
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Socio-economic and Educational Predictors of Parental Media mediation in Morocco: a Mixed Approach Study

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| ABSTRACT

As digital devices become part of Moroccan households, parents have found themselves forced to navigate how they govern their children's screen time. This study investigates the parental mediation strategies used in Morocco and analyzes how educational level and household income shape these preferences. Drawing on a survey of 274 parents across Morocco, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, post-hoc ANOVA, and linear regression models, in addition to a semi structure interview with 20 parents. The findings show a clear preference for restrictive mediation ($M = 3.16$), which parents rely on it significantly more than instructive ($M = 2.94$, $p = .015$) or cooperative approaches ($M = 2.81$, $p < .001$). Regression models further highlight that digital parenting style is strongly linked to socio-economic status. Higher levels of parental education consistently drive greater involvement across all mediation types, with postgraduate degree holders showing the most pronounced engagement in instructive and cooperative strategies compared to parents with primary education ($p < .0001$). In contrast, an absence of formal education negatively predicts both cooperative and restrictive practices. Income follows a similar trend, as households earning between 5,000 and 20,000 MAD (500\$ and 2000\$) demonstrate significantly higher participation across mediation styles than those earning under 5,000 MAD (500\$) ($p < .01$). Ultimately, these patterns reveal a significant socio-economic divide in how digital parenting is practiced in Morocco, suggesting that future media literacy frameworks and school-based interventions must move away from standardized models to address these underlying demographic disparities.

| KEYWORDS

Parental Mediation, Media Literacy, Socio-Economic Predictors, Educational level, Morocco

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The modern media landscape has become overwhelmingly saturated, ushering in an era where children are born into a world deeply integrated with digital technology. Navigating daily through various digital channels, children use media as an integral part of their lives, prompting intense scientific interest in how screen exposure impacts their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Hassan, Alam, Wahab, & Hawlader, 2020). While digital media offers educational and social opportunities, it also introduces substantial vulnerabilities. Due to their developing cognitive maturity and a lack of media literacy, children are routinely exposed to online dangers, including content, contact, and conduct risks, alongside serious violations of privacy (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

To mitigate these risks, the active intervention of mediators is crucial to safeguard children. While extensive academic work has examined institutional frameworks and the role of educators, comparatively little research has addressed the primary mediators of media: parents. Parents are the most significant socialization agents, gatekeepers, and facilitators of technology in a child's early years. To manage these digital environments, parents employ diverse strategies under the umbrella of parental mediation

theory. These range from restrictive approaches, such as setting screen-time boundaries and content rules, to active approaches, such as instructive and cooperative co-use, which rely on shared screen experiences and open communication about media benefits and harms (Clark, 2011; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Valkenburg, Krcmar, Peeters, & Marseille, 1999).

Despite the global relevance of digital parenting, the existing body of literature exhibits a heavy Western centric bias, as most prominent studies have been conducted in Europe and the United States. This geographical disparity highlights a critical need to "de-westernize" media studies by exploring how local, non-Western contexts shape media practices. In Morocco, the study of parental mediation and parents' media literacy remains in its infancy, leaving an empirical gap regarding how local cultural and social dynamics influence parenting in the digital age (Nfissi, 2013).

Furthermore, parental mediation is not practiced in a vacuum; it is shaped by demographic and familial capital, notably family socioeconomic status (SES) and educational attainment. Parents with higher educational backgrounds (e.g., Master's or Doctorate degrees) tend to exhibit a better understanding of digital opportunities and risks, leading to a greater reliance on active, instructive, and cooperative mediation styles (Merdin, 2017; Šmahelová, Juhová, Čermák, & Šmahel, 2017). Conversely, parents with lower socioeconomic capital or limited digital literacy often rely on strict restrictive mediation; such as outright device bans, to manage risks, sometimes because of longer working hours or a lack of alternative technical resources.

To address these critical gaps in the literature, this study investigates the preferred parental mediation styles of Moroccan parents and evaluates how their educational backgrounds, socioeconomic factors, and media literacy levels predict these practices. By evaluating these dynamics within Morocco, this research provides essential insights for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to support effective media literacy and parental guidance strategies.

2. Literature Review

Modern domestic environment is highly digitized, creating a screen-saturated ecosystem where children are exposed to massive flows of information. This has forced researchers to transition from traditional television effects models to interactive digital media frameworks. Parental mediation is defined as any strategy parents use to control, supervise, or interpret media content for children to foster healthy media habits and protect them from digital dangers (Warren, 2001). Under the media effects paradigm, parental involvement represents a crucial protective behavior against online risks, acting as a cognitive filter that shapes how children receive and interpret media messages (Mendoza, 2009). Historically, parental mediation was theorized around TV viewing, categorizing strategies into restrictive rules, active discussion, and co-viewing (Valkenburg et al., 1999). However, the interactive nature of personal devices has expanded these concepts, leading to contemporary frameworks that differentiate between restrictive, instructive, and cooperative co-use strategies (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

In Morocco, the demographic base is heavily youth-oriented, which means that the largest portion of the media landscape should be allocated primarily to children and young people (Benaayach, 2001). Despite this reality, children's status as a distinct user class remains marginalized in national media policies, which are often vague, protective, and poorly aligned with the interactive needs of youth (Ait Mansour & Sabry, 2020). Empirical surveys show that digital technology has thoroughly saturated Moroccan households. For instance, 9 out of 10 Moroccan children use smartphones daily, and 68% of them own their own portable device despite 58% of them still being at the primary school level (Kaspersky & Immersion, 2021).

While media access provides educational opportunities, as demonstrated by the Ministry of Education's deployment of TV lessons and digital platforms during the COVID-19 lockdown, it also exposes Moroccan youth to serious vulnerabilities. These risks are classified using the European Union's expanded "3Cs" model, which outlines content, contact, and conduct risks, alongside violations of privacy (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Content risks involve encountering violent, pornographic, or hate filled material. Local research demonstrates that exposure to violent media is significantly linked to aggressive behavior and academic difficulties among Moroccan youth (Lazrak, 2017). Contact risks, including cyberbullying, online grooming, and peer harassment, represent a major threat to children's emotional well-being (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Livingstone, Haddon, Goerzig, & Ólafsson, 2011). Conduct risks refer to children's own behaviors online, such as participating in cyberbullying or sending sexually explicit messages (Livingstone & Görzig, 2014). Finally, violations of privacy have emerged as a significant risk, driven by data-tracking algorithms and the parental practice of "sharenting," where parents inadvertently compromise their children's long-term digital footprints by sharing personal stories and images on social media (Beckham, Leaver, & Markham, 2019; Staksrud, Ólafsson, Livingstone, & Haddon, 2013).

In Morocco, academic exploration of how youth manage these dynamics is emerging but limited. Research on secondary students indicates that social media dominates youth digital habits, serving universal motives of entertainment and social interaction, but also leading to issues such as digital addiction and distraction (Belhadj, 2019). Strikingly, Belhadj (2019) found that Moroccan adolescents are active content creators, with 78.67% producing their own social media content. This active engagement highlights the dual-use nature of digital platforms, where the potential for creative self-expression and digital citizenship is constantly in tension with severe behavioral and safety risks.

To measure how parents navigate these digital spaces, communication scholars have developed various parental mediation scales. The measurement of parental regulation originally focused on non-interactive television, identifying three core practices: instructive mediation (explaining content), restrictive mediation (setting strict boundaries), and social co-viewing (sharing the

screen without active commentary) (Valkenburg et al., 1999). With the advent of the internet and personal computers, Livingstone and Helsper (2008) adapted these scales to include active co-use (combining instruction and shared use) and multiple forms of restrictive practices, such as technical filtering, rule-making, and post-hoc browser history monitoring.

Despite their widespread use, digital age parental mediation scales have produced inconsistent results regarding factor structure, item representation, and content validity (Kuldas, Sargioti, Milosevic, & O'Higgins Norman, 2021). These inconsistencies stem from a lack of consensus on terminologies and a failure to account for sample demographics, such as parental education or the specific technical characteristics of different media devices. To establish a standardized framework, researchers have proposed a simpler tripartite model categorized as "restrictive enabling observant" mediation (Kuldas et al., 2021). Restrictive mediation encompasses rule setting and technical restrictions. Enabling mediation involves parent and child initiated communication about internet safety and opportunities. Observant mediation includes passive monitoring of a child's screen and online behavior.

In terms of actual practice, global studies show that parents frequently combine these styles depending on the device in question. Restrictive mediation is more strongly applied to interactive devices like smartphones and computers due to their high perceived risk, whereas cooperative co-use is more commonly applied to traditional television viewing (Ofcom, 2021; Poulain et al., 2023).

To understand the behavioral mechanisms of parental intervention, it is necessary to define the three core styles examined in this study:

Restrictive Mediation: This style relies heavily on rule making to regulate children's screen time and content access, aiming to prevent exposure to negative and risky media content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). While effective at reducing direct exposure to content risks, overly strict restrictive mediation can lead to unintended negative consequences, such as increased interest in prohibited content, higher parent-child conflict, and a failure to develop necessary self regulatory digital skills (Aktürk & Akman, 2024).

Instructive Mediation: Instructive mediation refers to parents' active, verbal efforts to interpret, translate, and contextualize media messages for their children (Kirwil, 2009). Acting as educators, parents discuss the benefits and dangers of media, explain embedded commercial or ideological messages, and evaluate the motives of content creators (Litt, Geusens, Seamster, & Lewis, 2022). This approach is highly valued because it promotes children's critical thinking and long-term media literacy skills, enabling them to make independent, safe decisions online.

Cooperative Mediation (Co-use): This style involves parents and children engaging with digital devices together, allowing for shared exploration, joint gameplay, and co-viewing (Yu, DeVore, & Roque, 2021). Cooperative mediation is characterized by bidirectional communication and a collaborative, non-authoritarian posture (Austin & Kistler, 2015). It serves as a powerful parenting strategy that strengthens parent child bonding and encourages positive digital learning, though its efficacy in shielding children from sophisticated online threats is occasionally debated (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010).

Media literacy is fundamentally defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms (Center for Media Literacy, 2021). The European Center for the Development of Vocational Training extends this definition to emphasize three core competencies: physical and digital access, critical understanding of messages and hidden agendas, and active communication and content creation across diverse contexts (CEDEFOP, 2009).

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in W. James Potter's (2016) Cognitive Model of Media Literacy, which conceptualizes media literacy not as a static category, but as a dynamic continuum. Potter's model is structured around three essential pillars:

Skills: These are the cognitive tools used to process and interpret media messages. Potter outlines seven core skills: analysis (breaking down messages), evaluation (judging content quality against standards), grouping (classifying elements), induction (generalizing patterns), deduction (applying general principles), synthesis (reassembling elements), and abstracting (distilling the essence of a message).

Knowledge Structures: These represent organized sets of information stored in an individual's memory. To be highly media literate, an individual requires strong, structured knowledge in five key areas: media effects, media content, media industries, the real world, and the self. These structures allow users to look beyond the surface of a message and understand the commercial motives or biases behind its production.

Personal Locus: This is the motivational core of the model, representing a person's goals and drives. A strong personal locus means an individual actively directs their focus, critically filtering media exposures to align with personal goals rather than passively absorbing media content.

Potter (2016) establishes distinct stages of media literacy development, moving from early childhood states (acquiring fundamentals, language and narrative acquisition) to advanced states (developing skepticism, intensive development, experiential exploring, critical appreciation, and social responsibility). Parents operating at lower stages of media literacy face significant challenges: they display an inability to critically assess messages, fail to leverage media for positive development, and struggle to implement proactive strategies to protect their children. In contrast, parents with a highly developed critical appreciation of media possess the cognitive tools necessary to guide their children's digital habits effectively.

Historically, media literacy frameworks have been developed in Western countries, leading to an overreliance on cultural assumptions that do not always align with local realities in developing nations. De-westernizing the field is crucial to account for diverse sociocultural, economic, and political contexts (Nfissi, 2013).

Within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, media literacy is evolving amidst high rates of traditional illiteracy, political volatility, and highly centralized media structures. While countries like Egypt have attempted to introduce media education at secondary and university levels to foster critical citizenship (Tayie, 2016), these programs face systemic hurdles from cautious policymakers.

In Morocco, media and information literacy is still in its infancy and remains largely excluded from the formal national curriculum (Nfissi, 2013). This institutional neglect means Moroccan students are not systematically equipped with the critical skills required to navigate the digital age safely. The integration of media literacy in secondary schools faces major organizational, systemic, and attitudinal challenges (Ait Hattani, 2019). Organizationally, schools suffer from a severe lack of financial and technological resources, preventing students from gaining hands on digital experience (Kettani, 2022). Systemically, teacher professional development in digital literacy is weak, leaving many older educators reliant on obsolete, traditional instructional methods (Kettani, 2022). Finally, attitudinal challenges are prominent; many teachers display skepticism toward digital technology, viewing it primarily as a source of distraction rather than an educational tool (Ait Hattani, 2019). To overcome these barriers, scholars advocate for expanding media and information literacy across all university faculties and secondary institutions, arguing that critical skills are essential to help Moroccan youth interpret media roles and societal effects (Nfissi & Chouit, 2016).

Because the formal educational system in Morocco does not provide media literacy instruction, the entire responsibility of digital safety and guidance falls directly upon parents. Research demonstrates that parents' own media literacy is a powerful predictor of how they mediate their children's media use (Macias & Choi, 2021). Media literate parents are highly aware of potential media effects and actively use digital parenting strategies to cultivate critical thinking skills in their children (Rasmussen, White, King, Holiday, & Densley, 2016). Parents with strong media literacy are more likely to engage in instructive mediation, discussing commercial motives and source reliability, and are more confident in setting appropriate boundaries (Macias & Choi, 2021). In contrast, parents with lower media literacy skills often exhibit high levels of anxiety and a poor understanding of digital spaces, causing them to rely on rigid restrictive mediation, such as outright device bans, which fails to prepare children for eventual, unsupervised digital exposure.

Furthermore, parental mediation is shaped by broader family dynamics. For example, parental stress can lead to highly inconsistent mediation, causing parents to alternate between permissive neglect and harsh, arbitrary restrictions (Warren & Aloia, 2019). Additionally, discrepancies and conflicts between co-parents regarding media rules can create a confusing household environment, reducing the overall efficacy of digital regulation and leading to poorer behavioral outcomes for children (Mares, Stephenson, Martins, & Nathanson, 2018).

Empirical literature consistently demonstrates that parental mediation is heavily stratified by socioeconomic status (SES) and educational attainment. On one hand, parents with higher levels of education hold a more sophisticated understanding of digital opportunities and risks, leading them to prioritize instructive and cooperative mediation strategies (Merdin, 2017). On the other hand, parents with lower education levels are more likely to rely on strict restrictive mediation, using traditional, rule based approaches to manage device use (Šmahelová et al., 2017).

Socioeconomic status, particularly family income, also plays a pivotal role. Families with higher incomes have greater access to diverse digital devices and educational tools, creating a complex media environment that renders strict restrictive rules difficult to enforce (Šmahelová et al., 2017). Consequently, higher-income parents are more likely to engage in cooperative co-use and instructive dialogue, which are highly adaptive for multi device households. Lower-income parents, who often work longer hours in manual labor, have less time and resources to dedicate to shared media activities, leading them to rely on restrictive strategies to protect their children (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

These dynamics highlight how socioeconomic and educational capital shapes and stratifies digital parenting practices, creating a "digital parenting divide" between highly resource rich households and those with limited educational and financial assets.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

This study is theoretically framed by four overlapping paradigms:

Parental Mediation Theory: Posits that parents act as primary socializing agents, facilitators, and gatekeepers who deploy active, restrictive, or cooperative strategies to manage media effects and online risks for their children.

Bedroom Culture (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001): Conceptualizes the spatial and temporal privatization of media consumption, where portable screens have shifted children's media use away from shared family living rooms to private domestic spaces, making direct parental supervision extremely difficult.

Participatory Learning (Lynn Clark, 2011): Challenges television centric deficit models by introducing a collaborative framework where parents and children explore digital media together as colearners, actively sharing the "emotion work" of negotiating technology within family life.

Distant Mediation (Zaman et al., 2016): Identifies a nuanced parenting strategy where parents allow young children temporary device autonomy but maintain passive, distant supervision, stepping in only when a threshold risk is observed.

4. Method

4.1 Research Design

This study used a mixed methods research design within a pragmatism paradigm. Pragmatism is uniquely suited for this study as it balances objective, statistical quantitative data with the nuanced, subjective interpretations of qualitative social factors, answering both the "what" and "why" of parental media mediation. In accordance with the ethical guidelines proposed by Purvis and Crawford (2024), the study maintained a strict commitment to confidentiality, objective and non judgmental interactions, and informed voluntary consent.

The research was split into two parallel phases: a large scale quantitative survey to map statistical correlations across Morocco, and a semi-structured qualitative interview cohort to capture deep familial experiences.

4.2 Participants

The target population consisted of Moroccan parents of children under 18 years of age residing in Morocco. For the quantitative sample, 280 parents were recruited, which was finalized to 274 valid parent responses after filtering for missing or incomplete demographic data. The quantitative sample was obtained using random, cluster based sampling, leveraging secondary school student networks to access highly diverse socioeconomic status. For the qualitative sample, purposive sampling was used to select 20 parents representing balanced educational levels and income brackets for semi-structured interviews.

4.3 Procedure

Quantitative data collection occurred through a dual mode hybrid distribution. Physical paper questionnaires were distributed directly to parents via public high school student channels in Morocco to ensure access to lower-income or less educated parents. Furthermore, the survey was distributed online across Moroccan parenting networks. Qualitative interviews took place in multiple settings based on participant preference, including public spaces, cafes, secondary schools, and phone/video calls, with each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Moroccan Darija, audio recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for thematic coding.

4.4 Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics established mean scores and standard deviations for all variables. Inferential statistics included a One-Way ANOVA with a Least Significant Difference (LSD) post-hoc pairwise comparison to examine statistical differences in the use of the three mediation styles. Six distinct linear regression models were constructed to test the predictive power of family monthly income and parental educational levels on cooperative, instructive, and restrictive practices.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using NVivo software. Thematic analysis combined deductive coding (using parental mediation and bedroom culture categories) with inductive coding to capture emergent, contextual themes regarding Moroccan domestic realities.

5. Results

5.1. Quantitative Data Findings

The demographic distribution of the survey sample of 274 Moroccan parents is balanced across key socio-demographic indicators. Females represent 49.6% ($N = 136$) of the participants, and males represent 50.4% ($N = 138$). In terms of age, the largest cohort is aged 30–34 (27.0%), followed by 35–39 (17.0%), 25–29 (12.0%), and above 60 (12.0%).

Household device density is exceptionally high. Only 1.4% of households possess no digital devices, whereas 43.6% possess 3–4 devices, 26.4% possess 2 devices, 13.6% possess 5–6 devices, and 6.4% possess more than 7 devices. Regarding family size, 31.4% of households have two children, 28.5% have three children, and 17.9% have only one child.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each mediation style. Restrictive mediation has the highest reported engagement (Mean = 3.1602, $SD = 1.0651$), followed by instructive mediation (Mean = 2.9380, $SD = 1.1775$) and cooperative mediation (Mean = 2.8102, $SD = 0.9473$).

A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine if the differences in reported means are statistically significant. The ANOVA revealed a highly statistically significant difference in engagement levels across mediation styles.

To pinpoint the exact differences between mediation styles, a Least Significant Difference (LSD) post-hoc test was performed. The post-hoc test confirms that restrictive mediation is practiced at a statistically higher rate compared to both cooperative ($P = 0.000$) and instructive mediation ($P = 0.015$). No statistically significant difference exists between cooperative and instructive mediation score means ($P = 0.162$).

For Cooperative Mediation, the educational level regression model uses Elementary Education as the reference group. Higher educational credentials are significantly associated with increased cooperative mediation. Furthermore, the monthly income model uses Less than 5,000 MAD as the reference level. Middle to high incomes significantly predict increased cooperative mediation.

Instructive mediation is significantly positive predicted by all education groups above elementary level, with the strongest positive indicators observed in Master's and Doctorate degree holders. Similarly, middle to high family monthly incomes significantly predict higher engagement in instructive mediation.

For Restrictive Mediation, educational attainment is a positive predictor, whereas having no formal education acts as a significant negative predictor. In contrast to active styles, all monthly income brackets significantly predict increased restrictive mediation compared to families earning under 5,000 MAD.

5.2. Qualitative themes from Interviews

Thematic coding of the 20 semi structured interviews in NVivo reflected rich narratives that help explain the statistical trends of the quantitative survey.

Restrictive Mediation Practices: Interviewees consistently verified that restrictive mediation is their foundational, "safety first" strategy. All interviewed parents reported having some rules in place. Time restrictions ranged from outright smartphone bans to specific daily allowances: "My kids, often watch cartoons on the TV, with the limit of a half hour per day" (Mother of two, Fez). Smartphones and computers are heavily restricted compared to television: "They only get to use their phones during the weekend" or "They don't have a smartphone... they are not allowed to own or use a smartphone". Television content restriction, however, is often structurally built into family routines by using family safe satellite settings: "We only turn it on after 6 PM... we only tune in to satellite frequencies that respect our values, religion, and culture".

Instructive Mediation and Developmental Readiness: The interviews revealed that instructive mediation is strictly bounded by child age and maturity: "Since my kids are still toddlers, I rarely engage in discussions with them". Parents demonstrated an explicit desire to transition toward instructive mediation as children age: "For now, I am using restrictive and cooperative mediation only because of his very young age, but I would like to be more instructive once he can understand and make conscious decisions" (Father of a two-year-old, Taounate).

Older siblings were described as more critical and media literate: "The boy, the older sibling, has become a little bit more critical and argumentative; while the girl is easily convinced and still just curious... it's a matter of age and level of maturity".

Cooperative Mediation and Family Bonding: Cooperative television viewing is widely used as a means of domestic bonding and safety monitoring: "I sit with them most of the time especially when I'm doing something that doesn't need focus, so that I can pay attention to any irrelevant content that might appear on TV". However, co-use is highly restricted or non-existent on laptops or smartphones. Educated parents described occasionally sitting with children on computers, but strictly for schoolwork and tutorial assistance: "They only use the computer when they need it for school projects or educational purposes" or helping them master digital tools like Microsoft PowerPoint or Word.

7. Discussion

7.1. Understanding the Moroccan Digital Parenting Divide

The triangulation of quantitative survey data and qualitative parent interviews reveals a complex picture of digital parenting in Morocco. The descriptive analysis confirms that restrictive mediation remains the dominant, "default" strategy used by Moroccan parents across all demographic segments. However, the qualitative insights demonstrate that while parents rely on rules and physical boundaries to ensure basic safety, they do not view restriction as an optimal long-term strategy. Instead, Moroccan parents exhibit a dynamic, adaptive approach, expressing a strong desire to transition from restriction to instructive guidance as their children demonstrate increased developmental maturity and media literacy.

This adaptive posture matches Potter's (2016) media literacy continuum, wherein parents dynamically adjust their regulatory involvement based on their child's progress through stages of cognitive and skeptical development. In early stages (representing toddlers and primary schoolers), parents use strict restrictive and passive distant mediation to keep children safe while maintaining family boundaries. As children grow into their pre-teen and teenage years, developing a critical locus and sharpened skepticism, parents actively introduce instructive dialogue to foster independent, critical thinking.

7.2. The Spatial Shift of "Bedroom Culture" and the Tension in Co-Use

A key finding of this study is the distinct divergence in how parents mediate different technological platforms. While cooperative mediation is highly prevalent and active on traditional television screens (functioning as a tool for shared family bonding and moral alignment), it is exceptionally low or non-existent on laptops, computers, and smartphones.

This divergence is theoretically explained by Bovill and Livingstone's (2001) conceptualization of "bedroom culture". The rise of portable, mobile screen technologies has privatized children's media consumption. Unlike the living room television, mobile devices are spatialized and used in private domestic spheres, often isolated from parental line of sight. This spatial privatization introduces a major tension in cooperative mediation; Parents feel a strong desire to co-use devices to keep children safe and foster shared digital skills. However, the individualistic, personal design of smartphones and tablets actively resists shared, co-use

experiences, pushing parents to abandon cooperative strategies and resolve to strict restrictive or reactive instructive mediation to monitor their children's activities.

7.3. Fostering Critical Media Literacy: From Restrictive Defense to Instructive Empowerment

The regression analyses reveal that parents' media literacy is a powerful positive predictor of all three mediation styles, explaining the highest portion of variance in instructive mediation (38.1%). This strong correlation suggests that parents with high media literacy possess the cognitive capital necessary to move beyond defensive, reactive, and passive boundaries toward proactive, instructive dialogue.

The qualitative interviews highlight the protective and even life saving implications of this critical empowerment. For example, a father described how his media literacy and active parental monitoring allowed him to recognize that his preteen son was playing a dangerous, highly manipulative online game ("The Blue Whale") that almost drove him to self harm. The father's ability to critically analyze digital media content enabled him to intervene at a critical moment, saving his child's life.

On the other hand, parents with limited media literacy and blurry understandings of digital environments frequently resort to extreme, defensive restrictive practices; such as, outright banning smartphones or internet access entirely. While intended as a safety measure, this "control deficit" approach leaves children digitally marginalized, entering a highly digitized world with no critical cognitive structures or self regulatory skills to navigate potential content, contact, and conduct dangers independently.

7.4. Socioeconomic and Educational Predictors: Family Capital and Technology Regulation

Our statistical models confirm that digital parenting in Morocco is heavily stratified by socio-demographic and educational capital, validating the structural predictions of family capital theory:

The Educational Stratification: Parents holding Master's or Doctorate degrees show the highest statistical likelihood of using instructive and cooperative mediation compared to those with basic primary education ($P < 0.0001$). This occurs because higher educational attainment equips parents with strong critical reasoning skills, technical self-efficacy, and a deeper appreciation for open, communicative parent child dynamics. In contrast, parents with no formal education exhibit a statistically significant negative association with both cooperative ($\eta^2 = -0.553$, $P = 0.0388$) and restrictive mediation ($\eta^2 = -0.605$, $P = 0.0387$), likely due to a lack of familiarity with digital screen interfaces and lower parental confidence.

The Economic Stratification: Family monthly income serves as a powerful structural predictor. Parents in the middle to high income brackets (5,000 to 20,000 MAD) are significantly more likely to practice cooperative and instructive mediation compared to families earning under 5,000 MAD ($P < 0.0001$). Higher income brackets afford parents more comfortable working conditions, reduced physical labor, and more domestic leisure time, directly increasing their availability and capacity to engage in shared, collaborative media experiences with their children.

The Restrictive Exception: Interestingly, while active mediation is strictly bounded by mid to high income, all higher income brackets predict increased restrictive mediation compared to the lowest income group ($P < 0.01$). This occurs because wealthier households have a much higher density of personal digital devices (smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles), which exponentially increases children's exposure to contact, conduct, and commercial risks. To manage this complex domestic risk profile, high income parents must actively implement strict content rules, screen time boundaries, and technical website blockers alongside active dialogue.

8. Conclusion

This study has systematically investigated the media mediation practices of Moroccan parents and evaluated how these strategies are predicted by socio-economic and educational capital and parent media literacy. The quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that while restrictive mediation is the dominant practice among Moroccan parents, digital parenting is heavily stratified. Highly educated, middle to high income parents with robust media literacy are empowered to employ instructive, collaborative co-use strategies that foster critical thinking and online safety in their children. In contrast, lower-income, less-educated parents frequently rely on strict, defensive restriction, such as outright device bans, to compensate for limited digital skills and lower parental confidence, leaving their children digitally vulnerable.

8.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings have major theoretical and practical implications for media studies and digital parenting:

Theoretical Contributions: The study extends global Parental Mediation Theory by de-westernizing its frameworks and applying them to a developing Arab-Muslim context. It highlights the unique cultural reliance on traditional family bonding and Islamic values as a natural buffer against digital content risks.

Practical Implications: It exposes the "digital parenting divide," showing that parental support initiatives cannot employ a one-size-fits-all approach. Interventions must be custom-tailored to accommodate the specific demographic, economic, and educational disparities that exist across different social strata.

8.2. Limitations

While providing valuable, grounded insights, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged to guide future research: Social Desirability Bias: Because parenting and risk protection are sensitive and socially laden topics, self-reported survey data may be subject to social desirability bias, where parents overreport active, instructive mediation and underreport neglectful or overly restrictive practices to align with social norms of "good parenting".

Socio-Geographic Representation: Although the study incorporated paper surveys in low income areas to capture less educated parents, the primary survey distribution mode was online. This introduces a selection bias toward urban, internet connected, and literate parents, while underrepresenting the rural Moroccan population who face distinct infrastructural, technological, and cultural challenges.

Co-Parenting Dynamics Neglected: By focusing strictly on individual parent responses, the study neglects the critical influence of co-parenting dynamics. The ways in which mothers and fathers coordinate, agree, or experience conflict regarding domestic media rules directly shape the overall domestic screen safety environment.

8.3. Policy Recommendations

To foster a safe, media literate society, Moroccan policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders should implement the following guidelines:

Parent-Inclusive School Programs: Rather than focusing media literacy programs strictly on students, schools should design parental support workshops that equip parents with basic digital skills, screen safety tools, and constructive instructive communication techniques.

National Awareness Campaigns: Broadcasters (such as SNRT and 2M) and telecom regulators should air targeted public service campaigns in Moroccan Darija to educate families on screen-time boundaries, content ratings, and the cognitive dangers of sharenting.

Localized Media Literacy Resources: Develop culturally sensitive digital safety guides and mobile applications in Arabic and Darija that help parents evaluate the credibility of news and manage content controls on smartphones.

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