# The Impact of Digital Media on Adolescent Well-Being and Coping Strategies

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**ABSTRACT:** The pervasive use of social media is having a significant impact on the fabric of everyday life. This paper employs a qualitative research approach to analyze a substantial body of literature and data from questionnaire surveys conducted by Beyens and so on. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the impact of social media use on adolescent well-being and coping strategies. The paper explores how the duration of adolescents' participation in social media and the type of content consumed influence their well-being. The causes of social media addiction have also been discussed. Furthermore, the study examines the potential of parental mediation and government policy guidance in reducing the disadvantages of social media on mental health. The analysis interprets that active use of social media is positively correlated with the well-being within the same individual. The user-facing social media enables adolescents with similar temperaments to group together, while content-facing social media helps adolescents to learn and perceive. Parents frequently employ both restrictive and positive interventions to regulate their teenagers' internet usage. The implementation of government legislation that restricts internet access for minors can facilitate the development of time management skills, but may also impede the acquisition of self-directed learning skills in adolescents.

**KEYWORDS**: Adolescents, User-facing social media, Content-facing social media, Well-being, Parental mediation, Government policy guidance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The widespread use of social media platforms is profoundly changing all aspects of daily life. An increasing number of individuals have expressed concern about excessive social media use. Adolescents, as a particularly vulnerable group with immature minds, are especially susceptible to the influences of social media.

This essay employs a qualitative research methodology to analyze a substantial body of literature and questionnaire data from Beyens et al. The objective of my paper is to examine the how social media use acts on adolescent well-being, the coping strategies, and the advice provided.

This paper hypothesizes that the active use of social media by young people will enhance their well-being, and that direct restrictions on adolescents' online time will hinder the development of certain competencies of adolescents.

This study analyzes social media use in terms of the dimensions of spontaneity, duration and content consumed by adolescents. Furthermore, this paper also analyzes why adolescents are addicted to social media in terms of loneliness, gender differences, and family deficiencies.

In addition, this paper will also discuss the measures to deal with internet depression and addiction from two aspects: parents' mediation and government policy guidance. Regarding the mediation of parents, this paper will consider the possibility of active intervention and restrictive intervention. In addition, this paper will focus on the implementation outcomes of these policies, including time limit, content supervision and educational measures.

In the concluding section, the findings of my paper are summarized to provide recommendations for parents, educators, policy makers and social media platforms. These suggestions are aimed at creating a healthy digital environment for teenagers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Teenagers' mental health vulnerable to social media fluctuations**

A series of studies on teenagers show that the longer the passive use of social media, the lower the level of happiness. On the contrary, the time for teenagers to actively use social media is positively related to their happiness. Active use includes activities such as sending messages and publishing content. (Beyers, 2020).

Today's children are usually considered as "digital aborigines" because they have been exposed to digital information and entertainment on the screen for a long time. Stiglic & Viner (2019) pointed out that excessive screen time will lead to higher energy intake and lower diet quality. In addition, there is a positive correlation between excessive screen time and depressive symptoms.

As Kırcaburun et al. (2019) pointed out, cyberbullying (CBP) and problematic social media use (PSMU) are considered risky behaviors. A study by Giordano et al. (2021) showed that the longer teenagers spend online, the more likely they are to become addicted to social media. In addition, research shows that men are more likely to participate in cyber bullying than women. Zhu et al. (2021) found that the victimization rate and implementation rate of cyber bullying were 13.99% to 57.5% and 6.0% to 46.3% respectively.

Teenagers who rely too much on social media at night may experience a series of adverse effects, including decreased sleep quality, inferiority complex, anxiety and depression. Teenagers who rely too much on social media may feel isolated and stressed if they can't be exposed to social media. This may lead to an increase in anxiety and depression (Woods & Scott, 2016).

**Why teenagers are addicted to social media**

Loneliness is an important factor in frequent use of social media. For teenagers, social media is a means to relieve depression. (Qatar et al., 2021).

Su et al. (2020) found that there are gender differences in social media use motivation. Research shows that men mainly use social media for entertainment purposes, while women use it for information and interpersonal communication. When the social needs in real life are not fully met, women are more likely to use social media as a coping mechanism for emptiness, which may increase the possibility of social media addiction.

Teenagers are particularly prone to "fear of missing out", which can be defined as the desire to surf the Internet and the impulse to keep checking social media. Compared with teenagers from two-parent families, teenagers from single-parent families tend to use social media more frequently and are more likely to engage in dangerous online behaviors. The potential causes of this situation include increased pressure, economic problems and incomplete families. Under the background of family relationship disorder, teenagers often seek to communicate with their peers through online channels (Bloemen et al., 2020).

**Coping Strategies**

Every parent has own opinion on children's use of social media. Parents who have a negative attitude towards social media may try to control the time their children use the Internet and electronic devices, which is called restrictive intervention. On the contrary, the process of guiding children to use digital technology correctly is called active mediation. These activities include explaining how to use media devices, discussing the content of new applications or websites and playing video games together (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2021).

On October 25, 2019, the General Administration of Press and Publication of the People's Republic of China (GAPP) issued a notice on the prevention of online game addiction. The notice includes verifying the user's identity, limiting the game time and setting the upper limit of in-game consumption according to the age. The goal of these measures is to reduce the risk of Internet addiction among young users (Xiao, 2020).

**Summary:**

Active use of social media is related to improving happiness, while too much screen time will damage health (Beyems et al., 2020; Stiglic & Viner，2019)。 Teenagers are addicted to social media because they are lonely and afraid of missing the news (Qatar et al., 2021; Su et al., 2020; Blomann et al., 2020). A high degree of social media addiction increases the risk of cyberbullying (Giordano et al., 2021). Addiction to social media can lead to poor sleep quality and mental health problems (Woods & Scott, 2016). Whether parents' intervention is positive or restrictive usually depends on their attitude towards social media (Benedetto and Ingrassia, 2021). China's laws and regulations curb Internet addiction by limiting online time (Xiao, 2020).

The above research lacks the long-term impact of social media use and the effectiveness of intervention measures. This study will

also discuss how passive use of social media affects people's well-being, as well as many factors that affect parents' intervention methods, and the long-term impact of China's guidance policy on teenagers' potential ability.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology to systematically collate and analyze the research phenomena and secondary data through literature analysis and case study. This was achieved by collating and summarizing a large amount of qualitative research literature, thus ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The following steps were used for the tabular categorization and summarization:

1. Identification of research questions and objectives:

The impact of digital media on adolescents' well-being and coping strategies.

2. Literature collection and initial screening.

A search for relevant literature and cases was conducted, with the aim of eliminating literature that was not relevant to the question.

3. Classify and summarize

Read the literature carefully, identify the key themes, and place each piece of literature and cases into the appropriate category. Summarize the key findings, data, conclusions, and recommendations for future research in each category.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The impact of active and passive use on well-being**

A significant positive correlation was observed between the average time spent actively on social media and well-being within the same individual. There was a significant positive correlation between the time spent passively engaging with social media and well-being between people.

The above conclusions are inconsistent with previous research conclusions. In the past, the prevailing trend in research was to actively utilize social media to enhance happiness and passively utilize social media to diminish happiness.

Passive use of social media by adolescents, which is primarily used to receive messages, provides adolescents with the value of being needed in human interaction and increases adolescents' sense of well-being between-person. Young people's active use of social media includes activities such as sharing content on social media. Adolescents actively present themselves and increase their self-identity, which increases well-being within the same person.

**Relationship between the content orientation of social media and the well-being**

In Finland, South Korea and Spain, adolescents who used Facebook more frequently in daily life were more likely to be addicted to alcohol. In the United States and Finland, adolescents who used YouTube more frequently had lower rates of hazardous drinking. The findings suggest that YouTube use is negatively associated with hazardous drinking. This may be due to the fact that these platforms provide educational and recreational opportunities that reduce the risk of hazardous drinking.

The above research results are consistent with previous studies, and educational social media can correctly guide teenagers' behavior. The user-facing social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter facilitate social interactions that assist users in establishing communities of shared interests. Content-oriented social media platforms, such as Twitter and YouTube, provide users with access to content that they can consume and browse. The diverse array of platforms may attract users with varying characteristics, leading to the formation of unique or even polarized user groups within them. Consequently, adolescents with alcohol addiction may be inclined to utilize specific social media platforms due to their distinctive characteristics.

**Restrictive interventions or passive interventions**

A greater proportion of mothers than fathers are subjected to less restrictive interventions. Girls are more likely to be treated by less restrictive interventions than boys. The greater the time spending online, the more likely parents are to take less restrictive interventions. The older the parent, the less likely the parents are to take more restrictive interventions and the more likely the parents are to increase positive interventions. The greater the parental concern about online risk, the more likely they are to implement more restrictive interventions.

The preceding conclusions indicate that the manner in which parents implement positive or restrictive interventions is contingent upon their age and gender, as well as that of their children, and their assessment of network risks. Previous studies have solely

examined the relationship between parents' attitudes towards the network and their decision to take measures.

**Parents' control of electronic devices and related conflict**

The older the parent and child, the less likely the child was to experience conflict with the parent regarding the use of smartphones. Furthermore, the overuse of electronic devices by parents was found to significantly influence the lack of control of children's use of electronic devices. The behaviors and perceptions of parents regarding digital technology use not only directly affected their sense of control, but also indirectly affected family harmony by increasing family conflict.

The findings of the aforementioned research are largely consistent with those of previous studies in this field. The use of electronic devices by parents can lead to family conflicts. However, parents often engage in excessive use of these devices and are therefore unable to set an example for their children.

**A case study of the outcomes resulting from the implementation of a policy.**

One year after the publication of the Notice on the prevention of gaming addiction, the level of Internet literacy among Chinese minors is generally high, with the majority of the secondary indicators scoring above the 2.5 passing mark.

The improvement in time management skills may be related to the policy limiting gaming time, which motivates students to better manage their time.

Information screening and crisis response skills, both of which scored below the passing line, were particularly strong. This may be due to the fact that these competencies require a high level of critical thinking and complex cognitive skills, and the policy, which focuses mainly on the management of playtime, fails to adequately cover these aspects of education.

Policy has had a limited impact on self-directed learning skills and online innovation skills, which scored slightly below the pass mark. This may be attributed to the fact that the development of these competencies necessitates a long-term investment in education and cannot be achieved solely through limiting playtime.

The above research clearly explains the outcomes after the implementation of the policy. The previous research mainly focused on the policy content of guiding teenagers to surf the Internet, which extends the previous research.
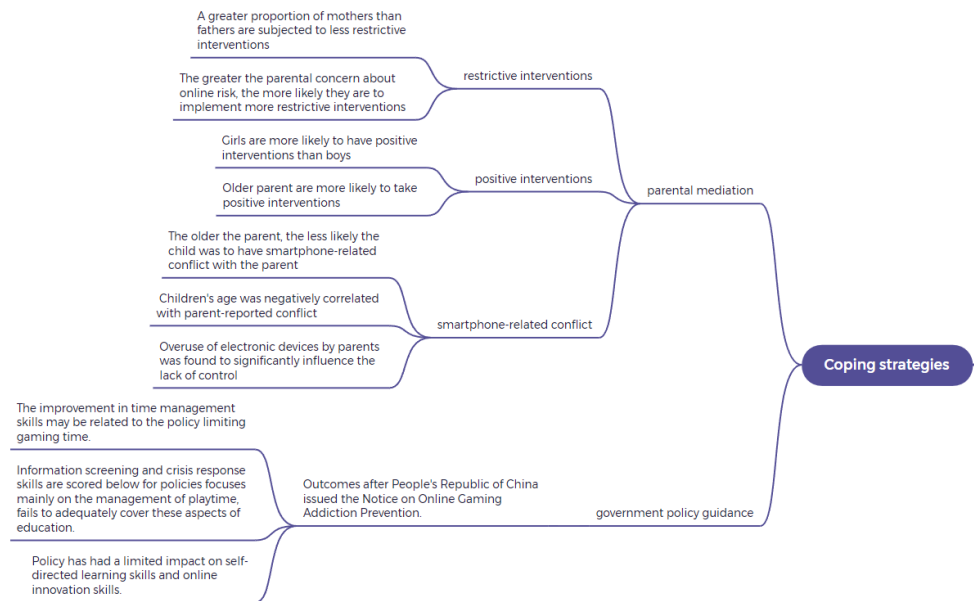
**Summary:**

A synopsis of the above analysis is presented in a diagram below:
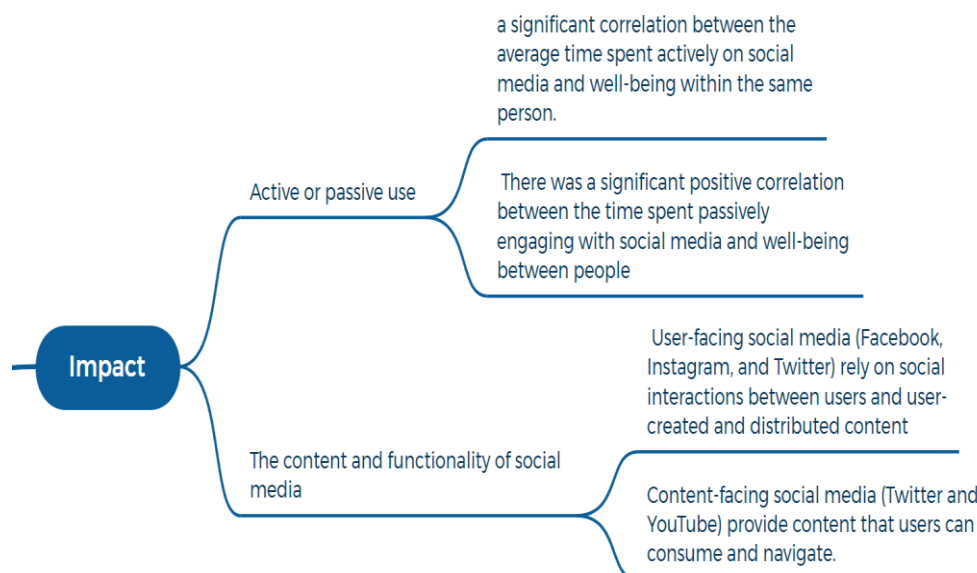


The impact of digital media on adolescent well-being Coping strategies

## 5. POLICY IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSIONS

A significant positive correlation has been identified between the amount of time an individual spends actively using social media and their personal well-being. Conversely, passive use of social media by an individual is positively correlated with well-being between people. Consequently, parents and schools should encourage and guide adolescents to engage in more interactive social media activities. In addition, policymakers may consider developing guidelines or public education to help users identify and avoid the negative effects of excessive passive viewing of content, such as social comparison and anxiety.

The content and types of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter for user interaction and YouTube, Twitter for content consumption) have varying effects on user behavior and well-being. Policymakers can collaborate with platform developers to enhance the design of social media in a manner that fosters positive interactions and healthy use among young people.

Rather than relying solely on restrictive measures, policymakers can provide parents with educational programs that may help them understand the various online risks and how they can be managed. It is possible to develop resources and training programs that will assist parents in adapting interventions to their child's developmental stage and fostering healthier and more constructive online habits.

Many parents are addicted to electronic devices and social media but want their children to quit the internet. Policies can encourage parents to lead by example in the proper use of smartphones.

In the case of China's policy mentioned above, the results observed after implementation suggest that a single restrictive measure may inhibit certain adolescents' capacity development. Consequently, policymakers should consider developing an integrated policy framework that combines education, regulation and community support to manage and guide children's and adolescents' online activities.

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ts=x9_Vhh5yPp&sig=_x29t9oLiBVGCM6Xmf8vwvdAn-A&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Parents%20supervise%20their%20children's%20social%20media%20time&f=false

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**The Impact of Digital Media on Adolescent Well-Being and Coping Strategies**

**Appendix**

**Figure 1: descriptive statistics for well-being and duration of use**

| | M (SD) | Well-being between-person | Well-being within-person |
|---|---|---|---|
| Well-being | 5.61 (0.75) | – | – |
| Duration of overall active social media use | 12.47 (11.49) | .06 | .09** |
| Duration of overall passive social media use | 19.71 (8.95) | .17 | .07* |
| Duration of active Instagram use | 5.15 (6.69) | – .03 | .04 |
| Duration of passive Instagram use | 9.39 (4.84) | – .07 | .03 |
| Duration of active WhatsApp use | 5.34 (4.14) | .08 | .04 |
| Duration of passive WhatsApp use | 7.34 (3.69) | .01 | .09*** |

Note. Source: Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., van Driel, I. I., Keijsers, L., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2020). The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent to adolescent. *Scientific reports*, *10*(1), 10763. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-67727-7

**Figure 2: Direct regression effects predicting hazardous alcohol use based on social media type**

Direct regression effects predicting hazardous alcohol use based on social media type in four countries

| | United States | | | | South Korea | | | | Finland | | | | Spain | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P | B | SE |
| Facebook | 0.23 | 0.12 | 0.05 | 0.070 | 1.14 | 0.19 | 0.16 | <0.001 | 0.49 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.001 | 0.48 | 0.15 |
| YouTube | −0.33 | 0.11 | −0.07 | 0.005 | 0.72 | 0.18 | 0.11 | <0.001 | −0.44 | 0.15 | −0.08 | 0.005 | 0.03 | 0.11 |
| Twitter | 0.28 | 0.15 | 0.05 | 0.065 | −0.25 | 0.28 | −0.02 | 0.385 | −0.77 | 0.26 | −0.08 | 0.004 | 0.31 | 0.15 |
| Instagram | 0.07 | 0.12 | 0.01 | 0.587 | 1.40 | 0.23 | 0.14 | <0.001 | 0.34 | 0.15 | 0.06 | 0.031 | 0.32 | 0.11 |
| Instant msg. | 0.12 | 0.13 | 0.02 | 0.356 | 0.87 | 0.18 | 0.14 | <0.001 | 0.67 | 0.16 | 0.12 | <0.001 | −0.04 | 0.13 |

Note. Effects calculated separately for each social media. All the regression models were adjusted by compulsive Internet use, offline belonging, psychological distress, impulsivity, risk-taking, age, and gender. Instant msg. = Instant messaging; B = unstandardized regression weights; β = standardized beta coefficient.

Note. Source: Savolainen, I., Oksanen, A., Kaakinen, M., Sirola, A., Miller, B. L., Paek, H. J., & Zych, I. (2020). T*he association between social media use and hazardous alcohol use among youths: A four-country study. Alcohol and alcoholism*, *55*(1), 86-95. https://academic.oup.com/alcalc/article/55/1/86/5628206

**Figure 3: Multinominal regression analysis for restrictive and active mediation**

Multinomial logistic regression analysis for restrictive and active parental mediation.

| Predictors | Restrictive parental mediation | | Active parental mediation | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Less than before lockdown vs. as much as before lockdown | More than before lockdown vs. as much as before lockdown | Less than before lockdown vs. as much as before lockdown | More than before lockdown vs. as much as before lockdown |
| | OR (95%CI) | OR (95%CI) | OR (95%CI) | OR (95%CI) |
| **Demographic characteristics** | | | | |
| Parent's age | 1.04 (1.00–1.07) | 0.96 (0.93–1.00) | 1.01 (0.97–1.06) | 0.97 (0.94–1.00) |
| Parent's gender (mother vs. father) | 1.45 (0.87–2.42) | 1.19 (0.65–2.17) | 1.92 (1.01–3.66*) | 1.21 (0.70–2.10) |
| Child's age | 0.93 (0.81–1.06) | 0.78 (0.67–0.92**) | 1.36 (1.14–1.63**) | 0.97 (0.84–1.12) |
| Child's gender (girl vs. boy) | 0.92 (0.56–1.52) | 0.53 (0.29–0.97*) | 0.57 (0.30–1.06) | 0.55 (0.32–0.95*) |
| SES (low vs. average) | 1.05 (0.56–1.99) | 1.03 (0.49–2.18) | 0.73 (0.34–1.58) | 0.88 (0.44–1.74) |
| SES (high vs. average) | 1.11 (0.62–1.98) | 1.28 (0.66–2.50) | 0.59 (0.28–1.24) | 1.15 (0.63–2.10) |
| **Child-related variables** | | | | |
| Time spent online | 1.15 (1.07–1.25***) | 1.05 (0.96–1.16) | 1.00 (0.92–1.09) | 1.00 (0.92–1.08) |
| Child's self-regulation | 0.75 (0.52–1.08) | 1.59 (0.99–2.56) | 0.69 (0.45–1.07) | 1.36 (0.90–1.05) |
| Child's digital skills reported by parents | 1.03 (0.68–1.55) | 1.68 (0.93–3.03) | 1.42 (0.85–2.37) | 1.54 (0.92–2.58) |
| **Parent-related variables** | | | | |
| Parental negative attitudes towards digital technology | 0.87 (0.65–1.15) | 1.45 (1.01–2.09*) | 1.20 (0.86–1.69) | 1.21 (0.88–1.67) |
| Parental worry about online risks | 0.90 (0.68–1.18) | 3.36 (2.12–5.32***) | 0.61 (0.45–0.83**) | 2.56 (1.71–3.83***) |
| Parental worry about the lockdown's impact on child's education | 0.96 (0.75–1.22) | 0.81 (0.60–1.09) | 1.24 (0.91–1.68) | 1.22 (0.93–1.62) |
| Parent's digital skills | 0.78 (0.51–1.20) | 0.50 (0.29–0.86*) | 1.53 (0.88–2.65) | 1.03 (0.63–1.68) |
| Parent's self-efficacy | 1.29 (0.86–1.93) | 0.73 (0.44–1.21) | 0.96 (0.60–1.53) | 0.72 (0.47–1.13) |
| Cox & Snell R² | .39 | | .35 | |
| Nagelkerke R² | .44 | | .42 | |
| χ² (df) | 217.71 (28)*** | | 194.18 (28)*** | |

Note. OR = Odds Ratios; CI = Confidence Interval. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Note. Source: Sciacca, B., Laffan, D. A., Norman, J. O. H., & Milosevic, T. (2022). Parental mediation in pandemic: Predictors and relationship with children's digital skills and time spent online in Ireland. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *127*, 107081. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563221004040

**Figure 4: Analysis results of parents and children's use of digital media and their perceived influence on parent-child relationship conflict**

| | M (SD) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Parents' excessive use (T1) | 2.86 (0.95) | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 2. Parents' lack of control (T1) | 2.52 (1.03) | .32*** | 1 | | | | | | |
| 3. Parents' lack of control (T2) | 2.48 (1.03) | .36*** | .73*** | 1 | | | | | |
| 4. Perceived negative impact (T1) | 3.53 (0.79) | .02 | .29*** | .26*** | 1 | | | | |
| 5. Child-reported conflict (T1) | 1.55 (0.70) | .18*** | .44*** | .42*** | .26*** | 1 | | | |
| 6. Child-reported conflict (T2) | 1.55 (0.71) | .23*** | .41*** | .48*** | .23*** | .61*** | 1 | | |
| 7. Parent-reported conflict (T1) | 1.54 (0.67) | .21*** | .57*** | .45*** | .32*** | .71*** | .54*** | 1 | |
| 8. Parent-reported conflict (T2) | 1.54 (0.68) | .22*** | .46*** | .58*** | .25*** | .57*** | .74*** | .62*** | 1 |

| Predictor | Parents' lack of control (T2) | | | Child-reported conflict (T2) | | | Parent-reported conflict (T2) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | b | SE | β | b | SE | β | b | SE | β |
| Parents' age (T1) | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.01 | −0.01* | 0.00 | −0.08 | −0.00 | 0.00 | −0.03 |
| Parents' gender (T1) | 0.06 | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.06 | 0.08 |
| Children's age (T1) | −0.01 | 0.03 | −0.02 | −0.01 | 0.02 | −0.02 | −0.05* | 0.02 | −0.10 |
| Children's gender (T1) | 0.05 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.05 | 0.03 |
| Parents' excessive use (T1) | 0.13** | 0.05 | 0.12 | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.05 |
| Parents' lack of control (T1) | 0.68*** | 0.04 | 0.68 | 0.11** | 0.04 | 0.16 | 0.10** | 0.04 | 0.15 |
| Perceived negative impact (T1) | | | | 0.06 | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.4 | 0.00 |
| Child-reported conflict (T1) | | | | 0.44*** | 0.06 | 0.45 | | | |
| Parent-reported conflict (T1) | | | | | | | 0.48*** | 0.07 | 0.48 |
| Parents' lack of control (T1) * Perceived negative impact (T1) | | | | −0.01 | 0.03 | −0.02 | −0.02 | 0.03 | −0.03 |
| R² | 0.53 | | | 0.36 | | | 0.39 | | |

Note. Source: Matthes, J., Thomas, M. F., Stevic, A., & Schmuck, D. (2021). Fighting over smartphones? Parents' excessive smartphone use, lack of control over e, and conflict. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *116*, 106618. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220303654

**Figure 5: China Teenagers' Network Literacy Score in 2020**
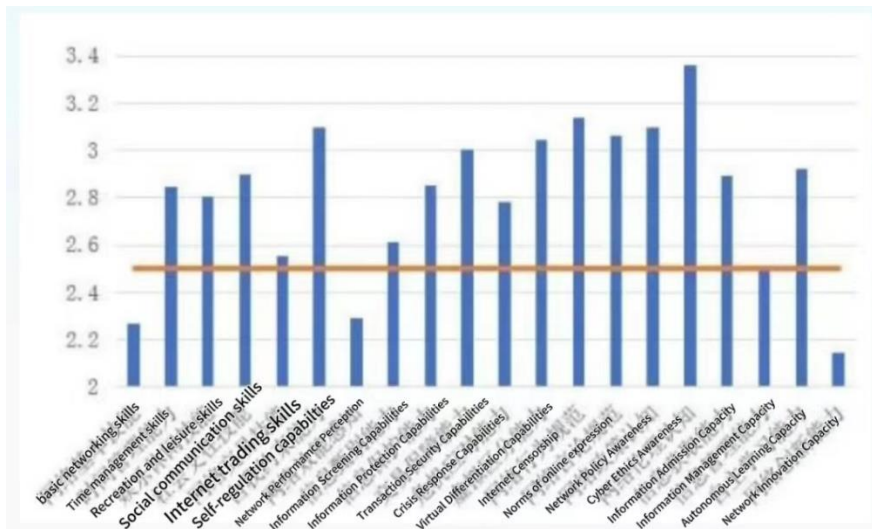


Note. Source: Zhu Xiaofan & Chang Ying (2020): *Research report on the Internet literacy of Chinese youth,* Institute of Social Development Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (translated by me).
https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_10600890