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# Platformization and family digital practices in Argentina: a parental perspective

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**Abstract**

This article explores parental digital practices in Argentina through the lens of platformization, based on data from an ad hoc online questionnaire administered to mothers and fathers of adolescents aged 10–17. Drawing on the conceptual triad of mediation, mediatization, and platformization, the study examines how digital technologies reshape family life and parental roles. Results show high smartphone penetration and identify WhatsApp as the main infrastructure for intra-family coordination and affective communication. Parents report a generational shift in practices and a gradual transformation of mediation strategies, which tend to become less restrictive and more dialogical as adolescents gain autonomy. The study maps patterns of divergence and convergence in device and platform use: WhatsApp and Instagram emerge as shared interaction spaces, whereas other platforms and activities remain generationally segmented. These findings support the notion that digital parenting involves enacting parenting within and through platforms, not only monitoring children's online behaviour. Situated within debates on surveillance capitalism and digital intimacy, the article discusses implications for autonomy, everyday support, and relational identity in platformized family life. It contributes to ongoing discussions about digital parenting by offering empirical evidence from a Global South perspective, emphasizing how technological infrastructures mediate not only communication but also affective and normative aspects of family relationships. Given the non-probabilistic sample—predominantly urban, highly educated, and largely composed of mothers—findings are exploratory, context-specific, and not generalizable. The article concludes by calling for research that includes adolescents' voices and examines how families negotiate meaning, care, and control in platformized environments.

Keywords: digital parenting, platformization, daily life, interpersonal relationships.

## 1. Introduction

This study, part of a broader research project, takes an exploratory, descriptive approach to identifying and characterizing dynamics of digital parenting, particularly parent–child practices developed in digital environments. To this end, the phenomenon of digital parenting is examined, understood as the way in which parents interact with, guide, and supervise their children's use of digital technologies, as well as how they perform their parental roles in these environments (Castro-Sánchez, 2022; Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024). This inquiry aims to provide a detailed account of how parenting is being redefined within a digitally mediated world, where daily routines and family interactions are increasingly shaped by devices and platforms.

In recent years, the expansion of mobile connectivity and the growing centrality of platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok have transformed the fabric of everyday life. These changes affect not only communication but also family coordination, care dynamics, and identity expression (Castro-Sánchez et al.,

2023). As such, digital parenting cannot be reduced to isolated interventions but must be approached as a continuum of situated practices that intersect with broader technological and cultural transformations.

Within this framework, digital parenting emerges as a concept, though there is no unanimous consensus on its definition. It has been described as the management of children's digital interactions (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020) and as the set of mediation strategies between parents, children, and digital life, with restrictive approaches being the most prevalent (Nichols & Selim, 2022). Today, parents engage in various mediation practices, seeking to balance active and restrictive behaviors based on factors such as their children's age and digital competence (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). In all cases, there is consensus that understanding digital parenting is essential for developing educational strategies and mitigating risks associated with technology use (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020; Grané I Oró, 2021; Castro-Sánchez, 2024).

Along these lines, Nichols & Selim (2022) propose integrating three dimensions: parental mediation of children's digital activities; children's mediation of parents' digital activities; and the role of digital media in supporting parent-child interaction. They further argue that each of these dimensions should consider aspects related to social identity.

However, as highlighted in previous research, digital parenting extends beyond mere mediation and should be understood as the exercise of parental roles within digital environments themselves (Castro-Sánchez, 2022; Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024). A model centered solely on parental mediation of children's online activities offers an overly narrow perspective on a complex landscape. Moreover, some practices of representing relational selfhood on digital platforms may fail to respect children's privacy (Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024).

As an exploratory study, this research does not aim to establish definitive conclusions but rather to open avenues for deeper inquiry into how digital media are transforming family life in general and parenting in particular. Our objective is to identify emerging patterns within the phenomenon of digital parenting, examine how parents navigate the complexities of new digital environments, and describe how their roles and responsibilities evolve in response to the opportunities and risks posed by digital technologies.

This initial exploration is expected to serve as a foundation for future research and contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks and guidelines for parents, educators, and policymakers.

## 2. Theoretical Background

The concept of digital parenting emerges within mediatized societies, where daily practices are increasingly shaped by digital devices and platforms. The notion of interface and its co-evolutionary nature (Scolari, 2018) can shed light on certain aspects of human-media relationships within families (Castro-Sánchez, 2022). For this reason, technologies—broadly understood—, and particularly digital technologies, play a crucial role in defining family interactions today.

To contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon, we propose a three-layered reading: parental mediation with digital technologies, which includes both educational and caregiving practices; mediatized parenting, shaped

by sociality in digital media and particularly in socio-digital platforms that have gained centrality today; and platformized parenting, which reflects how digital platforms structure parental practices (Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024).

Parental mediation encompasses the actions parents undertake to influence how children use and interpret media content. It has an educational purpose aimed at developing critical skills and has a long-standing tradition, previously applied to television (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Livingstone et al. (2011) suggest that active mediation is linked to higher digital competence in children and involves parent-child discussions about content and internet safety, fostering a critical understanding of both online risks and opportunities. Another key aspect of this type of mediation is the promotion of progressive autonomy in children. As they grow, strategies must be adjusted, emphasizing the importance of flexible and adaptive mediation (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

Beyond specific mediation strategies, digital parenting must also be understood as a relational process situated within broader sociotechnical systems. Parents do not act in isolation but within environments shaped by affordances, algorithms, and data infrastructures. These technological conditions influence what can be done, what is visible, and what is valued in digital interactions, thereby shaping parental expectations and behaviors (Mascheroni & Siibak, 2021).

Mediatization, as a process, transforms not only communication but also sociocultural practices. According to Hjarvard (2013), media do not merely transmit messages; they become embedded in and shape social interactions, including family dynamics. Mediatized parenting thus refers to the ways in which digital media integrate into daily routines and parent-child relationships. Technologies create environments, as media ecology theories propose (McLuhan, 1967/2015), altering family dynamics through instant messaging applications and video conferencing tools, which reshape parent-child communication. Family relationships are no longer solely defined by physical proximity but by constant digital interaction. Consequently, the mediatization of parenting implies that parental behaviors, decisions, and actions occur in evolving environments, driving changes in traditional parental roles.

In this context, the notion of platformization, derived from mediatization, allows us to interpret parenting through a contemporary lens. According to Poell et al. (2022), platformization refers to the penetration of digital platforms into various areas of daily life. In parent-child relationships, this results in practices that reorganize around digital platforms.

Van Dijck (2016) also reinforces the idea that platforms not only mediate communication but also shape it. Applied to parenting, this transformation alters how mothers and fathers perform their roles, not only supervising their children's platform use but also actively engaging in these spaces, sharing experiences, and interacting. In all cases, platformization is redefining the modes of socialization within parent-child relationships, reshaping family dynamics and structures.

Moreover, Srnicek (2017) points out that platforms have emerged as dominant actors in the digital economy, with implications for data extraction and commercialization, a phenomenon that extends to family digital practices. Zuboff (2019) warns of the risks of "surveillance capitalism," wherein family digital interactions may be monitored and monetized, raising new ethical dilemmas.

Recent studies confirm an ongoing platformization of family environments (Sefton-Green et al., 2025). This process refers to the increasing penetration of digital platforms into everyday life, transforming family dynamics, relational practices, and household organization. This phenomenon not only structures family life but also redefines the place of families within an expanding digital ecosystem (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2025).

From a relational perspective, platformization reinforces the idea that families are no longer solely constituted through physical cohabitation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2012) but also through digitally mediated interactions. This transformation reconfigures traditional socialization and caregiving practices, extending family life beyond the home. It also generates new forms of interdependence and vulnerability (Livingstone & Sefton-Green, 2025).

Digital platforms act as mediators in how families understand themselves and interact with other social systems, such as education, labor, and politics. As these platforms become essential infrastructures for daily life, they introduce new forms of regulation and control that may impact family autonomy (van Dijck et al., 2018; Sefton-Green & Livingstone, 2025).

The platformization of family intimacy is another key aspect of this phenomenon. Digital technologies facilitate new ways of maintaining emotional closeness while also generating tensions around privacy and access to personal information within the household (Erstad et al., 2024; Sefton-Green & Livingstone, 2025). This shift leads to alternative forms of constructing family intimacy, shaped by the uses and regulations of digital platforms.

Ultimately, the platformization of the family is not merely a technological transformation; it represents a reconfiguration of intra-family relationships, daily practices, and cultural imaginaries surrounding families in the digital era.

## 3. Methodology

As expressed by Sautu et al. (2010), individuals' interpretations of social reality can also be captured through a survey-based analysis focused on social agency. Such an approach examines the decisions individuals make within their specific contexts and how these are influenced by their beliefs, values, and personal experiences. Surveys serve as an effective tool for exploring the attitudes and beliefs underlying these behaviors, as they enable the identification of sociocultural patterns (Babbie, 2021).

In this study, the survey was used as the primary data collection technique, utilizing a questionnaire as its instrument — a structured set of questions designed to gather specific information (Sautu et al., 2010). It is one of the most common tools used for collecting structured data and the primary field entry vector for this research.

To substantiate the claim that parenting is a mediatized and platformized reality, we seek to understand what the individual and shared digital parent-child habits are, as well as the current parental role-based digital practices. Based on these initial inquiries, the following objectives are formulated: to explore digital habits, digital parent-child interactions, and parental digital role practices, and to analyze the exercise of parental functions in digital environments within the broader phenomenon of mediatization and platformization of interpersonal relationships.

### 3.1. Instrument development and structure

An ad hoc online questionnaire was developed to capture parental and shared parent–child digital practices in platformized environments. The instrument was built by identifying thematic cores and defining dimensions and subdimensions. A preliminary pool of items was drafted, followed by decisions regarding format, ordering, and administration context. The survey was implemented in QuestionPro (2023, University License - Research Edition), which enabled section-based blocks aligned with the study dimensions.

This article analyzes a 20-item core track from a broader questionnaire, organized into four sections (sociodemographic data; parental digital habits; children's digital habits; shared digital habits) and three main dimensions subdivided into specific subdimensions (Table 1). The full questionnaire includes additional items (Supplementary Material S1) that fall outside the analytic scope of this paper.

Table 1: Questionnaire Structure

| **Section** | | **Items** | **Positions** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sociodemographic Data | Age | 8 |
| | | Sex | |
| | | Residence | |
| | | Education | |
| | | Household Composition | |
| | | Number of Children 10-17 years | |
| | | Children Ages | |
| | | Co-residence with Children | |
| **Section** | **Dimensions** | **Subdimensions** | **Positions** |
| 2 | Parental Digital Habits | Digital Competence | 4 |
| | | Device Use | |
| | | Platform Use | |
| | | Digital Practices | |
| 3 | Children's Digital Habits | Child's age (target child) | 5 |
| | | Device Use | |
| | | Platform Use | |
| | | Digital Practices | |
| | | Parental Access to Information | |
| 4 | Shared Digital Habits | Platform Use | 3 |
| | | Digital Practices | |
| | | Formative Mediation | |
| **Total** | | | **20** |

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.2. Data collection and eligibility

The survey link was distributed through digital channels with a brief description of the target population. Given the exploratory nature of the study and its focus on a specific subgroup, chain-referral (snowball) recruitment was used over a one-week period (Goodman, 1961; Hernández Sampieri et al., 2016). Eligibility criteria were: (a) being a mother or father; and (b) having at least one child aged 10–17. To minimize early dropouts, respondents were allowed to skip questions; therefore, item-level response counts vary and are reported in the Results section.

The survey link received 1,370 views. A total of 452 respondents initiated the questionnaire; 228 completed it (completion rate 50.44%), and the average completion time was 8 minutes. Because respondents could skip items, analyses were conducted using valid responses per item. The analytic sample for the core socio-demographic profile corresponds to respondents who provided the minimum required information and met the inclusion criteria (N = 370; female = 334, male = 36). Responses were anonymous and no directly identifying information was collected. The survey was completed by adults and did not request or store identifiable information about minors.

### 3.3. Instrument validation and pilot testing

Content validity was assessed through expert review, following standard procedures for instrument appraisal (Cabero & Llorente, 2013). Experts provided open-ended feedback on the questionnaire as a whole, focusing on (a) whether the items adequately represented the domain of interest and covered relevant dimensions without omitting key aspects (Haynes et al., 1995), and (b) whether wording, layout, and response formats were clear and easy to follow, given their influence on comprehension and response quality (Dillman et al., 2014). The panel included specialists with expertise in social science research methods, education and technology, and digital communication. Written feedback was analyzed and used to refine item wording, ordering, and response options prior to data collection.

After expert validation, a small-scale pilot test (pretest) was conducted to evaluate both the instrument and the data collection procedure, consistent with recommended survey practice (Groves et al., 2004). Twenty participants completed the questionnaire and provided feedback on usability, clarity, length, and technical functioning. Based on this pilot, minor revisions were made to improve comprehension, reduce ambiguity, and optimize survey flow and completion time.

Supplementary Material S1 provides the full questionnaire (English translation of the Spanish original), including item wording, response options, and documentation of expert validation and pilot testing.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize device use, platform use, and reported practices. To support key descriptive contrasts across children's age groups (10–13, 14–15, 16–17), we conducted chi-square tests of independence on selected high-frequency items (coded as yes/no), reporting effect sizes (Cramér's V). Given the non-probabilistic sample and exploratory design, these tests are reported as indicative patterns rather than population estimates.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Section 1. Sociodemographic Data

The following table presents the sociodemographic composition, structured into subdimensions and items.

Table 2: Sociodemographic Data

| Subdimension | Item | Percentage | Valid N | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Under 26 | 1.09% | 368 | 4 |
| | 26-35 | 2.45% | | 9 |
| | 36-45 | 36.41% | | 134 |
| | 46-55 | 54.35% | | 200 |
| | 56-65 | 4.89% | | 18 |
| | Over 65 | 0.82% | | 3 |
| Gender | Female | 90.27% | 370 | 334 |
| | Male | 9.73% | | 36 |
| | X | 0.00% | | 0 |
| Residence | Urban area | 93.78% | 370 | 347 |
| | Rural area | 6.22% | | 23 |
| Education | Primary | 1.36% | 369 | 5 |
| | Secondary | 9.21% | | 34 |
| | Higher non-university | 21.14% | | 78 |
| | University | 46.88% | | 173 |
| | Postgraduate | 21.41% | | 79 |
| Co-residing individuals | Spouse | 76.15% | 369 | 281 |
| | Partner | 11.92% | | 44 |
| | Child(ren) | 93.22% | | 344 |
| | Parent(s) | 3.25% | | 12 |
| | Sibling(s) | 1.08% | | 4 |
| | Other relatives | 1.63% | | 6 |
| | Other non-relatives | 2.71% | | 10 |
| Number of children aged 10-17 | 1 | 49.18% | 366 | 180 |
| | 2 | 35.52% | | 130 |
| | 3 or more | 15.30% | | 56 |
| Children's age range | 10-13 | 80.60% | 366 | 295 |
| | 14-15 | 33.61% | | 123 |
| | 16-17 | 43.99% | | 161 |
| Co-residence with child(ren) | Yes | 97.54% | 366 | 357 |
| | Partially | 1.64% | | 6 |
| | No | 0.82% | | 3 |

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Q indicates the number of respondents selecting each option. Percentages are calculated using the number of valid responses for each item (Valid N). For single-choice items, percentages sum to 100% within the item (excluding missing responses). For multiple-response items ("select all that apply"), percentages are calculated over respondents who answered the item, and therefore percentages do not sum to 100%.

The predominant demographic profile in this sample consists of individuals aged 36 to 55 years (90.76%), mostly women (90.27%) living in urban areas (93.78%). The majority have a high educational level, with university (46.88%) or postgraduate studies (21.41%). Most cohabit with at least one adolescent child (97.54%), predominantly aged 10 to 13 years (80.60%). Additionally, a significant proportion live with a spouse (76.15%) and have one or two children (84.70%). This profile reflects a relatively homogeneous group in terms of age, gender, urban setting, and family composition.

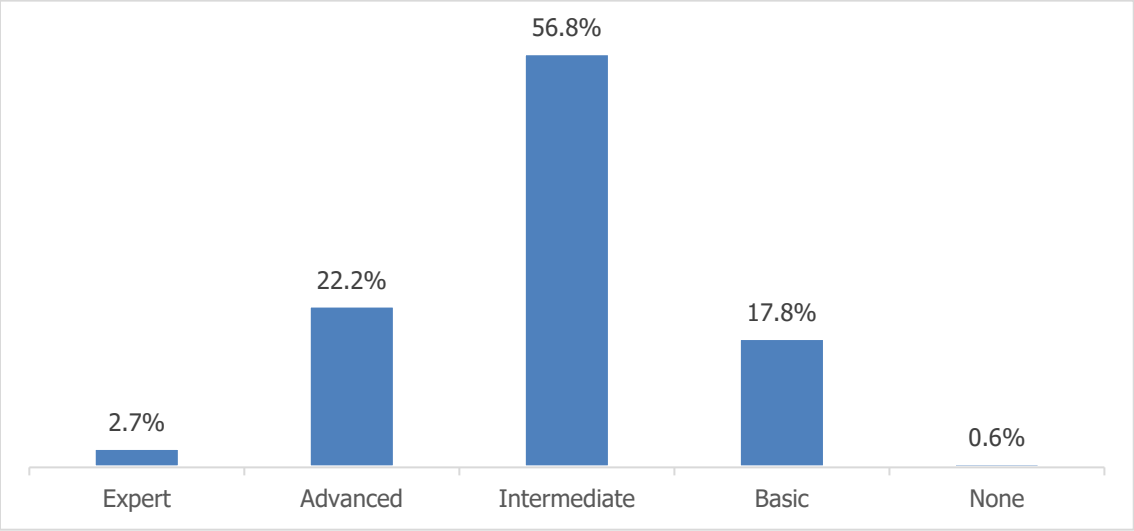
## 4.2. Section 2. Parental Digital Habits

This section covers four subdimensions: digital competence, devices, platforms, and digital practices.

### 4.2.1. Parental Digital Competence

Most respondents perceive themselves at intermediate or advanced levels of digital competence, suggesting a positive self-assessment, with very few placing themselves at the extremes of either expert proficiency or complete lack of skills. It is important to highlight that these data are based on self-perception, meaning they may not necessarily align with an objective evaluation of actual digital skills.

Figure 1: Self-Perceived Digital Competence




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Self-perceived digital competence among respondents. Percentages are calculated over valid responses to this single-choice item (N=338).

### 4.2.2. Parental Use of Devices and Platforms

Regarding the "devices" subdimension, the smartphone is the most widely used device among mothers and fathers, with 85.13%, followed by smart TVs (73.18%) and laptops (62.97%).

For the "platforms" subdimension, WhatsApp stands out as the most frequently used platform, with 97.94% of respondents reporting usage, followed by Instagram (89.97%) and YouTube (75.81%).

Table 3: Parents – Use of Digital Devices and Platforms

| Subdimension | Item | Percentage | Q | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Device Use | Smartphone | 85.13% | 292 | 343 |
| | SmartTV | 73.18% | 251 | |
| | Laptop | 62.97% | 216 | |
| | Desktop PC | 56.27% | 193 | |
| | Tablet | 38.48% | 132 | |
| | Smartwatch | 20.99% | 72 | |
| | Video Game Console | 9.04% | 31 | |
| | Virtual Reality Accessories | 2.33% | 8 | |
| Platform Use | WhatsApp | 97.94% | 332 | 339 |
| | Instagram | 89.97% | 305 | |
| | YouTube | 75.81% | 257 | |
| | Facebook | 61.65% | 209 | |
| | LinkedIn | 29.50% | 100 | |
| | Twitter | 20.06% | 68 | |
| | TikTok | 19.76% | 67 | |
| | Discord | 3.24% | 11 | |
| | Twitch | 2.36% | 8 | |

Source: Own elaboration. Note: The Q column indicates the number of responses received for each option, while the N column represents the total number of participants who could have selected each option.

#### 4.2.3. Parental Digital Practices

Regarding parental digital practices, Table 4 shows that the most common activity is "reading or watching news online", reported by 84.82% of respondents. "Chatting" and "listening to music" are also highly prevalent, with more than three-quarters of participants engaging in these activities.

Although less frequent, yet still significant, more than half of the respondents watch videos on platforms such as YouTube or TikTok and work or study online. Other activities, such as "sharing images or videos on social media" (48.81%), "downloading applications" (48.21%), and "watching series or movies via streaming" (47.92%), also have considerable representation.

These findings confirm that digital platforms shape parents' daily experiences, encompassing both functional activities—such as reading news and working or studying online—and leisure and socialization practices, such as chatting, listening to music, or watching series and movies. This scenario underscores the central role of digital technologies in everyday life, influencing various aspects, including time management, relationship dynamics, and intra-family interactions.

Table 4: Parents – Reported Digital Practices

| Subdimension | Item | Percentage | Q | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Activities | Reading/watching news online | 84.82% | 285 | 336 |
| | Chatting | 80.36% | 270 | |
| | Listening to music | 76.49% | 257 | |
| | Studying/working online | 63.69% | 214 | |
| | Watching videos on YouTube/TikTok | 56.55% | 190 | |
| | Sharing images or videos on social media | 48.81% | 164 | |
| | Downloading applications | 48.21% | 162 | |
| | Watching series or movies via streaming | 47.92% | 161 | |
| | Posting stories or updates on social media | 44.35% | 149 | |
| | Listening to podcasts | 42.26% | 142 | |
| | Sharing audio, photos, or videos | 39.58% | 133 | |
| | Taking selfies or recording oneself | 21.43% | 72 | |
| | Playing online games with others | 4.46% | 15 | |
| | Live streaming on social media | 3.57% | 12 | |

Source: Own elaboration

### 4.3. Section 3. Children's Digital Habits

A segmentation by age groups was chosen to better present the results. The age ranges were established based on theoretical frameworks, considering that adolescents aged 10 to 13 belong to early adolescence, while those aged 14 to 17 are in middle adolescence (Arnett, 2019). Although these categorizations have evolved over time, they provide a useful framework for analysis.

Within the middle adolescence category, an additional division was made between ages 14-15 and 16-17, as this period marks full access to digital environments. While definitions are neither uniform nor absolute, this segmentation was implemented to identify potential trends.

This section also comprises: devices, platforms, digital practices, and parental access to information.

#### 4.3.1 Children’s Use of Devices and Platforms

A comparative perspective is provided to illustrate how digital habits evolve with age, focusing on the use of devices and digital platforms.

The data, based on parental reports, indicate a high prevalence of smartphone use across all age groups, with a slight increase as children grow older. The use of smart TVs and gaming consoles shows a slight decline with age, whereas laptop usage increases, possibly indicating a shift toward devices more oriented toward educational purposes.

Regarding digital platform use, YouTube and TikTok remain consistently popular across all age ranges, while Instagram and WhatsApp show a notable increase among older adolescents, potentially reflecting a shift in socialization and communication habits. Platforms such as Discord and Twitter also see increased usage with age.

Table 5: Children – Use of Digital Devices and Platforms

| **Subdimension** | **Item** | **10-13 (N=139)** | | **14-15 (N=58)** | | **16-17 (N=77)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **%** | **Q** | **%** | **Q** | **%** | **Q** |
| Device Use | Smartphone | 79.86% | 111 | 94.83% | 55 | 90.91% | 70 |
| | SmartTV | 61.15% | 85 | 53.45% | 31 | 54.55% | 42 |
| | VG Console | 46.76% | 65 | 37.93% | 22 | 42.86% | 33 |
| | Tablet | 47.48% | 66 | 31.03% | 18 | 24.68% | 19 |
| | PC | 38.13% | 53 | 34.48% | 20 | 36.36% | 28 |
| | Laptop | 33.81% | 47 | 48.28% | 28 | 66.23% | 51 |
| | Smartwatch | 7.91% | 11 | 12.07% | 7 | 16.88% | 13 |
| | Virtual Reality | 7.19% | 10 | 6.90% | 4 | 2.60% | 2 |
| Platform Use | WhatsApp | 78.42% | 109 | 94.83% | 55 | 97.40% | 75 |
| | YouTube | 82.01% | 114 | 70.69% | 41 | 67.53% | 52 |
| | TikTok | 63.31% | 88 | 79.31% | 46 | 77.92% | 60 |
| | Instagram | 43.17% | 60 | 86.21% | 50 | 88.31% | 68 |
| | Discord | 6.47% | 9 | 12.07% | 7 | 15.58% | 12 |
| | Twitter | 1.44% | 2 | 22.41% | 13 | 16.88% | 13 |
| | Facebook | 2.16% | 3 | 8.62% | 5 | 16.88% | 13 |
| | Twitch | 4.32% | 6 | 10.34% | 6 | 20.78% | 16 |
| | LinkedIn | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 1.30% | 1 |

Source: Own elaboration. Note: The figures represent both the percentage (%) and the absolute number (Q) of users in each category. Percentages are calculated using, for each age group, the number of respondents who answered the multi-response question (selected at least one option), so N is constant across items within each age group. "VG Console" refers to video game consoles.

To complement descriptive patterns, age-group differences were statistically significant for several high-frequency items. For platform use, Instagram use increased sharply with age ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=58.96$, $p<.001$, $V=.46$), and WhatsApp use also showed a significant age gradient ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=19.84$, $p<.001$, $V=.27$). For reported practices, chatting increased with age ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=27.01$, $p<.001$, $V=.31$), whereas playing online with others decreased ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=14.68$, $p<.001$, $V=.23$). Studying/working online increased with age ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=14.38$, $p<.001$, $V=.23$), and listening to podcasts also rose across groups ($\chi^2(2, N=274)=21.37$, $p<.001$, $V=.28$). These tests provide additional support for the observed descriptive contrasts, and should be interpreted as indicative given the exploratory, non-probabilistic sample.

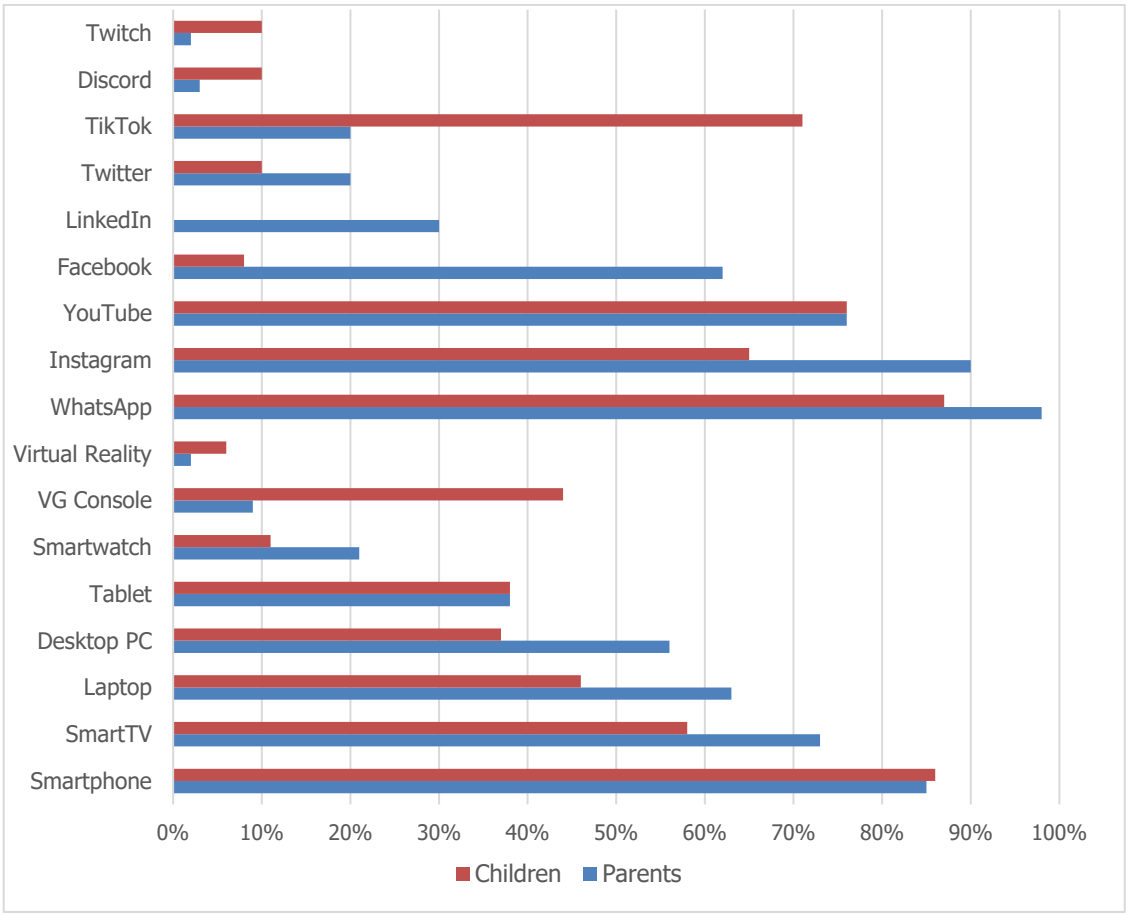
#### 4.3.2. Compared Use of Devices and Platforms

When comparing reported parental and children's digital usage, it becomes evident that the smartphone is the most widely used device in both groups, showing a balanced usage between parents and children. Tablets and YouTube also display similar levels of use across both groups. However, some generational differences are observed.

Parents show a higher prevalence of desktop PC and laptop use, as well as platforms like LinkedIn, likely due to their association with professional activities. Meanwhile, children dominate the use of gaming consoles and platforms such as TikTok, Discord, and Twitch, which are primarily linked to entertainment and peer socialization.

These differentiated usage patterns reflect the distinct interests of each group, as well as the generational characteristics of their engagement with digital technologies in daily life.

Figure 2: Compared Use of Digital Devices and Platforms




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Multi-response items (respondents could select more than one option); therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%. Device-use percentages are calculated over respondents who answered the device question (Parents N=343; Children N=274). Platform-use percentages are calculated over respondents who answered the platform question (Parents N=339; Children N=274).

#### 4.3.3. Children's Digital Practices

Regarding children's digital practices, the most popular activity across all age groups is "watching videos on YouTube/TikTok," with a slight increase in the 14-15 age group.

"Playing online with others" has a high prevalence among 10-13-year-olds, exceeding 70%, but this decreases in older age groups. In contrast, "chatting" follows the opposite trend, increasing with age, possibly reflecting a growing preference for social interaction through messaging in middle adolescence.

Other activities such as "listening to music" and "watching series or movies" also show an increase with age, with high engagement among older adolescents. Meanwhile, "listening to podcasts" and "live streaming on social media" also rise with age, though they maintain lower overall percentages.

Table 6: Children – Digital Practices

| **Activities** | **10-13 (N=139)** | | **14-15 (N=58)** | | **16-17 (N=77)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **%** | **Q** | **%** | **Q** | **%** | **Q** |
| Watching videos on YouTube/TikTok | 84.89% | 118 | 91.38% | 53 | 89.61% | 69 |
| Playing online with others | 74.10% | 103 | 53.45% | 31 | 50.65% | 39 |
| Chatting | 58.99% | 82 | 79.31% | 46 | 90.91% | 70 |
| Listening to music | 58.27% | 81 | 91.38% | 53 | 85.71% | 66 |
| Watching series or movies via streaming | 50.36% | 70 | 55.17% | 32 | 70.13% | 54 |
| Studying/working online | 37.41% | 52 | 56.90% | 33 | 62.34% | 48 |
| Downloading applications | 52.52% | 73 | 39.66% | 23 | 55.84% | 43 |
| Sharing images or videos on social media | 31.65% | 44 | 50.00% | 29 | 54.55% | 42 |
| Posting stories on social media | 32.37% | 45 | 53.45% | 31 | 62.34% | 48 |
| Sharing audio, photos, or videos | 30.94% | 43 | 39.66% | 23 | 58.44% | 45 |
| Taking selfies or recording oneself | 32.37% | 45 | 44.83% | 26 | 49.35% | 38 |
| Reading/watching news online | 13.67% | 19 | 18.97% | 11 | 35.06% | 27 |
| Listening to podcasts | 7.91% | 11 | 22.41% | 13 | 32.47% | 25 |
| Live streaming on social media | 7.91% | 11 | 10.34% | 6 | 16.88% | 13 |

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Percentages and absolute counts (Q) are shown for each activity. Percentages are calculated using, for each age group, the number of respondents who answered the multi-response question (selected at least one option), so N is constant across activities within each age group.

#### 4.3.4. Compared Digital Practices

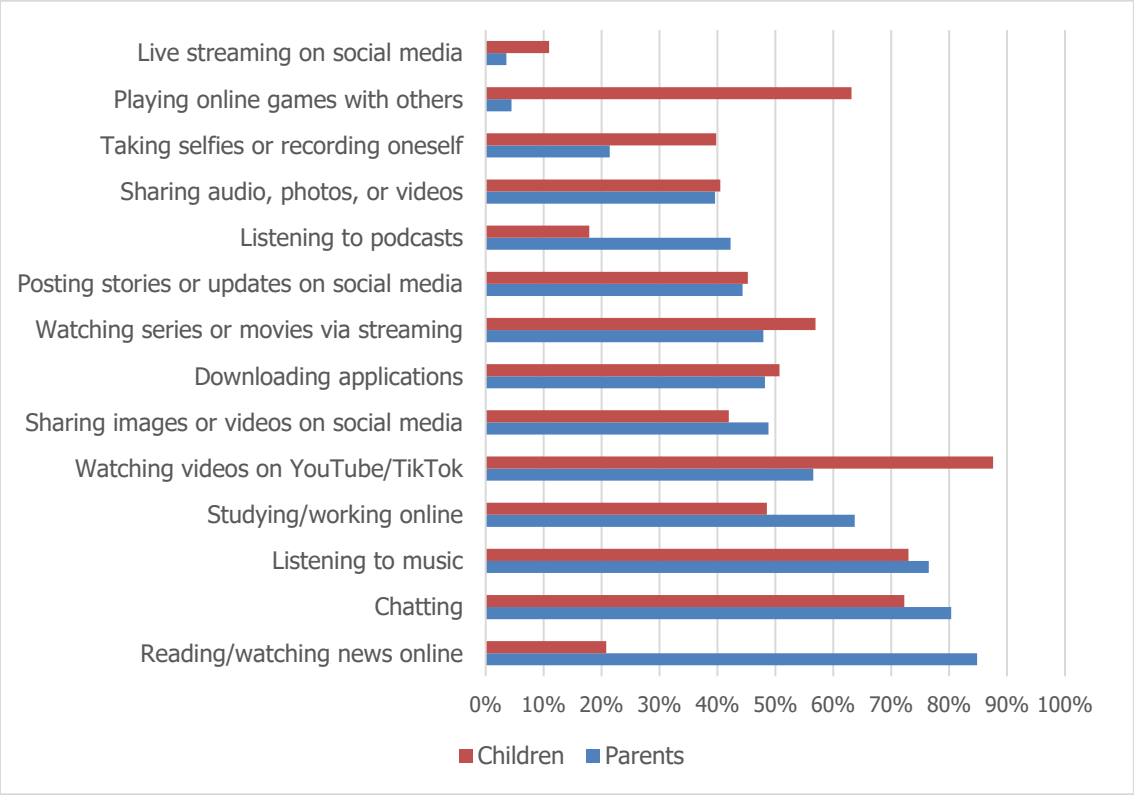
When comparing the digital practices of parents and children, clear differences emerge. Parents show a higher prevalence in activities such as "reading/watching news online" and "studying/working online", while children

dominate activities like "playing online with others", "taking selfies or recording oneself", "live streaming on social media", and "posting stories on social media".

These patterns reflect how digital practices are distributed across different spheres, with work-related activities being more prevalent among parents and entertainment-oriented activities being dominant among children. Social interaction practices appear balanced, though with distinct characteristics in each group.

Other activities, such as "listening to music", "watching videos on YouTube/TikTok", and "sharing audio, photos, or videos", show a more balanced distribution, becoming commonplace practices in daily life.

Figure 3: Compared Practices



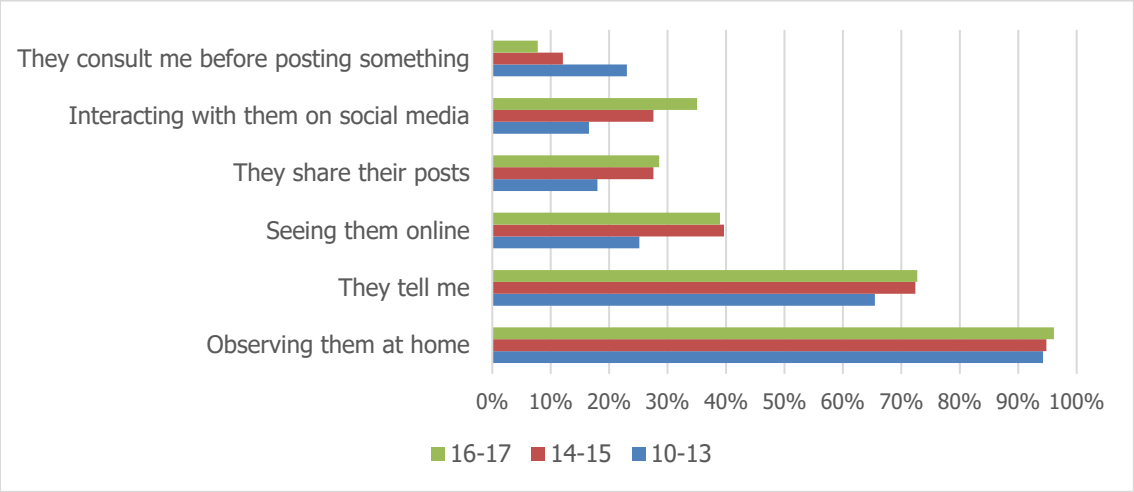

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Multi-response item (respondents could select more than one option); therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%. Percentages are calculated over respondents who answered the practices question (Parents N=336; Children N=274).

#### 4.3.5. Parental Access to Information

How do parents gain insight into their children's digital activities? Observing them at home is the most reported method across all age groups. Talking to them is the second most frequent approach, with a significant increase among 14-15 and 16-17-year-olds, which could suggest a more open dialogue as children mature.

Methods, such as seeing them online and having them share their posts, also increase in the older age groups, aligning with greater social media interaction, which grows markedly with age. In contrast, prior consultation before posting something about them decreases among older children, possibly reflecting a developing sense of autonomy.

Figure 4: Parental Awareness of Children's Digital Activities




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Multi-response item. Percentages do not sum to 100%. Percentages by age group are calculated over respondents who answered the item (selected at least one option): 10–13 years (N=139), 14–15 years (N=58), 16–17 years (N=77).

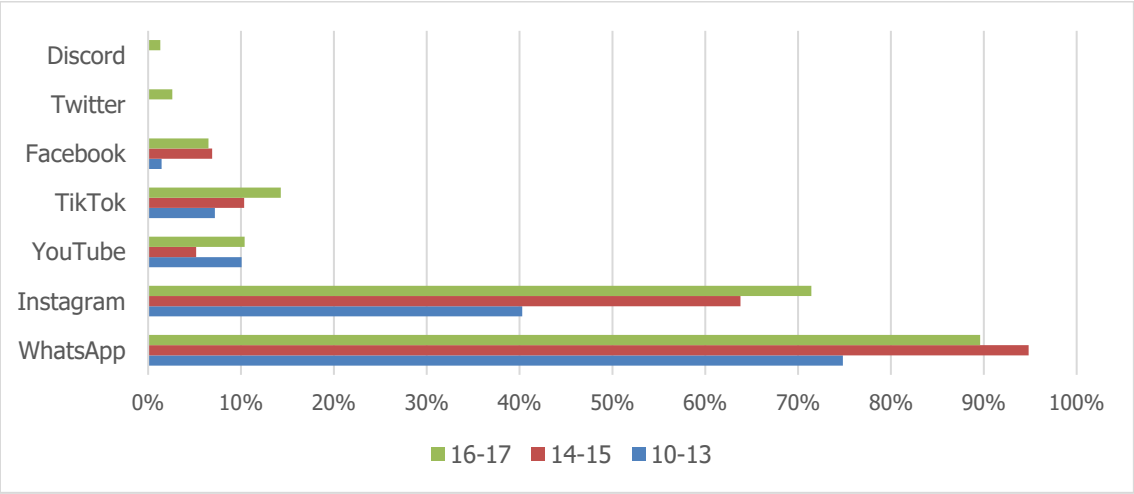
## 4.4. Section 4. Shared Digital Habits

This section consists of four parts: platform use, joint activities, formative mediation, and the intersection of uses and practices. The latter includes two subcategories: comparative platform use and comparative practices.

### 4.4.1. Shared Platform Use

The following figure presents data on platforms used for parent-child interaction, as reported by parents across the three defined age groups. Overall, the data show notable differences in platform use by age, with certain platforms emerging as more prominent shared spaces between parents and adolescents.

Figure 5: Parent-Child Interaction Platforms




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Multi-response item. Percentages do not sum to 100%. Percentages by age group are calculated over respondents who answered the item (selected at least one option): 10–13 years (N=139), 14–15 years (N=58), 16–17 years (N=77).

#### 4.4.2. Shared Digital Practices

Figure 6 lists the joint online activities between parents and children, with data segmented by children's age groups.

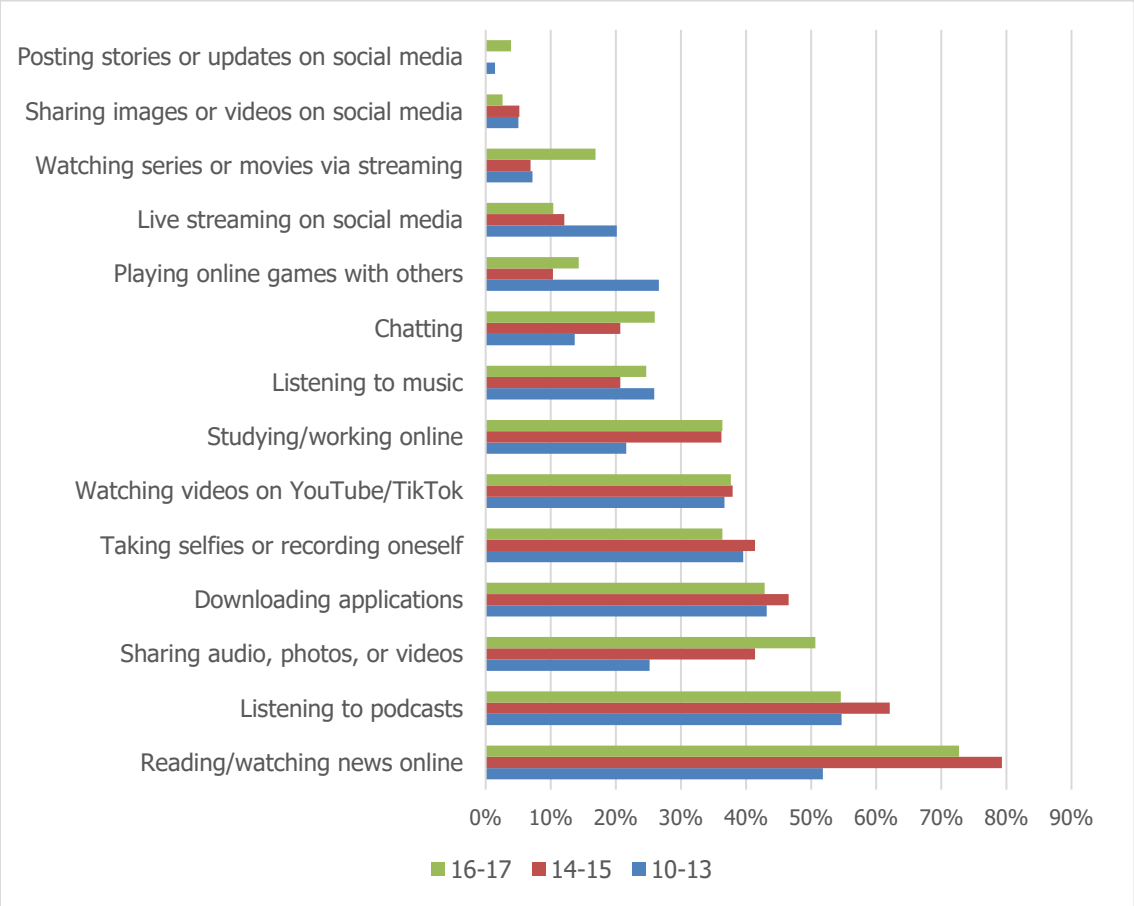
"Reading/watching news online" emerges as a shared practice across all age groups; however, this pattern should be interpreted considering its relatively low individual baseline among adolescents (Table 6). In other words, the activity appears more frequently in co-use contexts than as a standalone practice reported for children. This suggests that, in this sample, adolescents' exposure to online news may occur primarily through joint parent–child interactions—often initiated, curated, or scaffolded by parents—rather than through independent consumption. Consistent with this interpretation, 51.80% of parents of children aged 10–13, 79.31% of those with children aged 14–15, and 72.73% of those with children aged 16–17 report engaging in this activity together (Figure 6), indicating high levels of sharing that peak in mid-adolescence despite the low individual base.

Interest in podcasts appears to remain stable regardless of the children's age, showing a slight increase in the 14-15 age group, like "taking selfies or recording oneself". "Sharing audio, photos, or videos" increases significantly with age, with 25.18% in the 10-13 age group, 41.38% in the 14-15 age group, and 50.65% in the 16-17 age group, indicating a growing trend.

"Playing online with others" is more common in families with younger children (26.62% for ages 10-13) but declines with age. On the other hand, "watching series or movies via streaming", while not very common among younger groups, sees a significant increase in the 16-17 age group (16.88%).

Overall, the figure provides insight into how virtual environments can become spaces for family participation. It reveals that some joint online activities, such as reading news and sharing multimedia content, increase with age, while others, such as playing online and taking selfies, tend to decline. This may reflect shifting interests and behaviors as children mature.

Figure 6: Shared Digital Practices



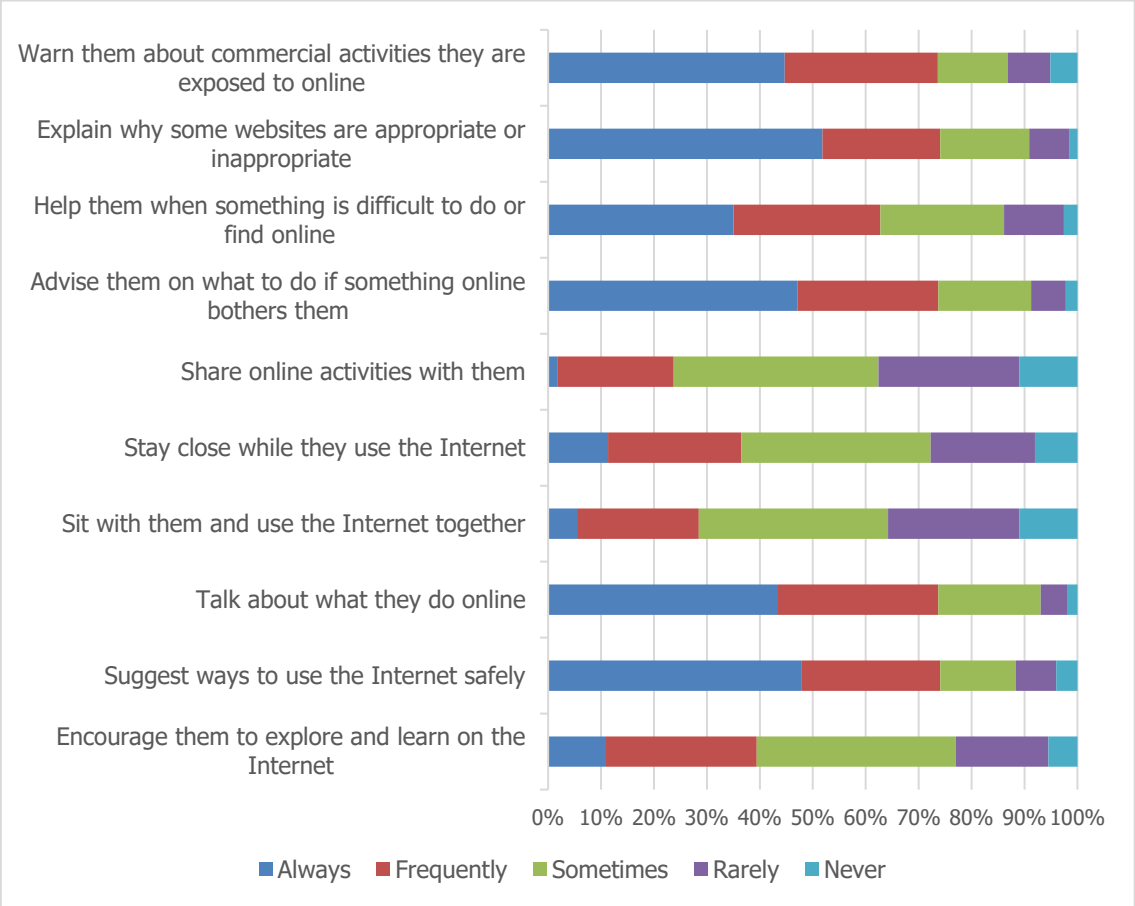

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Multi-response item. Percentages do not sum to 100%. Percentages by age group are calculated over respondents who answered the item (selected at least one option): 10–13 years (N=139), 14–15 years (N=58), 16–17 years (N=77).

### 4.4.3. Formative Mediation

Figure 7 illustrates how mothers and fathers engage in mediating actions regarding their children's digital activities. "Explaining why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate" and "advising them on what to do if something online bothers them" are the most common practices, with the highest percentages in the "always" and "frequently" categories across all age groups. This suggests a strong parental concern for children's online safety and well-being. Other highly adopted practices include "suggesting ways to use the Internet safely", "discussing online activities", and "warning them about commercial activities".

On the other hand, direct interaction—such as "sitting with them to use the Internet together", "staying nearby while they use the Internet", or "sharing online activities"—is reported as less frequent. This may indicate that adolescents seek greater online independence as they grow older.

Figure 7: Parental Educational Mediation



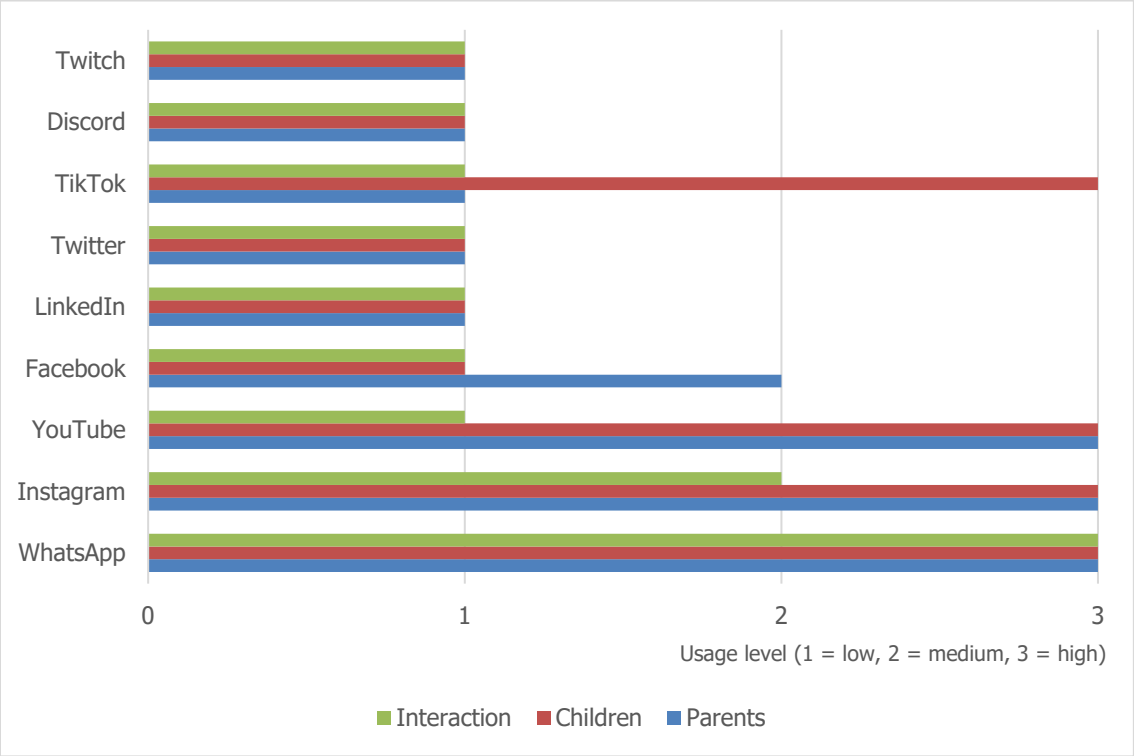

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Response scale: Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Rarely, Never. Percentages are calculated over valid responses per item (missing responses excluded), as respondents were allowed to skip questions.

## 4.5. Intersection of Uses and Practices

### 4.5.1. Comparative Platform Use

This section synthesizes and compares previously presented data (Tables 3 & 5, Figure 5). The findings indicate that parent-child interactions are highly concentrated, with low diversification. These interactions primarily occur on platforms that already have high individual usage, which seems to drive shared use as well.

Figure 8: Comparative Platform Use




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Usage levels summarize the share of respondents selecting each platform within each group: Low (<33%), Medium (33–66%), High (>67%). Multi-response items: percentages may exceed 100% across platforms. Parents' platform use is based on respondents who answered the platform question (N=339); children's platform use is based on the child module (N=274); "Interaction" is based on respondents who answered the interaction-platform item (N=274).

Firstly, WhatsApp stands out with high interaction, followed by Instagram, which has a medium level of interaction. In contrast, YouTube, a platform widely used by both groups, shows low levels of interaction, possibly due to its interface structure.

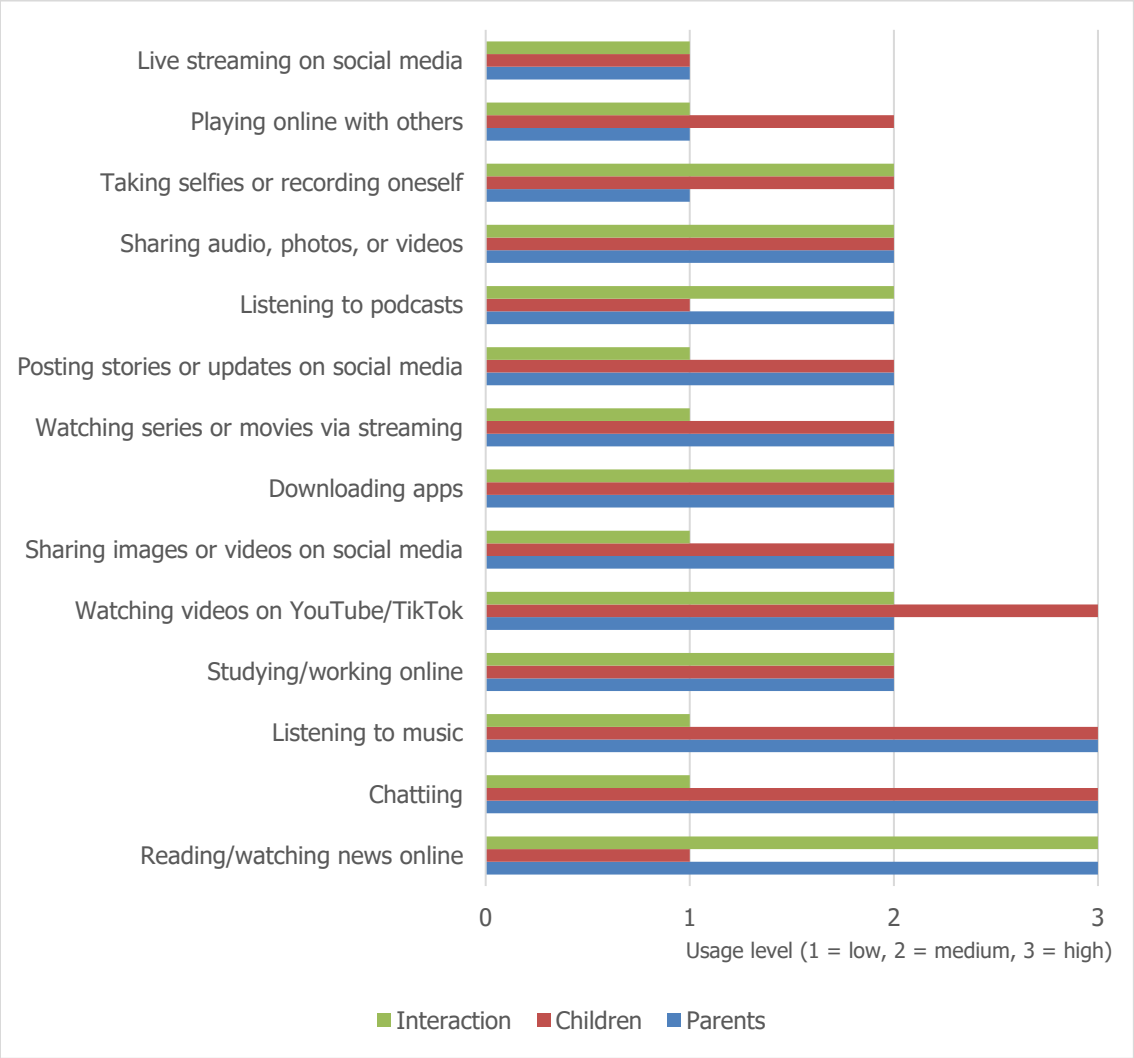
In the case of TikTok, which is intensively used by children, interactions remain low, likely because adults also report low individual usage. Facebook follows a similar pattern, with medium usage among parents but low usage among children, resulting in low parent-child interaction.

Thus, the generational differences in platform usage, along with the varying levels and types of interaction they promote, seem to be reflected in the shared online practices of parents and children.

#### 4.5.2. Compared Practices

Figure 9 shows that, in general, joint activities remain at medium and low levels, even in cases where they have high individual engagement, such as "chatting" or "listening to music".

Figure 9: Compared Practices




Source: Own elaboration. Note: Usage levels summarize the share of respondents selecting each activity within each group: Low (<33%), Medium (33–66%), High (>67%). Multi-response items; percentages may exceed 100% across activities. Parents' practices are based on respondents who answered the practices question (N=336); children's practices are based on the child module (N=274); "Shared" refers to joint practices reported in the shared-activities item (N=274).

It is observed that parents have a high individual engagement in "reading/watching news online", while children show high engagement in "watching videos on YouTube/TikTok". "Chatting" and "listening to music" present high levels in both groups but low joint incidence.

The common medium-intensity activities—"taking selfies," "downloading apps", "listening to podcasts", "watching videos on YouTube/TikTok", "sharing audios, photos, or videos", and "studying/working online"—also show some level of individual practice in either group. This suggests that joint usage might be driven by these individual preferences.

Meanwhile, "reading/watching news online" has high engagement among parents, low among children, yet high in joint practice. In all cases, the disparity in practices reflects generational differences and possibly parental expectations.

## 5. Discussion

The results of the presented track highlight how parental figures in this sample engage in active mediation, which tends to relax as children grow older. This could reflect a transition towards progressive digital autonomy, aligning with the need for flexible and adaptive mediation (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). It also reinforces the idea that digital parenting transcends mere mediation and is shaped within digital environments themselves (Castro-Sánchez, 2022; Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024).

Moreover, the observed patterns suggest that parenting strategies are not only reactive to children's behavior but also conditioned by the logic and design of the platforms themselves. Interface structures, algorithmic feeds, and data-driven nudges influence how parents perceive risk, visibility, and engagement, potentially steering their mediation efforts in specific directions (Mascheroni & Siibak, 2021).

The decline in direct mediation, such as "sitting together to use the internet", could be interpreted as a response to the growing autonomy of children. However, this also raises challenges in balancing parental guidance with respect for privacy (Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024). Active parental participation in platforms poses ethical dilemmas regarding children's privacy management, a critical issue highlighted by Castro-Sánchez et al. (2024).

The centrality of platforms in family practices raises concerns about data extraction and commercialization, as warned by Zuboff (2019) and Srnicek (2017). This suggests the need to educate both parents and children about the risks associated with technology use in a context of digital surveillance. Against this backdrop, the prominence of platforms like WhatsApp supports the idea that parent-child interactions are being reshaped by platformization dynamics (Poell et al., 2022). This raises questions about how interactions, practices, and relational identities within families are being shaped.

Furthermore, there are generational markers in digital environments. While parents in this group report acceptable levels of perceived digital competence, there is a low diversification of parent-child interactions. This may be due to generational preferences that limit the use of popular platforms among children, such as TikTok. Even in cases of overlap—where both parents and children use platforms like YouTube and Instagram—joint interactions remain low. This could be because the platform structures themselves foster diverse experiences (Van Dijck, 2016), potentially limiting certain role dynamics or prioritizing individual over shared usage.

The limited overlap also reflects differences in digital literacies, expectations, and the affective meanings attributed to various platforms. While parents often engage with digital technologies for instrumental or communicational purposes, children may prioritize expressive or identity-based uses, which are less accessible to adult mediation. These contrasts set the conditions under which negotiation, co-presence, and care are enacted.

Finally, we emphasize that the integration of technologies into daily life is not only redefining practices but also transforming roles and expectations among different actors (Hjarvard, 2013). In this sense, the reported mediatized and platformized daily experiences have implications for family dynamics and reconfigure parental roles (Castro-Sánchez et al., 2024; Sefton-Green et al., 2025), reinforcing the need to consider digital parenting as a complex phenomenon.

The findings invite us to consider how social class, educational background, and gender intersect with digital parenting practices. In this sample, the predominance of highly educated urban mothers suggests a specific profile of digitally engaged parents, whose practices may not be generalizable to other sociocultural settings. Access to digital tools, confidence in using them, and the ability to establish meaningful mediation strategies are not distributed equally across populations. These disparities raise critical questions about digital inequalities within families and the reproduction of broader social asymmetries through platformized parenting (Livingstone et al., 2011; Grané I Oró, 2021). Exploring these intersections is essential for designing inclusive educational interventions and public policies that support diverse parenting realities in the digital age.

## 6. Conclusions

The data reveal a contrast between the high reported usage levels of platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram, both individually and in group settings, compared to other digital activities that are less common or tend to be more private for children, such as online gaming or live streaming.

The results highlight the central role of the smartphone as a facilitator in the platformization of relational interactions within families. It functions as the key device through which daily practices are organized, mediated, and reconfigured. Within this phenomenon, WhatsApp emerges as a multipurpose platform that facilitates instant communication and structures coordination, care, and affective expression dynamics in the family environment. It is a key communication tool between parents and children, with its use in direct interactions increasing as children get older.

Children's digital autonomy grows with age as well, leading to a decrease in direct parental supervision. In parallel, parental engagement is expanding into digital spaces, potentially reshaping everyday family dynamics. The findings reflect an expansion in children's digital independence with age, accompanied by a shift in parents' mediating roles.

Differences in device usage, platform preferences, and digital practices between parents and children are evident. However, there are also points of convergence, such as the shared use of WhatsApp and Instagram. This suggests opportunities to strengthen formative mediation in joint activities, particularly around digital safety and educational content consumption.

With these considerations in mind, this study is exploratory and context-specific. The survey is based on a non-probabilistic sample and is not statistically representative; therefore, findings are not generalizable to the broader population. Moreover, the sample is strongly skewed toward urban, highly educated respondents and includes a high proportion of mothers, which further constrains the scope of inference. Rather than population estimates, results should be read as indicative patterns within a particular sociocultural profile, which may offer contextually relevant insights for comparable settings in Argentina. Another limitation is that the study captures only parents' perspectives, excluding adolescents' voices despite their central role in platformized family life. Future research should incorporate adolescents' accounts and triangulate perspectives within households.

In addition, comparative research across socioeconomic groups in Argentina could illuminate how structural inequalities shape access, digital competence, and mediation strategies. Understanding these variations is essential for developing culturally responsive approaches to digital parenting that acknowledge the diversity of contemporary family contexts in the country.

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**Conflict of interest**
The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Ethical statement**
This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of scientific research and did not require additional ethics committee approval.

**Declaration of AI usage**
Generative AI tools were used for language editing and manuscript formatting. The author reviewed all content and approved the final text. No generative AI tools were used to generate or modify data, perform analyses, or interpret results.

**Data availability**
The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request.

**Author contributions**
The author is solely responsible for the conception, research, writing, and revision of this manuscript.

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