

# The effects of smartphone use on parenting

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Parents may worry that spending time on their smartphones has a negative impact on their relationships with their children. However, a new comprehensive analysis published in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* found that this is unlikely to be the case.

In the analysis of data from 3, 659 parent-based surveys, the authors tested 84 different possibilities to assess whether smartphone use was associated with parenting, and they found little evidence. Accordingly, they explored whether the effect of phone use on parenting depended on whether it displaced time with family and was associated with family conflict.

At low levels of displacing time with family, more smartphone use was associated with better (not worse) parenting. The authors noted that, especially considering diverse family environments, smartphones play multiple roles in family life, and when not heavily impacting on family time, may have a positive role in parenting.

"The challenge with much of the technology-family literature is that it has mainly stemmed from an assumption of risk and problems. As a result, small and uneven findings can become the focus of media, policymakers, and parents," said lead author Kathryn L. Modecki, Ph.D., of Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University, in Australia. "This is an issue because it can cloud our insight as we focus on ways to meaningfully assist parents and families to enhance positive outcomes." Thus, Dr. Modecki and her colleagues used a transparent approach that mapped a myriad of ways that smartphones could link to family wellbeing. "We found very little evidence of problems and hope these data help move us towards more constructive and nuanced conversations around families' diverse experiences with technology, actual risks associated with parenting, and where we can best support," she said.

**More information:** Kathryn L. Modecki et al, Tuning into the real effect of smartphone use on parenting: a multiverse analysis, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/jcpp.13282](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13282)

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