Parental mediation of mobile internet use by children and adolescents: Portuguese and European findings from the Net Children Go Mobile project

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ECREA 2014 – Lisbon, Portugal
Structure of the presentation

Parental mediation in times of mobile media

Types of parental mediation

Country classification on parental mediation

Portuguese results (national survey + Focus Groups) in perspective

Challenges for family mediation and the research agenda on parental mediation
Presentation based on

Quantitative research (national surveys, 7 countries) – 2013-2014
Qualitative research (Interviews and focus groups with children, parents, teachers, and youth workers in 9 countries) – 2014

Reports:

Parental mediation in times of mobile media

• NCGM aim: To understand and distinguish children’s mobile media experience from the PC-based internet experience in terms of opportunities and risks.

• Changes concerning...
  o Mobile devices connected to the internet
  o Convergent multifunctional devices
  o Personal devices
    o Privatization of access and use
    o Pervasiveness of the internet in the children’s daily lives
    o Different social conventions of freedom, privacy, sociability and not least, supervision by parents and adults (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014)
Parental mediation - EU Kids Online survey

1) **Active mediation of internet use**, where parents engage in activities such as talking about internet content while the child is engaging with it, and sharing the online experience of the child by remaining nearby.

2) **Active mediation of internet safety**, where the parent promotes safer and responsible uses of the internet.

3) **Restrictive mediation**, which involves setting rules that limit and regulate time spent online, location of use and online activities.

4) **Technical restrictions**, that is, the use of software and technical tools to filter, restrict and monitor children’s online activities.

5) **Monitoring** or checking the record of online activities.

Among the five parental strategies examined, only active mediation of internet use and restrictions are associated with lower risk and harm (Dürager & Livingstone, 2012). However, restrictive measures are also likely to undermine children’s digital literacy.
Portugal: parental mediation in 2010 and 2014 (according to children)

Active and Restrictive Mediation of the internet at the top

The values of Active Mediation and Restrictive Mediation led among the 25 EUKOL countries in 2010, the same happened in 2014, among the 7 NCGM countries.

Parents:
2010: 60% use the internet; 2014: 68% use the internet
## The top values on parental mediation in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>9-12 years</th>
<th>13-16 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never allow the child to purchase apps</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>91</td>
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<td></td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td>Talk to the child about what he/she does on the internet</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never allow the child to register geographical location</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>57</td>
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<tr>
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<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never allow the child to give out personal information</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td>63</td>
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<td>67</td>
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<td>Explain why some websites were good or bad</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help when something was difficult to do or find</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggest ways to use the internet safely</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggest ways to behave towards other people online</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sit with the child while he/she uses the internet</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>54</td>
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</tbody>
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NCGM survey 2014
Portugal: parental mediation of smartphones

3 FG: parents with secondary and (mainly) tertiary education; all internet users.

Shared arguments concerning smartphones
- More powerful and difficult to control than PC, laptops and tablets.
- Too complicated and having “too much functionalities”.
- Merely devices for calls and texting. Children don’t need a so expensive device especially when their everyday life is “totally under control”.
- Contrary to tablets, they imply contracts with phone companies.

Shared arguments concerning children
- “My child is not mature enough” - all age groups (9-10; 11-13; 14-16)
Portugal and other NCGM countries

Considerable variation on children’s owning a smartphone
At the bottom: Romania: 28%; Portugal: 35%;
At the top: Denmark: 84%; The UK: 58%;

Two poles
Portuguese parents mainly focused on difficulties and constraints
Danish parents mainly focused on opportunities and pedagogical benefits.

A shared “umbilical cord”
Expressed by teachers (and social workers) in Portugal, Belgium, Italy... children “always reachable” by parents even during classes or outdoors activities.
Challenges for family mediation

TRUST, SURVEILLANCE AND PRIVACY

• **Trust** between parents and children is central to understand parental mediation

• **Monitoring** strategies adopted by parents as form of surveillance and control and a way of limiting children’s privacy.

• **Main strategies:**
  - From children: acceptance; non acceptance; concealment
  - From parents: trust; distrust; negotiation

• Key challenge: balance protection (from problematic situations) with children’s freedom to experiment (maximizing opportunities), avoiding the risk of overprotecting children or betraying their trust.

NEGOTIATING RULES

• **Dynamic** nature of rules since they involve some level of negotiation.

• Challenge: how to define situations/occasions in which it is adequate (or not) to use a device or do an activity?

• For parents: managing continuity with change – how rules are kept?

• For children: how rules are followed (accepted, contested or negotiated)?

• Impact of mobile devices: portability, individualization – difficult to control
Challenges for research on parental mediation

• **How to capture the complexity of mediation practices of parents?** It involves different situations, contexts, practices and actors (children, other family members, teachers, etc.)

• **What impact the ‘new media ecology’** (internet access ‘anywhere, anytime’, privatization, individualization…) **has on parental mediation? How to capture these changes in research?**

• **Limits of classifications/typologies** - types of mediation are not mutually exclusive (they may overlap, or mean different things to different people), nor the categories used in surveys capture entirely the array of situations and practices (risk of oversimplification?)

• **Different perceptions regarding mediation** – parents vs. children (e.g. active mediation maybe considered as form of monitoring and regarded as invasive by children)
Obrigada! Thanks!

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