

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Applicant	Mgr. Lenka Dědková, Ph.D.
Habilitation thesis	Parenting practices in digital era
Reviewer	doc. Mgr. Kateřina Lukavská, Ph.D.
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Department of Psychology, Faculty of Education, Charles University

Thank you for the opportunity to review this habilitation thesis, which I found to be informative, coherent, and very well written.

Topic and structure of habilitation thesis

The rapid digital transformation poses one of the major challenges facing contemporary societies. This is reflected in numerous calls for both basic and applied research. While most psychological research focuses on human–machine interaction at the individual level, the important topic of digital socialization—namely, how to support children’s healthy development in a digitalized world—remains relatively understudied. I therefore appreciate the clear and consistent focus of this habilitation thesis on investigating the complex role of parents in digital socialization. The topic is timely, important, and highly relevant to social psychology.

The thesis specifies three core areas: (1) the relationships between parental mediation strategies and the family environment and adolescents’ online risky or problematic behavior; (2) parental knowledge of children’s online activities as generated through parental mediation and child disclosure; and (3) parental characteristics, their ICT use, and their links to parental mediation preferences. Together, these areas build a coherent and comprehensive body of knowledge on digital/media parenting (parental mediation), including both its predictors and its effects.

Theoretical background and research aims

Bronfenbrenner’s model, its adaptations, and the additional theories presented in the Introduction together provide an interesting framework showing that ICT functions as an additional agent and/or moderator of socialization. Although the specific focus of the habilitation thesis—as reflected in the research questions—is somewhat different, namely on how children are socialized in digital environments, the introductory section convincingly argues why it is essential to address ICT within theories of socialization. In particular, it highlights the omnipresence of ICT and its impact on the environments in which socialization takes place, especially the family system.

The section describing the concept of parental mediation is concise yet comprehensive and provides a very good overview of the current state of research. As such, it serves as an excellent starting point for presenting the results of the author's own studies in this area.

On the other hand, the section focusing on other important family and parental factors affecting ICT use in children and adolescents is somewhat underdeveloped, despite the author's own research engagement in these topics.

Overall, the set of research aims is coherent, well motivated, and clearly articulated.

Among the research aims, I found the second to be the most innovative and compelling, as it connects established knowledge on general parenting with the "new digitalized world." A minor critical point concerns a certain simplification of the complex construct of parenting—for example, overprotective parenting, which would be highly relevant to the monitoring of online activities, is not explicitly considered. A second critical point relates to the reduction of parental knowledge about children's online activities to knowledge of a limited set of specific at-risk experiences, such as cybervictimization, online contact with strangers, and exposure to violent content. I believe that these specific types of experience cannot fully capture the broader concept of parental knowledge of children's ICT use. Nevertheless, it is understandable that researchers must delimit complex phenomena in order to study and measure them empirically.

I appreciate that the research aims, although specific and at times narrowly focused, are firmly grounded in broader theoretical frameworks, which indicates that the author has a deep understanding of the complex topic of digital parenting.

Included studies and their description

All studies are well aligned with the topic of the thesis and were published in well-established outlets (one in a monograph and the others in international Q1 journals), which is impressive. The author's contribution varies across the studies, but in three of them it is 80% or more and in the remaining two 40%, which suggests the crucial role of Lenka Dědková within the research team, at least with respect to topics related to parenting. In addition, two further studies in which Dr. Dědková was not the lead author appear to have been led by her PhD student, which suggests her success in the role of a supervisor.

Most studies draw on data from relatively large samples of adolescents, some collected in the Czech Republic and others in international settings. Two additional datasets were collected from adults (parents or guardians), one large and representative and the other smaller, both Czech. The samples and analytical procedures are described concisely but sufficiently in the Methods section of the habilitation thesis.

Discussion and conclusions

With respect to Studies 2–4, I appreciate that the author explicitly reflects the fact that interaction with strangers online should not be taken as inherently risky. At the same time, I agree that it can serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of parental mediation. However, not all parents necessarily perceive online contacts as risky, either because of their own previous experience or, more importantly, because of a high level of trust that their child is

well prepared to cope with the potential risks of online communication. This represents a limitation insofar as adolescents' readiness to engage in online communication—an activity that may be largely harmless when appropriate safeguards are in place—is not fully taken into account.

Studies 6 and 7 provide very valuable contributions, as they offer empirical evidence for the positive effects of active mediation—specifically on parental knowledge of children's online activities and on children's willingness to disclose risky or negative online experiences to their parents. These highly important outcomes help to partially rehabilitate active mediation, which has often been labelled as ineffective in preventing excessive or problematic (addictive) digital media use.

Studies 8 and 9 offer interesting insights into the predictors of low versus high engagement in various parental mediation strategies. In particular, the inclusion of partners' characteristics and skills makes it possible to see that media parenting should not be conceptualized as an isolated activity of one parent, but rather as a deliberate practice shaped by the specific family context and parental motivations and beliefs.

The General Discussion is rich, focused, and clear. I particularly appreciate the important acknowledgment of the limits of the currently available—predominantly cross-sectional—evidence, as well as the overview of findings derived from longitudinal studies. I also agree with the second limitation discussed, namely the relative lack of research on moderating mechanisms. At the same time, it may be noted that some studies have already suggested that the effects of parenting on problematic media use are mediated by children's self-control (Li et al., 2013, doi: 10.1089/cyber.2012.0293), self-esteem (Dong et al., 2019, doi: 10.1007/s11469-018-9912-x), and self-consciousness (Zhang et al., 2019, doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2019.07.019).

The limitations of studies included in the thesis are described sufficiently and demonstrate a clear and nuanced understanding of the field.

Overall Evaluation

Overall, this habilitation thesis represents a high-quality and substantive contribution to our understanding of digital socialization, a highly important and timely area of contemporary social psychology. The work is well written, theoretically well grounded, and methodologically sound, and it demonstrates the author's strong expertise in the topic as well as her solid command of psychological research more generally. I did not identify any major shortcomings in either content or form. Taken together, the thesis provides a coherent and convincing body of evidence on digital parenting and clearly meets the standards expected of a habilitation thesis.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

You mentioned that the concept of parental mediation has expanded with the increasing accessibility of ICT. From your perspective, which of these newer components is the most important? Are there any important components that have not yet been sufficiently studied?

What do you consider to be the major challenge in measuring parental mediation?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled "Parenting practices in digital era" by Mgr. Lenka Dědková, Ph.D., **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Social Psychology.

Date: 10.1.2026

Signature

