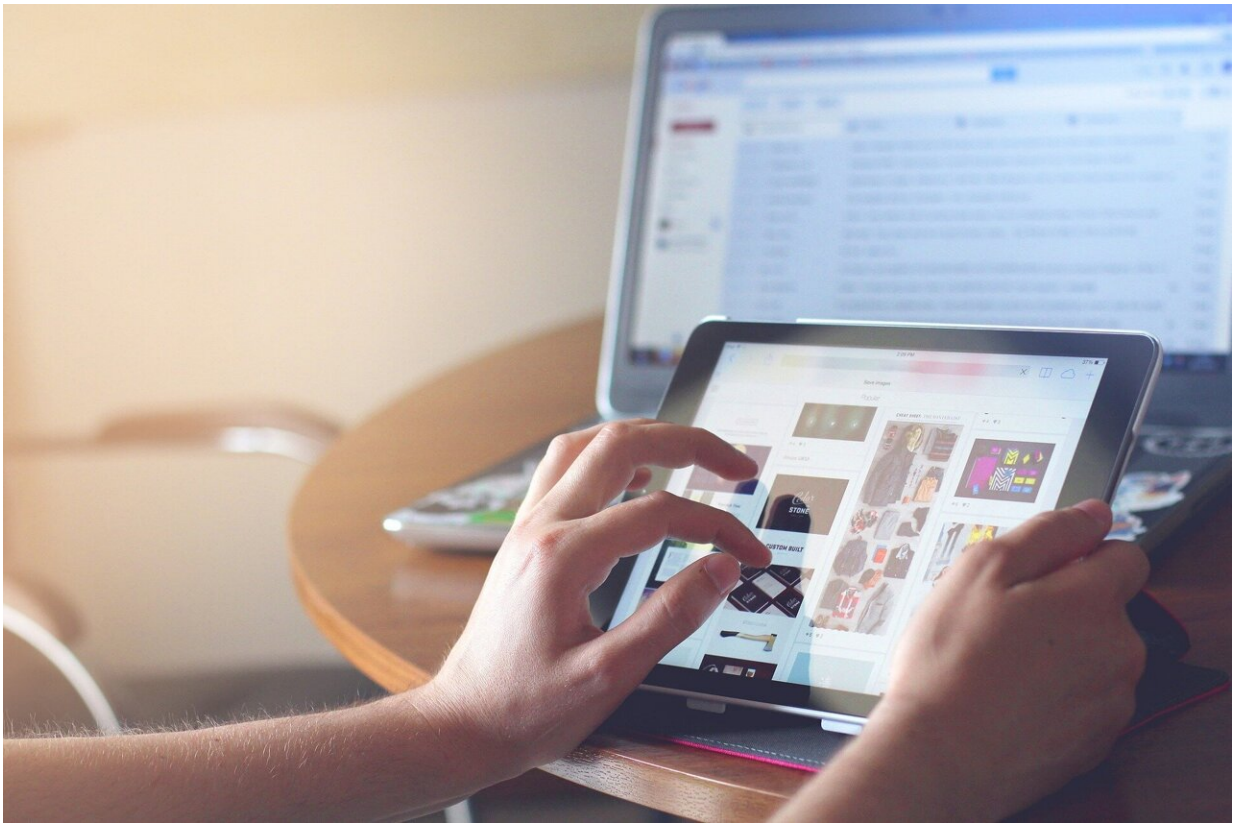


Stricter parental monitoring of social media isn't always better, says study

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Parents are often under the impression that the best way to protect their preteens and teens online is to restrict their use: limiting the amount of time they can spend, implementing rules about which apps they're

allowed to use, etc. But this kind of restrictive monitoring, though popular, may not be the most effective strategy.

In a new study [published](#) in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, researchers surveyed 248 U.S. parents of middle schoolers about their media monitoring behaviors, the family context, and perceptions of their children's problematic [internet](#) use. The results revealed that restrictive parental monitoring (including rules and limits of time or content) of adolescents' digital media use was associated with problematic internet use.

However, active monitoring (efforts to promote critical thinking of the media by discussing central themes, character choices, and implicit messages of content) and deference monitoring (intentional avoidance of restrictions, often in an attempt to showcase parental trust in children's decision-making) were not associated with problematic internet use.

In addition, qualitative interviews with a subset of 31 parents revealed that while most parents reported restrictive behaviors, multiple other techniques (including active and deference monitoring) were also used. Parents tended to converge on the same types and reasons for restrictive monitoring, whereas for other approaches the reasons behind their decision-making were quite different, ranging from pre-arming their child with useful strategies to trusting their adolescent's judgment.

"Although we don't know the direction of influence without a [longitudinal study](#), this cross-sectional study tells us that [parents](#) are using all kinds of monitoring strategies, beyond restricting their children's digital media use—and these other strategies can be just as successful, if not more so," said Linda Charmaraman, Ph.D., director of the Youth, Media & Wellbeing Research Lab at the Wellesley Centers for Women, who led the study.

Authors also included J. Maya Hernandez, Ph.D., Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph, M.D., MPH, and Stephanie Reich, Ph.D.

More information: J. Maya Hernandez et al, Parental Monitoring of Early Adolescent Social Technology Use in the US: A Mixed-Method Study, *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s10826-023-02734-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-023-02734-6)

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