

## HOW HAS PARENTAL MEDIATION GUIDED INTERNET USE BY CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS?

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### ABSTRACT

The Mediation is the set of measures used by parents (father / mother) that influences, with their conduct, valuations and verbalizations, uses and meanings that children have about the internet. The aim of this study was to understand how parental mediation has affected / guided the use of the internet by children and adolescents. An integrative review of the scientific literature was carried out in the LILACS, MEDLINE, PePSIC, SciELO and PsycINFO databases libraries (2008-2017). From the 28 articles retrieved, it had noticed that parents have guided their children based on strategies to restrict online content and dialogue, which had pointed out with greater beneficial effects. It is also necessary qualitative studies in this area.

**Keywords:** Parenting; children; Internet.

### Cómo la mediación parental ha orientado el uso de internet del público infantojuvenil?

#### RESUMEN

La mediación compone el conjunto de medidas utilizadas por padres (padre/madre) que influyen, con sus conductas, valoraciones y verbalizaciones, usos y significaciones que los hijos tienen a respecto de Internet. El objetivo de este estudio fue comprender de qué modo la mediación parental ha afectado/orientado el uso de Internet por niños y adolescentes. Se realizó una revisión integrativa de la literatura científica en las bases/bibliotecas LILACS, MEDLINE, PePSIC, SciELO y PsycINFO (2008-2017). Por los 28 artículos recuperados, se percibió que los padres han orientado a los hijos a partir de estrategias de restricción de contenidos online y del diálogo, siendo este apuntado con más efectos benéficos. Se resalta la necesidad de estudios cualitativos.

**Palabras clave:** Parentalidad; niños; internet.

### Como a mediação parental tem orientado o uso de internet do público infanto-juvenil?

#### RESUMO

A mediação compõe o conjunto de medidas utilizadas por pais (pai/mãe) que influenciam, com suas condutas, valorizações e verbalizações, usos e significações que os filhos têm a respeito de internet. O objetivo deste estudo foi compreender de que modo a mediação parental tem afetado/orientado o uso de internet por crianças e adolescentes. Foi realizada uma revisão integrativa da literatura científica nas bases/bibliotecas LILACS, MEDLINE, PePSIC, SciELO e PsycINFO (2008-2017). Pelos 28 artigos recuperados, percebeu-se que os pais têm orientado os filhos a partir de estratégias de restrição de conteúdos online e do diálogo, sendo este apontado com maiores efeitos benéficos. Ressalta-se a necessidade de estudos qualitativos.

**Palavras-chave:** Parentalidade; criança; internet.

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## INTRODUCTION

Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) have played an increasingly important role in the context of the relationships established between children and their peers, family members and teachers, as well as parents and children, because new forms of interaction have emerged along with every technological advancement. Such phenomenon has influenced the way people communicate and, consequently, express their subjectivities (Scorsolini-Comin, 2014). With regard to internet use, although network access has increased, parents still have little control over the content that can be accessed by their children when they are online (CETIC, 2017). The Declaration of Children's Rights (UN/ UNICEF, 1990) states that it is parental responsibility to instruct, assist, provide guidelines, and monitor their children and adolescents when it comes to their use of the web at home, at school, at their friends' homes, at internet cafes, and so on, until they become legally independent at the age of 18. The exercise of parental supervision, therefore, gains prominence by becoming a fundamental tool for success in the mediation of internet access for children and adolescents (Nogueira, 2016).

Although schools provide a rich context in which to apply new technologies, the way children and adolescents are oriented to become internet users is still an aspect that has been pointed out by the scientific literature. That theme will be presented here as related to the family domain. Thus, the present study investigates the dimension of parental educational practices developed for the interactive context of the internet, which is increasingly ubiquitous in our daily lives. It represents an emerging theme within Developmental Psychology. Therefore, the need for dialogue emerges in view of the scientific literature produced both on parenthood and on education mediated by The DICTs. Although the educational phenomenon does not exclusively belong to the family environment, the analysis of the present study is focused on the family. Thus, it is expected that the discussion promoted here will also be of interest to educators and the entire school community.

In view of the present context, even though there is variation in the terminology used in the literature to designate parental educational strategies directed at their children's use of electronic media, the term "mediation" has prevailed (Maidel & Vieira, 2015). Such practices are part of the set of measures used by parents in order to influence, by means of their own behavior, appreciations and verbalizations, their children's relationship with the uses and purposes of all types of media, including the Internet (Mondin, 2008).

The literature points out that there is not only one

way to exercise parental control on children's access to internet content. The Kids Online Brazil 2016 survey, for example, showed that the practices reported by parents ranged from more permissive postures to strict discipline and control. In view of this panorama, children and young people tend to see authoritarian mediations as cruel impositions, in which they become mere recipients of norms rather than active agents. As a result, they end up believing such practices will exclude them from the new communication processes (CETIC, 2017). Permissive mediations tend to let users themselves decide how much time they will spend on the internet. We can also consider the existence of negligent mediation, in which parents take excessive distance from their children, who are left without any guidance on how to protect themselves from the dangers of cyberspace (CETIC, 2017). In this sense, the establishment of limits is essential for the safe development of children and adolescents (Almeida, Alves, & Delicado, 2011).

In the scientific literature, there is a consensus that the family environment may be closely associated to problems that children and adolescents might have concerning affections and behavior (Terres-Trindade & Mosmann, 2016). In this context, it is important to realize that some symptoms of dysfunctional styles of parenting, such as lack of consistency and lack of communication skills, are some of the main factors that lead to Problematic Internet Use (PIU) (Patrão et al., 2016).

This scenario points at the need to provide parents with instructions in order to promote the positive use of the internet as a tool for healthy, safe development. Thus, it is perceived that even in the face of the worldwide modernization and the fast pace technological advancements, childcare remains a family responsibility (Spizzirri, Wagner, Mosmann, & Armani, 2012). However, it is necessary to pay attention to the environment that surrounds children and adolescents when they are out of the family environment. The focus of attention must be directed to the changes that never cease to take place in the processes of socialization. The misuse of the Internet is one of the issues that must be addressed (CETIC, 2017). In this context, negative parental practices, such as the imposition of coercive rules and the inability to avoid intense family conflicts, may lead to problems in children's affections and behavior. Therefore, positive parental mediation, imbued with a feeling of responsibility and proximity, proves highly effective when it comes to preventing children from getting into trouble in the future (Terres-Trindade & Mosmann, 2016).

The increase in the use of the Internet by children and adolescents, associated with the need for parental mediation, raises questions such as: How have parents

mediated their children's access to the internet? This question reveals the need to conduct research that addresses the parental mediation theme. Thus, the aim of this study was to understand how fathers and mothers are mediating the internet activities of their children and adolescents.

## METHOD

*Type of study:* This is an integrative review of the scientific literature developed in five stages: problem formulation, study survey, data evaluation, data analysis, data interpretation, and presentation of the results. The main question of this review was based on the PICO strategy, which is a tool that helps produce the questions underlying a research within evidence-based practice. PICO is an acronym for Patient, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome. However, since there is no comparative approach in this study, the research question was written like this: How has parental mediation affected/guided the use of the Internet by children and adolescents? In addition, the presentation of the review/synthesis of all knowledge obtained was based on the recommendations of the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) system, according to the criteria recommended in its checklist.

*Library/Indexing Bases:* In order to search for the articles, we used the following databases/libraries: Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System online (MEDLINE), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Electronic Periodics in Psychology (PePSIC) and PsycINFO. These databases are platforms for the wide online indexation of scientific journals, both national and international, representing most of those whose articles have an important impact on the scientific literature. The search strategy was defined with the descriptors "Parenthood", or "Family power", or "Parenting" and "Internet", based on the DECS (Health Sciences Descriptors) for the terms "Family Power" and "Internet".

*Inclusion criteria:* The criteria established for the inclusion of studies were: (a) articles published in indexed journals. (b) articles written in Portuguese, English, or Spanish. (c) articles published from January 2008 to December 2017. (d) articles with a theme which was relevant to the objective of the review and that dealt with the models/modes of parental mediation for online content and their reverberations in terms of orientation for children and adolescents. Exclusion criteria: (a) revision studies, books, book chapters, reviews, abstracts, congress records, letters, news reports, dissertations, and theses. (b) themes which were too disconnected from the objective of the study or that did not contribute to answer the central question

of the review. (c) articles not made available in full.

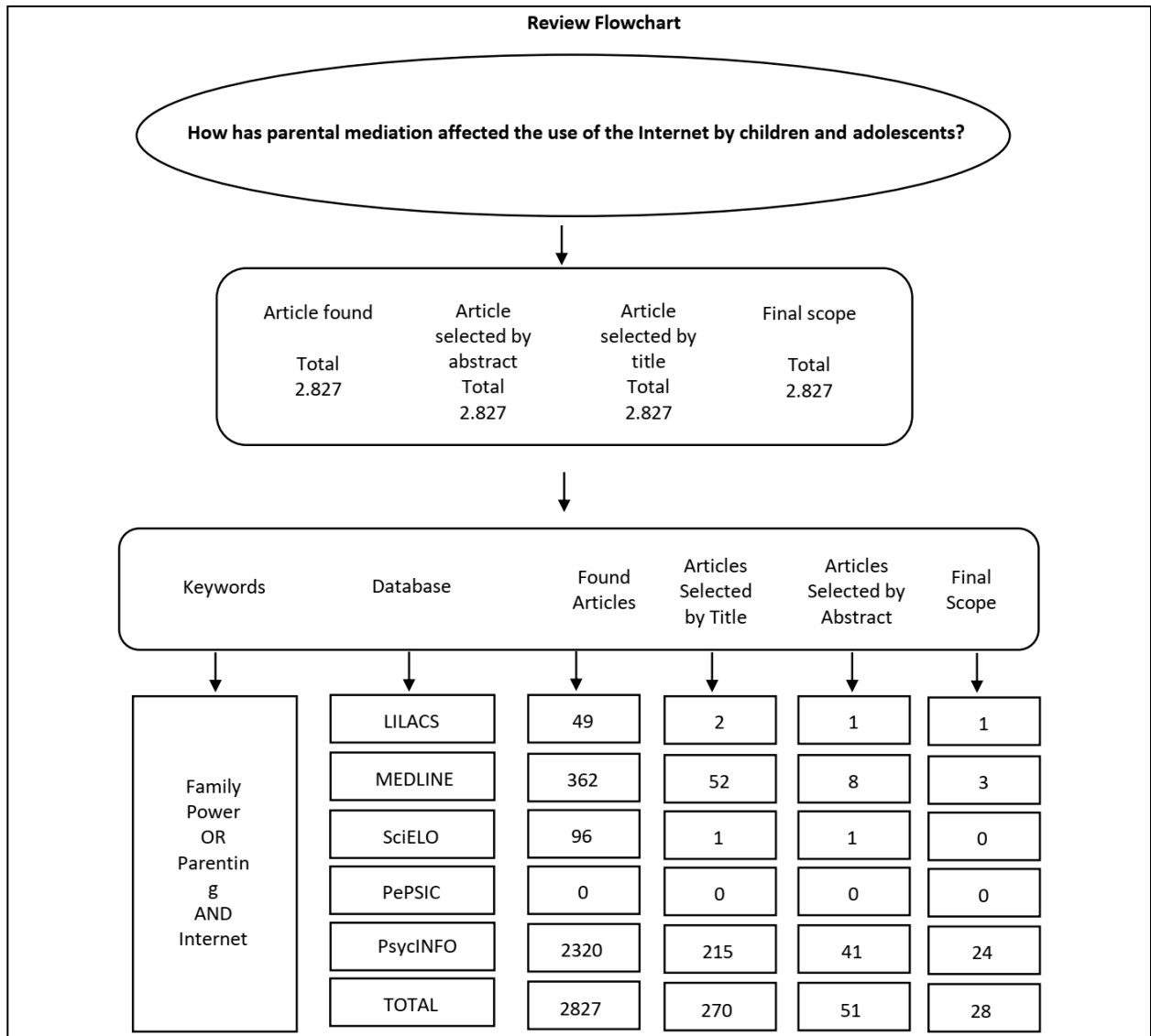
*Procedure:* The bibliographic survey and the gathering of references took place in May 2018, with the help of two independent judges, both familiar with review procedures. At first, a thorough reading of the collected titles was carried out (N = 2,827) with special attention paid to the terminology used as well as to the combination of some terms. After a first selection performed by means of an examination of the titles, 2,557 studies were excluded due to the prioritization of topics such as autism, hyperactivity, video game addiction, and topics focused on health issues were obviously outside the focus of interest of this study. Sequentially, a thorough reading of the recovered abstracts (N = 270) was performed, and studies that did not fit the inclusion listed criteria were excluded. Thus, 219 articles were excluded, out of which 170 were related to the theme, 10 were book chapters, 1 was a dissertation, 1 was an editorial, 9 were reviews, and 28 were articles not available in full.

After a reading of the abstracts, the selected articles (N = 51) were examined and read in full. Out of these, 23 studies were excluded, 22 because they were investigations with greater emphasis on aspects other than parenthood, such as problematic use of the internet as a disorder, consequences of cyberbullying in the family and exclusive video game mediation. One article was excluded because it had already been retrieved from the MEDLINE database. Thus, only the publications recovered in this last selection (N = 28), which constituted the corpus of analysis of the present study, were incorporated into the review. This selection process is represented in Illustration 1.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As an illustration, a table with the main results of the review will be presented below.

It has been noticed that there is no consensus regarding mediation models. There is a considerable diversity of terminologies that refer to mediation, such as Monitoring, Communication Quality, Restrictive Mediation, Authoritarian Mediation, Authoritarian Mediation and *Laissez-faire style*, Active Mediation, Supervision, and so on (Appel, Holtz, Stiglbauer, & Batinic, 2012; Li, Dang, Zhang, Zhan, & Guo, 2014; Symons, Ponnet, Emmery, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017). In addition, there has been an increase in the number of published articles in recent years. and 68% of the articles (n= 19) were published in the last five years. Moreover, the articles' emphasis was on restrictive mediation and on the comparison of its effectiveness with other models, such as active mediation, monitoring, or authoritarian mediation. 96% (n = 27) of the selected articles were in English and 92% (n = 26) were quantitative (Li et al., 2014).



**Figure 1.** Flowchart with the procedures for selecting articles.

It is possible to consider that the higher frequency of quantitative studies selected for this review is related to an attempt to verify, as a priority, the effectiveness of the different mediation models in order to provide children and adolescents with protection against the threats posed by the Internet. Only one study was qualitative (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017) and another one was of mixed approach (Özgür, 2016). There was balance in the number of studies with adolescents (35%,  $n = 10$ ), children and adolescents (25%,  $n = 7$ ), parents plus children and adolescents (21%,  $n = 6$ ), parents (14%,  $n = 4$ ), and children (4%,  $n = 1$ ). In addition, the origins of the studies are diverse, including countries such as Turkey, Singapore, the United States, Spain, Portugal, China, South Korea, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Germany, and Israel. Such diversity points at the cross-cultural character of the

internet phenomenon and its implications in the family context, as well as the need for parental mediation.

The discussion of the results was organized around four thematic cores that portrayed the contents of the corpus of articles. These cores were constructed by means of a reading of the set of recovered articles. Discussion was guided not only by the articles of the corpus but also by other important references for the theme under investigation (Simões, Ponte, Ferreira, Doretto, & Azevedo, 2014; Almeida et al., 2011; CETIC, 2017). The delimited cores of themes were: (1) The faces and voices of mediation. (2) Restrictive mediation and dissonances in the scientific literature. (3) Good communication between parents and children. (4) The singularities of adolescence and the challenge of parental mediation.

**Table 1.** Classification of Recovered Studies in Terms of The Most Frequent Occurrences in Different Categories N = 28).

Categories	Characteristics, absolute frequencies in the sample and percentage	Examples in the sample
Type of study	Quantitative (n = 26; 96%)	Padilla-Walker & Coyne (2011)
	Quality (n = 1; 2%)	Symons et al. (2017)
	Mixed (n = 1; 2%)	Ozgun (2016)
Sample	C and A (n = 18; 64.28%)	Chou, Chou, and Chen (2016)
	P, C and A (n = 6; 21.42%)	Lee (2012)
	P (n = 4; 14,28%)	Symons et al. (2017)
Year of Publication	2015 to 2017 (n = 13;46.43%)	Lwin (2017)
	2012 to 2014 (n = 9; 32.14%)	Alvarez et al. (2013)
	2008 to 2011 (n = 6; 21.42%)	Jennie, Khoo and Ang (2008)
Continent of origin	America (n = 7; 25%)	Tripp (2010)
	Europe (n = 10; 35.71%)	Valcke et al (2010)
	Asia (n = 10; 35.71%)	Lee (2012)
	Oceania (n = 3; 3,57%)	Shin (2017)
Points for mediation	Active mediation (n = 11; 39.28%)	Appel et al. (2012)
	Monitoring (n = 8; 28.57%)	Sasson and Mesch (2014)
	Restrictive Mediation (n = 9; 32.14%)	Lee (2012)

P= Parents.

### The faces and voices of mediation

As we have seen earlier, even though there is variation in the terminology used in the literature to designate parental educational strategies directed to the media, the notion of “mediation” has prevailed (Maidel & Vieira, 2015). Such practices make up the set of measures used by parents in order to influence, by means of parental conducts, appreciations, and verbalizations, how much importance their children attribute to the Internet and how they use it (Mondin, 2008).

In this context, the authors Symons, Ponnet, Emmery et al. (2017) conducted a study that sought to investigate the mediation strategies of fathers, from the perspective of fathers, mothers, and children. By means of analyses, the authors were able to list six mediation modalities: (1) Restriction of interaction (rules on appropriate behavior in social networks). (2) Monitoring (supervision of the children’s ad-hoc and online behaviors). (3) Access restrictions (how long and where the children are allowed to access the Internet). (4) Interpretative mediation (discussion with children of the content accessed). (5) Technical mediation (software programming for access tracking and blocking of specific websites), (6) Supervision/co-use (content access with children). Thus, we begin

to understand that there is a multiplicity of terms and postures considered as parental mediation. In Brazil, among the parental mediation strategies reported by children and adolescents who constantly use the Internet, the ones that stand out are those of the active type, exercised by means of dialogue (CETIC, 2017). It is important to highlight that girls are subject to more restrictions than boys regarding internet access because they are considered more vulnerable (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017). Similarly, the 2016 The Kids Online Brazil survey found that girls – compared to boys – reported more often than their parents or guardians took the time to teach them how to behave on the Internet (CETIC, 2017).

In addition, Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, and Heirman (2017) point out that children did not perceive mediation as intensely as their parents reported doing, which demonstrates the fact that parents sometimes tend to overestimate the orientations they provide. This study also showed that mothers seem to mediate more than fathers do, and mediation would tend to decrease as the children grow older. Similarly, in the research with Portuguese parents by Simões et al. (2014), when children have with the Internet, the mothers are the ones they most often go to, which suggests a perception of affective support and trust. This result hints at the importance of families as supporters and promoters of

an environment of proximity and trust.

There are cultural influences that should be taken into account when we are talking about Parental Mediation, as in the case of Chinese children who do not perceive mediation as authoritarian because parental supervision in their culture is very strict (Chou, Chou, & Chen, 2016). In the case of immigrant Latin families in the United States, there is great difficulty in mediating their children's internet access, as parents have little technical knowledge on how to safely browse the Web and too much fear of the so-called dangers of the online world (Tripp, 2010). Similarly, Özgür (2017) was able to observe in his research that Turkish parents have little knowledge on how to use the internet but tend to be more loving with their children, despite the rigid family traditions of their culture. This sometimes causes them not to exercise a conscious mediation on the contents accessed by their children, and there is a curious mix of permissiveness and authoritarianism while this rigidity would tend to decrease as the children grow up.

Finally, Symons, Ponnet, Walrave and Heirman (2017), and Padilla-Walker and Coyne (2011) highlight the possibility of the phenomenon of "deference". It happens when parents deliberately decide not to interfere in their children's internet use, granting them autonomy to make their own decisions on what to do. This usually happens at a more advanced age in adolescence, when the focus of supervision falls on the younger children and teenagers gradually get more freedom to explore the web by themselves. Thus, Symons, Ponnet, Walrave and Heirman (2017) point out that parents will use different types of mediation throughout their exercise of parenthood, having no way of clearly defining how they will handle the way their children use the Internet in general.

Based on the set of studies presented in this category, we highlight a gender perspective that underlies parental mediation regarding the use of the internet. Mothers, rather than fathers, are often considered to be the ones responsible for orientations/control, and girls are usually the ones who should receive more guidance/control, in comparison to boys. Thus, it can be suggested that the mediation of internet use would be an element of the home environment, according to the studies recovered, thus more associated with the mother figure. This set of studies also reinforces the idea that the mediation of internet use should be a parental practice to be developed in the family context, exclusively by parents, without including the school and other reference figures such as teachers in this context, even though the use of the Internet is increasingly taking place in the school space with the development of the TDICs. For the on-screen literature, mediating the use of the Internet is also presented as an activity of the domestic and exclusive scope of parental responsibility.

Restrictive mediation and dissonances in the scientific literature

Restrictive mediation is about limiting a child's amount of viewing time and prohibiting them from watching certain programs and accessing some types of content. This category portrays the great diversity of views on the literature on restrictive parental mediation. The studies presented focused on comparing models of mediation with the restrictive style in order to find out the best efficacy, or even take a position of defense or criticism of this modality.

A survey on the use of internet by children and adolescents in the European context pointed out that the restrictive mediation of internet use by Portuguese parents is the most active (77%), followed by Belgium (76%), and Ireland (75%). Denmark alone registers the lowest value for restrictive mediation (23%). In the remaining countries of the study, this value is always above 60% (Simões et al., 2014), which reflects the popularity of this parental mediation model.

**Restrictive mediation is also directly related to the children's state of development.**

The less autonomous the child, the more effective restrictive mediation is. It protects them from risks and helps them control their own impulses by means of external regulation. However, for older children it is necessary to modify the type of mediation and decrease the level of restriction. Similarly, in a national survey with Portuguese internet users, restrictive mediation was identified as being inversely proportional to age, ranging from 96% for children aged 9-10 years to 63% for children between 15-16 years (Simões et al., 2014).

On the other hand, Li et al. (2014) point out in their study that, in cases where there were higher scores regarding internet dependence in adolescents, it was verified that they had less positive support from their parents and more negative control with restrictions. Parents who tended to respect their children's autonomy were negatively related to children with unhealthy Internet habits. In the authors' research, factors such as sincere expressions of respect and love were seen as instruments of protection. Thus, studies on parental mediations in Brazil demonstrate that mediations of an authoritarian nature tend to be seen as a cruel attitude by children and young people (CETIC, 2017).

Although network access has increased in recent years, parents often have little control over what their children are accessing when they are online (CETIC, 2017). As we mentioned earlier, the declaration of children's rights (UN/UNICEF, 1990) prescribes that it is parental responsibility to instruct, assist, guide, and monitor children and adolescents concerning their use of the Internet. In this context, a phenomenon called "weakening of parental functions" emerges. When it happens, parents feel guilty and uncertain about the

kind of standing they take regarding what they can, should or should not do for their children (Zanetti & Gomes, 2011). Thus, it is perceived that even in the face of harsh criticism for restrictive mediation, other mediation models can also be called into check, due to a general difficulty by parents when it comes to knowing how to deal with issues related to their children's internet access.

### **Good communication between parents and children**

This category deals with the appreciation of good communication between parents and children, which emerged in most of the articles recovered. This strategy was listed most of the time by parents and children as the best way to mediate access to the Web.

Asunción, Costa, Tagliabue and Matos (2017) point out in their study that when adolescents have a positive, emotionally healthy connection with their parents, they are less alienated in their relationships and consequently make a less troublesome use of social media such as Facebook. Another interesting data was produced in the research by Carochinho and Lopes (2016), who aimed to analyze the phenomenon of internet dependence in a military school. There is a directly proportional relationship between internet use by adolescents and lack of cohesion and family communication. The more conflicts there are in a family, the more these adolescents, especially girls, will seek the internet as a refuge in order to engage in more satisfactory relationships.

Appel et al. (2012) point out that healthy communication is paramount in the prevention of depressive symptoms arising from excessive internet use as a means to mitigate loneliness. Li et al. (2014) point out that parental control can either intensify or prevent a situation of internet addiction. This practice can either encourage or aggravate children's lack of self-control in order to make wise decisions regarding the content they access online. In addition, affective support and respect for adolescent autonomy have been shown to be important factors for the prevention of internet addiction (Terres-Trindade & Mosmann, 2015).

Example is a much more effective tool than the postulating of rules because children learn by observing the behavior of parents, which is often inconsistent with established rules. Thus, we should not see technology and the Internet as factors that only affect the world of children and adolescents, as if parents and children were two disconnected generations living in different universes. After all, parents are most often the providers of Internet access. The whole family benefits from networked technologies and the Internet. Nevertheless, parents are still responsible for mediating and controlling their children's internet use while sharing

the benefits of Internet technology. It is also important to remember that each generation has their particular way of using the Web (Almeida et al., 2011).

By examining the set of studies retrieved in this category, it is possible to emphasize that good communication emerges as the most appropriate strategy to mediate the use of the Internet by children. Although such communication presupposes respect for the autonomy of children and adolescents, the literature seems to reinforce the educational role of parents not only in the establishment of rules, but also in making sure that the rules are followed and reassessing them in order to adapt to changes in the development of children and in the technologies themselves. Thus, good communication should not be understood as greater permissiveness by parents, but as a strategy that tends to make parents and children get closer and respect each other while successfully adapting to the asymmetry of power that emerges in family relationships.

### **The singularities of adolescence and the challenge of parental mediation**

Adolescence is a period of discovery and constant change. In this sense, Shin and Lwin (2017) point out that peers have great influence on the content that teenagers choose to access. Consequently, when active mediation comes from friends, adolescents may be more likely to take risks. Peer mediation is suggestive by nature, while that of parents and teachers is more at the instructive level, providing kids with guidelines on how to use the internet and which sites should be avoided. In line with these statements, Simões et al. (2014) say that younger children seek the support and presence of their parents. They like to show mom and dad their skills. They like to do things together, listen to their parents' advice, and get clear instructions. However, around the age of 11-12, kids start to feel a desire to inhabit their own world and to set up their own personal space and distinction with the complicity of their "best friends". In adolescence, the desire for privacy, autonomy, and independence from parents becomes stronger, and friends become the main social network of identification (CETIC, 2017).

Closer communication is needed so that the effectiveness of parental mediation can be more significant. Shin and Lwin's study (2017) demonstrated an important relationship between active mediation by teachers and peers, and risks of the Internet while illustrating that parental mediation alone is not enough to protect children from such risks. Thus, we must pay attention to the environment that children and adolescents experience when they are away from their families (CETIC, 2017). In this context, negative parental practices, such as the establishment of coercive rules and decision-making that lead to intense family conflict, may also lead to affection-related, behavioral problems

in children. Thus, a positive parental mediation, imbued with feelings of responsibility and proximity, tends to save children from future trouble (Terres-Trindade & Mosmann, 2016).

Sasson and Mesch (2014) point out that technical and social mediation of a controlling nature is not effective in protecting children and adolescents from inappropriate, Internet content. Intrusive mediations, for example, do not serve their alleged purpose of preventing kids from going on blind dates with people they have met on the Internet. In addition, peers have a great influence on decisions, as adolescents tend to overestimate their friends' advice while underestimating the validity of parental regulations.

In Tripp's study (2010), parents had little knowledge about computers and internet use, which ended up in a considerable gap between their skills and that of their children. This proved to be a difficulty for parental mediation. After all, parents knew little about the contents accessed, did not have a clue about how to install content regulation software, and did not even know how to check a PC's browsing history.

The parents in Tripp's (2010) research, for example, who did not have internet access at home, restricted the frequency at which their children visited the homes of neighbors and friends, or remained present in the places where their children accessed the internet. Parents who had internet at home placed the computer in a common area, such as the living room, where they could easily monitor their children's online activities. However, the restrictions caused some parents to harbor fears that they might inadvertently be undermining their children's opportunities. In this sense, Simões et al. (2014) postulate that excessive protectionism and limitations to Internet use can become barriers to positive opportunities for children to improve their own decision-making. "Protecting by means of restrictions" can be the opposite of training for autonomy and personal responsibility, cornerstones of the educational project that most parents want for their children, especially adolescents.

This last category, constructed with a focus on studies with parents of children and adolescents, reveals that parental mediation of internet use is a practice that takes as reference the very use that these parents make of the Internet and the DICTs. The greater or lesser ease in this mediation, in this sense, may be related to the way these parents access the Internet or not, and to how they use information technology in their daily lives. Such proximity, or distance, can lead to distinct practices of defensiveness against the new as well as a more exploratory behavior in order to learn with these technologies that advance so fast nowadays. These aspects make us reflect that parental mediation on the use of the Internet is another practice that cannot

always be taught to parents in a standardized way. Parent mediation ends up being developed according to established relationships, to the life histories of each family member, to the cultural, social, and labor references of these families, and to parental styles themselves.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this research was to understand how fathers and mothers are mediating the internet use by their children and adolescents. Therefore, it could be observed that there are several ways of performing parental mediation, such as active mediation, monitoring, technical mediation, indulgent mediation (*laissez-faire*), restrictive mediation, and so on. Some of the main models that stood out in the review articles are active mediation, open communication, and restrictive mediation. With regard to active mediation, research tends to classify it as a healthy and effective mediation option, most often highlighting that the best way to avoid reckless behavior by children in the Web is to maintain a good channel of communication with children, in order to nurture relationships of trust and guidance.

As for restrictive mediation, it is understood that there is no consensus on its practice, with an oscillation between pros and cons. In favorable surveys, there are indications that the restriction decreases the time spent online by children and this situation protects them from greater perils of the Internet. However, the restrictive approach works better with younger children than with adolescents. In studies against restrictive mediation, there was evidence that this parental style actually aggravates risky behaviors because it is associated with an invasive, authoritarian posture and does not respect the autonomy of children, especially teenagers.

The studies also proved the importance of going beyond parental mediation regarding risk prevention, emphasizing the importance of a family environment of support and affective understanding. In this context, psychology professionals play a vital role because they are the ones who are capable of promoting discussions, and contribute to studies about parenthood, providing parameters for parents to benefit from the experiences to be presented. The school can also make a difference in this context, even though its importance has not been properly reported in the review. Although parental practices are developed within the family environment and have particular characteristics for each interactive model, when it comes to mediation of internet use, the school can play a pivotal role not by designing access rules, for example, but by providing students with clear information on the risks and benefits of Internet access, while promoting an increasingly responsible and engaged use. The establishment of norms for Internet



use and for the assessment of information technologies in the school space brings the possibility of these reflections to happen also in the family environment when parents are not involved in this mediation or are having difficulty in this process.

There were some differences regarding mediation directed at children and adolescents. Such differences reveal the importance of a more communicative mediation in order to preserve autonomy, so that parents do not have to spend so much energy controlling the time kids spend online and the types of sites they access. In addition, mothers seem to be more attentive. They are most often the major reference for their children regarding the use of internet. Moreover, girls tend to receive more orientations and mediations than boys, under the justification of being more vulnerable, which reinforces a gender perspective that associates women to paradoxical positions as educators and also as the ones that should be controlled. That issue should be increasingly discussed both within the family and also at school so that society will not reinforce stereotypes that compromise plurality and emancipatory education.

It can also be considered that, in almost all articles, the interest was to understand how parental mediation can prevent risky behaviors by means of a quantitative research approach with the intention to map out the styles of parental mediation, or even compare different models. That trend has generated a profile of studies in the area somewhat repetitive and with few positive approaches regarding the use of the Web. We highlight the need for qualitative studies with an emphasis on the “process” that parents go through in the phenomenon of mediation, with broader approaches, which do not only focus on protective factors.

One of the limitations of the present study was the need to circumscribe the bibliographic search by means of only two descriptors, in view of the possibility of being able to retrieve more articles with different keywords, since there is no consensus regarding the nomenclature used to refer to the practice of parental mediation. As a recommendation for future studies, it would be important to conduct research that focuses on the process experienced by parents in the exercise of parental mediation, with a view to understanding the path they take in their educational practices and affective interactions.

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