

How Parents Shape Adolescent Screen Time: Findings from Denmark and Ireland

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European response to public concern about digital technologies



Digital Services Act
2024



Press release

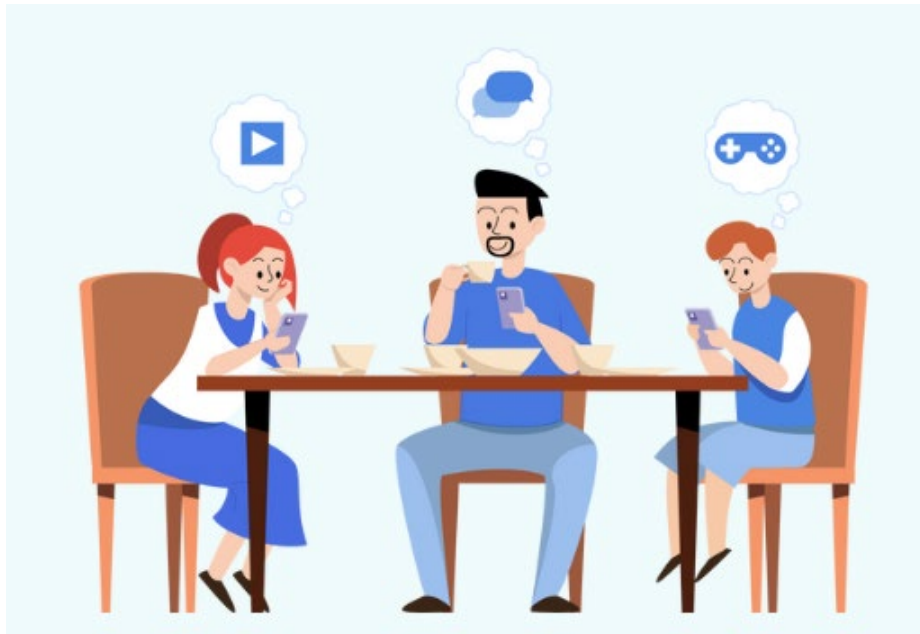
Minister McEntee issues new guidance on mobile phone use in schools, supported by €9 million funding



Denmark plans social media ban for under-15s as PM warns phones 'stealing childhood'



Parental strategies to safeguard children's online safety



Parental screen time

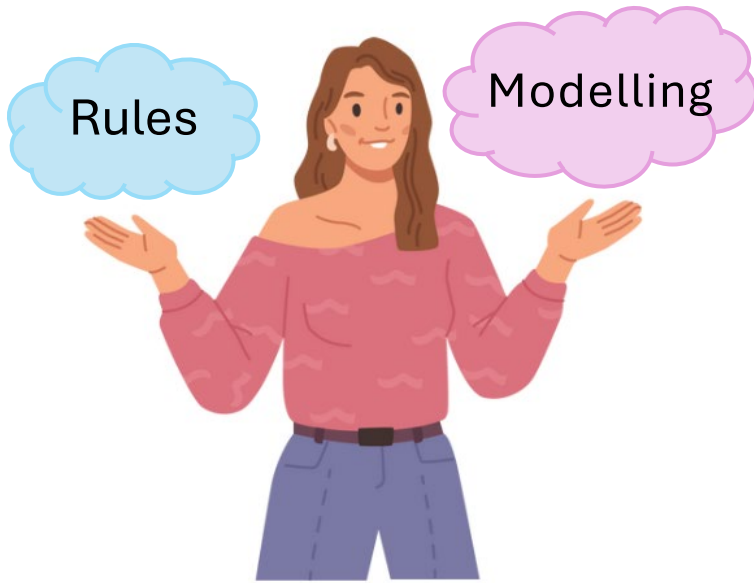
Jago et al., 2012; Lauricella et al., 2015
Sørensen et al., 2023



Screen time rules

Nagata et al., 2025; Bjeland et al., 2015
Pedersen et al., 2022

The current study



Liu et al., 2012

Limited evidence for the relative influence of parents' rules and behaviour on adolescent screen time.



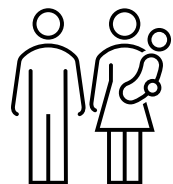
Our research questions:

1. Do parental screen time and rules correlate with adolescents' screen time?
2. Does parental screen time have a stronger association with adolescents' screen time than parental screen time rules?
3. Do relationships vary by parent gender, child gender or country?

Methods



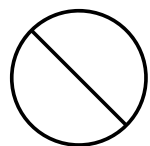
Growing up in Ireland



Born in 2008 (age 13)
N = 4424



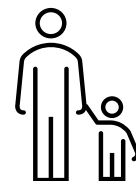
Time spent on screen-based activities
(parent-reported)



Rule on total time spent on devices (parent-reported)



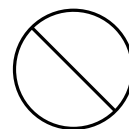
Danish data



8 – 15 years old
N = 1025



Time spent on social media
(parent- and child-reported)

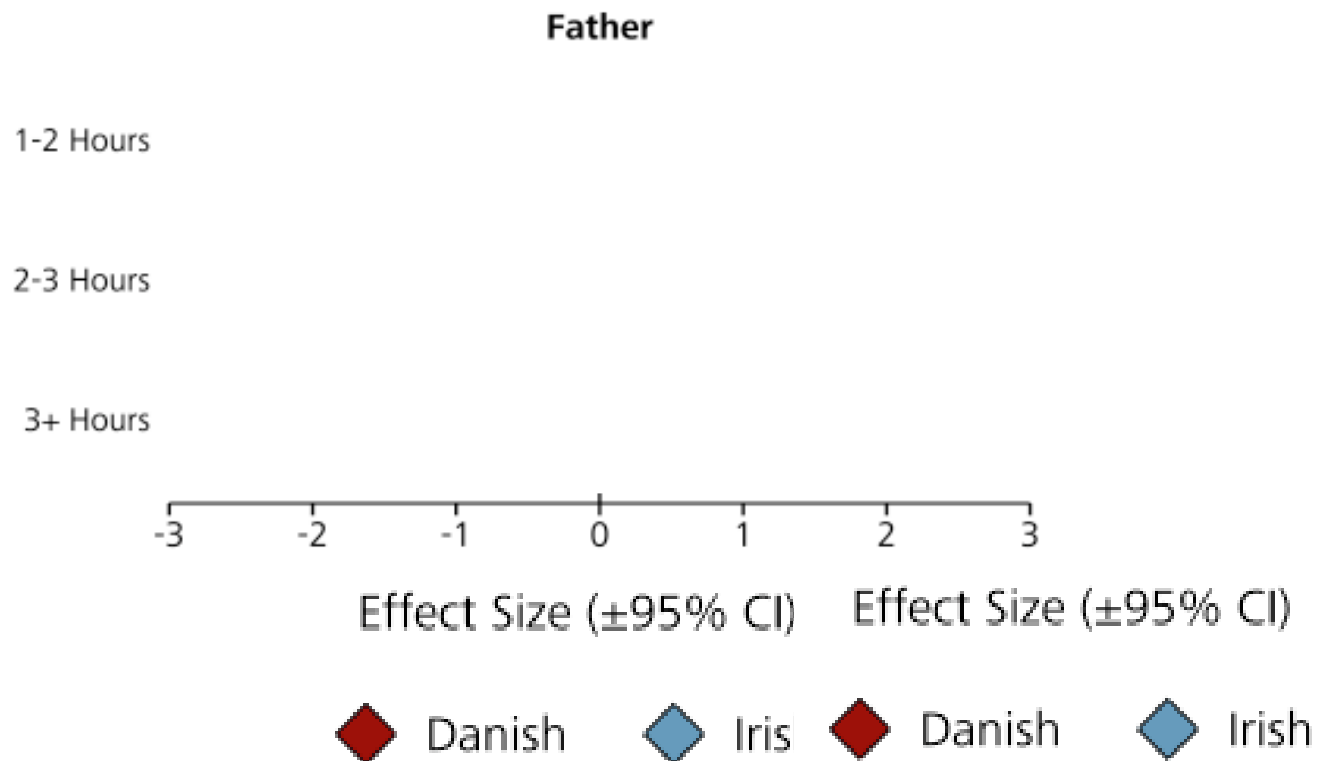


Rules about time spent on phone (child-reported)



Objective screentime data
(n=352 matched-pairs)

Child screen time (2+ hours) ~ parent screen time



Reference group: < 1 hour of screen time

Model controls: (D) parental gender, age, region, income, education, composition;
(I) region, children n, SES, parental age, employment, education;
(D & I): Screen time rules (yes/no)

Parental screen rules ~ child screen time

Time

Parental modelling
of screen time rules are independently
associated with children's screen time

3.0

Reference group: No household rules for time spent on (I) electric devices, or (D) phone

Model controls: (D) parental gender, age, region, income, education, composition;

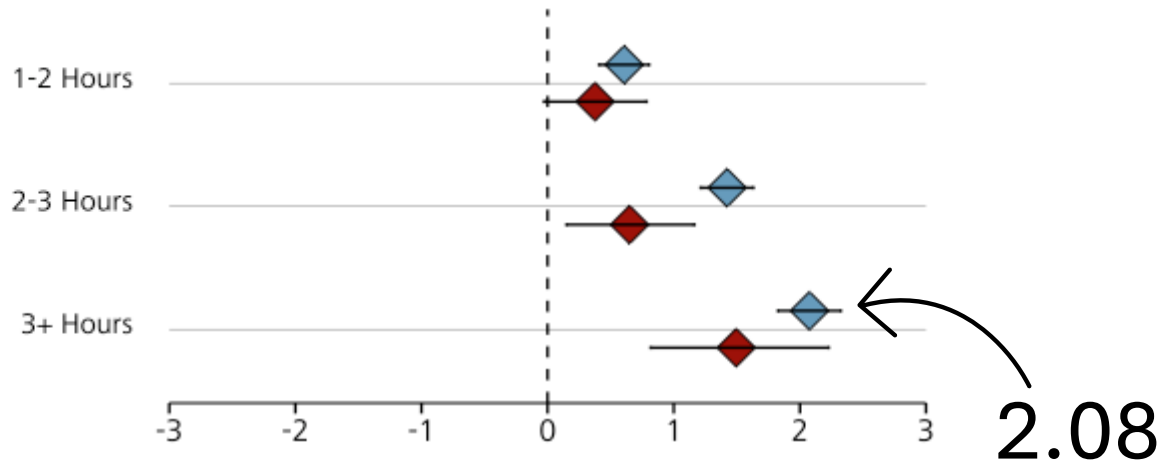
(I) region, children n, SES, parental age, employment, education;

(D & I): Parental screen time (categorical)

Which has a stronger effect: behaviour or rules?

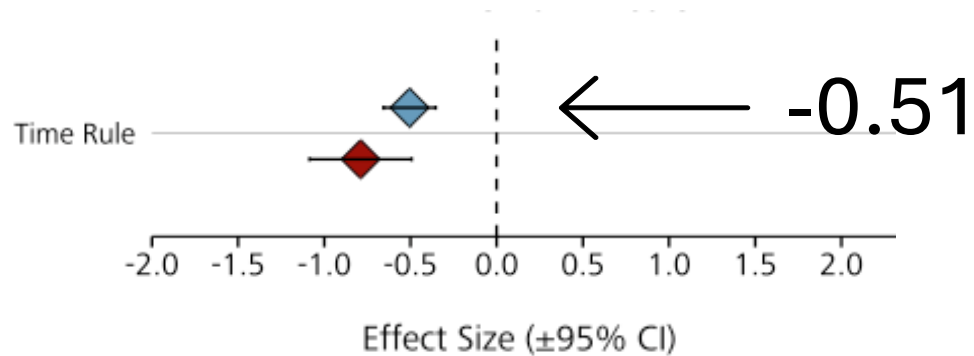


Mother's screen time



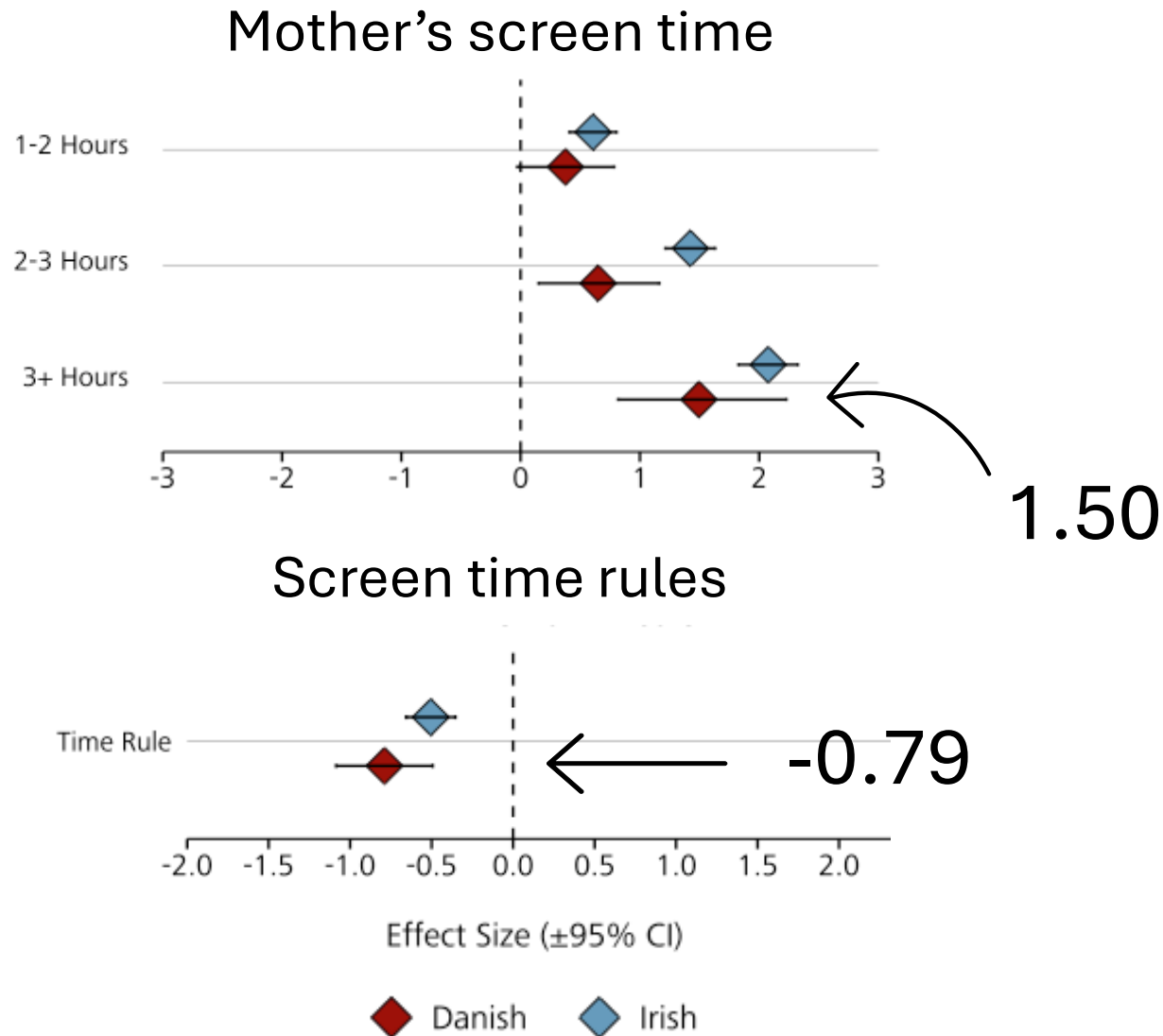
The effect size of mothers' screen time (+3 hours) is 4 times larger than the effect of screen rules (Irish data)

Screen time rules



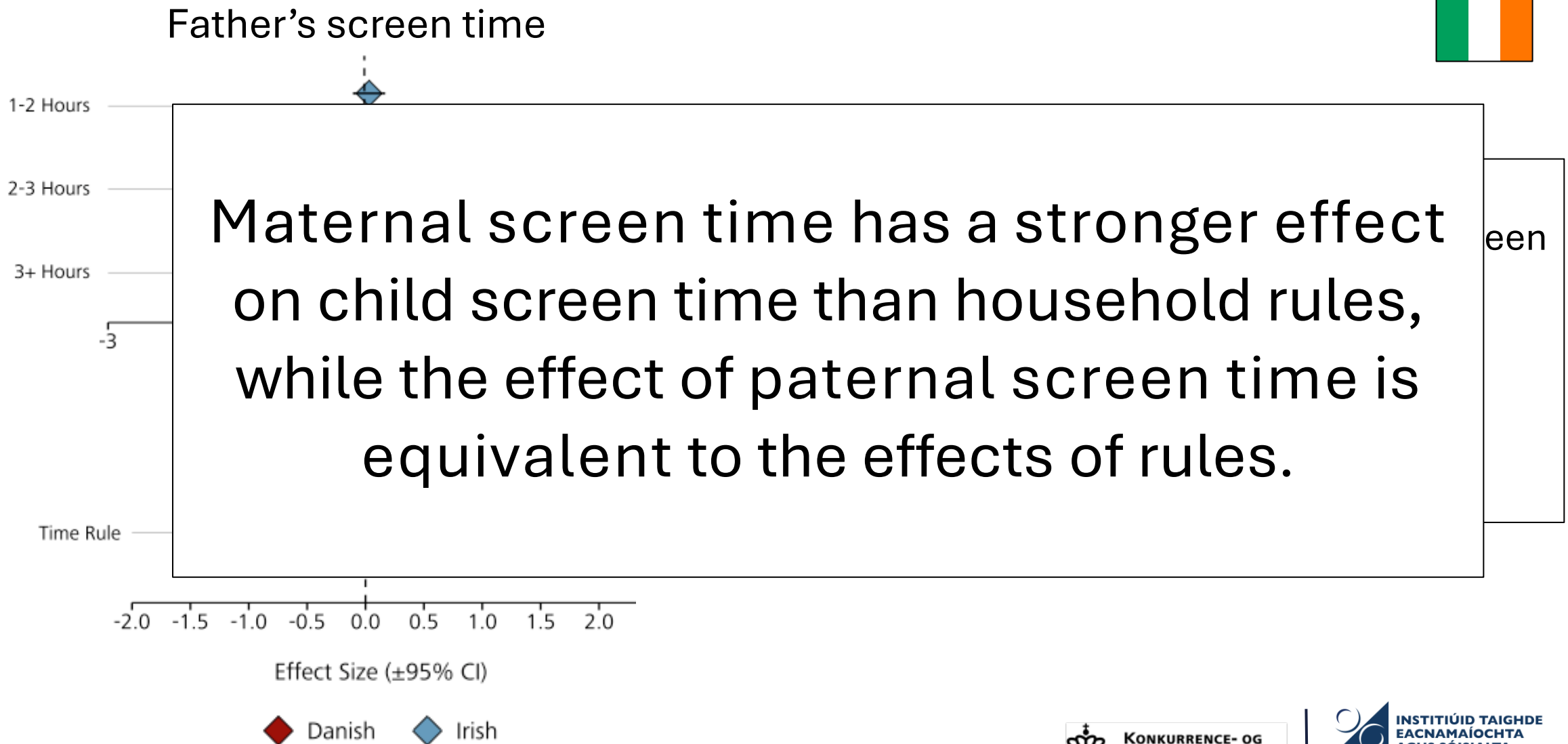
◆ Danish ◆ Irish

Which has a stronger effect: behaviour or rules?

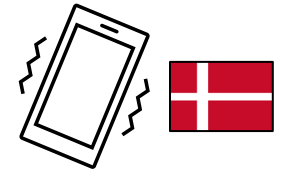


The effect size of mothers' social media time (+3 hours) is nearly 2 times larger than the effect of a phone time rule (Danish data)

Which has a stronger effect: behaviour or rules?

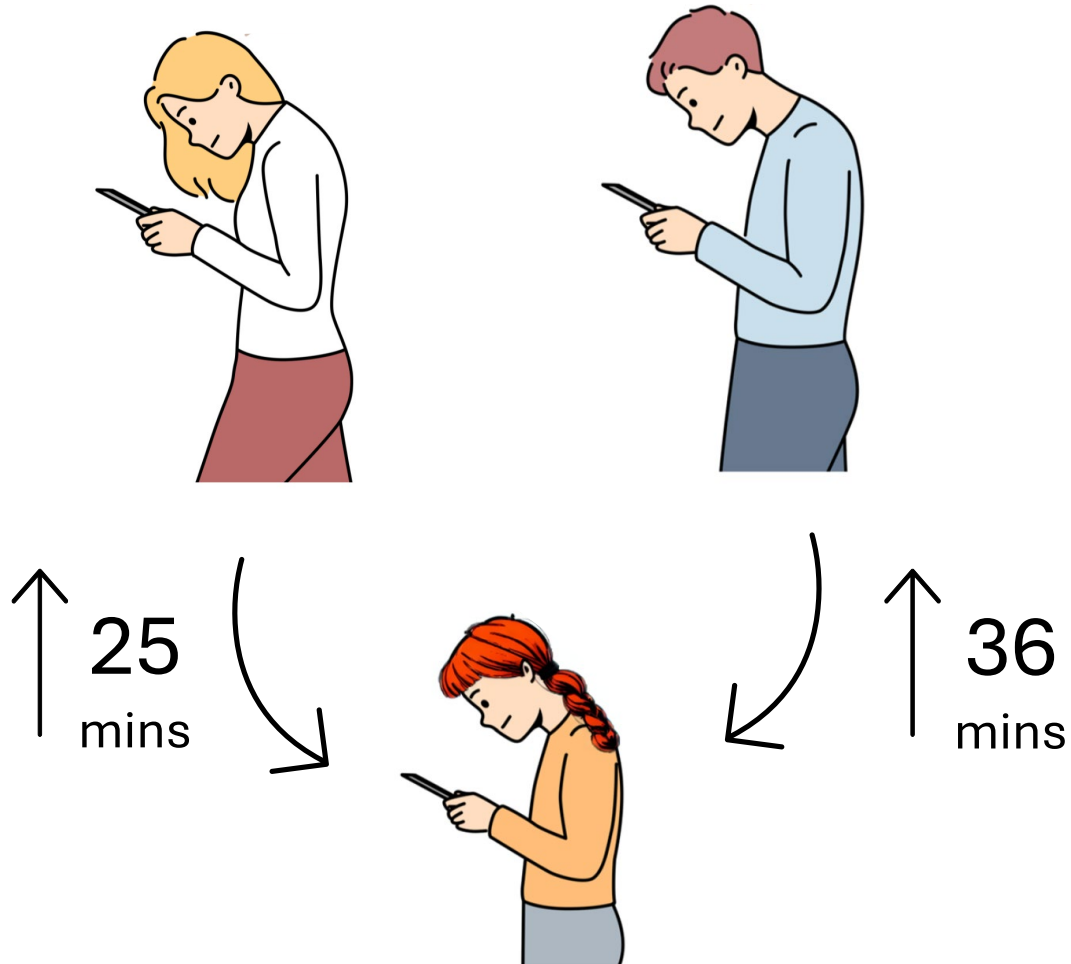


Objective data (device screenshots)



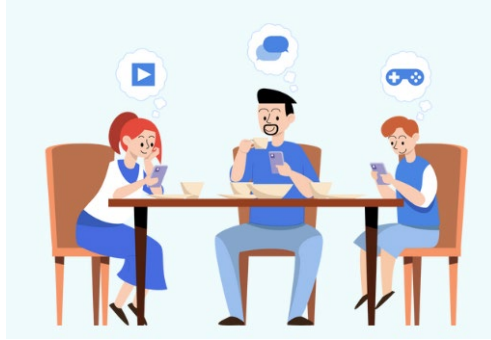
n=352 pairs

For every extra minute of parental social media time...

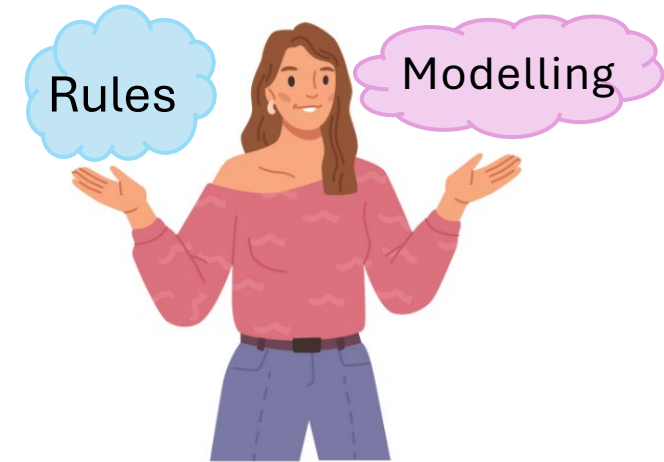


The association between parents' social media screen time and sons' social media use is not significant.

Discussion



Parental screen time and rules are independently associated with children's screen time.



Comparing same-household parents, maternal screen time exerts a stronger influence than paternal screen time.



Objective social media time data reveal gendered intergenerational effects.

Maternal modelling effects were stronger than household rules effects.

Conclusion

Limitations & Future Directions

- Cross-sectional data.
- Methodological variability.
- Other parental strategies.
- Alternative factors that influence children's screen time.

Key takeaway message:

Fostering children's digital well-being extends beyond policy guidance to the everyday practices of parents, balancing mindful modelling with consistent and communicative rule-setting.

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Thank you
for listening!

Any
questions?

