



Systematic Review

# A Comparison of Parenting Strategies in a Digital Environment: A Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract:** In the modern digital landscape, parental involvement in shaping children's internet usage has gained unprecedented importance. This research delves into the evolving trends of parental mediation concerning children's internet activities. As the digital realm increasingly influences young lives, the role of parents in guiding and safeguarding their children's online experiences becomes crucial. The study addresses key research questions to explore the strategies parents adopt, the content they restrict, the rules they establish, the potential exposure to inappropriate content, and the impact of parents' computer literacy on their children's internet safety. Additionally, the research includes a thematic question that broadens the analysis by incorporating insights from studies not directly answering the primary questions but contributing valuable context and understanding to the digital parenting arena. Building on this, the findings from a systematic literature review, conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, highlight a shift towards more proactive parental involvement. Incorporating 49 studies from 11 databases, these findings reveal the current trends and methodologies in parental mediation. Active mediation strategies, which involve positive interactions and discussions about online content, are gaining recognition alongside the prevalent restrictive mediation approaches. Parents are proactively forbidding specific internet content, emphasizing safety and privacy concerns. Moreover, the emergence of parents' computer literacy as a significant factor influencing their children's online safety underlines the importance of digital proficiency. By shedding light on the contemporary landscape of parental mediation, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how parents navigate their children's internet experiences and the challenges they face in ensuring responsible and secure online engagement. The implications of these findings offer valuable insights for both practitioners and researchers, emphasizing the need for active parental involvement and the importance of enhancing parents' digital proficiency. Despite limitations due to the language and methodological heterogeneity among the included studies, this research paves the way for future investigations into digital parenting practices.

**Keywords:** digital parenting; free-range parenting; online safety; parenting styles; cyber parental control



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## 1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, the internet has evolved into an indispensable element of daily life for a vast number of individuals. In the current year, the active global internet user base exceeds 5.3 billion people, constituting more than 65% of the world's population. This signifies a substantial growth of over 28% since 2019, with approximately 1.2 billion new individuals joining the digital realm during this period [1]. With the prevalence of internet usage among approximately 65% of the global population in 2024, it is plausible to anticipate that this percentage may exceed 75% by the year 2025, resulting in an estimated 6.5 billion internet users worldwide. The topic of digital parenting has gained increasing significance as the next generation matures in an environment immersed in the online domain. In the wake of the ascent of commercial television in the United States during the

early 1950s, concerns and anxieties regarding its adverse effects on children have garnered widespread attention [2]. However, contemporary attention has shifted from television to the internet and the broader digital landscape, drawing focus to potential risks and challenges. In the present era, children allocate a substantial portion of their time to online activities, be it for educational or entertainment purposes [3]. Due to their youth, children encounter difficulties in comprehending the opportunities and risks inherent to internet and digital platform usage. As their lives become increasingly documented in the digital realm, concerns emerge regarding potential long-term implications for their future privacy and safety [4].

Among all internet users, children emerge as a particularly vulnerable demographic, susceptible to a wide spectrum of potential hazards that can manifest in the online environment. Finkelhor et al. [5] elucidated common online issues affecting adolescents, including cyberbullying, online sexual exploitation, sexting, online fraud, hacking and identity theft, the online promotion of suicide and self-harm, and internet overuse or addiction. Given the essential role of parents in promoting safe internet use, they must be prepared to identify and protect their children from these threats. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of these perils, parents can better equip themselves to safeguard their children's online experiences.

Current research indicates that the majority of internet activity transpires within the confines of individuals' homes. A significant proportion of primary school children (81%) engage in online activities within their homes [6]. This trend has only intensified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with parents reporting a noticeable increase in their children's usage of digital devices and engagement with the internet [7]. Furthermore, an extensive 94.6% of children in Europe now have access to the internet from the convenience of their own homes [8]. This highlights the critical role of parents in offering effective and balanced guidance on internet use, ensuring that children benefit from the digital world while minimizing potential risks [9]. As online threats continue to proliferate, it becomes increasingly imperative for parents to employ existing approaches and explore novel approaches to protect their children's online presence. In a study conducted by Matin Chandrima et al. [10], the efficacy of parental internet mediation in mitigating problematic internet usage among children was underscored. Warren [11] defines parental mediation as any method employed by parents to regulate, supervise, or comprehend the content encountered by their children online. In the realm of parental mediation, discernible trends have also emerged. A European study [12] encompassing 18 countries revealed that the most common restrictive action in parental mediation involves limiting daily screen time to approximately 30 min. Another prevalent restriction involves preventing access to violent content, particularly in video games. Conversely, the most prevalent enabling action involves parents selecting educational games and applications for their children and encouraging their utilization. Occasionally, parents also actively engage with these resources alongside their children. While the majority of parents are familiar with parental mediation practices, some opt not to implement them. In recent years, the concept of "free-range parenting" has gained considerable prominence as a notable parenting approach. Free-range parenting encourages children to cultivate independence and undertake calculated risks commensurate with their age, while still maintaining a degree of parental oversight [13].

The primary objective of this paper is to investigate the prevalence of parental mediation practices among parents, along with their attitudes and experiences regarding the upbringing of children in the digital milieu. Additionally, the study aims to gain deeper insights into parents' perspectives on the significance of the internet in their children's lives, its impact on their mental health, behavior, and their exposure to online violence and inappropriate content.

This paper is structured into several key sections that collectively aim to deepen our understanding of parental mediation practices and their implications in the digital age. Following this introduction, we delve into the theoretical framework that supports

our study in Section 2. This section is subdivided into various segments that discuss current digital parenting trends, examine parental mediation strategies, consider shifts in parental approaches, provide insights into ‘Free-Range Parenting’, and explore diverse perspectives on digital monitoring. Section 3 outlines the methodology employed in this research, detailing our research questions, the review protocol adopted, and the study selection process to ensure rigor and reliability in our findings. Section 4 presents the findings of our systematic literature review, highlighting the prevalence of parental mediation practices and the diverse attitudes and experiences of parents in the digital environment. In Section 5, we analyze the implications of our findings in greater depth, exploring cultural variations in parental mediation, the long-term effects of these practices on child development, the role of peer influence in digital parenting, variations in parental mediation across different age groups, the psychological impacts of these practices, and collaborative approaches to digital parenting. Section 6 critically assesses the implications of our findings, acknowledges the limitations of our study, and suggests directions for future research. Finally, Section 7 summarizes the key insights derived from our research. Through this comprehensive exploration, the paper aims to contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on digital parenting, providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, educators, and parents alike.

## **2. Theoretical Backbone: Exploring Digital Parenting**

### *2.1. Digital Parenting Trends*

In recent years, there has been significant research focused on the subject of digital parenting and the challenges associated with raising children in the digital age. Scholars from various disciplines have explored different aspects of parental mediation, internet safety, and the impact of digital technologies on children’s development. One noteworthy contribution to this ongoing discourse is a recent article that presents findings from an eight-year research study conducted through the “EU Kids Online” survey across 12 European countries [14]. The study specifically focuses on children between the ages of 11 and 16, aiming to explore their perspectives on parental mediation strategies and the notable changes observed from 2010 to 2018. The analysis reveals a significant increase in the adoption of active mediation practices in several European countries. Furthermore, the research highlights a substantial rise in the proportion of children who use the internet daily, with rates reaching approximately 90% or higher by 2018 across all countries surveyed. In seven countries, the increase was particularly pronounced, exceeding 20% points on average. This upward trend is especially evident in the context of parental mediation regarding internet safety, which experienced the most substantial growth among the four mediation strategies analyzed in the study. Ultimately, the research suggests a shift in parental approaches, moving away from solely imposing rules and restrictions and toward actively guiding children in their internet use.

### *2.2. Understanding Parental Mediation Strategies*

Parental mediation in children’s internet use encompasses a spectrum of strategies employed by parents to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks associated with online activities. The socialization approach, one of several theoretical perspectives on parental mediation, places parental practices within the context of cultural socialization. This perspective underscores the importance of parents aligning their family’s socialization goals with those of other social agents, including the internet [15]. Parental mediation strategies in the realm of children’s internet use are guided by techniques and child-rearing practices shaped by parental values and attitudes. These values, pivotal for effective child-rearing, are influenced by broader cultural dimensions within a society, such as individualism and collectivism [16].

Rode’s work [17] categorizes the rules established by parents into five distinct groups: rules that explicitly prioritize PC use over other activities, rules rooted in trust, rules designed to safeguard the computer from potential threats like viruses or access to adult

content, rules that restrict specific activities that are perceived to be risky, and rules that prohibit certain activities that are considered threatening. Her research sheds light on numerous privacy and security threats of which children are often unaware, while also addressing parental strategies to address or mitigate these threats. Although parents employ a range of tactics to protect their children, and some children express concerns, research indicates that children remain susceptible to a wide array of risks. Her study, conducted in 12 households, reveals issues such as identity theft, harassment by strangers, the unintentional disclosure of personal information online, and the circumvention of security software. These findings underscore the urgency of further research to comprehensively understand and effectively address these issues. Moreover, it is imperative to surmount barriers to accessing children as informants to gain valuable insights into their utilization of these technologies. Given the pressing need for privacy and security research concerning children, it is essential for the community to collaborate in eliminating bureaucratic obstacles that threaten children's safety.

As the practice of parental mediation continues to grow, researchers have raised inquiries regarding the aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) that parents prohibit their children from using and the rationale behind such restrictions. Gür and Türel's [18] research indicates that parents generally allow their children to use ICT under supervision but become more cautious when it involves situations where children may share personal information online. Consequently, they impose stricter limitations on their children. This assertion is supported by their findings, indicating that 31% of parents reported that their children do not have access to social media, while 42% approve of social media usage only under supervision. Additionally, the majority of parents permit their children to use instant messaging applications, albeit under their watchful eye. The increasing adoption of parental mediation techniques should come as no surprise, given the findings of Álvarez et al.'s [19] study, which unequivocally establish the internet as an indispensable and integral component of children's daily lives. According to their findings, 60% of users aged between nine and sixteen access the internet daily, with 33% using it weekly. Nevertheless, the internet presents a dual nature, offering educational and beneficial resources alongside inappropriate content such as pornography and cyberbullying. Yaman et al.'s [20] study concluded that internet risks emanate from various sources, including categories like cyberbullying, cyber fraud, and cyber harassment. Children, due to their limited technological literacy and lack of awareness regarding online dangers, constitute the most vulnerable demographic in this context. Data collected in the same study also revealed that children typically commence using the internet at the age of 10.

### 2.3. Shifting Parental Approaches

Given the pivotal role that parents play in the upbringing of their children and in guiding their online behavior, it is reasonable to anticipate that they employ various strategies to safeguard their children from potentially harmful or objectionable content on the internet. Álvarez et al.'s research [19] suggests that parents often shape their children's online experiences through prohibition or supervision, yet they may not always be aware of the unwanted content their children encounter online. Therefore, especially during the early stages of internet use, it becomes imperative for parents to actively guide their children and participate in shared online activities.

Parents employ diverse approaches when navigating the digital landscape with their children, resulting in a spectrum of internet parenting styles, including those that are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and laissez-faire [21]. The permissive style is characterized by parents who avoid conflicts and refrain from setting explicit boundaries on internet usage. Conversely, the laissez-faire style signifies minimal parental involvement in controlling their children's online activities, often accompanied by a lack of supportive or restrictive attitudes. On the other hand, parents adopting the authoritative style establish clear rules, including practical measures such as time limits for internet use. Lastly, the au-

thoritarian style involves parents setting strict regulations without providing explanations, while disregarding their children's perspectives on internet-related matters.

Álvarez et al. [19] concluded, citing the work of Aunola et al. [22], that the permissive style is the most commonly adopted, followed by the authoritative style, with the authoritarian style being the least prevalent. However, a more recent study conducted by Özgür [23] reveals a shifting landscape in the adoption of these parenting styles. In this study, 595 students identified their family's internet parenting style as *laissez-faire*, 395 considered it to be permissive, 282 perceived their family's style as authoritative, and 17 indicated an authoritarian style.

Furthermore, parenting styles also significantly influence parents' efforts in providing internet education and are closely associated with their own experiences, attitudes, and usage of the internet. Festl and Gniewosz [24] explored the impact of parents' educational backgrounds on their internet parenting practices and family dynamics, building upon previous research that highlighted the correlation between parents' education levels and their confidence, perceptions, and mediation strategies concerning the internet [25,26]. They observed higher levels of perceived parenting confidence among parents from more highly educated families [24]. Additionally, these findings resonate with earlier research, indicating that a mother's educational level significantly influences her internet parenting style, whereas the father's educational level does not exhibit a significant relationship. The study by Gür and Türel [18] also unveiled that parents who lack computer ownership, home internet access, or technological proficiency tend to hold more negative attitudes towards the use of information and communication technologies (ICT).

#### 2.4. Understanding 'Free-Range Parenting'

Although research shows that parents generally aim to control and monitor their children's media usage, not all parents adopt the same approaches and levels of parental mediation. Consequently, a portion of parents decide to grant their children extensive freedom on the internet, either fully or nearly so. This style of parenting is commonly known as 'free-range parenting'. The concept of 'free-range parenting' started gaining popularity in the early 2000s. Lenore Skenazy's book, published in 2009, played a significant role in popularizing this parenting style. The book promotes granting children more independence and freedom in their daily activities, including their internet usage, with a focus on maintaining safety and taking practical precautions [27]. In the past, parents tended to encourage more independence in their children, allowing them to participate in independent activities and gradually take on responsibilities. However, their methods have been increasingly challenged in recent decades as modern parents often exhibit a sense of apprehension, fearing the potential dangers associated with granting such independence to their children [28]. As a result, 'free-range parenting' is now often perceived by many people as a form of child neglect [29]. Additionally, some studies have been conducted to explore the association of demographic factors with the practice of 'free-range parenting'. Studies have shown that income levels play a role in neglectful parenting. In 2013, Washington University conducted research to explore the connection between neglect subtypes, race, and poverty. Their findings revealed a moderate correlation between a lack of resources, low income, and a higher rate of neglect. The study recommended focusing on policies that address the disparities in living conditions among poorer families to better tackle maltreatment issues [30]. Past studies have delved into the reasons behind this correlation. One primary factor is the lack of time, availability, and financial means to constantly supervise children. Many low-income parents, unable to afford childcare while supporting their families, have no choice but to leave their children alone when they are at work [31]. As a result, out of necessity, many low-income families adopt a more 'free-range parenting' style.

#### 2.5. Diverse Perspectives on Digital Monitoring

Opinions on 'free-range parenting' vary, reflecting a divided perspective. Parents aim to monitor their children's online activities for protection, but challenges arise due to fake accounts, technical loopholes, and unclear policies. Some resort to monitoring apps for

constant supervision, citing safety concerns [32]. Personal experiences also shape parenting approaches, as one participant mentioned not wanting their child to repeat their own past mistakes. While parents may engage in mediating their children's internet use, the efficacy of their approaches remains distinct. Certain studies indicate that parents often respond by imposing limitations on their child's online engagement when encountering online difficulties, which can be perceived as being intrusive to children rather than genuinely protective [33]. Those abstaining from monitoring apps prioritize teaching responsibility and building trust before granting independence. Perspectives differ, with some emphasizing close monitoring, while many children advocate teaching responsibility and building trust before granting more freedom.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The methodology outlined by Kitchenham and Charters [34] is widely acknowledged for its thorough and dependable approach to conducting systematic literature reviews (SLRs) across various academic disciplines [35–37]. In this study, we adhered to their guidelines to ensure the establishment of a precise, clear, and transparent literature review. These guidelines encompass a series of distinct tasks, including formulating research questions, establishing a review protocol, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, devising a search strategy, conducting study selection, executing data extraction and synthesis, and ultimately presenting and reporting findings [38]. This review was also conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines [39]. Adhering to all these steps is essential for the purpose of reducing potential researcher biases. In the following subsections, we are going to describe and demonstrate how we have employed the aforementioned methodology and guidelines to fit our research.

#### 3.1. Research Questions

While the preceding research has explored various facets of digital parenting, the present study adopts a comprehensive approach for scrutinizing the contemporary trends and methodologies in parental mediation. The research questions steering this study are as follows:

(RQ1) What are the predominant trends characterizing parental mediation concerning children's internet use in the contemporary milieu? This question is designed to elucidate the transformative patterns in parental engagement, taking into consideration elements such as their active mediation, imposition of constraints, and collaborative co-usage strategies.

(RQ2) What genres of internet content do parents proactively prohibit their children from accessing? In an era marked by an abundance of digital content, this inquiry seeks to gain insights into the specific genres, applications, programs, and games that parents opt to restrict due to concerns related to their children's privacy and security.

(RQ3) What rules and restrictions do parents establish governing their children's internet utilization? Through an exploration of the regulatory measures enforced by parents, encompassing aspects such as duration, timing, access to content, and monitoring practices, this question seeks to comprehend the strategies employed by parents to ensure a secure and balanced digital experience for their children.

(RQ4) Is there an escalating exposure of children to inappropriate internet content, and how do parents confront this challenge? This question delves into the potential vulnerability of children to harmful online material and examines the methodologies through which parents implement mediation strategies to mitigate risks and safeguard the overall well-being of their children.

(RQ5) To what degree does parents' proficiency in computer literacy impact the online safety of their children? This question explores the correlation between parents' digital competencies and their effectiveness in guiding and supervising their children's online activities, underscoring the significance of empowering parents to cultivate a secure online environment.

Through an exploration of these research questions, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of digital parenting. It offers valuable

insights that can inform both practitioners and researchers in the endeavor to promote responsible and secure internet usage among children. By scrutinizing current trends and methodologies, this study strives to offer meaningful guidance to parents and educators navigating the intricate digital terrain and striving to foster a safer online environment for the forthcoming generation.

### 3.2. Review Protocol

Our systematic literature review encompassed articles, chapters, and reports published in various sources, including journals, books, conference proceedings, and webpages, without imposing a specific time frame. The objective was to systematically gather pertinent studies, enabling a comprehensive classification and analysis of affective recognition and expression channels, methods, models, and instruments within the education domain—areas that prior research may not have fully explored. To achieve this, we conducted searches across various databases, such as Google Scholar, the Web of Science, IEEE Xplore, Scopus, ACM Digital Library, Elsevier ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, MDPI, SAGE Journals, SpringerLink, and Taylor & Francis Online with the following query: (“digital parenting” OR “Internet parenting” OR “parenting on the Internet”) AND (child OR childhood OR kids) AND (Internet OR web OR cyber). It is important to highlight that for inclusion in this study, articles needed to meet all specified inclusion criteria and avoid any of the exclusion criteria. An article was considered suitable for inclusion if it constituted a complete full-text paper written in English and aligned with the thematic focus of our research. Conversely, articles that were incomplete, inaccessible, or not in English were excluded from consideration.

Data collection from reports was carried out independently. This involved a systematic approach to extracting data from each of the selected reports, ensuring accuracy and adherence to the review protocol. Given the individualized nature of the data’s collection, there was a focused effort on maintaining consistency and objectivity throughout the process. No automation tools were used in the data collection process, and all data were verified directly from the original reports. This approach of data collection through a single researcher was deemed suitable for the scope of this review, considering the manageable number of final studies included and the detailed nature of the data required.

In conducting this systematic literature review, a singular approach was adopted for the selection and allocation of studies in relation to the research questions posed. Unlike conventional methods where identified studies are coded before being aligned with research questions, this review directly allocated identified studies to corresponding research questions. Given the unique nature of this approach and the fact that the selection of studies was conducted solely by one researcher, it was imperative that we establish the reliability of inclusion decisions. To this end, a test–retest procedure was implemented as a means of validation [34].

The protocol for selecting studies was executed on three separate occasions: initially, in January 2023, which resulted in the identification of 43 studies; a subsequent round in April 2023, which identified an additional 48 studies; and a final iteration in January 2024, culminating in a consolidated set of 49 studies. The consistency in the identification of studies across these rounds, particularly the inclusion of all studies identified in the initial rounds within the final set, underscores a high level of consistency in the inclusion/exclusion decisions made by the single researcher involved.

Among the total of 49 studies identified, 27 furnished answers to the initial suite of five posed research questions. To enrich the scope of our review and deepen our understanding, an additional thematic research question was introduced: “How do evolving parental mediation strategies, influenced by digital advancements, cultural nuances, and psychological impacts, shape effective digital parenting across different developmental stages and contexts?”. Insights from 22 studies that did not directly answer the initial research questions were drawn upon, providing valuable context and perspective. The inclusion of this thematic question allowed the analysis to encompass areas such as cultural variations, long-term impacts on child

development, and the psychological implications of parental mediation strategies, thereby offering a comprehensive overview of the digital parenting landscape.

### 3.3. Study Selection Process

By formulating the search query and executing it across 11 distinct databases, a comprehensive total of 4007 results were generated. In the subsequent phase of result refinement, 3244 entries were excluded through the examination of article titles. This process led to the retention of 763 potential results. Further refinement proceeded with a preliminary review of abstracts, resulting in the exclusion of 532 records and the retention of 231 viable results. Subsequently, a more detailed review of the main bodies' contents resulted in the elimination of 97 entries, culminating in a remaining count of 134 outcomes. The fourth phase of refinement involved a thorough examination of the main bodies, leading to the exclusion of 45 articles that were not sufficiently relevant to our research topic. Ultimately, a final round of 40 eliminations occurred because these articles did not provide answers to the research questions. The review protocol is depicted in Figure 1 while the initial and final distribution of articles across databases is presented in Table 1.

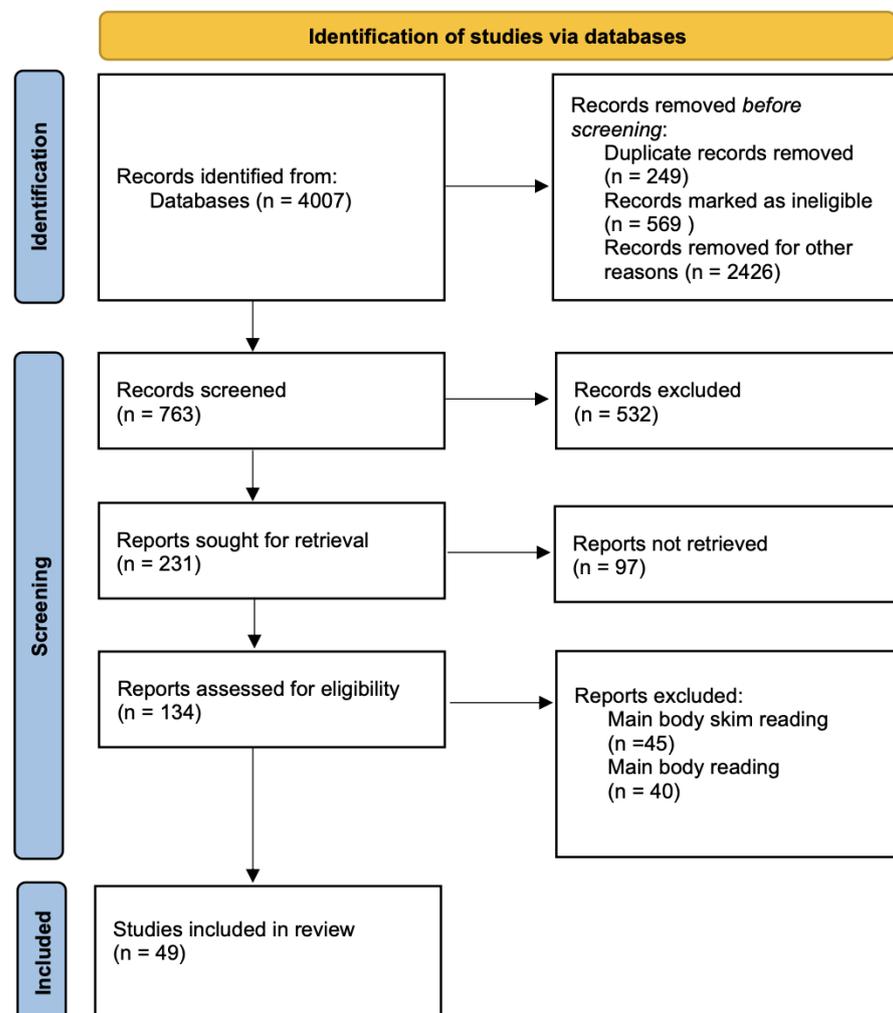


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

**Table 1.** The number of research papers initially discovered in each database and the final number that underwent analysis.

Database	Initial Set of Papers	Final Set of Papers
Google Scholar	2930	27
Elsevier ScienceDirect	443	7
SpringerLink	274	5
Web of Science	137	4
SAGE Journals	47	2
Taylor & Francis Online	46	1
Scopus	43	1
Emerald Insight	39	1
IEEE Xplore	20	1
ACM Digital Library	16	0
MDPI	12	0

### 3.4. Bibliometrics of Selected Studies

Out of the total 49 papers evaluated for review, 78% (38 papers) were published in academic journals, 14% (7 papers) appeared as reports, while the remaining 8% (4 papers) were chapters in edited volumes. Notably, conference proceedings did not serve as a publication venue for any of the works. The highest concentration of publications in a single source did not exceed two papers. Regarding journals, notable mentions include “Computers in Human Behavior”, “Contemporary Family Therapy”, “Frontiers in Psychology”, “Heliyon”, and “Pediatrics”. The majority of reports originated predominantly from the Pew Research Center and The London School of Economics and Political Science. This distribution is clearly delineated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of studies by type of publication.

Source	Type of Publication	References
Journal of Children and Media	Journal Article	[40]
Computers in Human Behavior	Journal Article	[41,42]
Psychological Bulletin	Journal Article	[43]
The International Encyclopedia of Communication	Book Chapter	[44]
Communication Theory	Journal Article	[45]
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media	Journal Article	[46]
Contemporary Family Therapy	Journal Article	[47,48]
Media Psychology	Journal Article	[49]
International Journal of Drug Policy	Journal Article	[50]
Journal of Adolescence	Journal Article	[51]
Journal of Family Psychology	Journal Article	[52]
Social Media: Opportunities & Challenges	Book Chapter	[53]
Digital Generations: Children, Young People, and New Media	Book Chapter	[54]
Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology	Journal Article	[55]
Education and Information Technologies	Journal Article	[56]
The London School of Economics and Political Science	Report	[57,58]
Frontiers in Psychology	Journal Article	[59,60]
British Journal of Educational Technology	Journal Article	[61]
Parenting: Studies by an Ecocultural and Transactional Perspective	Book Chapter	[62]
Pediatrics	Journal Article	[63,64]
National Center for Missing and Exploited Children	Report	[65]
Psychology Research and Behavior Management	Journal Article	[66]

Table 2. Cont.

Source	Type of Publication	References
Information, Communication & Society	Journal Article	[67]
Chinese Research Perspectives Online	Journal Article	[68]
International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning	Journal Article	[69]
Heliyon	Journal Article	[70,71]
Science and Humanities Journal	Journal Article	[72]
Educational Psychologist	Journal Article	[73]
Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child and Edith Cowan University	Report	[74]
Journal of Adolescent Health	Journal Article	[75]
Children & Society	Journal Article	[76]
Communication Research	Journal Article	[77]
Psychiatric Quarterly	Journal Article	[78]
Journal of Computer and Education Research	Journal Article	[79]
Pew Research Center	Report	[80,81]
British Educational Research Journal	Journal Article	[82]
Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology	Journal Article	[83]
Center on Media and Human Development, School of Communication, Northwestern University	Report	[84]
Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace	Journal Article	[85]
Learning Media and Technology	Journal Article	[86]
Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking	Journal Article	[87]
Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review	Journal Article	[88]

The compilation of the reviewed research papers consists of 17 quantitative studies (representing 35% of the total), 21 qualitative studies (constituting 43% of the total), and 11 mixed-method studies (comprising 22% of the total). This is illustrated in Figure 2.

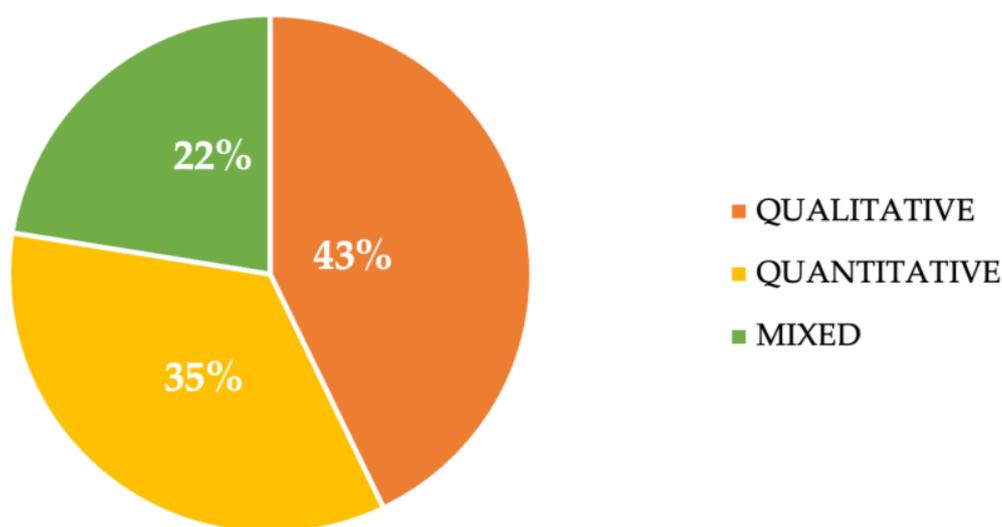


Figure 2. Distribution of studies by category.

The distribution of research papers based on their publication year is presented in Figure 3. The graph indicates a notable concentration of selected studies in 2021, followed

by 2022 and 2023. It is clear that a substantial portion of the chosen studies has been published in the last decade, with a few extending beyond this timeframe.

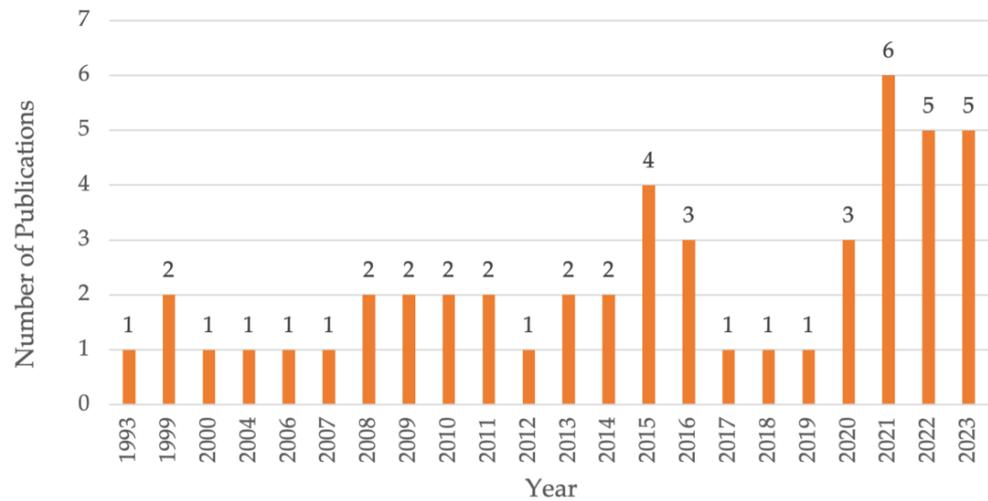


Figure 3. Distribution of studies by year of publication.

In Table 3, we offer a structured summary of the quantitative research that was used in our work. The table is organized to provide the key details from each study, including the reference and publication year for easy identification, alongside the country of origin to indicate the geographical context. Descriptions of the research focus are also provided. Critical to understanding the research’s robustness, the sample size and methodologies employed are also listed, offering insights into the analytical depth and approach of each study. Conclusively, the key findings are also summarized, highlighting the essential contributions these studies make to the field. This summary is intended to serve as a concise yet comprehensive guide, enabling readers to swiftly comprehend the landscape of the quantitative research within our work.

Table 3. Overview of the quantitative studies.

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Sample Size	Methods	Key Findings
[40]	2013	The Netherlands	The article investigates the adoption of new parental mediation types for internet use.	1004 internet users aged between 9 and 16	Survey	Four types of parental mediation and their causes were identified.
[41]	2022	Ireland	The study explores how often parents used mediation strategies during lockdown, their influencing factors, and their impact on children’s digital skills and online time.	461 parent participants and 461 child participants	Survey	Nearly half of parents maintained consistent mediation frequency.
[42]	2013	United States	This study validates a new scale covering diverse digital behaviors and perspectives, addressing previous measurement limitations.	397 students (1st survey), 545 students (2nd survey)	Survey	The study successfully developed a reliable, comprehensive scale that measures a wide range of technology uses and attitudes. The least substance use was among students with anti-drinking parents or no guidance.
[51]	2010	United Kingdom	This study examines how parental guidance affects teenagers’ substance use.	2179 students aged 15 and 16 years	Survey	
[52]	1999	United Kingdom	This study investigates the link between parents’ marital status and children’s behavior, factoring in maternal delinquency history.	840 married, 142 divorced, and 222 never-married families	Survey	Children from non-married or divorced families showed more behavioral issues.
[58]	2009	21 European countries	The study compares children’s online behavior in 21 European countries to guide policy.	Children (up to 18 years old) and their families	Survey	Children’s internet use across Europe varies due to different societal, cultural, and regulatory influences.
[59]	2022	Vietnam	This study investigates the impact of internet use on parent–child relationships and factors influencing this dynamic.	1216 students between the ages of 12 and 18	Survey	Highlights the need for parents’ education on internet risks and child behavior strategies.

Table 3. Cont.

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Sample Size	Methods	Key Findings
[60]	2021	China	The study investigates how parenting style affects cyber-aggression in young adults.	1796 college students	Survey	Cyber-aggression in college students is linked to parental over-protection and rejection.
[61]	2021	Austria	The study explores how parents in Austria mediate their young children's media use, focusing on educational intentions and activities.	150 parents	Survey	Parents use digital media to occupy children for household or work tasks.
[64]	2015	United States	Research shows nearly all young, low-income, urban children use mobile media devices by age 4, indicating a need for updated usage guidelines.	350 children aged 6 months to 4 years	Survey	Findings highlight mobile media's early adoption, independent use, and multitasking, urging updates to guidelines for young children's mobile media use. Children are distressed by online pornography, sexual solicitations, and harassment, often without guidance on reporting incidents.
[65]	2000	United States of America	This research explores the prevalence and impact of offensive online experiences among teenagers.	1501 children aged 10 to 17	Survey	Restrictive mediation lowered risky online contacts by raising awareness.
[67]	2023	Czech Republic	This study explores the impact of parental mediation on adolescents' risky online interactions, focusing on risk perception.	1031 adolescents aged 11 to 17	Survey	Findings show active/restrictive mediation reduces, while co-viewing increases children's aggressive tendencies.
[77]	1999	United States	Research explores parental mediation of violent TV's impact on child aggression, examining intervening perceptions and attention.	394 parents and children in the 2nd through 6th grades	Survey	Older media platforms remain integral in family lives, and parents, not just children, influence media usage dynamics.
[84]	2014	United States	This study examines the role of both new digital technologies and older media in modern parenting practices and family interactions.	2326 parents of children aged 8 years/younger	Survey	Parental mediation reduces the impact of cyber victimization on adolescent depression and anxiety, with cultural differences in the roles of teachers and friends.
[85]	2015	China, United States	This research investigates the buffering effects of parents, teachers, and friends against cyber victimization-related psychosocial difficulties among Chinese and American adolescents.	483 Chinese and 467 American children aged 13 to 15	Survey	Parents employ a mix of traditional and new strategies to mediate young children's internet use, influenced by the child's online behavior and parental beliefs.
[86]	2014	The Netherlands	This study uncovers methods for guiding 2- to 12-year-olds' internet activities, highlighting a blend of mediation strategies.	1097 parents	Survey	Adolescents active on social networks and chat rooms face higher cyberbullying risks, with some parental mediation methods showing protective effects.
[87]	2009	United States	The study examines cyberbullying's link with online activities and parental mediation's impact on reducing risks.	935 teens aged 12 to 17	Survey	

The table presents a summary of various studies spanning from 1999 to 2023, with a significant focus on parental mediation in the digital environment. The research was conducted in diverse locations, with multiple studies from the United States, and others covering European countries, as well as individual studies from Vietnam, China, Ireland, and Austria. Sample sizes varied widely, from as few as 150 parents in Austria to as many as 2179 students in the United Kingdom, indicating a broad range of study scales. The primary instrument for data collection across these studies was surveys, highlighting their preference for investigating the perceptions and behaviors regarding internet use and parental mediation. Research topics ranged from examining parental mediation types, to the impact of internet use on parent-child relationships, to the effects of parental guidance on child behavior online and offline, showcasing a comprehensive exploration of the interplay between digital media, parenting, and child outcomes.

Table 4 provides a detailed overview of the qualitative studies pertinent to our review. Notably, it outlines the research questions that guided each study. Information on the databases accessed for each study is also included. The number of articles reviewed is listed to give an indication of the scale of each study's literature analysis, providing insight into the comprehensive nature of the research undertaken. Key findings are summarized to distill the critical insights and conclusions drawn from these qualitative inquiries.

Table 4. Overview of the qualitative studies.

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Research Questions	Key Findings
[43]	1993	United States	The study introduces a model to reconcile differences in socialization research.	Undefined	Parenting style significantly impacts child development by moderating the effects of specific parenting practices.
[44]	2008	United States	In this research, the methods of parental mediation are explained.	Undefined	Most scholars believe that parental mediation is comprised of three dimensions.
[45]	2011	United States	The study critiques the traditional theory of parental mediation, suggesting its expansion to include emotional and interactive aspects.	How often do parents engage with their children in digital activities, and what influences these interactions and media choices in families?	The need for research on participatory learning as a new strategy of parental mediation in the digital age is identified.
[47]	2017	14 European Countries	This study analyzes European reports on the parental mediation of children's digital device use, revealing common strategies and influencing factors.	What are the most common parental mediation styles for young children's digital use, and what influences these styles?	Authoritative parenting dominates in digital mediation, focusing on rules about technology use, content, and time.
[48]	2020	United States	This study analyzes 28 articles to explore how families manage adolescents' internet use.	What factors influence the effectiveness of parental strategies in regulating adolescents' internet use?	Key insights include the effectiveness of parents with positive internet attitudes, the significance of age and gender in monitoring, and the superiority of authoritative parenting in internet mediation.
[50]	2004	United States	The study criticizes the oversimplified view of the family in substance use research, advocating for updated, complex approaches.	How do alcohol and drug researchers define 'family' and what criteria are used to determine these definitions?	Family-based solutions are recommended to prevent addiction, highlighting the need for future research in this area.
[53]	2022	India	This study reviews the effects of social media on children and teenagers, focusing on usage patterns, popular platforms, and its impacts.	What are the main reasons children and teenagers use social media, its impacts, and recommendations for their guardians?	Social networking can lead to information overload and online harassment, urging recommendations for parental and educational guidance.
[54]	2006	United States	The research delves into the dynamic of families managing internet risks and opportunities.	How do children's internet use and parental regulation align with societal norms and each other, and what online opportunities, risks, and policy needs arise from their experiences?	Acknowledging the complexity of family interpretations of everyday online activities.
[55]	2016	United States	This study explores the tension between parents' concern for online safety and teens' desire for autonomy in virtual spaces.	How do teens' access to technology, online behaviors, attitudes towards risks and privacy, and parental mediation strategies shape their digital experiences and boundary-setting in virtual spaces?	Challenges including teens' increased autonomy are revealed, shifts in power dynamics, and blurred boundaries in virtual interactions.
[57]	2012	United Kingdom	The study examines how parental active mediation can enhance children's internet safety by reducing risks without limiting opportunities.	How can parents' active involvement and positive sharing of internet experiences with their children enhance online safety and skills while mitigating online risks and harm?	Active mediation can boost online skills and reduces the harm experienced from online risks.
[62]	2020	Italy	This research explores digital parenting, analyzing the shift from traditional parenting styles to "parental mediation" in the digital age.	How does the concept of "digital parenting" encompass parental mediation practices, and what are the implications of children's digital involvement on parental approaches and education?	Digital parenting is challenging due to fast-evolving technology and its impact on children's development and identity.
[63]	2016	United States	This study evaluates the impact of traditional and digital media on children's and teenagers' health, outlining opportunities, risks, and recommendations for a balanced media use.	How do traditional and digital media differ in their impact, usage patterns, popularity, gamification effects, advertising reach, and risks in early childhood?	Digital and social media offer both benefits, such as early learning and social support, and risks for children and teenagers.
[68]	2022	China	This study investigates the prevalence of internet use among Chinese Adolescents.	Undefined	Internet usage is widespread among students in China and shows a notable correlation with levels of life satisfaction.
[71]	2023	India	A review of internet-based parenting interventions, analyzing methodologies and effectiveness in supporting parents.	How do internet-based parenting interventions impact parenting skills?	Identified themes include technology-assisted programs and improved parenting skills, with positive feedback.
[73]	2022	United States	The study explores changes in parental involvement in K-12 digital learning, addressing challenges and opportunities in supporting children's education.	How does digital K-12 learning affect parental involvement and challenges?	Highlights evolving parental roles in digital learning, emphasizing meaningful opportunities, confidence, and improved communication.

**Table 4.** *Cont.*

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Research Questions	Key Findings
[74]	2023	India, South Korea, Australia	This study investigates digital safety and citizenship, emphasizing multistakeholder collaboration and aligning with recent Asia–Pacific policy reviews to enhance children’s digital literacy and citizenship. The article explores how online communication features influence adolescent presentation and disclosure, examining their psychosocial development’s benefits and risks.	How can institutional and policy engagement in the Asia–Pacific region enhance digital safety, literacy, and citizenship among children?  How do the characteristics of online communication influence adolescents’ self-presentation, and what are the risks and opportunities for their psychosocial development?	The study supports the need for increased institutional and policy engagement across the Asia–Pacific region to build digital safety, literacy, and citizenship among children.  Adolescents’ use of technology can both positively impact friendship quality and lead to cyberbullying and risky stranger interactions.
[75]	2011	The Netherlands	This study examines the dual effects of violent video games on aggression and visuospatial cognition in adolescents.	Can playing violent video games influence aggression and improve visuospatial skills in adolescents?	Playing violent video games is significantly linked to enhanced visuospatial cognition, with a 13% overlap in variance.
[78]	2008	United States	The study analyzes how parents regulate children’s digital media, focusing on demographic influences and parental perceptions.	What influences parental mediation strategies in digital environments?	Key factors affecting parental mediation in digital media use include demographics, technology use, and parental attitudes.
[79]	2021	Turkey	This study investigates the role of parental care in children’s digital technology use, focusing on participant characteristics	What are the characteristics and influences on the parental mediation of the internet use of children and adolescents?	Studies predominantly utilize questionnaires and qualitative methods and identify various parental mediation styles.
[83]	2020	Indonesia	This study introduces a transformation framework to understand how social media impacts adolescents’ peer relationships.	How does social media transform adolescents’ peer experiences, particularly in the context of dyadic friendships?	The framework offers a fresh lens to view the complex nature of adolescent social interactions on social media, integrating interdisciplinary research to guide future studies.
[88]	2018	United States			

This collection of studies, spanning from 1993 to 2023 and across various regions including those of the United States, India, Europe, and the Asia–Pacific, examines the role of parental mediation, the effects of digital and traditional media on youth, internet safety dynamics, and digital parenting’s evolutions. Research questions explore how digital parenting impacts child development, the effects of media on youth health, strategies for improving online safety, and digital media’s role in adolescent social interactions and parental digital learning involvement. The research underlines the crucial influence of parental mediation on children’s digital behavior, the impact of digital media on youth, and the need for modernized parenting approaches in the digital era.

Table 5 offers a concise summary of the mixed-method studies relevant to our review. It categorizes each study by its reference, publication year, and country of origin, giving a foundational context for the research. Additionally, it describes the research focus of each study, outlines the methods employed, the sample size, and encapsulates the key findings. This organization aids in understanding the diversity and depth of the mixed-method research within the field.

**Table 5.** Overview of the mixed studies.

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Sample Size	Methods	Key Findings
[46]	2008	United Kingdom	This article delves into how parents regulate their children’s and teenagers’ internet activities.	1511 children and 906 parents	Survey; Interview	Online restriction reduced risk; other methods like active co-use did not.
[49]	2019	Germany	The study focuses on examining the effects of parental mediation, role-modeling, and attachment security on children.	500 child–parent pairs	Survey; Interview	Highlights the value of empathic communication and positive parent–child relationships.
[56]	2021	Israel	This study explores how different parental mediation strategies for adolescent internet use impact adolescents’ online behavior and perception of online risks.	357 adolescents ages 12 to 18 and 156 young adolescents ages 9 to 11	Survey; Interview	Restrictive mediation heightened risk awareness but reduced safe internet use, while active mediation increased use and autonomy without added risks.
[66]	2023	China	The study examines the effects of three parental strategies on teen cyberbullying in China.	642 secondary-school students aged 13 to 18	Survey; Content Analysis	Active mediation helps, restrictive mediation does not, and non-intrusive inspection worsens cyberbullying.

Table 5. Cont.

Reference	Year	Country	Research Description	Sample Size	Methods	Key Findings
[69]	2016	Thailand	This study investigates the key digital literacy skills necessary for today's workforce, focusing on university seniors in Thailand.	400 university seniors	Survey; Literature Review	Evaluative skills emerged as the most critical aspect of digital literacy among university seniors.
[70]	2021	Indonesia	This study explores the effect of digital literacy, parental mediation, and self-control on online risk among elementary students.	300 elementary school students	Survey; Literature Review	Digital literacy and parental mediation influence online risk, but parental mediation does not enhance students' self-control.
[72]	2021	Philippines	This case study investigates how parents mediate their children's video game use, examining strategies, perceptions, and outcomes related to game playing.	20 parents of children aged 7 to 14	Survey; Interview	Parental strategies, influenced by their perceptions and time spent with children, led mostly to positive outcomes, while restrictive mediation showed mixed results.
[76]	2023	Hungary	This study analyzes the influence of parental mediation strategies on adolescents' screen time and learning outcomes.	1000 families	Survey; Literature Review	Identifying four main mediation strategies, the research highlights the role of parental mediation as a critical aspect of modern parenting.
[80]	2015	United States	The study assesses social media use trends and explores user engagement and the rise of other platforms.	1597 internet users aged 18 and older	Survey; Interview	Facebook remains the top social media platform, while Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn experience notable growth in their user base.
[81]	2015	United States	This study investigates friendship dynamics among teens, highlighting online friendships' prevalence, gender differences in making online friends, and the primary platforms for these connections. This study challenges the digital native concept. It shows that factors like usage breadth, experience, gender, and education are significant, alongside generation, in defining digital natives.	Teens aged 13 to 17	Survey; Interview	A majority of teens have made friends online; social media and online gaming are the top venues for meeting friends; however, most teens still interact with friends in person.
[82]	2010	United Kingdom	This study challenges the digital native concept. It shows that factors like usage breadth, experience, gender, and education are significant, alongside generation, in defining digital natives.	2350 adults	Survey; Literature Review	The research reveals adults can acquire digital native competencies, particularly in learning, through skills and experience with technology.

#### 4. Review Results

The sections below outline the findings of our systematic literature review and provide the answers to our research questions. By focusing on our research inquiries, we aim to paint a clear picture of how parents are currently approaching digital parenting.

##### 4.1. (RQ1) What Are the Predominant Trends Characterizing Parental Mediation Concerning Children's Internet Use in the Contemporary Milieu?

The current trends in parental mediation regarding children's internet use reveal a shift towards more active involvement and guidance. Parents are increasingly adopting strategies to safeguard their children from potential online risks while allowing them to explore the digital world. That does not come as a surprise considering they, as the most influential people in the development and socialization of their children, carry the primary responsibility for guiding their children's media behavior [40]. According to the findings of a recent study conducted by Sciacca et al. [41], nearly half of the parents surveyed (46%) implemented parental mediation with consistent frequency. Parenting style and parental mediation are distinct concepts that influence how parents interact with their children regarding media use. While parenting style encompasses the overall emotional tone between parents and children [43], parental mediation refers to specific strategies parents use to regulate their children's media experiences [44]. Three commonly reported parental mediation strategies are active, restrictive, and co-use mediation [45]. Active mediation involves positive interactions between parents and children, such as discussing media content and guiding them toward appropriate media use. Restrictive mediation entails setting rules to limit media time and content access. Co-use occurs when parents engage in media activities together with their children [46]. Brito et al. [47] examined parental mediation in 14 countries and found that restrictive mediation was the most commonly used

strategy by parents. They monitored both television and mobile device usage, occasionally requesting that their children switch channels if inappropriate content was detected or uninstalling unsuitable apps. However, the findings of a study completed by Hefner et al. [49] contradicted these results. This research revealed that the more parents practiced restrictive mediation, the more adolescents tended to exhibit problematic mobile phone usage. The study also highlighted the influence of role-modeling, as children followed the level of parental involvement with mobile phones. While some research suggests that restrictive mediation is the most used strategy, other studies have indicated the potential drawbacks of excessively restrictive mediation, which may lead to problematic mobile phone usage among adolescents. Therefore, striking a balance between active guidance and reasonable restrictions remains crucial in guiding children's internet usage effectively. We can conclude that the most commonly used parental mediation technique is restrictive mediation, where parents set rules and restrictions on media usage. However, there is also a growing recognition of the importance of active mediation, involving positive interactions and discussions about media content to guide children towards appropriate internet use. Overall, the evolving landscape of parental mediation reflects a growing awareness of the importance of parental involvement in shaping responsible and safe digital citizens among the next generation. The answers to the first research question are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Trends and challenges in parental mediation strategies.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
A shift towards more active involvement of parents in children's internet use.	Striking a balance between active guidance and reasonable restrictions.	[40,41]
Parental mediation strategies vary significantly, indicating a nuanced approach to children's media interaction.	Adapting parental mediation strategies to match the dynamic digital landscape and children's evolving online activities.	[43,44]
A growing recognition of the importance of active mediation in guiding appropriate internet use.	Developing effective strategies for active mediation without fostering dependency or the loss of autonomy.	[45,46]
Restrictive mediation is most common but shows potential drawbacks in certain contexts.	Ensuring restrictive mediation does not encourage problematic behaviors.	[47,49]

#### 4.2. (RQ2) Which Genres of Internet Content Do Parents Proactively Prohibit Their Children from Accessing?

The family plays a crucial part in shaping the social development of their children [50]. Current studies have demonstrated that the family acts as a safeguard against adolescents engaging in risky and harmful behaviors, such as tobacco, illicit substance, and alcohol use, as well as unsafe sexual practices [51,52]. A growing number of parents are now taking their kids off social media, amid increasing concerns about safety and privacy. The parents also choose to ban some apps, shows, and games [53]. This trend of parents taking their kids off social media and implementing bans on certain apps, shows, and games can be attributed to escalating worries about their children's safety and privacy in the digital landscape. With the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread use of online platforms, parents are becoming more cautious about the potential risks their children might encounter. Livingstone and Bober [54] found that restrictive forms of parental guidance are slightly more prevalent than evaluative or conversational forms: 42% of children aged 9–17 living with their parents indicated having specific rules about the duration of their online activities, and 35% had rules about the timing of their online sessions. Correspondingly, 43% of parents acknowledge setting limits on their child's internet use. Interestingly, some online activities were seen as helpful or safe, so they had fewer rules (like games, email, and instant messaging). But for activities that parents worried about, like shopping, privacy, chat, or certain interactive platforms, there were more rules set in place. In a study carried out by Erickson et al. [55], a series of interviews were conducted with parents and their children. In one case, a parent utilized parental controls on a well-known movie website to ensure that only age-appropriate movies were accessible. In another instance, a parent was actively involved in monitoring their child's text messages and social media interactions. Various rules established by parents included requirements for their children to be friends with one or both parents on social media platforms, share passwords for

all online accounts, and maintain open access to text messages. In conclusion, parents take proactive measures to ensure their children's digital safety by forbidding them from viewing specific types of internet content. This includes restricting their access to social media platforms, apps, shows, and games due to increasing concerns about safety and privacy. This trend reflects parents' growing awareness of potential online risks and their commitment to safeguarding their children's online experiences. The summary of answers to the second research question is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Commonly prohibited content genres and their associated challenges.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
Parents increasingly restrict children's access to social media, certain apps, shows, and games due to safety and privacy concerns.	Balancing restriction with allowing beneficial online experiences.	[5,50–52]
Restrictive parental guidance is slightly more prevalent, indicating a cautious approach towards content like shopping, chat, or privacy-concerned activities.	Implementing rules that effectively safeguard without overly limiting exposure to beneficial digital interactions.	[54]
Parents utilize tools like parental controls and actively monitor online interactions, reflecting a proactive stance on digital safety.	Ensuring parental controls and monitoring respects children's privacy and autonomy while effectively safeguarding them.	[55]

#### 4.3. (RQ3) What Rules and Restrictions Do Parents Establish for Governing Their Children's Internet Utilization?

Parents establish a variety of rules and prohibitions for their children when using the internet. These measures aim to ensure a safe and responsible online experience for their children. Common rules include setting limits on the duration and timing of internet usage, specifying which websites and platforms are allowed, and monitoring the content their children access [56]. Duerager and Livingstone [57] revealed that 89% of parents impose rules about whether their child can give out personal information online; 82% talk to their children about what they do on the internet; and 59% stay nearby when their child is online. Nguyen et al. [59] found that among the respondents who enjoyed a strong parent–child relationship, the most prevalent form of parental involvement was centered around overseeing their children's online activities on the internet and social media. Additionally, these parents established guidelines regarding the duration and timing of internet access for their children [59]. Findings of current studies suggest that parents commonly establish rules and limitations to regulate their children's social media engagement and overall time spent on the internet [61–63]. These measures reflect parents' concerted efforts to ensure a balanced and responsible online experience for their children. The prevalence of rules regarding personal information sharing, conversations about internet activities, and physical proximity during online sessions underscores the importance parents place on safeguarding their children's digital presence. Moreover, the emphasis on overseeing internet activities and setting guidelines for the duration and timing of internet access further supports the notion that parents are actively managing their children's online presence, underscoring a focus on responsible and controlled internet use. The summary of findings related to the third research question can be found in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Overview of parental internet rules and implementation challenges.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
Common rules include time and content restrictions, underscoring efforts to ensure a safe online experience.	Adapting rules to keep pace with the rapidly changing online landscape and children’s growing digital savvy.	[56]
A high percentage of parents engage in discussions and impose rules about personal information sharing online, highlighting the emphasis on privacy and safe sharing.	Effectively communicating the importance of these rules to children to foster understanding and compliance.	[57,59]
Guidelines around the duration and timing of internet access are prevalent, aiming to balance online engagement with other aspects of life.	Finding the right balance between necessary restrictions and allowing for independence in internet use.	[59,61–63]

#### 4.4. (RQ4) Is There an Escalating Exposure of Children to Inappropriate Internet Content, and How Do Parents Confront This Challenge?

Research indicates that children are indeed susceptible to exposure to inappropriate content on the internet [65,66]. Due to their limited technological literacy and awareness of online dangers, children are at a heightened risk of encountering content that is not suitable for their age or development. This vulnerability is compounded by the extensive availability of digital platforms and the diverse nature of content that is accessible online. Studies have highlighted the presence of problematic content, including cyber-bullying, explicit material, and harmful online behaviors, which can have detrimental effects on children’s mental and emotional well-being. Parents’ efforts to employ various forms of parental mediation, such as active guidance and restrictive practices, underscore their recognition of the potential exposure to inappropriate content. These parental interventions reflect the collective concern to mitigate such risks and safeguard children from encountering harmful material during their online activities [67]. Young people use internet social networks more frequently, which also causes a higher risk of exposure to internet pornography, internet fraud, and internet risk, while others are inclined to file internet complaints against those problems [68]. Research has consistently highlighted the vulnerability of children to encountering inappropriate content on the internet. Their limited technological literacy and lack of awareness about online hazards contribute to their susceptibility to stumbling upon content that is unsuitable for their age and developmental stage. The vast availability of digital platforms further compounds this risk, making it crucial to address the issue effectively. The studies underscore the alarming prevalence of problematic content, ranging from cyber-bullying to explicit material, which can profoundly impact children’s emotional and mental well-being. The efforts of parents to employ diverse parental mediation strategies, including active guidance and restrictions, reflect their shared concern about the potential exposure of their children to harmful online material. This collective endeavor aims to mitigate risks and create a protective online environment for children during their internet engagements. Responses to the fourth research question are summarized and presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Children’s exposure to inappropriate content and parental mitigation efforts.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
Children are at a heightened risk of exposure to inappropriate content due to vast digital platform availability and varied online content.	Mitigating risks associated with the vastness of accessible content while fostering safe exploration.	[65,66]
Parents employ diverse mediation strategies, including active guidance and restrictions, to protect children from harmful content.	Balancing guidance and restrictions to protect without overly sheltering or limiting healthy digital literacy and resilience.	[67]
Increased internet social network use correlates with higher risks, highlighting the need for targeted strategies against explicit material, fraud, and cyberbullying.	Developing targeted mediation strategies that address specific risks without generalizing or over restricting internet use.	[68]

#### 4.5. (RQ5) To What Degree Does Parents' Proficiency in Computer Literacy Impact the Online Safety of Their Children?

In today's world, being digitally literate is crucial for making the most out of technology. It is like a communication toolbox that helps us access, organize, coordinate, evaluate, and share information in our society [69]. The fundamental idea is that children often learn about technology by watching their parents. A positive parenting approach, along with its core principles, serves as a type of parental guidance that helps shield children from negative influences while they navigate online tasks [70]. The results of a study conducted by Hingpit and Salomon [72] showed that parents who were not computer literate were more likely to not know what their children were playing in internet cafes. Predominantly, this group consisted of individuals without college degrees and who were engaged in low-income jobs. Conversely, those participants with a college education and the financial means to own computer units were the ones who engaged in co-playing activities with their children. These findings underscore the significance of enhancing parental computer literacy, as it enables parents to comprehend and engage with their children's digital experiences more effectively. The study findings suggest that parents' computer literacy plays a significant role in influencing their children's internet safety. Parents who possess higher levels of computer literacy are better equipped to monitor and guide their children's online activities. This proficiency enables them to understand the digital landscape and potential risks, allowing them to implement more effective strategies to ensure their children's safety while using the internet. In contrast, parents with limited computer literacy might struggle to navigate online platforms and recognize potential dangers, potentially leaving their children more exposed to online risks. Therefore, improving parents' computer literacy is crucial in promoting a safer online environment for children. Table 10 showcases a compiled summary of the answers addressing the fifth research question.

**Table 10.** Impact of parental computer literacy on online safety measures.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
Parents' digital literacy is crucial for effective guidance and protection in children's online navigation.	Enhancing parental digital literacy to keep pace with children's digital experiences and emerging online risks.	[69,70]
Higher parental computer literacy correlates with better awareness and engagement in children's online activities.	Bridging the digital literacy gap among parents to ensure equitable protection strategies across different demographics.	[72]
A lack of computer literacy in parents leads to a decreased awareness of children's online activities, particularly in lower socioeconomic groups.	Addressing the digital divide that leaves some children at greater risk due to their parents' limited digital literacy.	[72]

## 5. Discussion

The evolution of the internet and digital technologies has positioned parents as crucial stakeholders in guiding their children's online experiences [71,73,74]. The growth of internet usage among children, coupled with the potential risks and challenges posed by online content, necessitates active parental involvement to ensure a safe and responsible digital environment. In addressing these complexities, this review introduced an additional thematic research question, bridging the initial discussion with a deeper exploration of evolving parental mediation strategies. Current trends in parental mediation underscore a notable shift towards more hands-on approaches, highlighting the adoption of diverse strategies to safeguard children from potential online risks while enabling their digital exploration [75]. This evolution signifies the growing recognition of parents' pivotal role in nurturing digitally literate and conscious citizens. The prevalence of restrictive mediation, characterized by curbing content exposure and screen time, continues to resonate. Yet, the rising emphasis on active mediation speaks to the value of open dialogues and positive interactions between parents and children concerning digital interactions [76,77]. Parents proactively enforce restrictions on specific online content, such as social media platforms,

apps, and games. Their heightened awareness of privacy and safety underscores their commitment to creating a secure online environment [47,64,78,79]. This trajectory reflects a dedication to nurturing a responsible digital space. However, the intricacies lie in achieving an equilibrium between surveillance and fostering autonomy, exemplified by the emergence of the 'free-range parenting' approach. This diversity illustrates the array of philosophies parents adopt in navigating their children's digital lives [58,80,82]. Furthermore, the influence of parents' computer literacy on their children's online safety is unmistakable, underscoring the urgency of enhancing parents' digital proficiency to effectively guide and supervise their children's digital activities [66,83,84]. The aforementioned thematic research question extended the conversation by examining how these strategies are further influenced by digital advancements, cultural nuances, and psychological impacts across different developmental stages and contexts.

### *5.1. Exploring Cultural Variations in Parental Mediation*

The exploration of parental mediation practices in different cultural contexts adds a valuable layer of understanding to our findings. While our review encompassed studies from various regions, the intricacies of cultural norms, values, and communication patterns could significantly influence how parents approach digital parenting. Research could delve deeper into cross-cultural comparisons of parental mediation strategies and their outcomes. A study by Livingstone and Haddon [58] highlighted the importance of cultural variations in parental mediation. They found that parental concerns about internet risks and parents' mediation strategies differed between countries, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches. Similarly, a study by Wright [85] focused on exploring the role of parental mediation in adolescents' digital technology usage and its impact on reducing the risk of cyber victimization. The findings highlighted significant differences in parental mediation between Chinese and American adolescents. Chinese adolescents reported experiencing higher levels of parental mediation compared to their American counterparts. Moreover, Chinese adolescents reported more teacher mediation, whereas American adolescents experienced more friend mediation. The study underscores the importance of considering cultural values when examining the roles of parents, teachers, and friends in adolescents' lives, providing valuable insights for future research and intervention strategies.

### *5.2. Investigating Long-Term Effects of Parental Mediation on Child Development*

While this review touched on the potential impacts of parental mediation on children's online experiences, a deeper exploration of the long-term effects on child development would provide valuable insights. Future research could examine how different mediation strategies, such as active guidance and restrictive practices, contribute to children's digital literacy, cognitive skills, and socioemotional well-being as they grow. Research by Nikken and Jansz [86] delved into the positive effects of parental active mediation on adolescents' online behaviors, including safer online practices and a reduced likelihood of problematic internet use. A study by Mesch [87] explored the effects of parental restrictive mediation on adolescents' online behaviors and found that restrictive practices were associated with lower levels of online risk-taking. Investigating the lasting implications of parental mediation on children's overall development could provide evidence-based recommendations for effective digital parenting approaches.

### *5.3. Exploring the Role of Peer Influence in Digital Parenting*

Adolescents' digital interactions are not solely guided by parental mediation; they are also influenced by their peers. Peers play a significant role in shaping adolescents' online behaviors and attitudes, leading to potential clashes with parental guidance [85]. The desire for peer approval and the need to conform to social norms can drive adolescents to engage in risky online behaviors, potentially counteracting parental efforts. Lenhart [81] explored how teenagers' experiences on social media intersected with their relationships with parents

and peers. The findings revealed that teenagers often managed their online identities based on the perceived expectations of both parents and peers. They navigated a complex balance between parental oversight and the desire for peer acceptance, resulting in multifaceted digital behaviors. The interplay between parental mediation and peer influence necessitates a holistic approach to digital parenting. Acknowledging the potency of peer dynamics in shaping adolescents' online actions highlights the importance of fostering open dialogues that encompass both parental guidance and discussions about peer interactions. By incorporating insights from studies like these, digital parenting strategies can be designed to address the influence of peers effectively, encouraging responsible and secure online behaviors while also respecting adolescents' need for social connections and approval.

#### *5.4. Examining Parental Mediation across Age Groups*

Exploring the evolution of parental mediation practices across different age groups can shed light on how digital parenting strategies adapt to children's changing needs and capacities. Younger children, often being less experienced with digital environments, might benefit from more intensive parental involvement to ensure a secure online experience [58]. As they mature, the focus could shift towards fostering responsible decision-making and critical thinking skills [44]. A study by Rideout et al. [84] investigated parental mediation behaviors across various age groups, uncovering age-specific patterns. The research indicated that parents of younger children (ages 6–11) primarily relied on active mediation, involving joint media engagement and discussions about content. This approach aimed to guide their children's initial encounters with digital media. In contrast, parents of adolescents (ages 12–17) increasingly emphasized co-use mediation and discussions about online privacy, highlighting the importance of promoting autonomy while addressing privacy concerns. Furthermore, the study by Livingstone and Helsper [46] delved into the nuanced shifts in parental mediation strategies as children transition into adolescence. The findings show that younger children benefit from close supervision and content filtering, while adolescents prefer open communication with parents about online activities. This transition reflects a developmental shift from direct oversight to collaborative decision-making, aligning with the progression toward independence. Tailoring digital parenting strategies to match children's cognitive, emotional, and social development stages ensures the appropriate support and guidance for a responsible digital journey and online safety.

#### *5.5. Addressing the Psychological Impact of Parental Mediation*

A critical avenue for future research involves delving into the psychological consequences of different parental mediation strategies on children's well-being and their perceptions of autonomy. Nesi et al. [88] conducted a study that explored how adolescents interpreted various forms of parental mediation. The findings revealed a nuanced interplay between mediation strategies and emotional well-being. While some forms of mediation, such as open communication and active guidance, were linked to improved emotional outcomes, excessive monitoring and strict restrictions were associated with feelings of invasions of privacy and diminished autonomy [88]. A pertinent study by Rosen et al. [42] delved into the connection between clinical symptoms of psychiatric disorders and technology use, attitudes, and anxiety. This highlights the significance of striking a balance between protective measures and fostering children's sense of self-determination.

#### *5.6. Collaborative Approaches to Digital Parenting*

To comprehensively address the challenges of digital parenting, the involvement of schools, community organizations, and technology companies is paramount. Collaborative initiatives can pool resources, knowledge, and expertise to offer parents a more comprehensive set of tools and strategies. A study by Dingus Keuhlen et al. [48] emphasizes the importance of involving different groups, like schools, community organizations, and tech companies, to create a supportive environment for parents dealing with digital challenges. Schools play a key role by including lessons on digital skills in their teaching, helping

children navigate the online world responsibly. Community groups can organize events and provide advice to parents, keeping them informed about the changing digital world and effective ways to guide their children. Tech companies can contribute by creating tools that make online experiences safer for children and give parents more control over what their kids see and how much time they spend online. The research findings also stress the significance of parents having good skills, talking openly with their children, and understanding differences in how boys and girls use the internet. Therapeutic strategies involve creating family values with input from children, improving parents' internet-related skills, and supporting parents in guiding their children to set healthy online boundaries that match their age and gender. It is crucial for everyone involved to work together positively to teach children about both the risks and the benefits of the internet.

### 5.7. Discussion Summary

As previously mentioned, the addition of a thematic research question served to broaden the review's coverage and deepen our analysis, drawing on insights from 22 studies that offered critical perspectives on topics not directly examined by the initial set of research questions. This has allowed our research to delve into cultural differences, examine long-term effects on children's development, and consider the psychological aspects of parental mediation strategies, providing a more holistic view of the digital parenting field. As stated in the discussion above, the digital age has reshaped parental roles, necessitating active involvement to safeguard children's online experiences and promote responsible digital exploration [71,73,74]. A noticeable shift towards more engaged parental mediation strategies reflects a comprehensive approach to mitigating online risks, emphasizing the balance between restrictive measures and fostering open communication [75–77]. This evolution underlines the significance of privacy and safety awareness, with parents increasingly adopting tailored restrictions on specific online platforms to create a secure digital environment for their children [47,64,78,79]. Moreover, the nuanced balance between supervision and autonomy, with some adopting 'free-range parenting' strategies, highlights the diverse philosophies in navigating digital parenting challenges [58,80,82]. Parental digital literacy emerges as a pivotal factor influencing the effectiveness of mediation, indicating a pressing need for enhancing digital skills among parents to better guide their children's online activities [60,83,84]. Additionally, cultural differences significantly impact parental mediation approaches, with variances in strategies being observed across different regions, underscoring the importance of culturally sensitive digital parenting practices [85]. Long-term impacts of parental mediation on child development suggest that active guidance fosters safer online practices and a lower likelihood of problematic internet use, while restrictive mediation reduces online risk-taking behaviors [86,87]. Peer influence also plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' online behaviors, pointing to the necessity of incorporating peer dynamics into digital parenting strategies [81]. The effectiveness of parental mediation evolves with the child's age, suggesting a shift from direct oversight to collaborative decision-making as children grow, thereby aligning digital parenting strategies with children's developmental stages [88]. The psychological impact of mediation strategies highlights the delicate balance between protection and autonomy, influencing children's emotional well-being [42]. Finally, a collaborative approach involving schools, community organizations, and technology companies is essential for a holistic digital parenting strategy, offering a comprehensive support system to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape [48]. These findings are depicted throughout the discussion, culminating in a comprehensive portrayal in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Evolving dynamics of parental mediation: strategies, cultural variations, and digital literacy's role in enhancing children's online safety.

Findings	Key Challenges	References
The psychological impact of mediation strategies influences children's emotional well-being and autonomy.	Striking a balance between protection and fostering children's sense of self-determination and emotional well-being.	[42]
Parents are adopting tailored restrictions to create a secure digital environment.	Enhancing parents' awareness of privacy and safety to effectively enforce restrictions on specific online content.	[47,64,78,79]
Collaborative approaches involving various stakeholders are essential for holistic digital parenting.	Developing comprehensive support systems that involve schools, community organizations, and technology companies in parenting.	[48]
A nuanced balance between supervision and autonomy is crucial, with some adopting 'free-range parenting'.	Navigating the diverse philosophies in digital parenting to achieve an equilibrium between surveillance and fostering autonomy.	[58,80,82]
Parental digital literacy is pivotal in guiding children's online activities.	The pressing need for enhancing digital skills among parents to better guide and supervise children's digital activities.	[60,83,84]
Active parental involvement is necessary for children's safe and responsible digital exploration.	Encouraging more hands-on approaches among parents for online safety while fostering digital literacy and exploration.	[71,73,74]
The adoption of diverse strategies highlights the balance between restrictive measures and open communication.	Achieving a balance between protective measures and promoting open dialogue about digital interactions.	[75–77]
Peer influences shapes adolescents' online behaviors, necessitating the inclusion of peer dynamics.	Incorporating peer dynamics into digital parenting strategies to encourage responsible online behaviors.	[81]
Cultural differences significantly impact parental mediation approaches.	Addressing the need for culturally sensitive digital parenting practices that reflect varied norms and values.	[85]
Active guidance fosters safer online practices and reduces the likelihood of problematic internet use.	Investigating the long-term impacts of different mediation strategies on child development for evidence-based digital parenting.	[86,87]
The effectiveness of parental mediation evolves with the child's age.	Tailoring digital parenting strategies to match children's developmental stages for appropriate support and guidance.	[88]

## 6. Implications, Limitations, and Future Work Directions

### 6.1. Implications

The present systematic literature review has unveiled significant insights into the landscape of parental mediation practices regarding children's internet use. The research findings emphasize the evolving role of parents as pivotal stakeholders in shaping their children's online experiences. The growth of internet usage among children has brought the need for active parental involvement to the forefront to ensure a safe and responsible digital environment. This study sheds light on the multifaceted strategies parents employ to strike a balance between safeguarding their children from potential online risks and enabling their exploration of the digital world. The main contribution of this work lies in its comprehensive exploration of the current trends in parental mediation. By synthesizing a multitude of studies, this review has highlighted the prevalence of restrictive mediation strategies, such as curbing content exposure and screen time, alongside the growing importance of active mediation that fosters open dialogues and positive interactions. Furthermore, the impact of parents' computer literacy on children's online safety is emphasized, stressing the significance of enhancing parents' digital proficiency to guide their children effectively in the digital realm.

### 6.2. Limitations

It is also important to acknowledge certain limitations in this study. The review's scope was limited to the available literature in the English language, potentially omitting crucial studies in digital parenting practices. Additionally, the studies included in the review might vary in their methodologies, sample sizes, and geographical locations, which could introduce heterogeneity in the findings. The interpretation of the results should consider these variations, while also considering potential cultural, socio-economic, and contextual influences that might affect parental mediation approaches.

### 6.3. Future Work Directions

This systematic literature review has illuminated the evolving landscape of parental mediation practices in the digital age. Parents are navigating a complex terrain, adapting their strategies to foster responsible digital citizens while safeguarding their children from potential online risks. The findings underscore the importance of active involvement, open dialogues, and striking a balance between protection and autonomy. Future studies should delve into the dynamics of parental mediation among those with limited computer literacy, particularly focusing on conflict resolution strategies in the absence of direct contact. This exploration could reveal critical insights into supporting this demographic more effectively. Additionally, there is a crucial need to examine the evolving responsibilities of internet websites and online activity providers in protecting young users. Understanding the extent to which these entities offer support to parents, through information, meetings, documentation, and courses, could significantly contribute to enhancing parental capabilities in managing the digital environment. The research contributions extend to researchers in the field of digital parenting, educators, policymakers, and parents themselves. The identified open questions and implications pave the way for future research, enhancing our understanding of digital parenting strategies and their impacts on children's well-being and development. While limitations exist, they underscore the need for cautious interpretation while acknowledging the diverse factors that shape parental mediation practices. Finally, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge on digital parenting, fostering a safer and more responsible online environment for the next generation.

## 7. Conclusions

In today's world, where digital technologies are deeply ingrained in our daily lives, the importance of parents in guiding their children's online experiences has become more crucial than ever before. This review of the existing research has unveiled key insights into the current trends and dynamics surrounding how parents mediate their children's internet usage. What emerges is a notable shift towards more active involvement and guidance, as parents adopt strategies that balance setting content restrictions with open conversations, all aimed at fostering responsible and secure digital exploration. A significant finding is that parents' comfort and familiarity with technology significantly impact their children's safety online. Parents who are more adept at using computers are better equipped to monitor and guide their children's digital activities, underlining the importance of boosting parents' digital skills in today's rapidly evolving technological landscape. Moving forward, this study suggests several directions for future research. Exploring how different parental mediation approaches influence children of various ages and cultural backgrounds can provide deeper insights. Understanding the long-term effects of these strategies on children's digital literacy and overall well-being is also essential. Additionally, investigating how parental mediation strategies evolve as children grow older and examining the potential benefits and drawbacks of technology-assisted parental controls are promising areas of inquiry. This review offers valuable guidance for refining digital parenting practices, shaping effective policies, and informing educational initiatives. As parental mediation continues to evolve, it underscores the collective commitment to nurturing responsible digital citizens while creating a secure and enriching online environment for the generations to come.

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