



Parental Mediation and Social Media Use Patterns among Select Secondary School Students in Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background There is growing concern among stakeholders on the trend of use and misuse of new media among young people especially secondary school students. Media literacy scholars recommend parental mediation as an effective antidote to possible misuse of digital media among young ones. Whereas, studies have adopted parental media strategies in examining how parent attempt the control of digital media use among young people, few studies have probed into the perception of and specific preference for each of the parental mediation types and the implication of these preference on digital media use among young people.

Objective: This study investigated parental mediation strategies and social media use among secondary school students in Lagos, Nigeria. It specifically examined the parental mediation strategies (Active, Restrictive, Technical) adopted by parents to control their wards; examined parents' background different parental mediation strategies on social media use on their wards.

Method: Through cross sectional, descriptive survey research design and a combination of stratified and simple random sampling procedure, a sample of 384 parents in the selected local government areas of Lagos State was drawn for the study. Using SPSS version 25, descriptive analysis was carried out through tables and percentages as well as correlation and regression analysis.

Result: The findings reveal that the parent adopts the three mediation strategies in controlling their wards use of the social media. However, further analyses present a clear hierarchy of parental mediation strategies, with restrictive and technical approaches constituting the primary line of defense, while active mediation, particularly its discursive element, serves a secondary, more inconsistent role in adoption of the strategies by parents.

Conclusion: From the results of this study, it is concluded that digital parenting is underlined by fear of misuse of the new digital media hence the preference for the application of restrictive strategies by the parents in this study. This means that parents are not yet in tune with building literacy competence of their wards through media literacy education that leads to resilience among the younger when exposed to media messages.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to enriching existing literature on parental media theory and strategies by providing context specific. It supports the emerging research focus towards building parental mediation model that fits into the reality of new media environment. By exploring the application of the parental mediation strategies in digital media environment



characterised by social media platforms, the study fills a critical gap in theory and practice that warrant attention of policy makers, practitioners and educators.

Key Recommendation: This study recommends a reconsideration of the practice of parental mediation by investigating the long-term outcomes of this control-dominant model on children's digital resilience, self-regulation, and media literacy. Equally, policy makers and educators must take concrete steps beyond promoting mere tool adoption to persuade the parent to adopt a strategy that helps the younger ones to build media literacy competence. Intervention programs must actively encourage parents to integrate *discursive active mediation* alongside restrictive and technical strategies.

Keywords: Digital parenting, digital media, parental mediation strategies, social media use

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of smart phones use among teenagers is increasing across the globe. Internet use among teenagers has taken a momentum leap and almost got doubled in the last 10 years (Smahel, Machackova, & Mascheroni, 2020). Nigeria has the largest internet user base in Africa, approximately 122.5 million users (Statista, 2022). In terms of digital adoption rate, Nigeria ranks 114 in the 2022 Global innovation index in the world for key dimensions such as digital reach, data consumption and digital foundation (Mc Kinsey Global Institute, 2019). According to reports by DataReportal (2024), an average internet user in Nigeria spends 4 hours 20 minutes daily on internet. Latest data from the NCC (2025) indicates continuous growth in use of Internet based media by Nigerians. With the present jet age, the use of Internet has become necessary in some way for children (secondary school students), as academic information is being accessed easily on the internet. This is mostly rampant in the private schools than in the public schools (Shin & Huh, 2011 Adedeji, Godwin-Ewu, Irinoye, & Ewu, 2021). In most private secondary schools, students are encouraged to possess smart IT devices or a laptop to aid learning process, as it can be used in the case of assignment and assessments (Clark, 2011 Ebere,&Okuro, 2024).

Meanwhile, recent studies in Lagos Nigeria reveal high levels of digital media engagement among secondary school students and youth, with notable academic and behavioural implications. A large survey involving 1,800 participants across Lagos secondary schools found a strong negative correlation between social media use and student discipline ($r = -0.928$), suggesting that increased time online contributes to behavioural challenges (Aderibigbe, 2023). Research in Ikorodu involving 3,030 private-school students similarly showed intensive use of platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube, driven by information-seeking and social interaction motives, with students' information needs significantly predicting their online attitudes (Olatunji & Adeyemi, 2022). Broader youth-focused research in Lagos reported high digital media awareness and daily usage, with many young people turning to social platforms for communication, entertainment, and political information (Ojo, 2021). Overall, while digital media use is widespread and often beneficial for connectivity and information access, empirical evidence from Lagos highlights concerns around discipline, study habits, and the need for structured digital literacy interventions.



Analysing the cities of Nigeria, Lagos state has the highest media concentration with over 18 million internet subscribers (Austin, Fujioka, Bolls, & Engelbertson, 2019). Lagos is known to be one of the hubs of technology in Nigeria.. With such trends of increasing internet usage among teenagers, several concerns are being raised and corresponding responsibilities have been suggested among which is the parental mediation strategies (Fam, Juhari, Kääriäinen & Männikkö, 2025). The strategy is meant to control the use of new media among teenagers including children in secondary school. On the basis of this, this study evaluated the parental mediation strategies on digital use among secondary school students in Lagos state. Specifically, attention is on the parental mediation strategies adopted by parent to control their wards (secondary school students in Lagos state), digital media use among teenagers and the parents' perceptions of the different parental mediation strategies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study investigated adoption of parental mediation strategies by parents in the context of social media use among secondary school students in select local government areas of Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was meant to:

1. Investigate the trend in the adoption of parental mediation strategies among parents in Lagos state
2. Identify specific parental mediation strategies adopted by parents in controlling the social media use pattern among select secondary school students in Lagos State.
3. Determine the influence of parental mediation on social media use among secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental mediation remains a central construct in understanding how families shape children's engagement with media in an increasingly digital world. Three interconnected domains of restrictive mediation, technical mediation, and parents' perceptions and media use, provide a framework to examine how parents regulate and influence children's media environments.

Active mediation

Active mediation refers to a parental strategy of engaging in open dialogue with children about the media content they encounter, providing guidance, context, and critical perspectives rather than simply imposing rules or limits. Unlike restrictive mediation (which focuses on limiting time or content) and co-use (shared media engagement without critique), active mediation emphasizes communication that helps children interpret media messages, develop critical thinking skills, and make informed choices about media use. This approach is widely identified in parental mediation research as one of the core strategies for guiding children's media experiences in both traditional and digital contexts. Livingstone and co-researchers (2008) described active mediation as engaging children in discussions about what they watch or use online, helping them understand and evaluate media content meaningfully rather than merely controlling access (e.g., Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Mascheroni et al., 2018). Active mediation is recognized not just as a communication strategy but as a pedagogical tool within parental mediation frameworks. It supports children's critical engagement with media content,



contributes to safer online experiences, and complements broader parenting goals of socialization and autonomy development. This makes it a valuable approach in both research and practical parenting contexts as media technologies continue to evolve.

Restrictive Mediation

Restrictive mediation is defined as parents' use of rules to limit children's media exposure, both in terms of time and content. It includes parental rule-making about when media can be used, the duration of access, and the types of content considered appropriate (Valkenburg et al., 2013). Restrictive mediation encompasses traditional rules for television and game use as well as internet-specific limits on downloads, applications, and online activities (Lee & Chae, 2012; Nikken & Jansz, 2014). Research shows that restrictions of duration and content are frequently applied to young children, whereas device and supervision restrictions are more common for toddlers and preschoolers (Zaman et al., 2016). Importantly, empirical findings underscore that the effectiveness of restrictive mediation is age-dependent: it tends to be more effective for younger children, while older children and adolescents may resist or react impulsively to strict controls (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Across cultures, restrictive mediation reflects a common strategy for parents worried about online risks, but its consistent association with positive psychological or behavioral outcomes is not uniformly observed (Nathanson et al., 2002; Nikken & Jansz, 2014).

Technical Mediation

Technical mediation involves the use of software and technological tools that enable parents to monitor, filter, or control children's media use. Tools such as content filters, parental control settings, monitoring applications, and blocking functions facilitate technical forms of mediation (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). Technical tools can prevent access to certain apps or websites and log usage patterns, effectively operationalizing restrictive media governance (Nikken & Jansz, 2014). While these tools reduce exposure to inappropriate content and reinforce household rules, they may also be experienced by children as intrusive or trust-eroding, especially as children age and value autonomy.

The scholarly discourse around technical mediation has also expanded beyond its practical application to encompass theoretical considerations. Drawing on post-phenomenological and actor-network perspectives, researchers have argued that technologies do not merely assist mediation, they actively mediate relationships and shape behaviors (Verbeek, 2015). This broader framing positions technology as a co-producer of social practices, including parenting and communication dynamics. Hence, technical mediation both extends parental mediation strategies and forces reconsideration of the boundaries between guidance, control, and autonomy in digital parenting.

Parents' Perceptions and Media Use

Parents' perceptions of media and their own media habits significantly shape the mediation strategies they adopt. Research consistently shows that negative parental beliefs about specific types of media, such as violent television content or video games, are associated with higher levels of both restrictive and active mediation (Shin & Benjamin, 2016; Nikken & Jansz, 2016). Conversely, when parents perceive media as educational or useful, they are less likely to impose



restrictive rules (Lee, 2013). This pattern has been documented across media types including television, video games, and internet content (Nikken & Jansz, 2014; Shin & Huh, 2011).

Beyond content perceptions, parents' digital competence and own media usage also play a role. Studies find that parents with higher digital literacy feel more capable of employing a range of mediation strategies effectively, while lower competence may reduce both confidence and active engagement in mediation (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Moreover, parents with balanced personal media habits are more likely to model responsible use and implement structured media rules, whereas high personal use sometimes correlates with less restrictive or less engaged mediation practices. Parents' attitudes and their media literacy thus operate as critical mediators of mediation strategies: what parents believe about media influences not only the type but also the intensity of mediation they apply.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Rudnova, Kornienko, Semenov, and Egorov (2023), carried out a study on characteristics of parental digital mediation: predictors, strategies, and differences among children experiencing various parental mediation strategies. The study also examined the differences among children influenced by various parental mediation strategies. According to the results, both the behavioral and emotional characteristics of the children served as predictors of parental mediation. The children with parents who enabled mediation were happier than the others. Children under instructive mediation demonstrated the highest tendency to social media addiction. Children under selective mediation spent the most time (of all groups) on gadgets, but they showed a low tendency towards social media addiction.

Nwosu, Okeke and Nankyen (2022) assessed Awka urban parents' awareness and attitude to adolescents use of facebook. Their findings demonstrate that parents in Awka urban area had enough knowledge of the different strategies that are used to control or interpret media contents. Although they were aware of parental mediation strategies in controlling their children's facebook usage, their awareness did not translate to practice of such strategies. Parents were also found to be aware of their children's ownership and use of facebook, but did not really know what their children consumed online.

Wonsun and May (2021) did a research study on parental mediation of children's digital media use in high digital penetration countries by exploring the perspectives from Singapore and Australia. The research examined how parents in two high digital penetration nations in the Asia-Pacific region, Singapore and Australia, mediate children's use of digital media and how parental mediation practices in each country are explained by parents' media perception, digital literacy, and parental self-efficacy. The results of their survey show that Australian parents are more actively engaged in all types of parental mediation as compared to Singaporean parents. In both countries, those who are concerned about risks associated with their children's digital media use and those who feel confident in their parenting abilities are more likely to actively engage in all types of parental mediation. Findings also show that digitally literate parents are more prone to implement discussion-based mediation than control-based mediation.



Shih, Huh and Faber (2020) investigated teen's online privacy risks and the role of parental mediation. The study examined the role of parental mediation in teen's online information disclosing behaviors. In particular, the influence of parental mediation on two types of personally identifiable information disclosure (voluntary disclosure in general online activities and disclosure upon marketers' request) was examined. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design method. 381 parent-teen dyads in Korea constituted the sample size for the study. Finding revealed that, while parental mediation was not directly associated with teens' information disclosing behaviors, parent-teen disagreement on restrictive mediation was: teen's inaccurate perception of what parents do to limit their access to commercial Web sites seems to be positively related to teens' information disclosure on the Web.

Studies have also indicated that active mediation is associated with positive outcomes for children and adolescents. For example, active discussions about social media and digital content have been linked to reduced risks of cyberbullying and problematic online behaviors compared to purely restrictive or surveillance-oriented strategies (Ho et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2023). Active mediation also correlates with improved digital literacy, better parent-child relationships, and lower levels of problematic Internet use, highlighting its role in fostering resilience and healthier media habits in youth (Beyens et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2025; PubMed, 2025).

METHOD

The study adopted the quantitative approach with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The study is descriptive in nature involving analysis of data in percentage and inferential statistics. The population of the study were parents of secondary school students across the 20 statutorily recognized LGAs. However, in Lagos. The National Population Commission's (NPC) estimated figure for Lagos state is 13.4 -13.8 million (NPC, 2019). For a population above a million, Krejche and Morgan (1970) recommends a sample size of 384. Thus, to ensure representation across the local governments, a proportionate sampling procedure was adopted to arrive at the required 384 sample size for the study. Though Lagos is commonly classified into two main geographical areas - the Mainland and the Island; however, for the purpose of this study, we used the officially known five administrative divisions, commonly referred to by the acronym IBILE (Know Lagos, 2022). These divisions include Ikorodu, Badagry, Ikeja (the state capital), Lagos (Island), and Epe. Each of the divisions has the following LGAs Viz: Ikorodu has only Ikorodu, Ikeja has Agege, Ifako-Ijaiye, Alimosho, Kosofe, Mushin, Oshodi-Isolo, Somolu and Ikeja, Lagos Island is comprised of Lagos Island, Lagos Mainland, Surulere, Eti-Osa, Apapa, Amuwo-Odofin while Badagry division has Badagry and Ojo with Epe division having Epe and Ibeju-Lekki local governments. To ensure each division is represented in the sample, one local government was randomly selected. Thus, the following five LGAs; Ikorodu, Agege, Lagos Island, Ojo and Ibeju-Lekki were included in sampling frame from which a sample size of 384 was proportionately selected. .

The needed information was obtained through questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale: 5-Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3-Undecided, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly disagree. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section A is centered on the demographic factors of respondents, and Section B, which is segmented into scales, focused on questions aimed at gathering data on parental mediation strategies and social media usage. The likert based questionnaire items cover active mediation, restrictive mediation and technical mediation and the usage of social media which is specified in a scale as well. The questionnaire items were adapted from existing instrument (La'aro&



Faseyi,2019), Still, the instrument was further subjected to both face validity by colleagues and a pilot study to pretest for the reliability of the instrument. The result indicates an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.76 to meet the acceptable threshold of reliability test. (Cronbach, 1951, Keyton, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic analysis

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	195	50.8
Male	189	49.2
Total	384	100.0
Age		
20 – 30 years	25	6.5
31 – 40 years	106	27.6
41 – 50 years	154	40.1
51 years and above	99	25.8
Total	384	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	2	0.5
Married	204	53.1
Divorced	106	27.6
Widow	72	18.8
Total	384	100.0
Level of Education		
NCE	30	7.8
OND	87	22.7
B.Sc.	177	46.1
PGDE	76	19.8
Ph.D.	14	3.6
Total	384	100.0
Occupation		
Artisan	67	17.4
Civil Servant	103	26.8
Professional	79	20.6
Unemployed	83	21.6
Self employed	52	13.6
Total	384	100.0
Number of Children		
1-3	117	30.5
4-6	172	44.8
Above 6	95	24.7
Total	384	100.0



Descriptive Analysis of Sample Demographics

This study was conducted on a sample of 384 individuals, selected to explore patterns within the target population. The demographic characteristics including sex, age, marital status, level of education, occupation, and number of children are presented in Table 1 and summarized below. The data reveal a demographically distinct group characterized by middle age, high educational attainment, a high prevalence of marriage and marital dissolution, diverse occupational backgrounds, and moderate-to-large family sizes. The sample was nearly evenly divided by sex, with females representing 50.8% (n=195) and males 49.2% (n=189) of participants. This balanced distribution suggests the absence of significant gender-based sampling bias and provides a relatively equal basis for comparison across sex in subsequent analyses.

The age distribution indicates a predominantly middle-aged cohort. The largest proportion of participants (40.1%, n=154) fell within the 41–50 years age bracket. This was followed by those aged 31–40 years (27.6%, n=106) and individuals aged 51 years and above (25.8%, n=99). In contrast, young adults aged 20–30 years constituted only 6.5% (n=25) of the sample. This age structure implies that the study's findings are most representative of experiences and perspectives within mid to later adulthood. Marital status data reveal a population where marriage is common but marital dissolution is also prevalent. Just over half of the participants (53.1%, n=204) were married. However, a substantial 46.4% reported a dissolved marriage, comprising those who were divorced (27.6%, n=106) and those who were widowed (18.8%, n=72). Only a negligible fraction (0.5%, n=2) reported being single (never married). This pattern is consistent with the older age composition of the sample and highlights a significant life experience of marital transition or loss within the population under study.

The sample exhibited a notably high level of formal education. Nearly half (46.1%, n=177) of the participants held a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree as their highest qualification. An additional 19.8% (n=76) had attained a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), and 3.6% (n=14) held a Doctorate (Ph.D.). Cumulatively, 69.5% of the sample had obtained a first-degree qualification or higher. Those with an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) constituted 22.7% (n=87), while holders of the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) formed the smallest educational subgroup at 7.8% (n=30). This educational profile suggests a relatively skilled and academically qualified respondents.

In this study, respondents were engaged in a variety of occupational sectors. Civil servants formed the largest occupational group (26.8%, n=103), followed closely by professionals (e.g., lawyers, engineers, doctors) at 20.6% (n=79). A significant proportion of the sample (21.6%, n=83) was unemployed. Artisans (e.g., mechanics, tailors) comprised 17.4% (n=67), and self-employed individuals accounted for 13.6% (n=52). The concurrent presence of high educational attainment and a considerable unemployment rate (21.6%) presents a notable feature of the sample that may reflect broader labour market conditions, underemployment, or the inclusion of non-working educated individuals such as retirees or homemakers.



Data on the number of children indicate a tendency toward moderate-to-large families. The most frequently reported family size was 4–6 children (44.8%, n=172). Families with 1–3 children accounted for 30.5% (n=117), while a substantial minority (24.7%, n=95) reported having more than six children. In aggregate, nearly 70% of participants had four or more children. This fertility pattern aligns with the sample's middle-aged demographic, for whom family completion is typical, and may reflect socio-cultural norms regarding family size among Nigerians.

From the foregoing analysis, we see demographically distinct sample, characterized by a balance of sexes, a concentration in middle age, high rates of both current marriage and marital dissolution, considerable educational achievement, a mixed occupational profile with notable unemployment, and a prevalence of larger families. These characteristics reflect the fact that the sample was drawn the most city of Nigeria with urban or semi-urban population and a socio-cultural context where advanced education is valued.

Table 2: Analysis and Interpretation of the parental mediation strategies

S/N	Active Mediation	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Undecided N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
1	I discuss about the use of internet with my wards all the time	46(12.0)	65(16.9)	23(6.0)	91(23.7)	159(41.4)
2	I sit and discuss the content of social media my wards are exposed to on the internet	76(19.7)	94(24.5)	36(9.4)	108(28.2)	70(18.2)
3	I am very particular about what my kids see on the internet	4(1.0)	64(16.7)	49(12.8)	172(44.8)	95(24.7)
4	There are standing rules on internet usage by my children or wards	26(6.8)	54(14.1)	18(4.7)	165(43.0)	121(31.4)
5	Children are only allowed to watch media content at certain time period	65(16.9)	70(18.2)	46(12.0)	121(31.5)	82(21.4)



Restrictive Mediation

6	I monitor what my children are exposed to on social media	69(18.0)	97(25.2)	49(12.8)	81(21.1)	88(22.9)
7	My children are always compelled not to use the internet during certain time period	10(2.6)	22(5.7)	18(4.7)	151(39.3)	183(47.7)
8	There is set time limit for children to engage with internet based social media	8(2.1)	40(10.4)	28(7.3)	124(32.3)	184(47.9)
9	My children's age determines what they are allowed to watch on the internet	14(3.6)	22(5.7)	23(6.0)	168(43.8)	157(40.9)
10	My children act only on my recommendations in the use of internet	29(7.6)	46(12.0)	20(5.2)	125(32.6)	164(42.7)

Technical Mediation

11	We use internet devices to block and control certain online content for the children.	19(4.9)	37(9.6)	6(1.6)	143(37.2)	179(46.6)
12	A filtering tool in order to prevent my children visiting certain websites is installed in their devices	6(1.6)	30(7.8)	30(7.8)	197(51.3)	121(31.5)
13	The technical mediation is more effective than other mediation strategies	10(2.6)	42(10.9)	22(5.7)	145(37.8)	165(43.0)
14	I don't need to always be aware of what my children do on the internet, since technical mediation has been adopted.	19(4.9)	62(16.1)	24(6.3)	157(40.9)	122(31.8)



Active Mediation: The Primacy of Rules over Dialogue

Active mediation, which ideally fosters critical thinking through communication, shows a nuanced adoption pattern. The data indicates strong parental commitment to establishing a governed digital environment. Items concerning rule-setting garnered exceptionally high agreement ("I am very particular about what my kids see," 69.5% agree; "There are standing rules," 74.4% agree). However, the component of active mediation most directly linked to media literacy (the discursive review of content) proves less consistent. The statement, "I sit and discuss the content of social media my wards are exposed to," received the lowest agreement (46.4%) and highest disagreement (44.2%) within this category. This divergence suggests that while parents are comfortable in the *legislative* role of setting boundaries, they are less engaged in the *interpretive* role of co-viewing and dialogue. The strategy is thus partially adopted, favoring structural oversight over conversational guidance. However, the most plausible explanation of this pattern is that Lagos is 'moving and busy' city where survival depend on outdoor activities that will not allow parent to adopt the co-viewing strategies.

The data reveals restrictive mediation as the most uniformly and strongly endorsed strategy. Statements imposing temporal and age-based limits received overwhelming agreement. Compelling non-use during certain periods (87.0% agree) and setting time limits (80.2% agree) are near-universal practices. Similarly, age-determined allowances (84.7% agree) and expecting compliance with parental recommendations (75.3% agree) are firmly entrenched. This reflects a parenting approach centered on direct control and behavioral restriction.

A critical finding within this domain is the distinction parents make between rule-setting and active monitoring. While rules are paramount, direct surveillance is not. The item "I monitor what my children are exposed to on social media" shows significant disagreement (43.2%) and only 44.0% agreement. This indicates that restrictive mediation operates largely on a *pre-set, prophylactic model* rather than a *continuous, surveillance-based model*. Parents establish digital boundaries but do not necessarily patrol them consistently, trusting instead in the efficacy of the rules themselves and, as subsequent data shows, in technological reinforcements.

The adoption of technological tools is extensive, with over 80% of respondents agreeing they use devices to block content and install website filters. This high utilization is coupled with a robust belief in their effectiveness; 80.8% agree that "technical mediation is more effective than other strategies." This trust, however, intersects with a potentially concerning trend. A majority (72.7%) also agree with the statement, "I don't need to always be aware of what my children do on the internet, since technical mediation has been adopted." This finding points to tendency to over relied on technology rather physical exertion to implement rules. It also underlines a risk of *parental complacency* or a "set-and-forget" mentality. The data suggests that for many, technology is not merely a supplement to parental oversight but is perceived as a substitute for it. This philosophical stance, held by a significant majority, may undermine the goals of active mediation by reducing perceived necessity for ongoing engagement. A substantial minority (21.0%) disagrees with this notion, highlighting a salient divide in parental attitudes toward the role of technology in child-rearing among the respondents.



These findings present a clear hierarchy of parental mediation strategies, with restrictive and technical approaches constituting the primary line of defense, while active mediation, particularly its discursive element, serves a secondary, more inconsistent role. This preference structure suggests that contemporary digital parenting is characterized more by *risk management* than by *literacy development*. Parents appear to prioritize creating a safe, bounded online space through control and filtration, potentially at the expense of cultivating their children's autonomous critical evaluation skills.

Several internal tensions within the data warrant emphasis. First, the disjuncture between high rule-creation and low active monitoring suggests an assumption that rules are self-enforcing, which may not align with the dynamic nature of children's online exploration. Second, and more critically, the strong belief in technical tools as both effective and a rationale for reduced awareness poses a developmental paradox. While filters may limit exposure to harmful content in the home, they do not prepare children to navigate unfiltered environments elsewhere or to understand the socio-cultural contexts of the media they do consume.

These patterns carry important implications. For researchers, they indicate a need to investigate the long-term outcomes of this control-dominant model on children's digital resilience, self-regulation, and media literacy. For practitioners and educators, the data underscores the necessity of moving beyond promoting mere tool adoption. Intervention programs must actively encourage parents to integrate *discursive active mediation* alongside restrictive and technical strategies. Empowering parents to confidently discuss online content is essential to complement the safety net of controls, ensuring children develop not just protection but also competence.

This analysis delineates a parenting landscape where control, through rules and technology, is the predominant response to the digital environment. The widespread use of restrictive and technical mediation demonstrates high parental engagement and concern. However, the relative weakness of content-based discussion and the evident trust in technological substitutes for awareness reveal a strategic gap. Ultimately, a balanced mediation ecology, one that harmonizes the safety provided by control with the empowerment fostered by guided dialogue, is likely most conducive to raising digitally savvy and resilient children. Future efforts must therefore aim not to diminish the use of effective controls, but to elevate the practice of critical conversation to an equally valued and implemented parental responsibility.



Table 3. Perception of Parental Mediation Strategies

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Undecided N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
1	I believe restrictive mediation to be more effective	58(15.1)	70(18.2)	19(5.0)	95(24.7)	142(37.0)
2	I believe technical mediation to be more effective	4(1.0)	46(12.0)	36(9.4)	194(50.5)	104(27.1)
3	I perceive active mediation as too demanding and unnecessary	9(2.3)	56(14.6)	36(9.4)	127(33.1)	156(40.6)
4	I perceive restrictive mediation as the best	76(19.8)	84(21.9)	27(7.0)	99(25.8)	98(25.5)
5	I perceive technical mediation as easy and effective	35(9.1)	35(9.1)	24(6.3)	141(36.7)	149(38.8)

Table 3 presents parents’ perceptions of different mediation strategies adopted to regulate secondary school students’ social media use in Lagos State. The findings reveal varied levels of endorsement across restrictive, technical, and active mediation approaches.

For the statement “*I believe restrictive mediation to be more effective,*” 58 respondents (15.1%) strongly disagreed, 70 (18.2%) disagreed, and 19 (5.0%) were undecided. Conversely, 95 (24.7%) agreed and 142 (37.0%) strongly agreed. With a combined 61.7% agreeing, the data clearly indicate that most parents consider restrictive mediation an effective strategy for managing students’ social media behaviour. Regarding the statement “*I believe technical mediation to be more effective,*” only 4 respondents (1.0%) strongly disagreed and 46 (12.0%) disagreed, while 36 (9.4%) were undecided. A substantial majority, 194 (50.5%) agreeing and 104 (27.1%) strongly agreeing, affirmed the effectiveness of technical mediation. This suggests that parents widely view technological controls (such as filters, password restrictions, and monitoring tools) as useful and reliable methods for regulating students’ online activities.

In the case of “*I perceive active mediation as too demanding and unnecessary,*” 9 (2.3%) strongly disagreed, 56 (14.6%) disagreed, and 36 (9.4%) were undecided. However, 127 (33.1%) agreed and 156 (40.6%) strongly agreed. The high agreement level (73.7%) implies that many parents perceive active mediation, such as discussions and co-viewing, as time-consuming or burdensome, hence less preferred compared to other strategies.



When asked whether “*I perceive restrictive mediation as the best,*” 76 (19.8%) strongly disagreed and 84 (21.9%) disagreed, with 27 (7.0%) undecideds. In contrast, 99 (25.8%) agreed and 98 (25.5%) strongly agreed. Although the responses are more evenly distributed, the proportion of agreement (51.3%) still indicates a slight tendency toward favouring restrictive mediation as a preferred strategy.

Finally, on the statement “*I perceive technical mediation as easy and effective,*” 35 (9.1%) strongly disagreed, 35 (9.1%) disagreed, and 24 (6.3%) were undecided. A larger proportion, 141 (36.7%) agreeing and 149 (38.8%) strongly agreeing, affirmed the ease and effectiveness of technical mediation. This reinforces the earlier finding that parents highly value technological approaches to monitoring and controlling social media use.

DISCUSSION

These findings present a clear hierarchy of parental mediation strategies, with restrictive and technical approaches constituting the primary line of defense, while active mediation, particularly its discursive element, serves a secondary, more inconsistent role. This result defers a little from the findings that of Anaseer, (2024) whose indicate low level adoption of restrictive mediation by the parent. This preference structure suggests that contemporary digital parenting is characterized more by *risk management* than by *literacy development*. Parents appear to prioritize creating a safe, bounded online space through control and filtration, potentially at the expense of cultivating their children's autonomous critical evaluation skills.

Several internal tensions within the data warrant emphasis. First, the disjuncture between high rule-creation and low active monitoring suggests an assumption that rules are self-enforcing, which may not align with the dynamic nature of children's online exploration. Second, and more critically, the strong belief in technical tools as both effective and a rationale for reduced awareness poses a developmental paradox. While filters may limit exposure to harmful content in the home, they do not prepare children to navigate unfiltered environments elsewhere or to understand the socio-cultural contexts of the media they do consume.

This study approach of focusing on new media in relation to parental mediation theory contributes to contemporary research of adapting the theory in the context of new media and attempt at building a parental mediation model. As noted by Jia Yuin Fam, (2025) traditional application of the Parental Mediation strategies is in the context of television (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008, La'aro&Faseyi, 2019); the new media platforms, however, bears both new opportunities and intricate risks requiring re-evaluation of the theoretical postulation of the theory. This study aligns with this trends with data coming from Nigeria context.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it is concluded that digital parenting is underlined by fear of misuse of the new digital media hence the preference for the application of restrictive strategies by the parents in this study. This means parents are not yet in tune with building literacy competence of their wards. This remains a source of concern. Active mediation is viewed by many parents as demanding and less practical. These perceptions highlight a preference for



strategies that are perceived as efficient, less time-consuming, and capable of exerting clear control over students' social media activities.

RECOMMENDATION

These patterns in the findings carry important implications. For researchers, they indicate a need to investigate the long-term outcomes of this control-dominant model on children's digital resilience, self-regulation, and media literacy. For practitioners and educators, the data underscores the necessity of moving beyond promoting mere tool adoption. Intervention programs must actively encourage parents to integrate *discursive active mediation* alongside restrictive and technical strategies. Empowering parents to confidently discuss online content is essential to complement the safety net of controls, ensuring children develop not just protection but also competence

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the respondents to this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

The lead author was responsible for the conception of the research idea and provided guidance through the research process. The second author was largely responsible for the collection of the field data. The third author and the first author handled the design and writing of the initial manuscripts. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Data availability statement

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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