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Parent-Child Communication about Internet Use and Acceptance of Parental Authority

Symons Katrien, PhD ^{a b}

Ponnet Koen, PhD ^{a b}

Vanwesenbeeck Ini, PhD ^{c*}

Walrave Michel, PhD ^d

Van Ouytsel, Joris PhD ^d

^a Knowledge Center Higher Institute for Family Studies, Odisee, Huart Hamoiriaan 136, 1030 Brussels, Belgium

^b Department of Communication Studies, IMEC/Research Group for Media & ICT (MICT), Ghent University, Korte Meer 11, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

^c Department of Communication Studies, Research Group Center for Persuasive Communication (CEPEC), Ghent University, Korte Meer 11, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

^d Department of Communication Studies, Media, ICT/Interpersonal Relations in Organizations and Society (MIOS), University of Antwerp, Sint-Jacobsstraat 2, 2000 Antwerp, Belgium

*Corresponding author

Koen Ponnet

E: Koen.Ponnet@UGent.be

T: +329 264 67 12

Katrien Symons

E: Katrien.Symons@UGent.be

T: +329 264 67 12

Ini Vanwesenbeeck, corresponding author

E: Ini.Vanwesenbeeck@UGent.be

T: +32 9 264 68 90

Michel Walrave

E: Michel.Walrave@uantwerpen.be

T: +32 3 265 56 81

Joris Van Ouytsel

E: Joris.Vanouytsel@uantwerpen.be

T: +32 3 265 52 79

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None of the authors report any conflict of interest regarding the paper.

Parent-Child Communication about Internet Use and Acceptance of Parental Authority

Structural equation modelling is applied to investigate how parents' communication with their child about his or her Internet use is linked to the child's acceptance of parental authority in this area, and how this in turn is linked to the child's social media behavior. This study questioned children aged 13 to 18 and their mothers and fathers (N = 357 families) and found that acceptance of parental authority is a key factor in the effectiveness of parental mediation. It is recommended that parental mediation is studied as a dynamic process shaped by both parents and children.

Keywords: parental mediation; parental authority; internet use; parent-child communication; structural equation modelling

Parent-Child Communication about Internet Use and Acceptance of Parental Authority

While the Internet offers many opportunities, young people are also confronted with certain risks therein, such as cyberbullying, online sexual harassment, inaccurate health information, or simply excessive screen time (Fahy, Stansfeld, Smuk, Smith, Cummins, & Clark, 2016; Moreno, Kelleher, Ameenuddin, & Rastogi, 2014; Sorbring, 2014). A great number of studies have examined parents' options to help their children reap the benefits of Internet use while reducing potential negative outcomes, also referred to as "parental mediation" (Kalmus, Blinka, & Ólafsson, 2015; Sasson & Mesch, 2014).

Socialization theory, which states that children learn how to function within society, considers parents the primary agents who teach their children what is perceived as acceptable (Maccoby, 2007; Maccoby, 1992). Parental mediation is considered a type of socialization and refers to how parents use certain strategies to mitigate the negative effects of media on their children (Clarck, 2011). Much of the previous work on parental mediation has neglected the role children play both in mediation practices applied by their parents and the effectiveness of these practices (Van den Bulck, Custers & Nelissen, 2016).

During adolescence in particular, parental mediation is assumed to be less effective due to adolescents' increased need for autonomy and resistance to parental authority (Van Petegem, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, Beyers, & Aelterman, 2015). Still, researchers acknowledge that parents remain the primary socialization agent in adolescence (Otten, Engels, van de Ven, & Bricker, 2007) and only a limited number of studies have addressed parental mediation in adolescence (Valkenburg, Piotrowski, Hermanns, & De Leeuw 2013). Parental mediation is therefore best considered as a dynamic process in which the child is not a mere receptor of parental practices, but also an active agent in shaping the socialization process and its outcomes. Past research has examined this bi-directionality of child socialization (Darling, Cumsille, & Martínez, 2007; Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012; Shastri, 2015), stating that children have a

substantial role in shaping the process and end state (Shastri, 2015); still, there is little empirical evidence of how this dynamic plays out in the field of parental mediation of adolescents' Internet use, which requires domain-specific parenting. To investigate this dynamic, it is vital that both the child's and parental perspectives are taken into account—for example, how parents adapt their mediation practices to the perceived ability of their child to self-regulate (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2005; Padilla-Walker, Coyne, Fraser, Dyer, & Yorgason, 2012), and that the effectiveness of parental mediation depends on the child's willingness to obey (Livingstone & Bober, 2004).

In this study, it is argued that children's acceptance of parental authority is a key factor in successful adolescent-parental mediation. This goes beyond prior research investigating the direct relationship between parental mediation and behavioral effects. Specifically, structural equation modelling is used to investigate how parents' communication with their child about his or her Internet use is linked to the child's acceptance of parental authority in this area, and how this in turn is linked to the child's social media behavior. To combine the parental and child's point of view, triadic data are used: within each participating family, an adolescent (aged 13 to 18), a mother and a father were questioned.

As a behavioral outcome, we investigate whether children's acceptance of parental authority is related to social media behavior. Specifically, the study focuses on the frequency of social media usage and willingness to add strangers on social network sites. Adding strangers online is a common behavior, with approximately fifty percent of young people who have already added strangers online (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). A prior study in the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium, where the current study took place, found that one in five young people aged 14 to 19 consider it acceptable to add complete strangers to one's online social network (Vandoninck, d'Haenens, De Cock, & Donoso, 2011).

Theoretical framework

Parental Mediation Strategies in adolescence

Parental mediation research has often focused on different types that parents use to deal with their children's media usage. Traditionally, three parental mediation strategies are discerned: "co-use" refers to parents and children watching media together, without the necessity to discuss its content (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). This strategy is most likely for television use, and less applied to online media. "Restrictive mediation" refers to the parents controlling both the amount of time children spend on media and the type of content they come into contact with (Nikken & Jansz, 2014). "Active mediation" entails discussing media content, in which critical comments are given or content is explained (Nikken & Jansz, 2014). Due to the emerging popularity of online content, Nikken & Jansz (2014) added a fourth strategy, "supervision," which refers to parents supervising their children's media usage. This differs from co-use in that the parents do not watch together with their children, but still keep an eye on their children's media usage while doing household activities. In empirical research, supervision was more common among parents of young children (Nikken & Jansz, 2014). In most academic research, researchers conclude that active media mediation is more effective compared to restrictive techniques (Valkenburg et al., 2013).

Most of the parental mediation research has focused on children, as academic research often assumes that parents of adolescents lose their effect on their children (Valkenburg et al., 2013). This is mostly attributed to an increased need of children for autonomy that occurs in adolescence, which results in an increasing sense of freedom and interpersonal distance from the parents (Van Petegem et al., 2015). Still, qualitative research with parents of an adolescent child has indicated that parents remain motivated to be involved in their adolescent's Internet use due to concerns for potential risks, such as cyberbullying, excessive time online, privacy issues, or contact with strangers (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017). To compensate for the increasing need for autonomy, parental mediation styles that were effective during

childhood are progressively replaced by other, more age-appropriate practices. First, parents of older adolescents rely more on active mediation techniques compared to parents of younger children (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Second, studies have found that parents often engage in a strategy which is labeled as “deference,” or “sideline parenting” (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012; Symons et al., 2017). In this strategy, parents actively choose not to intervene and grant autonomy to their child as long as the media influence does not negatively impact the child (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). In other words, parents stay close to intervene when necessary, but grant the child increasing privacy and autonomy (Symons et al., 2017). These insights indicate that the division between active and restrictive parental mediation styles might be less relevant for studies on adolescents’ media usage.

Open communication styles

Another perspective to investigate how parents deal with their children’s media usage is the communication style by which they convey their rules and guidance. In other words, not only the type of parental mediation strategy may lead to positive results in children’s media behavior, but also the way that these rules and guidance are communicated (Valkenburg et al., 2013). This statement is supported by the self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2012). A core concept within SDT is “autonomy,” which refers to a universal, significant human capacity to act in a volitional manner (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010, p. 76). Following the SDT, successful parenting is associated with autonomy support (Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008). Applied to parental mediation theory, the SDT suggests that both active as well as restrictive mediation can be effective, as long as it is done in an open, autonomy-supportive way (Valkenburg et al., 2013).

Additional theoretical support for the effectiveness of open communication can be found in the Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT), which classifies family communication along its orientation on two dimensions. The first dimension is “conversation orientation,”

referring to the degree to which parents maintain a climate of open communication where every family member is encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction. The second dimension is “conformity orientation,” or the degree to which the family is viewed as cohesive and hierarchical (Koerner & Schrod, 2014). Family communication patterns have a profound effect on the child’s cognitive, behavioral, and emotional outcomes; a meta-analysis of 56 studies found that the average effect of conversation orientation is stronger than the effect of conformity orientation, and that this is especially true concerning effects on psychosocial outcomes (Schrod, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008). In essence, the general health and wellbeing of children is highest in the context of an open, unrestrained family communication climate. Various studies have confirmed the effectiveness of open parent-child communication for behavioral and psychosocial child adjustment (Ponnet, Wouters, Goedemé, & Mortelmans, 2016; Yu, Clemens, Yang et al., 2006). Given the above-mentioned insights, this study will not further focus on the classic division between active and restrictive parental mediation, but investigate the importance of open familial communication cited by studies on family communication and self-determination theory.

Acceptance of Parental Authority

Despite that parents communicate with their teenage children on their family standards on media usage, adolescents are not always inclined to comply with these standards (Valkenburg et al., 2013) and can even modify or respond to them (Van den Bulck, Custers & Nelissen, 2016). In this view, children are seen as active agents who participate in their parents’ media guidance (Nelissen & Van den Bulck, 2018). This may be even more true for older children.

When looking at family communication in general, younger children tend to agree with parental intervention, while older children have a more complex view on the legitimacy of parental authority (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). For an adolescent to follow parental

advice, his or her willingness to comply with their directions will become increasingly important; this willingness constitutes the adolescent's acceptance of parental authority (Yaffe, 2013), which is considered an important factor in terms of child socialization (Darling et al., 2007; Kuhn, Mai Phan, & Laird, 2014).

The acceptance of parental authority can be defined as “the extent to which parents’ assertion of control over an area is believed to be a natural, appropriate extension of their role as parents” (Darling et al., 2007, p.299). Parental authority becomes particularly relevant during adolescence, a period marked by a renegotiation of the boundaries between personal autonomy and parental authority. Therefore, the acceptance of parental authority is domain-specific, meaning that it depends on the issue that is at stake (Yaffe, 2013). Parental authority is typically more accepted when it concerns issues that are linked to health and safety (the prudential domain), social conventions, and moral concerns, while it is the least accepted when it concerns issues that are perceived as personal, such as friendships and leisure activities (Smetana, Crean, & Campione-Barr, 2005; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006). Conflicts over parental authority are most likely to occur over matters that are “multi-faceted,” covering multiple domains and considered personal by the adolescent but which parents perceive to be related to health and safety, morality, or social conventions, and therefore domains where they can and should intervene (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011; Smetana et al., 2005). In this study, we focus on the domain of social media usage and argue that adolescents’ acceptance of parental authority on social media usage can be associated with the extent to which parents use open communication.

Hypothesis Development

To investigate the association between open parental communication and accepting authority, we differentiate between mothers’ and fathers’ open communication styles. This is in line with previous research that demonstrated that mothers and fathers tend to report different

parenting styles (McKinney & Renk, 2008). Early research on parenting often focused on mothers, who were found to spend more time with their children (Phares, Fields & Kamboukos, 2009), but more recently, studies have acknowledged the importance of fathers in parenting styles with regard to media (Vanwesenbeeck, Ponnet, Walrave & Van Ouytsel; 2017). Still, there are reasons to believe that parents differ in communication styles. Mothers are more involved in parental mediation of Internet use compared to fathers (Symons, Ponnet, Emmery, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017), and their Internet parenting style shows more warmth in terms of support and communication compared to fathers (Valcke, Bonte, De Wever, & Rots, 2010).

Adolescents' increased need for autonomy from their parents may affect parent-child communication in this period. In a study among 13- to 17-year-olds, the reported openness of communication with parents was found to decline with age (Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998). A longitudinal study following adolescents from age 12 to 19 found a decline in communication in early adolescence which, remained at a low, stable level for boys while intensifying again for girls later in adolescence (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013). Specifically in the field of Internet use, a study found that children aged 10 to 16 were more inclined to obey their parents and accept restrictions on Internet use in the context of an open parent-child communication style (Byrne & Lee, 2011).

By establishing open communication with their child about his or her internet use, parents may create a context in which the child is more inclined to accept parental authority in this field, which in turn offers parents more opportunities to support their children in becoming safe and responsible Internet users. The SDT gives theoretical foundation for this statement: when parents support their children's autonomy, the internalization of rules and values is more likely, and adolescents will be motivated to comply with their parents' rules and values (Soenens, Vansteenkiste & Niemiec 2009). On the other hand, closed communication styles can lead to a rejection of parental authority, which does not support internalization of rules.

This can be further supported by the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966): adolescents may show adversity towards their parents when they believe that their autonomy is being threatened (Meeus, Beyens, Geusens, Soderman & Beullens, 2018). A certain degree of reactance is normal in the still-developing adolescent brain; however, the level of reactance can depend on the type of communication used by parents (Byrne & Lee, 2011; Valkenburg et al., 2013). If a parent does not communicate to adolescent children in an open way about their Internet mediation, the children may perceive their parents' authority to be illegitimate (Meeus et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Open mother-child communication about the adolescent's Internet use is positively associated with the adolescent's acceptance of parental authority on Internet use.

H2: Open father-child communication about the adolescent's Internet use is positively associated with the adolescent's acceptance of parental authority on Internet use.

As adolescents grow older, the Internet increasingly becomes a personal space in which they make new friends, develop relationships, and bond with existing friends (Boyd, 2014; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). The "friending behavior" of adolescents on social network sites (SNS) can be considered an essential aspect of adolescents' online safety and privacy management (Heirman, Walrave, Vermeulen, Ponnet, Vandebosch, & Hardies, 2016): the behavior is a risk in itself in terms of online grooming, and it is linked with problematic online experiences, such as cyberbullying perpetration and victimization (Gómez-Guadix, Borrajo, & Almendros, 2016). Still, the adolescent and the parent might have conflicting ideas on the amount of parental authority that is appropriate regarding the online friending behavior. Consequently, when adolescents feel that the exercised parental authority threatens their autonomy, they may be more likely to perform the behaviors prohibited by their parents (Valkenburg et al., 2013). The present study looks at the frequency of SNS usage and the

frequency with which online stranger contact occurs, which enables differentiation of the extent to which the adolescent engages in potentially risky online behavior.

This assumption leads to the following hypotheses:

H3: The adolescent's acceptance of parental authority on Internet use is negatively associated with the amount of time spent on SNS.

H4: The adolescent's acceptance of parental authority on Internet use is negatively associated with having online contacts with strangers.

H5: The relationship between both open communication styles and adding strangers online is mediated by the adolescents' acceptance of parental authority.

In addition to the hypotheses mentioned-above, we assume that the amount of time spend on a social network site is positively related to adding strangers. The impact of stranger acceptance on adolescents' obedience to parental authority is also investigated, to verify whether the amount of time spend on a social network site acts as a (partial) mediator for the direct effect between accepting parental authority and adding strangers on the social network site.

Based on the aforementioned hypotheses, we developed the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.

[Insert figure 1 here]

Method

Participants

This study is part of a large project focusing on children, families, and social media usage and was conducted in Flanders, the northern, Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. Data was collected between December 2015 and February 2016, with the help of undergraduate students from the Higher Education Institution. Prior to the start of the study, the procedure was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Antwerp.

In this study, data was gathered from different family members. When using multi-actor data, the acquired data often have a high rate of missing cases due to a non-response (Kalmijn & Liefbroer, 2011). Due to this consideration, the project employed a non-probabilistic sampling design. Newly-formed families were only included in the survey if both partners had lived together for at least three years prior to the survey.

For families with multiple children within the target age, the parents were asked to complete the survey with one of their children in mind. The parents were free to choose which child they took as the focal child, however, the parents were asked to align with each other, so that both father and mother filled in the survey with the same child in mind. Participants were recruited with the help of 81 undergraduate students. Each student distributed eight envelopes among families with at least one child between 13 and 18 years old. As a result, 648 families were asked to participate in this study. Participating families received an envelope with three questionnaires, one for each participating family member. Along with the questionnaire, each family member received a plain-language statement and was asked to fill in an informed consent form. The questionnaire started by instructing the participants to fill in the questionnaire individually and to not discuss it with other family members. To assure the participants' privacy, each received a sealable envelope for their completed questionnaire. The participants were then asked to send back the three sealed envelopes in a stamped, self-addressed envelope. A code was included on the back of each questionnaire. When analyzing the data, the researcher could identify members of the same family using this code.

In total, 357 families (adolescents aged 13 to 18, $M = 15.73$; $SD = 1.50$) correctly filled out each of the three questionnaires, with 54.9% of the families ($n = 196$) including a female adolescent. The mothers were aged 31 to 59 years ($M = 44.19$; $SD = 4.72$). The fathers were aged 31 to 70 years ($M = 46.67$; $SD = 5.65$). All adolescents reported access to a device at home

to go on the Internet; the majority of the adolescents (98.9%, $n = 351$) reported having a smartphone, and 92.1% ($n = 257$) reported having a profile on a social network site.

Measures

Table 1 gives an overview of all variables and the associated descriptive statistics.

Open parent-child communication

Open parent-child communication was measured among mothers and fathers using a three-item scale, which was based on the widely used open-parent-child communication scale (Barnes & Olsen, 1985; Ponnet et al., 2013). The items in the questionnaire (see Table 1) were adjusted to the context of online communication. All items were scored on a six-point scale from “Totally disagree” to “Totally agree”. The scale showed internal consistency for both mothers (Cronbach’s alpha = .91) and fathers (Cronbach’s alpha = .90).

Acceptance of parental authority

Three items (See Table 1) were derived from a study by Van Rooij and van den Eijnden (2007) and presented to the adolescent for completion. The items were answered on a six-point Likert scale from “Totally disagree” to “Totally agree”. The scale had good internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha = .81.

Contact with strangers on SNS

Three items were used to measure whether adolescents previously had contact with strangers on social network sites (Lobe, Livingstone, Olafsson, & Vodeb, 2018). The respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale how often they engaged in three behaviors, from “Never” to “Very often”: (1) having accepted a friend request from someone they do not know, (2) having sent a friend request to someone they never met in person, and (3) having sent contact details to someone never met in person. In terms of reliability, the scale proved acceptable consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha = .69.

Frequency of SNS usage

Respondents were asked how often they visited SNS on a nine-point Likert scale, going from “never” to “more than seven times a day”.

Data analyses

Data was analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus 6.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). First, we built a measurement model and examined whether the observed variables provided a reliable reflection of the latent variables. Second, we estimated a structural model with both parental views on communication quality (mother/father) as predictor variables, and accepting authority and adding strangers on social network sites as endogenous variables.

The child’s age and gender were included in the structural model as covariates. In addition, both maternal and paternal age were included as a covariate.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Results

Measurement model

The initial measurement model provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(56): 75.12, p < .001$, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .041 (CI: .007-.063), SRMR = .049. All factor loadings were greater than .57 and were found significant. Correlations among the latent variables in the path model can be found in Table 2. A closer look at the measurement model revealed a correlation between open parental communication for mothers and for fathers ($r = .37, p < .01$). In our proposed model, these variables were integrated as separate variables. To check whether this assumption holds, we compared a model in which the interdependent constructs were modelled separately to a model combined into a single latent construct. The result of the Chi-square difference test indicated that combining both constructs on open parental communication decreased the fit significantly, $\chi^2(1) = 457, p < 0.01$. Therefore, both the father’s and mother’s point of view were

included as separate variables. Nevertheless, these variables were allowed to correlate in the structural model.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Structural model

Figure 2 shows the final structural model. This model provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(97): 157.95, p < .001$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .056 (CI: .040-.072), SRMR = .052. Our analyses revealed that the mother's open communication was positively associated with the adolescent's acceptance of authority ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), confirming H1. In other words, when a mother maintains open communication on Internet usage, her child is more likely to accept parental rules on Internet usage. Despite the expectations formulated in H2, we could not confirm that the father's open communication was associated with the adolescent's acceptance of authority ($\beta = .14, ns$).

Following H3, we confirmed a negative relationship between acceptance of authority and the amount of time spent on a social network site ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$). In other words, adolescents who do not accept their parents' authority on Internet usage are more likely to report spending more time on social network sites. In H4, we expected a negative relationship between accepting parental authority and having contact with strangers on social network sites; this assumption was also confirmed ($\beta = -.34, p < .001$). An adolescent who accepts parental rules on Internet usage is less likely to have contact with strangers on social network sites. Finally, the amount of time spent on a social network site was significantly related with having contact with strangers on social network sites ($\beta = .22, p < .001$). Furthermore, no indirect effects were found with regard to accepting parental authority and adding strangers on social network sites ($\beta = .04, ns$).

We were also interested in the direct and indirect effects of open parental communication and adding strangers on social network sites. In a model without acceptance of

authority, a direct significant relationship between the mother's open communication and adding strangers was found ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$). However, in our structural model, we did not establish a direct significant path between parental open communication and adding strangers on social network sites (mother: $\beta = -.07, ns$; father: $\beta = .00, ns$); nor did we establish any indirect effects via acceptance of authority (mother: $\beta = -.05, ns$; father: $\beta = -.05, ns$). As a consequence, H5 was rejected.

The child's gender, the mother's age, and the father's age were not associated with any of the variables in the model. The adolescent's age was significantly associated with having contact with strangers on SNS ($\beta = .24, p < .005$), indicating that older adolescents are more likely to add or stay in contact with people that they have never met in real life. Neither the child's nor the parents' age were related to parental authority or parental open communication.

Discussion

This study empirically substantiates the proposition that parental mediation of adolescent Internet use is a dynamic process in which the adolescent's acceptance of parental authority is a key factor. The use of triadic data with a report from the mother, the father, and a child aged 13 to 18 offers good opportunities for studying how such parent-child interactions play out. Structural equation modelling provided support for a model in which parents' open communication with their child about his or her Internet use enhances safe Internet use, and the mediating role of the adolescent's increased acceptance of parental authority. This was only true, however, regarding the mother's communication with the child, not the father's.

The adolescents' acceptance of parental authority played an important role in whether adolescents had contact with strangers via social network sites and the amount of time spent on social media. This is in accordance with theoretical insights from the reactance theory, stating that if children feel threatened in their autonomy (Brehm, 1966), they are less likely to comply with the values and rules provided by their parents. Thus, while studies suggest that parents

engage less in parental mediation as the child gets older (Sonck, Nikken, & de Haan, 2013; Symons et al., 2017), parents still have a significant role to play in terms of enhancing safe Internet behavior and will have more opportunities for doing so when the child accepts their authority, as suggested by the perceived parental media mediation theory (Valkenburg et al., 2013). It is important to point out that many online risks become more prevalent during adolescence. For example, cyberbullying behavior has its peak between 12 and 15 years, while online sex-related harassment risks are lower for young adolescents, and higher for older adolescents (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Thus, while the Internet and especially social media can be considered part of the personal domain of young people, it clearly also includes aspects that legitimize parental involvement.

Based on SDT and the FCPT, parents' open communication with their child over the latter's Internet use was hypothesized to be associated with the child's acceptance of parental authority. This hypothesis was confirmed regarding communication by the mother, but not by the father. It is not clear why communication with the father was not a significant factor, but prior studies typically point out that fathers take up a lesser role in child-rearing, including during adolescence (Phares, Fields, & Kamboukos, 2009), and that adolescents are more likely to turn to their mother for discussing problems than their father (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2006). Mothers have also been found to be more involved in Internet parenting compared to fathers (Valcke et al., 2010). Our findings underline the importance of integrating mothers' and fathers' disparate communication styles. These results are further supported by Byrne and Lee (2011), who found that open communication with parents predicted less resistance towards parental strategies for enhancing safe Internet use among 10- to 16-year-olds. The results also confirm a qualitative study with parents of a child aged 13 to 18 that found open communication with the child plays a key role in successful parental mediation (Symons et al., 2017).

While the results of this study suggest that adolescents' acceptance of parental authority is an important missing link in studies on parental mediation, we acknowledge that there are other possible pathways between parent-child communication and online behavior. One possibility is that open communication stimulates children to disclose more to their parents, who in turn become better informed so that they can intervene if necessary. Parental knowledge of a child's behavior is a protective factor against problem behavior, and such knowledge stems more from open parent-child communication than from parents' monitoring practices (Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2010). Specifically in the field of Internet use, this communication can stimulate the child to disclose negative online experiences, such as cyberbullying (Cerna, Machackova, & Dedkova, 2016). Thus, open parental communication on Internet use can not only improve the child's acceptance of parental authority, but also improve parents' awareness of potential needs.

Further, it is possible that parents who apply an open communication style also engage in different Internet mediation strategies, which in turn results in different Internet use outcomes. Mediation strategies tend to reflect general family processes: for example, parents who engage more in open communication in general are also more likely to engage in critical discussions of media content (Fujioka & Austin, 2002).

Several limitations should be taken into account. First, the study's design is sensitive for sampling bias, as a non-probabilistic sampling design was used. Although this approach was deliberately followed to limit non-responses associated with multi-actor data, it does limit the generalizability of the study findings. Furthermore, a study on non-response of multi-actor data showed that participation was more likely when the relationship between the parent and the child was better (Kalmijn & Liefbroer, 2011). Such selective respondent participation may have biased the results. Second, our study only included two-parent families. This approach was followed to gather insight on the use of open communication from both the mother and the

father, as many studies either focus only on the mother or average the scores of both parents (Ponnet, Mortelmans, Wouters, Van Leeuwen, Bastaits & Pasteels, 2013). In our sample, newly-formed families were included only if the parents had lived together for at least three years, due to the high prevalence of newly blended families in the study's country. Nevertheless, "atypical" families, including one-parent families or families with same-gender parents, were not included. Overall, it is recommended that future research pay attention to these family types. Third, the study makes use of a cross-sectional design, which implies that there are limitations in terms of establishing causality. We acknowledge that parents' communication with their adolescent child can be affected by the child's behavior; hence our reversing the direction of causality suggested in the model. This effect is also referred to as the "child-effect" and is largely under-investigated (Mascheroni, Ponte & Jorge, 2018; Van den Bulck et al., 2016). Future research could investigate how the child-effect is related to acceptance of parental authority and risk behavior associated with the use of social media (i.e., adding strangers on social media). Finally, our study focused on the frequency of social media usage and adding strangers on social media. However, we did not differentiate in the type of strangers added by the participants, nor did we focus on other type of contact risks that appear on social media. For instance, future research should focus on contact risks like sexting via social media or privacy concerns related to online self-disclosure via social media.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable new insights in the field of parental mediation of adolescents' Internet use. Taken together, the study underlines the importance of taking into account the role of the child in parental mediation, as mediation outcomes are contingent on a dynamic parent-child interplay. Currently, there is still a lack of research incorporating the viewpoint of the child as well as the parent(s), which impedes the understanding of such dynamics.

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Figure 1. Proposed model

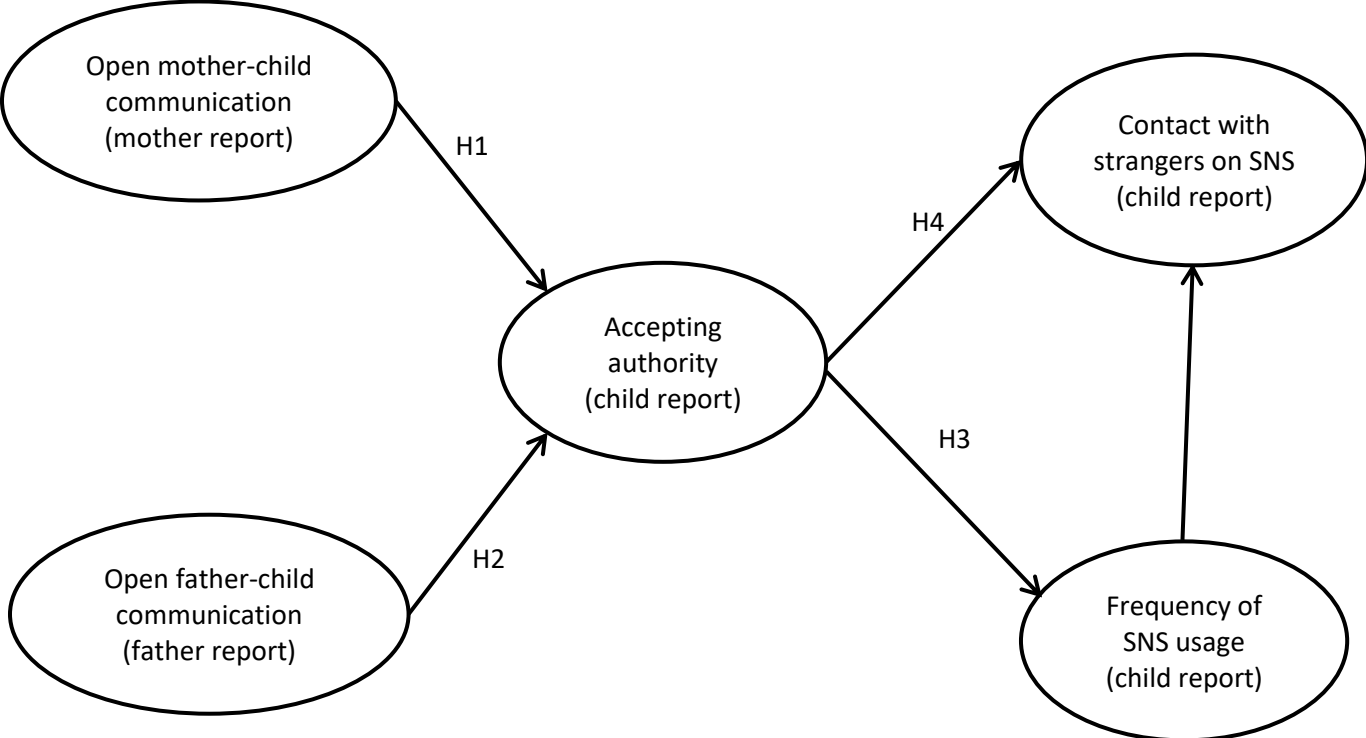


Figure 2. Structural model

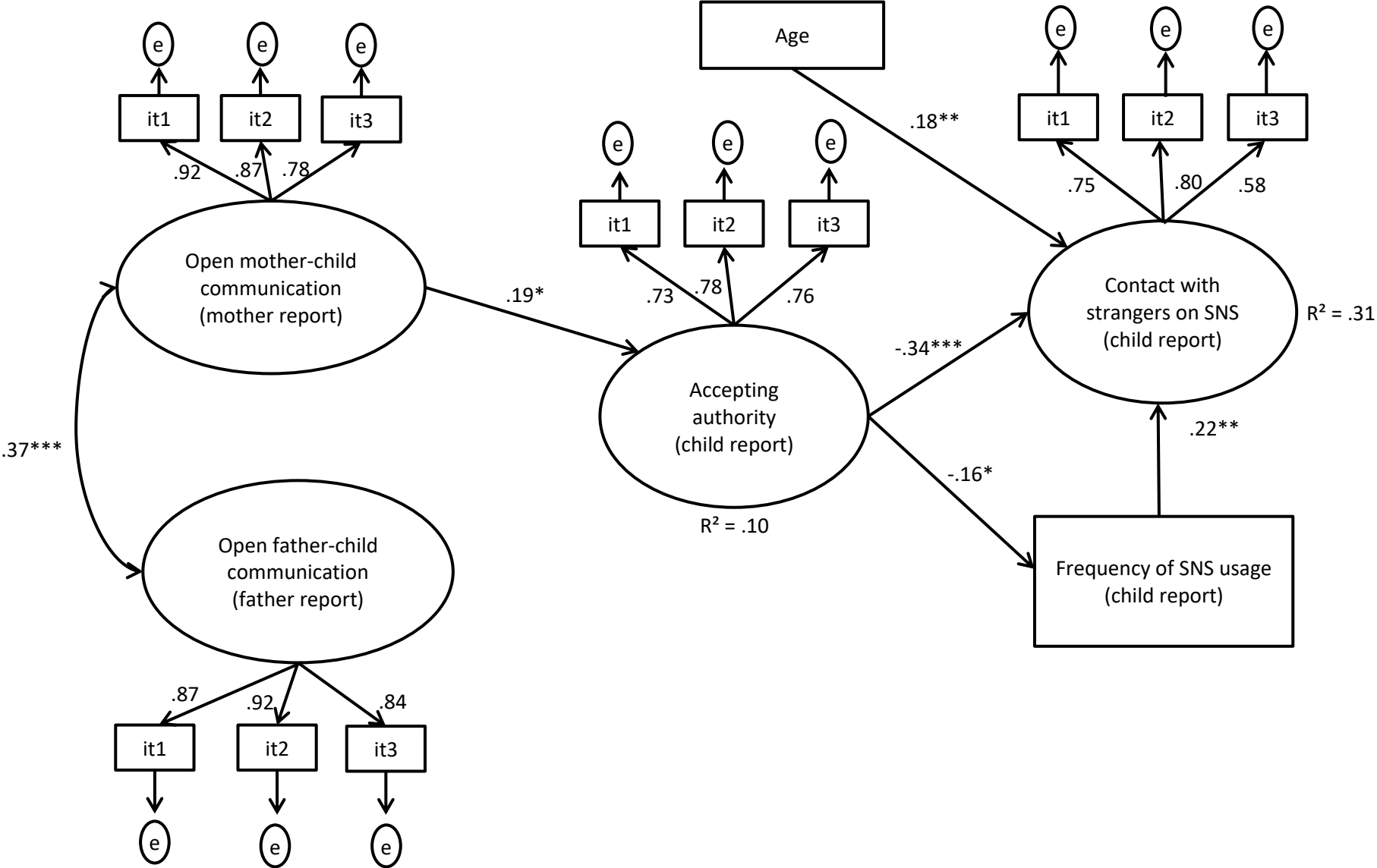


Table 1. Descriptive statistics of key variable indicators

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Open mother-child communication (mother report)			
Item1: I am happy with the way my child and I discuss his/her internet usage	4.47	1.11	1-6
Item2: I find it easy to talk with my child about his/her internet usage	4.64	1.14	1-6
Item3: My child discusses openly what she/he sees, does and reads on the internet	4.35	1.23	1-6
Open father-child communication (father report)			
Item1: I am happy with the way my child and I discuss his/her internet usage	4.40	1.15	1-6
Item2: I find it easy to talk with my child about his/her internet usage	4.50	1.17	1-6
Item3: My child discusses openly what she/he sees, does and reads on the internet	4.23	1.28	1-6
Accepting authority (child report)			
Item1: It think it's okay that my parents set rules on internet usage	4.88	1.22	1-6
Item2: I agree with the rules that my parents set for my internet usage	4.77	1.23	1-6
Item3: I follow the rules that my parents set for my internet usage	4.90	1.22	1-6
Contact with strangers on SNS (child report)			
Item1: Accepted a friend request from someone I do not know	1.71	.82	1-5
Item2: Added people that I did not meet in person	1.95	.94	1-5
Item3: Sent contact information to someone that I have never met personally	1.15	.52	1-5
SNS usage frequency			
Item1 How often do you use social network sites	5.29	1.91	1-9

Table 2. Correlations among the latent constructs

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Age	1				
2 Open communication (mother)	.06	1			
3 Open communication (father)	.05	.37**	1		
4 Accepting authority (child)	-.13*	.25**	.18**	1	
5 Adding strangers on SNS	.25**	-.12*	-.08	-.33**	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$