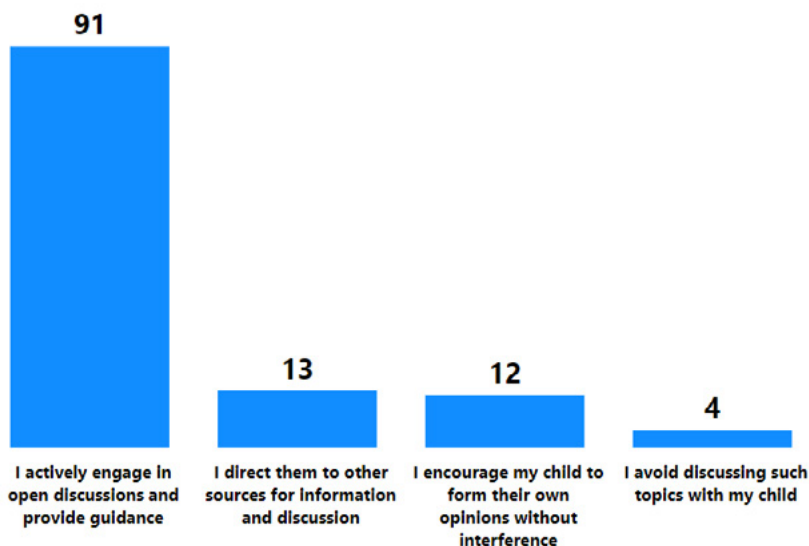


Figure 5: Parent's engagement in discussions about controversial or sensitive topics

The data reveals that 76% of parents reported actively engaging in open discussions and providing guidance when discussing controversial or sensitive topics with their children. This high percentage indicates a strong inclination towards active mediation and parental support, emphasising communication strategies. By

engaging in these discussions, parents are likely fostering a relationship of trust and promoting their children's autonomy by supporting self-regulation and informed decision-making, which ensures that parents are respectful of adolescents' needs and independence.

Additionally, 11% of parents direct their children to other sources of information, and 10% encourage them to form their own opinions. These practices further support the development of critical thinking and autonomy in adolescents, as they empower children to seek out information independently and develop their own viewpoints.

Only 3% of parents avoid discussing controversial topics with their children, indicating that the vast majority of parents recognise the importance of addressing sensitive issues and guiding their children through them. Avoidance of these discussions can lead to missed opportunities for teaching critical thinking and self-regulation, and may result in adolescents seeking information from less reliable sources or feeling unsupported in navigating complex topics.

In conclusion, parents in Beirut mostly use active mediation strategies, preferring to engage in discussions and dialogue with their children rather than using restrictive tools. This parental approach contributes to the development of decision-making and critical thinking skills, which eventually support the child's autonomy in opinion formation.

5.4 Factors related to the autonomy of the child

The questionnaire evaluated how parental autonomy support through mediation practices impacts their children's online activities, focusing on both communicative and cognitive support. Communicative support was measured by the extent to which parents encourage adolescents to express themselves freely and the adolescents' comfort in doing so. Cognitive support was assessed based on parents' roles in nurturing critical thinking in the digital sphere and evaluating the children's critical thinking skills. This assessment offers insights into the level of autonomy adolescents develop in forming their opinions and personal views while navigating social media content.

5.4.1 Autonomy in expression

The data revealed various attitudes when adolescents were asked about their comfort level in expressing their opinions and engaging in discussions on social media. On the other hand, the parents also demonstrated different levels of support for their children when it comes to their freedom of expression. These levels of support varied according to various situations and settings as well.

Adolescent's comfort level in expressing themselves on social media

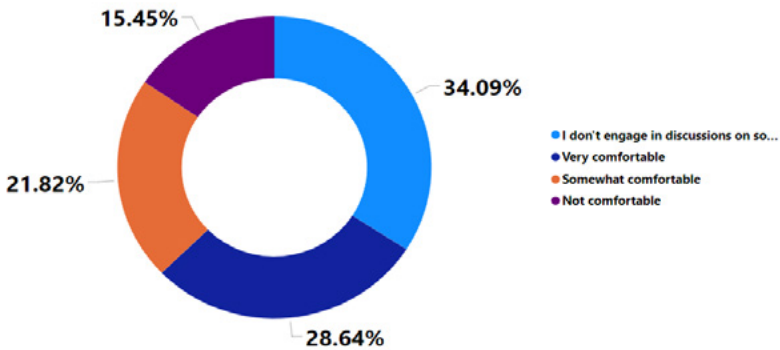


Figure 6: Adolescents' comfort level in expressing themselves on social media

The data indicates that 34% of teenage respondents do not express their opinions or engage in discussions on social media, which can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Separation-Individuation Theory. This reluctance may stem from a fear of judgement, a desire for privacy, or a lack of confidence in their viewpoints, illustrating low levels of autonomy in this context. SDT posits that autonomy is a fundamental psychological need, and the absence of this need being met can result in feelings of insecurity and a lack of confidence. Furthermore, these adolescents' behaviour aligns with controlled motivation, where external pressures and potential negative feedback inhibit their willingness to express themselves.

Similarly, 15% of respondents do not feel comfortable expressing opinions online because they prefer to avoid conflicts. This group also exhibits low autonomy, likely due to their strong emphasis on social harmony or fear of negative interactions. From a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) perspective, these adolescents might be driven by introjected regulation, where their actions are guided by internal pressures such as guilt or anxiety about causing conflict rather than genuine self-endorsed reasons. This finding is somewhat expected, as being a teenager in school is already a time when a real or perceived misstep can have serious consequences within one's social group. Social media likely amplifies this effect, potentially making teenagers more prone to self-censorship.

Conversely, 29% feel comfortable expressing their opinions and enjoy sharing diverse viewpoints on social media. These individuals, who engage in online discussions, debates, or dialogues, demonstrate high autonomy. They use these platforms as spaces for self-expression and engagement, indicating a strong sense of independence in their thought processes. This behaviour aligns with autonomous motivation in SDT, where their actions are driven by intrinsic interests and values, promoting their psychological well-being and personal growth.

Additionally, 22% feel somewhat comfortable but are cautious of potential backlash and exhibit moderate autonomy. They possess the ability to express themselves but are aware of the social repercussions, showing a balanced approach to independence. This indicates a partial fulfilment of their need for autonomy, where they are navigating between their desires for self-expression and the potential external consequences, suggesting a mix of autonomous and controlled motivations.

The varying levels of autonomy among adolescents highlight the diverse ways in which they navigate social media and self-expression. While some adolescents exhibit high autonomy by actively engaging in online discussions, others demonstrate caution or reluctance due to concerns about social repercussions. Conversely, a significant group of them do not express their views or engage in discussions on social media, possibly due to a lack of competence, relatedness, and autonomy or simply because they use social media only for communication and entertainment, as they reported previously.

Adolescents' comfort in expressing views opposing their parents'

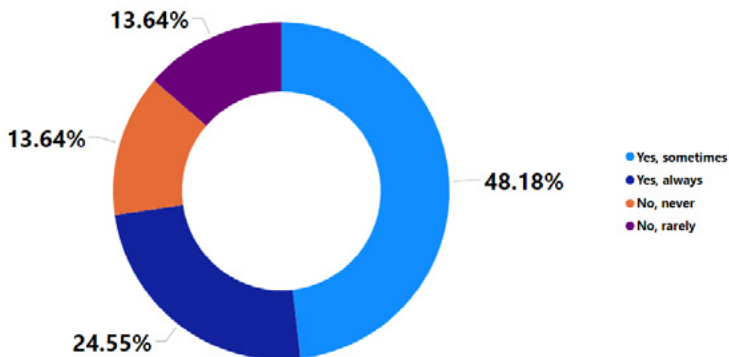


Figure 7: Adolescents' comfort in expressing views opposing their parents'

When children were asked about their comfort level in expressing views opposing their parents', whether in person or on social media, the responses were as follows:

48% expressed feeling "somewhat comfortable," indicating a moderate level of autonomy. While they can share their thoughts, they may still encounter hesitation or concerns about potential backlash from their parents. This suggests a supportive parental approach that allows for expression but may still have underlying dynamics that lead to caution and self-censorship. According to SDT, these adolescents might experience some level of volitional functioning but also face controlled motivation due to possible parental reactions.

25% reported they are "always comfortable" expressing views opposing their parents. This group shows high autonomy, as they can freely express their thoughts and opinions without fear of negative consequences. Such comfort likely stems from an environment where their parents value and respect their opinions,

fostering a sense of independence, critical thinking and confidence in their ability to express themselves. This aligns with SDT's concept of promoting volitional functioning (PVF), where parents support the child's autonomy and competence.

27% indicated they "rarely or never feel comfortable" expressing views opposing their parents. This indicates low autonomy, as they likely feel restricted by fear of punishment, judgment, or rejection. This lack of comfort in self-expression points to a more controlled or authoritarian parental approach where independent thought is not encouraged, potentially restricting the development of self-confidence and autonomy. According to SDT, these adolescents are likely experiencing controlled motivation, where their actions are regulated by external pressures, leading to diminished psychological well-being and hindered autonomy development.

In conclusion, the data reveals that almost 75% of adolescents enjoy various levels of autonomy in expressing themselves. In contrast, a noticeable group enjoys restricted autonomy in expression, leading to controlled opinion formation. These behaviours can also be seen through the lens of Separation-Individuation Theory, where adolescents are in different stages of distancing themselves psychologically and emotionally from their parents, impacting their willingness to express themselves.

Parental acceptance of adolescents expressing dissenting views

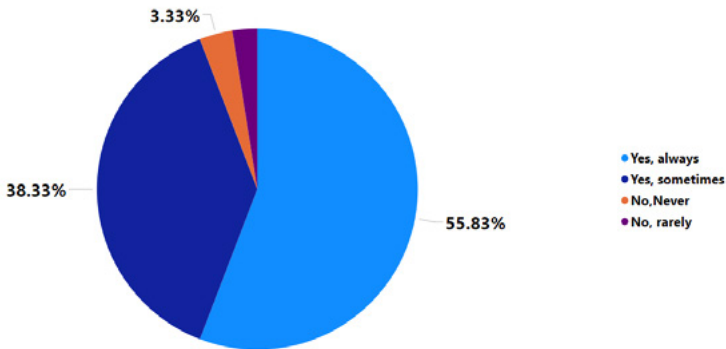


Figure 8: Parental acceptance of adolescents expressing dissenting views

The responses gathered from parents on whether they allow their children the freedom and comfort to express their dissenting opinions suggest that parent support their children in self-expression and opinion formation. Specifically, 56% of parents said they always encourage their children to share opposing views. This high percentage of encouragement aligns with active mediation and parental support dimensions, where parents foster open communication and a relationship of trust. Active mediation through open discussions and empathy supports adolescent autonomy by promoting self-regulation and informed decision-making. It helps adolescents feel respected and valued, enhancing their independence and critical thinking skills.

According to SDT, promoting autonomy is crucial for psychological well-being. This group is likely fostering an environment that supports autonomous motivation, where children feel free to express themselves based on personal interests and values. This environment satisfies the basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which are essential for healthy development

Furthermore, 38% of parents mentioned that they sometimes encourage this behaviour. This group might be partially fulfilling these needs, resulting in a mix of autonomous and controlled motivation. They might also be providing support in a less consistent manner, which can still promote autonomy but may sometimes feel controlled depending on the context and frequency of encouragement.

Conversely, only about 6% of parents admitted that they rarely or never encourage their children to express differing opinions. This percentage falls under reactive behavioural control or psychological control. This behaviour likely creates an environment dominated by controlled motivation. Their children might feel pressured to conform to parental expectations, leading to reduced self-determination and potentially adverse psychological outcomes.

The variation between parents' and children's responses may stem from parents' attempts to align with social expectations that emphasise the importance of open-mindedness and fostering open communication between parents and children.

Parental acceptance of adolescents expressing dissenting views (adolescent's perspective)

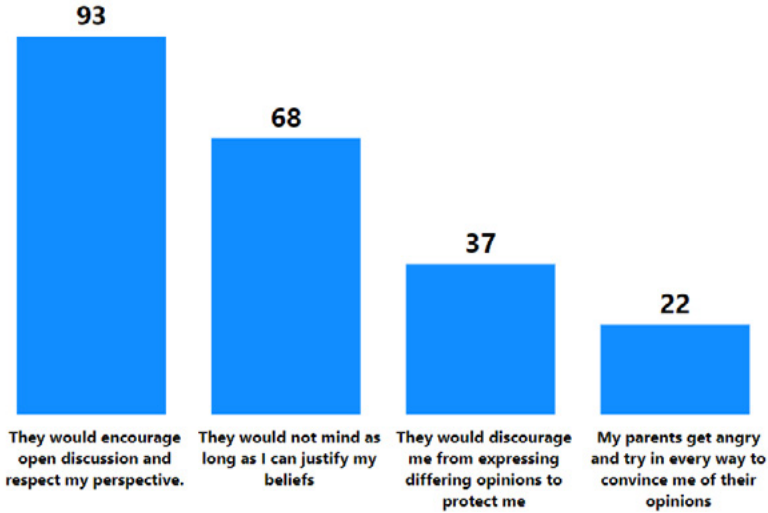


Figure 9: Adolescents' reports on parental reactions to their expression of opposing views

Investigating the parents' reaction to adolescents expressing opinions opposing to their parents. The data revealed that 42% of adolescents stated that their parents encourage open discussions and respect their perspectives, even when their views differ from their parents'. This approach promotes autonomy by fostering a relationship of trust and responsibility. Their parents are employing active mediation grounded in parental support. This aligns with the empathetic and trusting monitoring practices that promote self-regulation and informed decision-making. Adolescents in this category are likely to develop a stronger sense of autonomy as their views are validated and their independent thinking is encouraged.

Additionally, 31% of adolescents reported that their parents are open to them forming and expressing opposing views as long as they can justify their opinions and beliefs. Their parents are also engaging in active mediation. However, the conditional aspect introduces a form of proactive behavioural control. While this still supports autonomy by promoting critical thinking and

competence, it might also introduce some pressure to conform to parental expectations. The requirement for justification encourages adolescents to articulate their beliefs clearly, which can be beneficial for their cognitive development, but it may also limit their autonomy if they feel they must constantly meet their parents' standard

Conversely, 17% stated that their parents discourage them from expressing opposing opinions. Discouraging adolescents from doing so reflects a more restrictive approach to parental mediation. This aligns with proactive behavioural control, where the focus is on minimising risks and controlling the adolescent's environment without supporting their autonomy. This practice limits autonomy as it restricts adolescents' freedom to express their views and may weaken the parent-child relationship by creating a controlling atmosphere.

Finally, only 10% said their parents usually get angry and try to convince them of their views when asked about their parents' reactions to expressing opposing opinions regarding something they saw on social media. This group of parents are employing psychological control. This form of mediation involves emotional manipulation and guilt inducement, severely restricting autonomy and negatively impacting the adolescent's psychological well-being. Such controlling behaviour can lead to reduced intrinsic motivation and hinder the development of a healthy, independent sense of self. Adolescents in this category are likely to experience high levels of introjected regulation, where their actions are driven by internal pressures rather than true self-endorsed reasons.

In conclusion, the data highlights the varying degrees of autonomy support provided by different parental mediation practices. Encouragement of open discussions and conditional openness promotes autonomy and critical thinking, aligning with the principles of parental support in active mediation. In contrast, discouragement and coercive reactions reflect controlling practices that limit independence and can have negative psychological impacts.

Discrepancies between parents' and adolescents' opinions

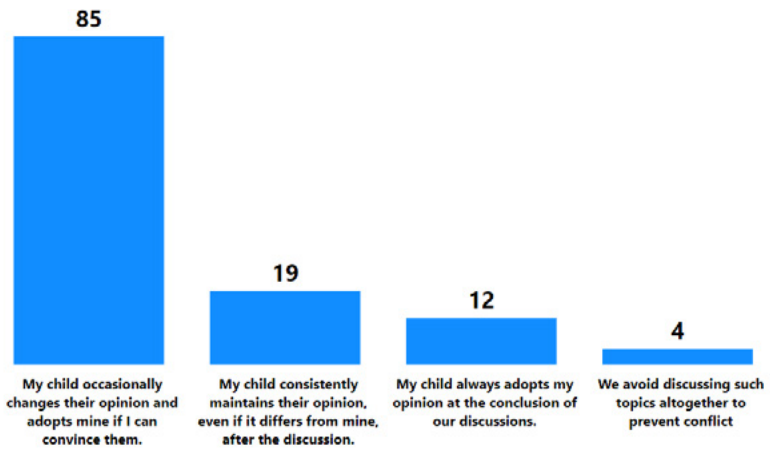


Figure 10: Parents' perspective of alignment of opinions with their children

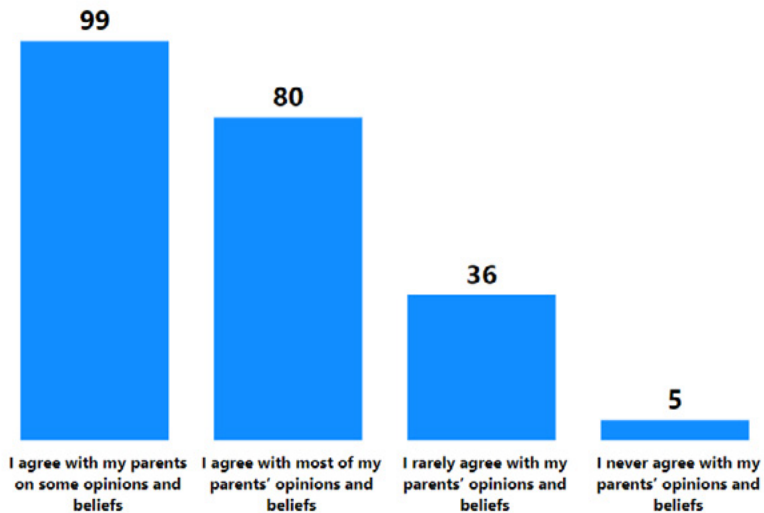


Figure 11: Adolescent's perspective of alignment of opinions with their parents

Both groups' responses reveal a notable alignment between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of agreement in their discussions. Among adolescents, 81% report either sometimes or always agreeing with their parents' views. In comparison, 81% of parents also believe they are occasionally or constantly successful in convincing their children to adopt their perspectives.

In contrast, 18% of adolescents stated they rarely or never agree with their parents. Similarly, 16% of parents believe their children consistently maintain differing opinions at the end of their discussion.

The alignment between parents' and adolescents' perceptions of agreement in their discussions, with 81% of adolescents and an equal percentage of parents reporting at least occasional agreement, reflects key elements of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This agreement suggests that parents are supporting their children's autonomy by fostering an environment where adolescents feel free to express their own views. At the same time, adolescents' willingness to engage and sometimes agree with their parents indicates a sense of competence, where they feel capable of participating meaningfully in discussions. Additionally, this mutual understanding strengthens the sense of relatedness, as both parties feel connected and respected in their interactions. The 18% of adolescents who rarely or never agree with their parents may be asserting their autonomy and competence by exploring and defending their own perspectives, which is a natural part of their development. Nonetheless, if this autonomy is not appropriately supported, it could lead to tension or feelings of coercion, which might undermine intrinsic motivation and the overall parent-child relationship.

Separation-Individuation Theory posits that adolescence is a critical period for individuals to develop their own identity, separate from their parents. The agreement observed between parents and adolescents can be seen as a natural and necessary part of the individuation process, where adolescents are negotiating their own views while still maintaining a connection with their parents. This balance allows adolescents to explore their individuality without completely rejecting parental influence, which is crucial for healthy identity formation.

On the other hand, the adolescents who rarely or never agree with their parents may be in a phase of more active separation, seeking to establish their own identity distinct from their parents' beliefs and values. This divergence can be a sign of healthy development, as adolescents navigate the complex process of forming their own opinions.

In summary, the findings suggest that while a significant proportion of adolescents and parents experience agreement, there is also a noteworthy minority where disagreement occurs, reflecting the adolescents' pursuit of autonomy and individuation. Both SDT and Separation Individuation Theory highlight the importance of the discussions between both to support adolescents' psychological development and autonomy in opinion formation.

Parental encouragement of adolescent participation in discussions beyond the family

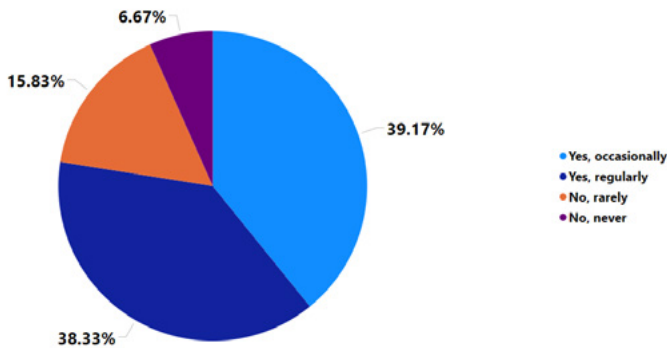


Figure 12: Parental encouragement of adolescent participation in discussions beyond the family

The data also indicates that a significant majority of parents (77%) recognise the value of involving their children in community-related discussions outside the family environment. This group reported engaging their children regularly or occasionally in discussions outside the family. This behaviour supports the promotion of volitional functioning (PVF) in SDT. PVF involves guiding adolescents in decision-making processes, which helps them align their actions with their values, thus fostering a sense

of self-determination and independence. This engagement in broader discussions also aligns with proactive behavioural control when it is conducted in a supportive manner that respects the child's autonomy. This involvement likely helps adolescents develop a broader perspective, enhance their critical thinking skills, and build confidence in expressing their opinions in diverse settings, and build their own opinions and beliefs.

Separation-Individuation Theory emphasises the importance of adolescents distancing themselves from parental dependencies to achieve autonomy. The high percentage of parents encouraging opposing views and community involvement supports the promoting independence (PI) aspect of this theory. By encouraging self-expression and participation in broader discussions, parents help adolescents develop independent identities and self-sufficient problem-solving skills.

However, 23% of parents rarely or never encourage such engagement. This lack of encouragement could be due to various factors, such as concerns about the nature of external influences, a preference for more controlled family dynamics, or simply a lack of awareness about the benefits of community engagement. Therefore, they be maintaining a more controlled family dynamic, potentially hindering the adolescent's ability to separate and individuate effectively. This lack of encouragement can lead to a reliance on parental approval and guidance, limiting the development of an autonomous self.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that most parents support their children's autonomy by using active mediation tools under parental support dimensions. This approach promotes autonomous motivation and volitional functioning, fostering healthy adolescent development. However, a minority of parents employ more restrictive strategies, reflecting reactive or psychological control, which can limit autonomy and hinder the separation-individuation process.

5.4.2 Cognitive support practices

As mentioned previously, promoting parental autonomy support for early and middle adolescents includes cognitive support practices such as fostering critical thinking and encouraging engagement with diverse perspectives. These practices reinforce mental skills and lead to higher autonomy in opinion formation.

Both surveys incorporated questions evaluating adolescents' critical thinking skills in navigating social media and exploring the role of parents in fostering these essential skills. The adolescent survey assessed their tendencies to critically evaluate online information, investigate sources, and engage with diverse views. Simultaneously, the parental survey examined how parents support and encourage the development of these abilities.

Adolescent reliance on social media to follow news

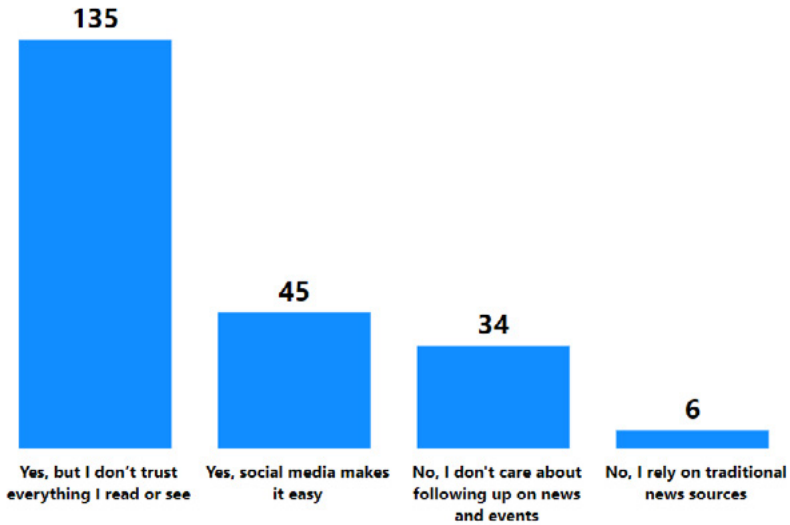


Figure 13: Adolescent reliance on social media to follow news

The adolescent's responses revealed that they are generally aware and able to assess information. About 61% stated that they rely on social media to catch up on news and events but do not trust everything they view. From the perspective of SDT, this group exhibits autonomous motivation as they engage with media based on personal interests and values, exercising their autonomy in opinion formation. This behaviour fulfils their needs for competence (by evaluating the news), relatedness (engaging in discussions about news), and independence (making independent judgments).

Looking at this group from the perspective of Separation-Individuation Theory, this group suggests successful Promotion of Independence (PI). These adolescents are distancing themselves from childhood dependencies, making autonomous decisions about the reliability of information. This indicates a healthy development of independence.

Interestingly, about 20% of adolescents rely on social media for news and events because it is convenient. This shows how easy and accessible these platforms are for them, given the time they spend online daily. According to SDT principles, they might be motivated by a combination of autonomous and controlled motivation. While they autonomously choose social media for its accessibility, their less critical approach may reflect a lack of guidance in developing media literacy skills.

Similarly, the Separation-Individuation Theory suggests that this group demonstrates independence in their media choices but may need further development in critical assessment skills, highlighting the importance of continued parental support in this area.

Conversely, a smaller group, around 15%, stated they do not care about following news and current events. According to both theories, this lack of interest in news might stem from a sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation directed towards other activities they find more engaging or fulfilling. They are exercising their right to choose what they value and focus on, even if it means being less informed about current events.

Overall, the results reveal a spectrum of adolescent autonomy in media consumption, influenced by different motivational orientations. The majority demonstrate high autonomy and critical thinking, indicative of effective active mediation and parental support. However, a notable minority shows varying levels of independence and critical assessment, suggesting the need for tailored parental approaches to foster comprehensive media literacy and autonomous decision-making.

Adolescent's abilities to assess the credibility of information and sources on social media

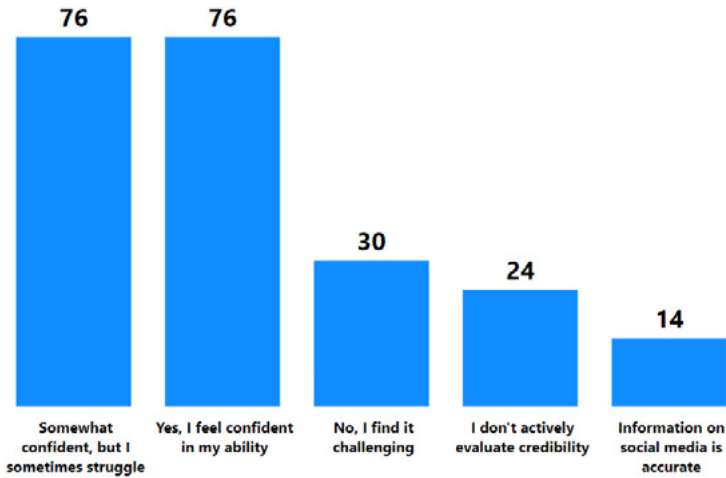


Figure 14: Adolescent's abilities to assess the credibility of information on social media

While measuring adolescents' abilities to assess the credibility of information and sources on social media, their answers showed that around 35% of respondents identified themselves as confident in their capability to assess the credibility of information on social media, while an equal percentage feel somewhat capable but occasionally struggle with this task. The first group demonstrates high autonomy and volitional functioning, as they feel confident in their ability to assess the credibility of information. Their independent judgment reflects intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of competence. Additionally, they exhibit a high level of competence, indicating their self-efficacy in discerning reliable sources from unreliable ones, which aligns with the core tenets of SDT. Looking at the results from the Separation-Individuation point of view, this group displays a high level of individuation, having developed the capacity to form independent judgments. Their confidence indicates a successful separation from parental or external influences, fostering a strong sense of self.

While the second group has some degree of autonomy, their occasional struggles suggest that their sense of competence is not fully developed, and they might benefit from targeted support to enhance their critical thinking skills. These adolescents may also rely on external validation and feedback from peers or adults, which can influence their volitional functioning and autonomy. They are in a transitional separation-individuation phase and show emerging independence but still experience occasional dependence on external validation, indicating ongoing development.

In contrast, around 14% of adolescents admitted that assessing information credibility is challenging. This group might be facing obstacles in critical thinking and autonomy and struggle with information evaluation. On the other hand, their engagement in self-scepticism indicates a possible awareness of their limitations, which is a positive aspect of critical thinking. It also suggests struggles with separation-individuation. Their critical thinking skills are developing, but they may still rely heavily on external influences, hindering full autonomy.

Meanwhile, a smaller segment of adolescents, 11%, claimed that they do not care to evaluate credibility actively and do not engage in efforts to assess the accuracy of information. From the SDT point of view, this group's answer signifies a lack of autonomy and volitional functioning. Their passive approach indicates a gap in intrinsic motivation and a reliance on external sources without critical examination. Their lack of concern may stem from low competence in critical thinking. This reflects delayed individuation. They may not feel the need to establish independence in their thought processes, relying on external sources without critical examination.

Only 6% of adolescents are unaware of fake and false information widely published and shared on social media, believing that all information shared on these platforms is accurate and correct. Their lack of awareness reflects a significant gap in competence and intrinsic motivation to question and verify information. They also show a lack of separation-individuation, indicating minimal development of independent thought and a high degree of reliance on external information without question. Their critical thinking skills are underdeveloped, leading to a passive acceptance of information.

Overall, the majority of respondents showed high to moderate critical thinking skills, which are essential for the development of their independence. Less than 20% of adolescents demonstrated minimal critical thinking abilities, which indicates low autonomy in their opinion formation.

Parents' role in guiding adolescents to critically evaluate social media Content

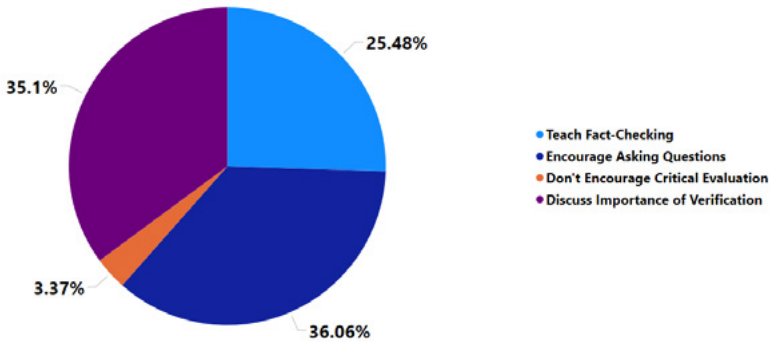


Figure 15: Parents' role in guiding adolescents to critically evaluate social media content

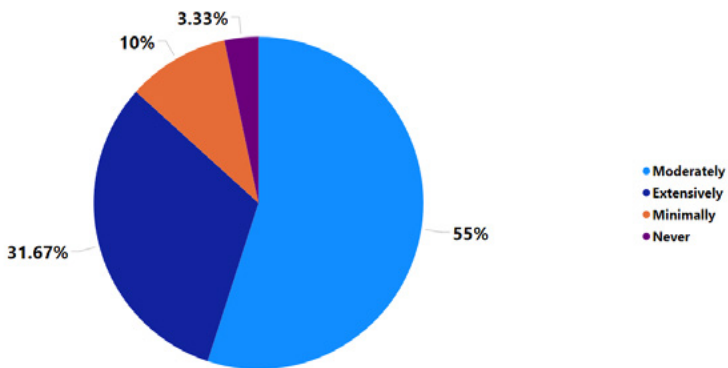


Figure 16: Extent of parental discussions on social media literacy concepts with adolescents

The previous findings are consistent with the data gathered from the parental survey, where 25% of parents reported that they actively teach their children fact-checking and resource-verification techniques. Additionally, 35% of parents discuss the importance of verifying online information with their children, and 36% encourage their children to question online content. Furthermore, 55% of parents reported that they discuss media literacy concepts such as propaganda and credibility with their children to a moderate extent, while 32% engage in these discussions extensively. The remaining respondents reported minimally or never discussing these concepts with them.

These efforts contribute significantly to adolescents developing high-level critical thinking skills. Parents support autonomous decision-making by teaching verification methods, fostering a questioning attitude, and exploring media literacy concepts, aligning with the principles of (PVF). This comprehensive approach equips adolescents with the tools necessary for critical engagement, helping them navigate online content and form well-informed opinions. Additionally, it leads to a successful separation from parental or external influences while forming their opinions.

Adolescent's methods of verifying online information

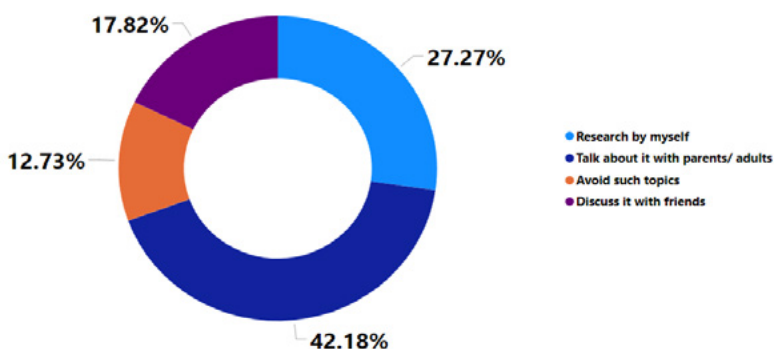


Figure 17: Adolescents' sources for verifying online information

The adolescents reported relying on different sources when asked who they consult when encountering a challenging or controversial topic online. Their responses showed a high level of trust in parents and trusted adults, with 42% of adolescents identifying them as their primary source of guidance. A significant group demonstrated independence, 27%, relying on their own research to learn more about the topic. Surprisingly, only 18% of adolescents trusted their friends as their guide. This might be caused by a fear of judgment and ostracism from their peers. Finally, the smallest segment, 13%, revealed that they would ignore the topic if they did not understand it, opting not to seek guidance or further information.

This high trust in parents and adults reflects the effectiveness of discussion and active mediation strategies, which are based on parental support rather than proactive practices. Also, their high reliance on themselves proves their autonomy and abilities to search and critically assess the information they encounter online.

Adolescents' exposure and engagement with diverse views

Investigating adolescents' tendencies to navigate and engage with diverse viewpoints online and measuring parental encouragement of such behaviours reveals crucial insights into the development of cognitive skills as being exposed to a variety of opinions and beliefs incites critical thinking and shapes one's views and beliefs. The participant's answers can be categorised as follows:

Neutral Encouragement: According to parent responses, 31% neither encourage nor discourage their children from engaging with diverse perspectives. This lack of active encouragement may limit adolescents' exposure to different ideas, hindering their ability to think critically and independently. Without this encouragement, adolescents might become more susceptible to biased or one-sided information.

This behaviour might result in adolescents experiencing a mix of autonomous and controlled motivation. While they are not explicitly restricted, the lack of active support might leave them without the necessary tools to develop strong critical thinking skills.

Parental discouragement: 18% of parents reported discouraging their children from navigating differing viewpoints online, steering them towards information they believe is correct. Additionally, 28% prohibited them from discussing opposing views on social media. This restrictive behaviour was similarly reported by 28% of adolescents. Such discouragement presents significant concerns as it can limit intellectual curiosity and prevent a well-rounded understanding of complex issues. It reinforces a narrow worldview, making it difficult for adolescents to empathise with others and appreciate diverse perspectives. These adolescents may struggle with critical thinking and autonomy due to restrictive parental strategies.

Active encouragement: 51% of parents reported exposing their children to a variety of perspectives, and 42% encouraged discussions and provided guidance to engage in conversation about diverse opinions. This is supported by 49% of adolescents who stated that their parents encourage open dialogue and exposure to diverse perspectives or provide guidance while allowing them to navigate diverse views independently.

Adolescents engaged in open dialogue and exposed to diverse perspectives demonstrate high levels of autonomous motivation. These adolescents are encouraged to think critically and independently, aligning their actions with personal interests and values. The parent's support for autonomy promotes volitional functioning (PVF), where they guide rather than control, fostering self-determination and critical thinking.

Moderation with specific rules: 31% of parents reported moderating their adolescents' online interactions and engagement with diverse views, implementing specific rules for their protection. Their response aligns with 24% of adolescents who provided the same statement. This approach promotes critical thinking and helps children develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the world. By engaging with a range of perspectives, adolescents are better equipped to navigate complex issues, fostering empathy and open-mindedness.

PVF focuses on satisfying children's psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By moderating but not overly controlling their online activities, parents are fostering an environment where adolescents feel competent in navigating complex issues and autonomous in forming their opinions. This approach supports their overall well-being and psychosocial

development. On the other hand, promoting independence involves encouraging self-expression, decision-making, and problem-solving. By setting rules that allow for controlled exposure to diverse views, parents are helping adolescents develop these skills in a structured environment. This method prepares them for greater independence in the future, particularly during late adolescence when such independence becomes a normative developmental task.

In summary, the data points out that around half of the parents encourage exposure to diverse views and perspectives on social media, while the rest either stay neutral or report restricting their children. Also, around 75% of parents encourage or moderate the engagement of their children with a variety of viewpoints online and discovering other perspectives. In contrast, the rest of the parents prohibit these discussions. Since active encouragement and open dialogue about diverse perspectives are crucial for developing autonomy and critical thinking. Parental mediation strategies, particularly active mediation, and balanced, proactive behavioural control, significantly promote these skills. The principles of Self-Determination Theory and Separation-Individuation Theory further emphasise the need to promote volitional functioning and independence to support adolescents in navigating social media. By encouraging a broad range of viewpoints and fostering intellectual curiosity, parents can help adolescents become more autonomous, empathetic, and well-informed individuals.

Parental restrictions on adolescents' online friendships

The survey examined parents' perspectives on whether their children's opinions were influenced by their peers. Seventy percent of parents acknowledged the significant role that peers play in shaping their children's opinions and beliefs. This finding aligns with the finding that nearly three-quarters (74%) of teenagers reported engaging in daily or weekly conversations with their friends about their views on social media, further explaining the parents' recognition and concern for peer influence.

The survey also assessed the extent of parental restrictions on their children's friendships and online interactions with peers. The responses revealed varying degrees of concern about the potential negative influence of peers on their children's opinion formation. Some parents imposed stricter limitations, while others demonstrated a more open approach, allowing their children greater freedom in choosing their friendships.

These findings offer insights into how parental mediation in online relationships can impact a child's exposure to diverse cultures, opinions, and people. Such exposure is crucial for the development of decision-making skills, critical thinking, and overall autonomy. The adolescents' responses provide an opportunity to understand the children's perspectives on these restrictions, potentially explaining any discrepancies between the two groups' answers. Ultimately, the results reflect a spectrum of parental approaches that closely align with the children's reported experiences regarding these limitations.

Parental restrictions:

- Occasional Restrictions: 42% of parents admitted to sometimes restricting their children's interactions with peers perceived as potentially having a negative influence due to differing opinions or beliefs. Similarly, 43% of adolescents reported experiencing this type of restriction. Their answers reveal a contradiction to the previous question related to openness to diverse perspectives, opinions, and beliefs. It shows fears of children actually being convinced of another viewpoint.

- Strict restrictions: 38% of parents stated they strongly restrict their children's interactions, while only 25% of adolescents reported the same. Interestingly, 4% of adolescents indicated that they disregard these restrictions and do what they want. This restrictive parental behaviour likely stems from a protective instinct, aiming to shield adolescents from influences that may conflict with family values or beliefs. However, such mediation can limit adolescents' exposure to diverse perspectives, potentially hindering the development of critical thinking and autonomy. Parents may inadvertently constrain their children's ability to form independent opinions and make autonomous decisions by not allowing adolescents to navigate and evaluate differing viewpoints.

Encouragement of openness

- Encouragement of interactions: Only 21% of parents reported encouraging their children to interact with peers regardless of their opinions, views, or backgrounds, whereas 28% of adolescents felt encouraged to remain open.

Encouraging interactions with peers of different opinions and backgrounds is crucial for developing critical thinking and empathy. Such interactions help adolescents understand and appreciate diverse viewpoints, fostering open-mindedness and reducing prejudices.

Analysing the results in light of the SDT indicates that parental restrictions on adolescents' interactions with peers of differing opinions can be seen as a form of controlled motivation. When parents impose such restrictions, they exert external control over their children's social interactions, which can undermine the adolescents' sense of autonomy. This lack of independence may prevent adolescents from developing intrinsic motivation to explore and understand diverse viewpoints, thereby stifling their critical thinking skills and personal growth.

Additionally, SDT highlights the importance of relatedness, or the need to feel connected to others. Restrictive parental practices may limit adolescents' opportunities to form meaningful connections with peers who hold different beliefs, thereby hindering their ability to develop empathy and social understanding.

On the other hand, the Separation-Individuation Theory focuses on the developmental process of achieving autonomy and a distinct identity from one's parents. The survey results indicating high levels of parental restrictions suggest that some parents may struggle with allowing their adolescents the necessary space for separation and individuation. By controlling their children's social interactions, these parents may inadvertently delay the adolescents' ability to establish their own identities and make independent decisions. This can lead to a prolonged dependency on parental approval and guidance, impeding the adolescents' psychological and emotional growth.

Moreover, the theory emphasises the importance of parents supporting their children's autonomy by encouraging self-expression, decision-making, and problem-solving. The findings that only a minority of parents encourage interactions with peers of

differing viewpoints suggest that many parents may not fully support their adolescents' autonomy. This lack of support can hinder the adolescents' ability to navigate diverse social environments and develop a robust sense of self.

Encouraging open interactions with diverse peers, on the other hand, supports the need for relatedness and fosters a more inclusive and empathetic worldview. Furthermore, encouraging openness to diverse perspectives aligns with the principles of Separation-Individuation Theory, as it promotes the adolescents' ability to form their own opinions and beliefs. Such encouragement helps adolescents develop the confidence and competence needed to make independent decisions and establish a distinct identity separate from their parents.

5.5 Adolescent's reaction to their parent's mediation strategies

5.5.1 Adolescent's perspective on parent's involvement in social media

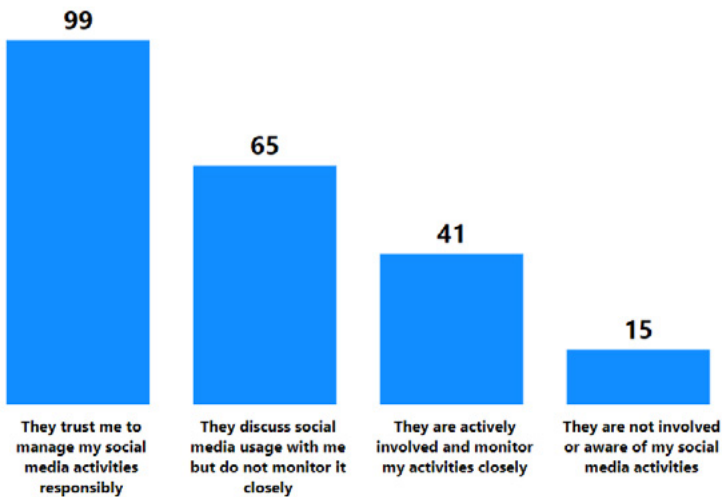


Figure 18: Adolescent's perspective on their parent's involvement in social media

When adolescents were asked to choose the closest option that describes their parents' involvement in their social media activities, the adolescents' answers revealed that the largest segment, 45%, believe that their parents trust their abilities to manage their online activities responsibly without any direct control. This suggests that children do not feel restricted or pressured by their parent's involvement in their online activities and have a high level of autonomy.

The second-largest segment, approximately 30% of respondents, believe their parents follow a communicative approach with them. They rely on discussing social media usage and activities with them but are not directly involved in monitoring their activities, giving them a space to make their own decisions independently. This indicates a balanced approach where parents offer support without controlling their children.

A smaller segment, 19%, reported that their parents are actively involved and monitor their social media activities. This group experiences controlled motivation and might feel restricted. Finally, the smallest group, 7%, states that their parents are not involved or aware of their social media usage. This might indicate a lack of parental support.

In conclusion, the data suggests a diverse range of parental involvement in their children's social media activities. While trust and open discussion are prevalent, a notable percentage of parents still take an active monitoring role. A smaller group remains uninvolved, which could indicate areas where more parental education on social media's literacy might be beneficial.

5.5.2 Adolescent's feelings towards parent mediation

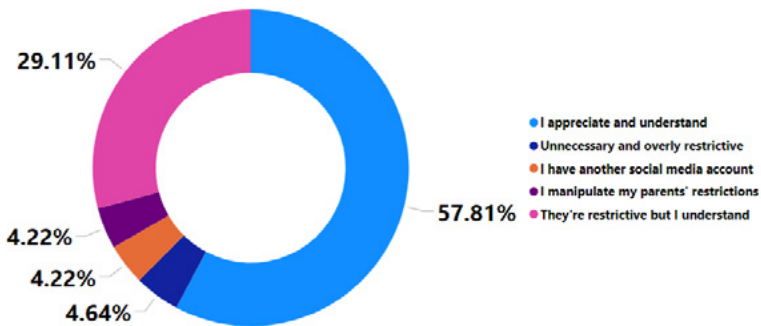


Figure 19: Adolescent's feelings towards parent mediation

The previous findings align with how adolescents feel about their parent's involvement; the majority, 58%, understand and appreciate the restrictions, indicating significant communication and alignment between parents and adolescents regarding online safety and activities. A considerable portion, 29%, find these restrictions limiting but understand their parents' good intentions, acknowledging the purpose behind the rules while still feeling constrained by them, which points to discussions and dialogue between the parent and the child regarding these restrictions.

A smaller group, 13%, manipulates their parents' restrictions, maintains secret social media accounts, or finds their parents' measures overly restrictive and unnecessary. This reaction may stem from a desire for more freedom or a lack of understanding of the reasons behind the restrictions or from overly restrictive measures pushing adolescents to seek their own autonomy.

This variation reflects parents' different approaches in mediating their children's activities and the adolescents' awareness of their parents' intentions to protect them.

5.6 Testing the correlation among variables and testing the research hypothesis

5.6.1 Testing the correlation between parental mediation strategies and child's autonomy in opinion formation

H1: Parental mediation strategies aimed at safeguarding children (13-17 years) on social media influence their autonomy in opinion formation.

H4: Different styles of mediation will impact the hypothesis above. The more conversational and less conformist approach will be best to preserve autonomy. Whereas the less conversational and more conformist approach will be the most restrictive on the autonomy of opinion formation of the child.

The correlation coefficient between parental mediation strategies and the autonomy of the child in opinion formation is equal to -0.05. This value indicates a very weak negative linear relationship between the two variables, suggesting that there is almost no linear relationship between parental mediation strategies and the autonomy of the child in forming opinions. This means that changes in parental mediation strategies are not strongly associated with changes in the child's autonomy in opinion formation.

However, the negative sign indicates that as the level of parental mediation increases, there is a very slight tendency for the child's autonomy in forming opinions to decrease. However, given the value of the correlation, this relationship is extremely weak and likely not practically significant. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to support the fourth hypothesis. The anticipated effects of different mediation styles were not observed; the more conversational and less conformist approach did not prove to be the best for preserving autonomy, nor did the less conversational and more conformist approach prove to be the most restrictive on a child's autonomy in forming opinions.

This could imply that other factors are more influential in determining a child's autonomy in opinion formation. Therefore, further investigation is needed to explore other factors that might influence a child's autonomy in opinion formation. These could include peer influence, educational environments, or individual personality traits.

5.6.2 Testing the correlation between restrictive parental mediation strategies and child's cognitive skills

H2: Restrictive parental mediation limits the ability to critically assess information.

The correlation coefficient between parental mediation strategies and the cognitive skills of the child is equal to -0.06 . This value indicates a weak negative linear relationship between the two variables, suggesting that there is only a very weak linear relationship between parental mediation strategies and the cognitive skills of the child. This means that changes in parental mediation strategies are not strongly associated with changes in the child's critical thinking skills.

The negative sign indicates that as the level of parental mediation increases, there is a slight tendency for the child's cognitive skills to decrease. However, given the magnitude of the correlation, this relationship is weak and may not be practically significant.

The weak negative correlation suggests that parental mediation strategies, as measured in this study, do not significantly impact children's critical skills. This suggests that other factors are more influential in determining a child's cognitive skills.

5.6.3 Testing variations in parental digital mediation strategies Among secular and nonsecular schools

H3: There is a variation in parental mediation strategies between secular and nonsecular schools, potentially leading to differing levels of autonomy in opinion and belief formation.

Examining the correlation between parental mediation strategies and the type of school a child attends - whether secular or nonsecular - based on data from both children's and parents' survey responses, reveals a consistent correlation coefficient of 0.14 in both groups.

This positive correlation suggests a weak relationship between the type of school (secular or nonsecular) and the parental mediation strategies employed. A correlation of 0.14 indicates that while there is some association, it is not strong. In practical terms, this means that whether a child attends a secular or nonsecular school might slightly influence how parents choose to mediate their child's online activities, but this influence is relatively minor.

The identical correlation coefficients from both children's and parents' responses indicate that a school's religious or philosophical orientation is a factor in shaping parental approaches to online safety and behaviour, though it is not a dominant factor. This finding implies that other factors - —such as the child's individual needs, family values, or the specific challenges of the online environment - —may play a more significant role in determining how parents mediate their child's internet use.

5.6.4 Testing the correlation between parental mediation strategies and child age

Examining the correlation between parental mediation strategies and child age from two perspectives - children's survey responses and parents' responses - reveals a consistent correlation coefficient of -0.07 in both cases.

This negative correlation indicates a very weak inverse relationship between child age and parental mediation strategies. In practical terms, it suggests that as children grow older, there is a slight tendency for parental mediation strategies to decrease. However, the correlation is so weak that it implies only a minimal impact, meaning that age differences do not significantly influence how parents mediate their online activities. Furthermore, the consistency in correlation suggests that there is a gradual loosening of mediation efforts as children age, but the change is not substantial enough to be of practical significance.

5.6.5 Testing the correlation between parental mediation strategies and the age range of parents (30s to 50s)

The correlation between parental mediation strategies and the age range of parents was calculated and equal to -0.11. It indicates a weak negative relationship between the age range of the parent (30s-50s) and the parental mediation strategies they employ. This suggests that as the parent's age increases within this range, there is a slight tendency for the intensity or style of parental mediation to decrease. The negative sign implies that older parents within this range might be somewhat less likely to use certain mediation strategies compared to younger parents within the same range. However, the correlation is weak, indicating that while age may have some influence, it is not a strong determinant of how parental mediation is practiced.

In other words, it reflects subtle shifts in how parental mediation is approached as parents age. For example, parents in their 30s might be more actively involved in their children's on-line activities, possibly due to greater familiarity with current digital trends or a more hands-on parenting style, while parents in their 50s may adopt a slightly more relaxed or hands-off approach. However, the weak strength of this correlation suggests that age differences within this range do not lead to significant changes in mediation strategies.

6. Findings and discussion

6.1 Main findings and discussion

The study explores how parental mediation strategies regarding social media usage in both secular and nonsecular schools impact the autonomy of adolescents aged 13-17 in forming their own opinions. Recognising adolescence as a critical period for developing critical thinking and pursuing autonomy, this research investigates how various mediation approaches influence adolescents' critical thinking skills, and abilities to form independent opinions and identifies the most effective strategies for fostering autonomy.

Social media usage and mediation strategies:

The data reveal that social media plays a significant role in adolescents' lives, with both adolescents and parents agreeing on an average daily usage of around five hours. Adolescents primarily use social media for entertainment and communication, with less frequent use for news, discovering opportunities, and making new friends. TikTok is the most popular platform among adolescents, followed by Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat, while parents favour Facebook, indicating a generational difference in platform preferences.

Examining parental mediation strategies reveals that parents in Beirut tend to monitor their children's online communication closely but pay less attention to the content and engagements. Restrictive measures like time limits and content filtering are less common, with parents favouring direct interaction and communication. However, discrepancies between adolescents' and parents'

responses regarding reporting browsing history checks and applying mediation strategies suggest some parents monitor covertly to maintain trust. This covert approach, while protective, could undermine trust and autonomy if discovered.

When it comes to content restrictions, nearly half of the parents limit access to sexual content, with some also restricting religious and political content to reinforce family values. While protective, some of these restrictions could limit children's exposure to diverse viewpoints, potentially hindering their ability to form independent opinions.

Additionally, the majority of parents and adolescents frequently discuss social media content and usage. These discussions play a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and helping adolescents navigate the digital world confidently and independently. Furthermore, most parents actively engage in conversations about controversial or sensitive topics, emphasising communication as a key aspect of parental mediation.

Assessing parental mediation strategies from a child rights perspective suggests that, although most parents use a balanced approach, covert monitoring, and content restrictions can sometimes infringe on children's autonomy and their right to access information. While parents are responsible for ensuring that children receive age-appropriate information, overly restrictive measures may limit their exposure to diverse content, which is essential for developing well-rounded, independent opinions - a key component of their digital rights. General Comment 25 emphasises that any restrictions should balance protection with the child's right to seek information. Furthermore, it stresses that these restrictions must be clearly communicated to the child, underscoring the importance of transparency and avoiding secretive mediation practices.

Autonomy in expression:

The study reveals that around 50% of adolescents either refrain from or feel uncomfortable expressing opinions on social media, indicating lower levels of autonomy. Conversely, the other 50% exhibit high autonomy, feeling comfortable and enjoying the expression of diverse viewpoints online. Interestingly, adolescents

reported feeling more comfortable expressing opposing views to their parents, with nearly three-quarters feeling comfortable or somewhat comfortable in such situations. This reflects moderate to high autonomy and a supportive parental environment.

Despite this, adolescents reported a range of parental reactions to opposing views. While 42% of parents encourage open discussions, fostering autonomy, 31% support autonomy conditionally, expecting well-justified opinions. Meanwhile, 27% of adolescents encounter discouragement or parental anger, reflecting a more controlling approach that limits autonomy. The discrepancy between adolescents' reports and parents' self-assessments suggests that parents might overstate their acceptance to align with community expectations.

However, the research shows a strong alignment between parents and adolescents in their discussions, with 81% of adolescents and the same percentage of parents reporting at least occasional agreement. This suggests that parents are supporting their children's autonomy, competence, and relatedness, creating an environment where adolescents feel their views are valued. The remaining 18% of adolescents who rarely or never agree with their parents may be asserting their independence as part of their natural development. Additionally, 77% of parents encourage their children to participate in discussions beyond the family, which helps develop a broader perspective, critical thinking skills, and independence. This engagement supports adolescents in forming autonomous identities.

The CRC emphasises children's right to express their views freely, and General Comment 25 reinforces the need for digital environments where children can exercise this right. While most parents under study demonstrated high encouragement for expression, some parental practices that condition or discourage expression may limit adolescents' ability to explore their identity and autonomy in the digital sphere, which is a fundamental part of their rights in the digital age.

Critical thinking skills:

The findings indicate that most adolescents display high autonomy in news consumption and information credibility, driven by intrinsic motivation and parental support in fostering critical thinking. Around 61% use social media as a primary information source but critically assess it, while 70% feel confident in evaluating information, highlighting their critical thinking abilities. Parental involvement plays a key role, with nearly 97% of parents actively teaching fact-checking, and encouraging scepticism about online content.

As a result of ongoing discussions between parents and children, adolescents tend to trust their parents or other trusted adults when facing challenging topics or prefer to search for information on their own. Surprisingly, they rely less on their friends, and only a few avoid challenging topics altogether.

The development of critical thinking skills is closely tied to the CRC's emphasis on the child's right to access and evaluate information. The finding that most adolescents feel confident in evaluating the credibility of information shows that parents are fostering essential skills for navigating the digital world. Encouraging fact-checking and scepticism aligns with General Comment 25, which stresses the importance of equipping children with the skills to engage with digital content critically and informally.

Parental concerns:

While parents show openness to discussions, they also exhibit concerns about exposing their children to diverse perspectives online. Nearly half encourage their children to explore different viewpoints, while the other half either discourage such exposure or remain neutral. This caution is also reflected in the fact that about 50% of parents restrict their children's interactions with differing views or choose to supervise these interactions with specific rules. This cautious approach extends to their children's friendships, with more restrictive measures applied to friendships that might influence their child's opinions or beliefs.

However, parental concerns about exposing children to diverse viewpoints indicate a cautious approach that might limit the full realisation of their digital rights. While protecting children from harmful content is necessary, the reluctance to encourage engagement with differing perspectives could restrict their

right to information and diminish opportunities to develop critical thinking. This concern about controlling exposure may also result in overly restrictive environments that stifle the development of autonomous decision-making, which is crucial for adolescents as they grow into informed individuals.

Adolescents' reactions to parental involvement:

Among adolescents, 75% perceive their parents' involvement in their social media experience as trust-based, aligning with both their own and their parents' responses. As a result, 58% appreciate their parents' efforts to protect them online, while 29% feel somewhat restricted but recognise their parents' good intentions. A small minority feel overly restricted, leading them to manipulate these restrictions or maintain secret social media accounts.

Correlation findings:

The analysis reveals that parental mediation strategies have minimal impact on adolescents' autonomy in opinion formation and critical thinking skills, suggesting other factors may be more influential. The study also found that the type of school - secular or nonsecular - has only a minor influence on parental mediation approaches, indicating that factors beyond school type are more critical in shaping these practices. Additionally, both child and parent age show weak correlations with parental mediation strategies, suggesting that age has little effect on how parents mediate their children's online activities.

Overall, the interpretation of findings in light of SDT and Separation-Individuation Theory provides a comprehensive analysis of the effects of parental mediation strategies on the development of cognitive skills, including critical thinking and the autonomy of opinion formation in children. However, testing the hypothesis on the effect of parental mediation strategies suggests that these strategies have a limited influence on children's autonomy in opinion formation and cognitive skills, regardless of age or school type. This highlights the need for further research to identify additional factors influencing children's opinion formation and cognitive development.

6.2 Limitations of the research

This study is limited to Beirut and might include potential biases due to the selection of a sample from only private schools, which may not fully represent students' educational experiences in public school settings. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data from both adolescents and parents may have introduced response bias, as participants might provide answers they perceive as socially acceptable rather than their actual views or practices. The study also faced challenges in achieving gender balance from parental responses. Another limitation is that 60% of parental responses were gathered from the broader community due to low school response rates, which may introduce variability in the data due to differences in how responses were collected.

One significant limitation of this study was the interpretation of each mediation strategy and its impact on children's behaviours and skills in terms of autonomy. These factors might be viewed from different perspectives, leading to varying interpretations. For instance, some parental mediation behaviours might be perceived as necessary and not limiting to a child's autonomy during early adolescence, while the same behaviours could be seen as restrictive and unnecessary during middle teenage years.

Additionally, while the survey included questions to assess parental mediation strategies, it might not have covered all the strategies that parents use simultaneously. This oversight could mean that the full spectrum of parental approaches, which might balance and ultimately support a child's development and independence, was not adequately captured.

Furthermore, the landscape of children's media use has changed dramatically, leading to an evolution in mediation strategies. Traditional strategies, such as co-using, have diminished in relevance as children now predominantly use mobile phones for social media. This shift implies that newer mediation strategies, which may be more pertinent in the context of mobile and social media use, might not have been adequately assessed in this study. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancement can result in mediation strategies quickly becoming outdated or evolving before they can be thoroughly studied. This dynamic nature of technology use among children necessitates continuous updating and reassessment of mediation strategies to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

Moreover, this research primarily focuses on cognitive skills and freedom of expression, leaving many factors related to the autonomy of opinion formation in children unexplored, such as emotional support, peers, and school environment. Assessing the intentions of parents and their practices in mediating their online activities posed a significant challenge, as it was difficult to determine whether their approaches supported or suppressed their children's autonomy. The research addresses this by evaluating whether mediation strategies were accompanied by discussions, which are considered critical for supporting and protecting the child. It also included multiple questions for parents about their mediation strategies and their support for critical thinking skills and freedom of expression. However, more in-depth interviews would have provided a deeper understanding of parental intentions and enriched the analysis.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

This research indicates that there is no clear evidence of the effect of parental mediation strategies on adolescents' development of independent opinions and critical thinking skills. However, theories on parental autonomy support and the Child Rights Convention and General Comment 25 suggest a connection between these variables. They emphasise the need for parents to adopt more transparent and empowering approaches that respect their children's digital rights. By fostering open communication and equipping children with tools for critical engagement with online content, parents can help them navigate the digital world with confidence and autonomy.

Therefore, it is necessary to adopt more empowerment-based mediation strategies. Rather than focusing on protection and restriction, parents should always prioritise fostering critical thinking and media literacy skills. This involves creating an environment that encourages open dialogue about online experiences and where adolescents feel comfortable seeking parental guidance when needed.

This research highlights the complexity of parental mediation in the digital age and its impact on adolescents' autonomy in opinion formation. Although parental practices such as encouraging expression and supporting cognitive skills are key aspects of mediation strategies, their influence on autonomy in opinion formation may be limited. Other factors, such as emotional support and decision-making autonomy, may play a more significant role and warrant further investigation.

To address the limitations of this study and enhance understanding of parental digital mediation and its impact on children's autonomy, future research should consider the following:

01 —Explore a wider range of mediation strategies:

assess newly emerging mediation strategies and their impacts on children’s media use and development, especially in the context of mobile and social media.

02 —Investigate factors influencing opinion formation:

examine additional factors contributing to children’s autonomy in forming opinions, such as emotional support, peer influence, and social influences.

03 —Conduct in-depth interviews:

employ qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, to gain insights into parental intentions and strategies, revealing nuances and motivations behind these practices.

04 —Diverse demographic sampling:

include a more diverse sample in terms of socio-economic status, cultural background, and family structure to enhance the generalisability of findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of how different contexts influence mediation strategies and their effectiveness.

By addressing these suggestions, future research can build on the current study’s findings and contribute to a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in parental mediation of children’s media use.

Research recommendations:

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made. First, parents should be encouraged to adopt a more flexible approach to mediation, one that respects the child’s digital rights, and the growing autonomy of their adolescent children. This might involve shifting from a directive style of mediation to one that is more supportive and collaborative, allowing adolescents to take greater ownership of their opinions and decisions.

Second, educational programs for parents should be developed to raise awareness of the limited influence that traditional mediation strategies might have and to promote more effective ways of engaging with adolescents. These programs should emphasise the importance of open communication and respect for the adolescent's emerging autonomy.

Third, schools and educators should also play a role in supporting adolescents' critical thinking and opinion formation, complementing parental efforts. Schools could implement programs that focus on digital literacy and critical media consumption, equipping adolescents with the tools they need to navigate the complexities of social media independently.

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Annex A: The Parents Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. Your honest feedback is crucial in helping us achieve our research objectives. We anticipate that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. We are committed to protecting your data and ensuring its confidentiality. All information collected will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared with third parties. Once again, thank you for your participation.

01 – Age of respondent

02 – Gender of respondent

03 – Occupation of respondent

04 – Please rank the social media platforms you use the most, starting from the most used

1st choice:

2nd choice

3rd choice

4th choice

Options: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Online games, Twitter, LinkedIn, Other (please specify)

05 — Name of your child's school

06 — For children aged 13-17, please provide the age, class, gender, and average hours spent on social media for each child.

	Age	Class	Gender	Average time spent on social media daily
First Child				
Second Child				

07 — Please rank the platforms your children use the most
 1st choice:
 2nd choice
 3rd choice
 4th choice

Option: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Online games, Twitter, LinkedIn, Other (please specify)

08 — What tools do you use to control your child's social media activities? (Select all that apply)I use parental control software to block some access

I — I apply content filtering

J — I regularly check the browsing history

K — I monitor their content and interactions online

L — I monitor who they talk/chat with

M — Ogero parental protection services

N — Time restrictions (using social media for a limited time or in a specific time)

O — Other (please specify in the next question)

P — I don't apply any mediation tools

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
09 – Do you believe your child's opinions and beliefs are influenced by the content they consume on social media?					
10 – Do you believe your child's online interactions with peers on social media influence their opinions and beliefs?					
11 – Do you believe your opinions and beliefs are influenced by the content you consume on social media?					
12 – Do you believe the people's opinions and beliefs are influenced by the content they consume on social media?					

13 – Do you initiate conversations with your child about their online activities?

- A – Yes, I frequently initiate discussions with them about their online activities
- B – Sometimes, I initiate discussions with them about their online activities
- C – Only when they come to me and ask for my opinion
- D – We never talk about their online activities

14 – What types of social media content do you restrict your child from accessing or viewing? (Select all that apply)

- A – Platforms that discuss explicit sexual matters
- B – Religious platforms that do not align with the family beliefs
- C – Political platforms that do not align with the family's opinions
- D – Platforms that discuss specific social issues
- E – I don't restrict any content

- 15 — How do you encourage your child to critically evaluate information on social media? (Select all that apply)*
- A — I teach them how to fact-check sources
 - B — I discuss with them the importance of verifying information
 - C — I encourage them to ask questions about what they read or watch online
 - D — I don't usually encourage them to critically evaluate information
- 16 — How frequently do you discuss current events, trends, or social issues with your child?
- A — Daily
 - B — Weekly
 - C — Monthly
 - D — Rarely or Never
- 17 — How do you handle discussions with your child about controversial or sensitive topics they encounter online?
- A — I actively engage in open discussions and provide guidance
 - B — I avoid discussing such topics with my child
 - C — I encourage my child to form their own opinions without interference
 - D — I direct them to other sources for information and discussion
- 18 — Do you encourage exposing your child to a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints online or would you prefer to direct them to what you believe is right to protect them?
- A — I expose them to a variety of sources and encourage discussion about differing opinions
 - B — I discourage them from engaging with viewpoints that differ from mine
 - C — I don't actively encourage them to engage with diverse perspectives

- 19 — To what extent do you discuss social media literacy concepts such as bias, propaganda, and credibility with your child?
- A — Extensively
 - B — Moderately
 - C — Minimally
 - D — Not at all
- 20 — Do you typically restrict your children from interacting with peers on social media if you believe those peers might influence your child's opinions and beliefs?
- A — Yes, I restrict my children from engaging in conversations or online interactions with them to protect them.
 - B — No, I encourage my children to remain open to all opinions, cultures, and backgrounds.
 - C — Sometimes I restrict my children from interacting with peers whom I believe might have a negative influence on their opinions and beliefs.
- 21 — To what extent do you restrict your children from interacting with opposing points of views on social media to protect them?
- A — I strictly limit their interactions with individuals who hold opposing viewpoints to shield them from potential harm.
 - B — I moderate their interactions, allowing them to engage with opposing viewpoints only under certain circumstances or conditions.
 - C — I encourage open dialogue and exposure to diverse perspectives, even if they conflict with my child's beliefs, to foster critical thinking.
 - D — I provide guidance and support but ultimately allow my child to navigate interactions with opposing viewpoints independently.

22 — How does your child typically react when discussing an issue or matter in which they hold a different opinion from yours?

- A — My child consistently maintains their opinion, even if it differs from mine, after the discussion.
- B — My child occasionally changes their opinion and adopts mine if I can convince them.
- C — My child always adopts my opinion at the conclusion of our discussions.
- D — We avoid discussing such topics altogether to prevent conflict

23 — Do you encourage your child to express their opinions and beliefs openly, even if they differ from yours?

- A — Yes, always
- B — Yes, sometimes
- C — No, rarely
- D — No, never

24 — Do you actively encourage your child to engage in community-related discussions outside of the family environment?

- A — Yes, regularly
- B — Yes, occasionally
- C — No, rarely
- D — No, never

Annex B: The Adolescents Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. Your honest feedback is crucial in helping us achieve our research objectives. We anticipate that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. We are committed to protecting your data and ensuring its confidentiality. All information collected will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared with third parties. Once again, thank you for your participation.

01 – Age

02 – Class

03 – Gender

04 – Name of school

05 – Please rank the social media platforms you use the most, starting from the most used

1st choice:

2nd choice

3rd choice

4th choice

Options: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Online games, Twitter, LinkedIn, Other (please specify)

- 06 – On average, how many hours do you spend on social media daily?
- 07 – Why do you mostly use social media? (Select all that apply)
- A – talking/chatting with friends
 - B – Learning about new opportunities
 - C – Having fun
 - D – Making new friends
 - E – Following up on news and social events
 - F – Other (please specify in the next question)
- 08 – Do you use social media to find out about news and events?
- A – Yes, social media makes it easy
 - B – Yes, but I don't trust everything I read or see
 - C – No, I rely on traditional news sources (Tv, newspapers, etc...)
 - D – No, I don't care about following up on news and events
- 09 – Are you confident in being able to tell if something is true or not on social media?
- A – Yes, I feel confident in my ability
 - B – Somewhat confident, but I sometimes struggle
 - C – No, I find it challenging
 - D – I don't actively evaluate credibility
 - E – I think most of the information on social media is accurate
- 10 – When you see something on social media that's hard to understand or makes you wonder, what do you do?
- A – Talk about it with parents or trusted adults
 - B – Talk about it with my friends
 - C – Research by yourself
 - D – Avoid such topics altogether
- 11 – How often do your parents talk to you about using social media?
- A – Daily
 - B – Weekly
 - C – Monthly
 - D – Rarely or never

- 12 – What things do your parents do to keep you safe when you're on social media? (Select all that apply)
- A – They use parental control software to block my access to certain websites
 - B – They apply content filtering
 - C – They regularly check my browsing history
 - D – They monitor my content and interactions online
 - E – They monitor who I talk/chat with
 - F – They apply time restrictions (using social media for a limited time or in a specific time)
 - G – They use Ogero parental protection service
 - H – They don't do anything
 - I – other (please specify in the following question)
- 13 – What do you think about how your parents are involved in what you do on social media?
- A – They are actively involved and monitor my activities closely
 - B – They discuss social media usage with me but do not monitor it closely
 - C – They trust me to manage my social media activities responsibly
 - D – They are not involved or aware of my social media activities
- 14 – What kind of stuff aren't you allowed to see on social media because your parents don't want you to? (Select all that apply)
- A – Platforms discussing explicit sexual matters
 - B – Religious platforms not aligning with family beliefs
 - C – Political platforms not aligning with family opinions
 - D – Platforms discussing specific social issues
 - E – They don't restrict any content

- 15 — How do you feel about the rules your parents make about what you can see and do on social media?
- A — I appreciate and understand their importance
 - B — I sometimes find them restrictive but understand their intentions
 - C — I feel they are unnecessary and overly restrictive
 - D — I don't have any content restrictions imposed by my parents
 - E — I know how to manipulate my parents' restrictions
 - F — I have another social media account that my parents don't know about
- 16 — How often do you and your friends talk about social media stuff?
- A — Daily
 - B — Weekly
 - C — Monthly
 - D — Rarely or Never
- 17 — Are you okay with sharing different opinions or arguing with others on social media?
- A — Very comfortable; I like sharing different ideas and opinions with others
 - B — Somewhat comfortable, but I'm careful because I'm worried about how others might react
 - C — Not very comfortable; I prefer to avoid troubles on social media
 - D — I don't engage in such discussions on social media
- 18 — How often do you talk with your parents about things happening in the world or what's popular on social media?
- A — Daily
 - B — Weekly
 - C — Monthly
 - D — Yearly
- 19 — Are you okay with sharing what you think, even if it's different from what your parents think?
- A — Yes, always
 - B — Yes, sometimes
 - C — No, rarely
 - D — No, never

- 20 — How much do your parents stop you from seeing different opinions on social media to keep you safe?
- A — My parents are very careful about who I talk to online if they have different ideas, to keep me safe.
 - B — My parents decide when I can talk to people who have different ideas, and they make rules about it.
 - C — My parents think it's good for me to hear different ideas, even if they're different from what I believe.
 - D — My parents help me out and give advice, but they let me decide how to handle talking to people with different ideas by myself.
- 21 — Do your parents stop you from talking to friends on social media if they think your friends might change what you think about things?
- A — Yes, they restrict me from engaging in conversations or online interactions with them to protect me
 - B — No, they encourage me to be open to all opinions, cultures, and backgrounds
 - C — Sometimes they restrict me from interacting with friends whom they believe might have a negative influence on my opinions and beliefs
 - D — They restrict me, but I do not listen to them, and I do what I want
- 22 — How much do you think the same way as your parents do?
- A — I agree with most of my parents' opinions and beliefs
 - B — I agree with my parents on some opinions and beliefs
 - C — I rarely agree with my parents' opinions and beliefs
 - D — I never agree with my parents' opinions and beliefs
- 23 — What usually happens when you and your parents talk about something on social media that you see differently?
- A — They would encourage open discussion and respect my perspective.
 - B — They would discourage me from expressing differing opinions to protect me
 - C — They would not mind as long as I can justify my beliefs
 - D — My parents get angry and try in every way to convince me of their opinions



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