



Parental Parenting Patterns and Social Media Use: Students' Social Attitudes Building

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Nov 16, 2025
Revised Dec 23, 2025
Accepted Jan 20, 2026
OnlineFirst Jan 31, 2026

Keywords:

Adolescents
Parenting Styles
Social Attitudes
Social Media Use

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The rapid expansion of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped adolescents' social interactions, raising concerns regarding the formation of social attitudes within educational settings. This study aims to examine the interplay between parenting styles and the intensity of social media use in shaping students' social attitudes at the junior secondary school level.

Methodology: Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with students and parents, systematic classroom observations, and documentation analysis, and were validated using data triangulation techniques.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that authoritative (democratic) parenting, characterized by a balanced combination of behavioral demands and emotional responsiveness, plays a crucial role in fostering positive social attitudes, including self-regulation, empathy, and collaborative skills. Students raised within a democratic family climate demonstrate internalized moral reasoning, enabling them to maintain socially appropriate behavior without reliance on external supervision. In contrast, excessive social media use is associated with social withdrawal, fragmented attention, and diminished quality of face-to-face interactions in school contexts. High levels of digital engagement were found to displace opportunities for direct interpersonal communication, leading to what can be described as social atrophy and alienation.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the protective function of authoritative parenting in mitigating the negative social effects of intensive digital media use. The results underscore that the family remains a critical socialization arena in the digital era, capable of strengthening adolescents' social resilience when supported by effective communication and guided autonomy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially a fundamental instrument in the process of character transformation and the formation of individual social attitudes, with the goal of producing a generation that excels not only intellectually but also possesses moral integrity, social responsibility, and emotional maturity. Education is not solely oriented

toward the transmission of cognitive knowledge; it also serves as a vehicle for the internalization of social values, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, care, politeness, and the ability to cooperate in community life [1]-[3]. These social attitudes provide a crucial foundation for students to build healthy and ethical social relationships, both within the school environment and in the wider community.

However, in the contemporary era, educational institutions face increasingly complex challenges as digital technology penetrates students' lives. Digital transformation has significantly altered adolescents' social interaction patterns, with virtual spaces now becoming the primary arena for building self-identity and social relationships [4]-[8]. Students' social attitudes are no longer formed exclusively through direct interactions within the family and school environment, but are also heavily influenced by the dynamics of communication and self-representation on social media. This situation demands a more adaptive and contextual educational approach to fostering students' social character.

The digitalization of education in Madiun City, manifested through the policy of providing laptops and Chromebooks for junior high school students, has, on the one hand, accelerated access to information and digital literacy. However, this policy has also given rise to complex sociological implications. Initial observations at High School 7 Madiun indicate a trend toward increasing cases of cyberbullying, verbal conflicts on social media that escalate into physical altercations, and a decline in communication etiquette among eighth-grade students. These findings align with previous research suggesting that the use of digital technology without adequate value guidance may weaken adolescents' empathy, self-control, and social responsibility [9]-[15].

Social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become integral to students' daily lives, often used for entertainment and as a coping mechanism to reduce academic stress. However, intense social media use without reinforcing moral values risks creating an environment of anonymity that erodes empathy and increases verbal and symbolic aggression [16]-[18]. In this context, parenting styles function as a primary internal filter, shaping children's social attitudes. Democratic parenting styles, characterized by open communication, appropriate supervision, and guided autonomy, have been shown to improve adolescents' self-control and social responsibility. Conversely, overly authoritarian or permissive parenting styles tend to contribute to the emergence of compensatory behaviors in digital spaces, including verbal aggression and withdrawal from real social interactions [19]-[22].

Although numerous studies have examined parenting styles and social media use in relation to adolescent development, the existing literature remains characterized by several conceptual and methodological limitations. First, most prior research has employed a quantitative, correlational approach, focusing on the strength of statistical relationships between variables without delving deeply into the sociopsychological processes underlying the formation of students' social attitudes. As a result, the mechanisms of value internalization, the dynamics of self-control, and the role of family communication in the digital context have not been comprehensively described [23]-[27]. Second, many studies position social media solely as an external factor with negative effects, without simultaneously examining its interaction with parenting styles, the primary value system within the family. Yet, several recent studies confirm that the impact of digital media is largely determined by the quality of mentoring and value regulation within the family environment [28]-[32]. Third, research that examines this phenomenon at the junior high school level in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the post-pandemic digitalization of learning, remains relatively limited. Given these research gaps, an in-depth qualitative study is needed to examine how parenting styles and the intensity of social media use interact dialectically to shape students' social attitudes. This research employs George Herbert Mead's theoretical framework of social behaviorism, which emphasizes that individual attitudes and behaviors develop through a process of stimulus and response within social interaction [33]-[35]. By positioning parenting styles and social media exposure as the dominant external stimuli, this study examines how the interpretation and internalization of these values shape students' social attitudes within school life.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to formulate a synergistic strategy between families and schools to mitigate the negative impacts of digitalization on students' social character development. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze in depth the influence of parenting styles and the intensity of social media use on the formation of social attitudes in eighth-grade students at Junior High School 7 Madiun. The results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of character education studies in the digital era, as well as practical contributions to the formulation of school policies and family support that are more responsive to the social challenges of today's adolescents.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, chosen because it allows researchers to explore social phenomena occurring within specific spatial and temporal boundaries in depth and context. The case study design is highly relevant for comprehensively understanding the dynamics of students' social interactions in everyday life, particularly regarding the influence of parental parenting styles and social media use on students' social attitudes. The research focused on eighth-grade students at Junior High School 7

Madiun, examining how their family environment and exposure to digital media within formal education influence their social functioning as a unified system.

The research subjects were selected purposively, with consideration for the representativeness of the information and the credibility of the data obtained. The primary informants in this study were eighth-grade students at Junior High School 7 Madiun, selected as the primary subjects to observe their social attitudes and interview them regarding their habits and patterns of social media use. Furthermore, parents served as informants to provide information on parenting styles used in the family environment. Additional informants included Guidance and Counseling teachers and Social Studies teachers, who provided supporting perspectives on students' social behavior in the school context. The involvement of multiple informants was intended to provide a holistic, in-depth picture of the phenomenon under study.

The research procedure was conducted in several systematic stages. The pre-field stage included submitting a research title, developing a proposal, and obtaining research permits from Junior High School 7 Madiun. The field stage involved participant observation to examine students' social attitudes in daily interactions within the school environment, as well as in-depth interviews with selected informants. The next stage was data analysis, which involved processing the data obtained through data reduction and presentation, and drawing conclusions. The final stage was reporting, in which the research results were compiled into a systematic, comprehensive scientific report.

Data collection in this study was conducted using several primary instruments. Observation was used to directly observe six indicators of students' social attitudes: honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring, politeness, and cooperation within the school environment. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain more detailed information on the types of parenting styles students experience at home, as well as their motivations and the intensity of their social media use, particularly on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. In addition, documentation techniques were employed to collect supporting data, including school profiles, photographs of learning activities, and other relevant documents, to strengthen the findings in the field.

Data analysis in this study was based on George Herbert Mead's Social Behaviorism, specifically through the concepts of mind and self, to examine how stimuli such as parenting styles and social media use shape responses in the form of student attitudes and social behavior. Technically, the data analysis followed an interactive analysis model that encompassed three main stages: data reduction by sorting and focusing data relevant to the research variables; data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives to systematically illustrate the influence of parenting styles and social media; and verification and drawing conclusions to formulate meaning and answer the research questions.

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, parents, and teachers, while technical triangulation was conducted by matching the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. The use of triangulation aims to enhance the credibility, validity, and objectivity of the data, thereby supporting the scientific justification of the research findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers assessed the validity of the variables Parenting Patterns, Social Media Use, and Social Attitudes using three primary data collection techniques. Table 1 presents the data grouped by research focus.

Table 1. The results of the research

Research focus	Interview Results (Subjects: Parents and Students)	Observation Results (Social Attitudes at School)	Documentation Results (Teacher's Notes)
Parenting Patterns	"I don't have any complicated rules, I'm a poor person, Ma'am. I can only sell at a stall. But it's my child, I asked him what he wanted; if he wanted to go to school, he would go to school, if he didn't go to school, that meant he wanted to work, so he could study according to his promise, when he went to school, when he worked, he would help at	SS-03 shows a confident attitude and is able to discuss well during group work in class.	The guidance and counseling teacher's notes show that SS-03 has never been involved in moderate or serious violations (e.g. fighting, smoking, playing truant, drinking alcohol), there has only been a record of minor violations related to uniform discipline, such as not wearing a hat during the ceremony once and not bringing sports clothes

	the stall, when he played on his cell phone, I allowed it.” (SO-03)	once during sports lessons.
Use of Social Media	<p>“I open TikTok and games, ma’am. If I’m at home and not in school, I usually open games. If I’m in class, I open TikTok because I can’t be bothered to chat with my friends, ma’am.” (SS-04)</p> <p>“I have violated it, ma’am, because it was noisy in class, I cheated on a semester exam but it wasn’t caught, because the questions were difficult, but if I was on duty I would definitely do it, if someone fell, I would help them but while laughing, ma’am.” (SS-03)</p>	<p>During recess, SS-04 tends to be alone with his Chromebook and doesn’t interact much with his classmates. During class, SS-04 is also seen opening his Chromebook without any instruction from the subject teacher.</p> <p>Screen Time screenshots show an average of 6-7 hours of social media use per day.</p>
Social Attitudes		<p>SS-03 always comes to class, helps teachers if they have difficulty carrying things, goes home on time and does duty before going home according to schedule.</p> <p>From the records of the homeroom teacher, SS-03 is included in the class management as class chairman.</p>

Based on in-depth interview data with parent informant SO-03, it was revealed that the parenting style applied in subject SS-03’s family was authoritative (democratic). Parents consistently provided space for dialogue and rational explanations before imposing sanctions or limits. This interaction pattern aligns with subject SS-03’s statement, which indicated comfort with daily activities and the ability to honor agreements with parents. This finding aligns with Baumrind’s theory, which emphasizes that democratic parenting is characterized by a balance between control and warmth that encourages the internalization of values and healthy self-regulation in children and adolescents [36]-[38].

In contrast, two weeks of intensive observations of subject SS-04 in the school environment revealed a contrasting pattern. Students with high social media usage (more than five hours per day) tended to display withdrawn social attitudes and minimal interpersonal engagement. SS-04 appeared more responsive to digital stimuli, such as Chromebook notification sounds, than to peer conversations. Social interactions were limited and instrumental, confined to asking questions about academic assignments. This pattern supports the argument that excessive digital media use contributes to a decline in the quality of face-to-face social interactions [39], [40]. Documentary data, including screenshots of social media usage and notes from guidance and counseling teachers, were used to corroborate the findings. These records indicated a correlative tendency between students’ social behavior problems at school and less adaptive parenting styles at home, particularly authoritarian parenting styles that lack dialogue. The use of data triangulation through interviews, observation, and documentation increased the validity of the findings and reduced the potential for subjective bias.

Based on the triangulation results, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, consistent democratic parenting, as evidenced by interviews and observations, has been shown to contribute to the development of positive, communicative, and cooperative social attitudes among students. Second, excessive social media use significantly reduces the intensity of direct social interactions in the school environment. Third, the consistency among parent interview data, student behavior at school, and teacher documentation indicates that the research findings are highly trustworthy. Furthermore, the qualitative data collected indicate a consistent causal pattern: democratic parenting, with healthy two-way communication, is a primary predictor of students’ social attitudes. This finding confirms the view that the family functions not only as the smallest social unit but also as a behavioral laboratory in which social values are first learned, tested, and internalized [41]-[43].

This phenomenon was clearly observed in subject SS-03. In-depth interviews with parents (SO-03) revealed that interactions at home were grounded in openness, rational negotiation, and guided autonomy. Children were given the freedom to make decisions for example, regarding the use of gadgets or involvement in school activities but remained within clear and consistent boundaries of supervision. This approach prevented students from feeling pressured by external control but instead encouraged them to take responsibility for their own choices. The literature indicates that this form of autonomy, when accompanied by guidance, significantly strengthens adolescents’ self-regulation and social competence [44]-[46].

The trust bestowed by parents was not perceived by SS-03 as an invitation to unlimited freedom, but rather as a moral mandate that must be upheld. In this process, external control gave way to strong self-control. The internalization of these values was reflected in the students' daily lives at school, where SS-03 demonstrated politeness, discipline, and high empathy toward peers. Social compliance was no longer driven by fear of sanctions, but by a deep understanding of social responsibility. This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that democratic parenting yields compliance grounded in moral awareness rather than coercion [47]. Conversely, the interpretation of subject SS-04's behavior revealed the problematic side of uncontrolled digital technology use. The duration of social media use, which reached 6–7 hours per day, indicates the dominance of the digital environment in students' daily lives. Researchers identified this condition as the formation of a digital isolation space, a situation in which individuals gradually withdraw from the surrounding social reality and replace it with pseudo-involvement in cyberspace. This situation aligns with the concept of social displacement and empirical findings that excessive digital engagement is associated with reduced social engagement and empathy [48].

This phenomenon creates a stark paradox in educational settings. Although students are physically present in the classroom, their psychological and emotional presence is fragmented by their attention to screens. This was confirmed through field observations, where SS-04 responded much more quickly to digital device notifications than to peer interactions. The resulting social interactions became shallow and transactional, lacking meaningful emotional engagement. This phenomenon aligns with the concepts of phubbing and being alone together, which describe social isolation amidst high digital connectivity [49], [50]. Overall, these findings strengthen the argument that without clear boundaries and consistent parenting supervision, social media can shift from a means of communication to an instrument of social alienation. This process of alienation occurs gradually yet destructively, eroding students' empathy and social sensitivity and weakening their ability to read social cues in real-world contexts. As a result, students risk becoming isolated individuals within their own social environment.

To facilitate understanding of the essence of this discussion, the following is a comparison matrix between the theoretical foundation and the facts found in the field.

Table 2. Comparison matrix between theoretical basis and facts found in the field

Study Dimensions	Literature Review	Research Findings	Analysis
Parenting	Democratic parenting produces children who are independent and socially competent.	Democratic parenting styles have good self-control and are active in organizations.	Validated: Balance of control and affection has been shown to shape positive social attitudes.
Social Displacement	The use of social media shifts the duration of real social interactions.	Students spend 6-7 hours/day on social media and ignore friends (phubbing).	Validated: Social media is a major distractor that reduces the quality of interpersonal communication.
Social Attitudes	Social attitudes require empathy and direct emotional involvement.	Students know how to greet (cognitive), but are reluctant to do so because they are busy with the activity of opening social media (affective).	Gap: There is a decline in the affective component due to digital interactions being shallow and instant.

Research findings on students' interactions with their parents provide strong empirical support for the relevance of Diana Baumrind's Authoritative (Democratic) Parenting theory. Amidst the disruption of digital technology that often undermines traditional parenting authority, democratic parenting remains a robust conceptual framework for explaining the development of adolescent character and social attitudes. The essence of this parenting style lies in a precise balance between demands (behavioral demands and control) and responsiveness (emotional support and warmth), which enables the internalization of values to occur rationally, reflectively, and sustainably. Previous research consistently demonstrates that this balance contributes significantly to the development of adolescent self-regulation and social competence, even in environments rife with digital distractions [51]–[53].

This dialectical relationship between demands and support is clearly reflected in the behavior of subject SS-03. Observational data from the school environment indicate that SS-03 has a high level of self-confidence, actively participates in class discussions, and demonstrates strong collaborative skills in group work. These findings confirm that compliance fostered through democratic parenting is not based on fear of punishment or repressive authority, but rather stems from a meaningful internalization of values. Students understand the

rationale behind agreed-upon family rules, enabling them to exercise self-control independently in broader social settings. Social norms are valued not because of external supervision, but because they have become integrated into students' social identities. In this context, democratic parenting serves as an effective protective factor in maintaining the integrity of students' social attitudes, even amidst high levels of social media use [54].

Conversely, the interpretation of SS-04's behavior, which demonstrates a tendency toward apathy and withdrawal from school social dynamics, provides empirical support for Social Displacement Theory. This theory is based on the assumption that time is a limited resource; Therefore, increased time allocated to digital activities directly displaces opportunities for face-to-face interaction [55]. In the case of SS-04, the duration of social media use, which reached 6–7 hours per day, surpassed its recreational function and became the dominant activity, shifting the center of students' social existence from the real world to the virtual space. This finding aligns with longitudinal studies showing that high-intensity digital media use is associated with reduced social engagement and increased interpersonal isolation among adolescents [56].

Further observational analysis revealed the emergence of an intense phenomenon: phubbing, the tendency to ignore the surrounding social environment in favor of digital device use. SS-04 appeared more responsive to visual stimulation from device screens than to greetings or invitations to interact with peers. This condition indicates attention fragmentation, in which students' physical presence in the classroom is not accompanied by mental and emotional engagement. Consequently, the quality of social interactions becomes shallow and loses its essential affective dimension. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of Nazir [57], who reported that phubbing contributes to declines in social relationship quality and a sense of interpersonal connectedness, particularly among adolescents.

Crucial findings from this situation indicate that low levels of sociability, participation, and cooperation among students with high levels of social media use are not solely due to a lack of cognitive understanding of social norms. The data indicate that students understand the rules of politeness and social conduct but lack sufficient opportunities and frequency to practice social dexterity. Social skills, like other skills, require continuous practice in real-life contexts. When students' time is almost entirely absorbed in digital interactions, social atrophy occurs: a decline in empathic sensitivity and the ability to read nonverbal cues due to a lack of practice in face-to-face interactions [58]. In this context, social media acts as a catalyst for social alienation, leaving students physically present but socially isolated.

As a final reflection, this research is not intended as an endpoint, but rather as a starting point for understanding the complexity of adolescent social behavior in the era of digital disruption. The phenomena studied demonstrate that social attitudes are shaped by multidimensional interactions among family factors, technology, and the broader social environment. Therefore, further research should broaden the scope of analysis by integrating external variables, such as peer-group influence, and internal variables, such as students' digital literacy levels. Understanding students' ability to filter and critically interpret digital information will clarify whether social media functions as a bridge or a barrier to meaningful social interaction [59]. Furthermore, indications of the phenomenon of academic and social escape to digital platforms require more in-depth exploration using quantitative and mixed methods approaches. By expanding the research locus across regions and educational levels, future studies are expected to produce a more comprehensive conceptual map. Ultimately, this ongoing effort is directed toward formulating educational strategies and parenting practices that are not only adaptive to technological developments but also capable of preserving the essence of humanity and the quality of social interactions in student development.

The main novelty of this study lies in its integrative and analytical approach to understanding the formation of students' social attitudes in the digital era. Unlike previous research, this study not only identifies the relationship between parenting styles and social media but also reveals the causal mechanisms of value internalization through George Herbert Mead's Social Behaviorism framework. Specifically, the novelty of this research lies in three aspects. First, this study introduces the concept of "democratic parenting as an internal filter," which can mitigate the disruptive effects of social media on students' social attitudes. Second, this study identifies the phenomenon of a digital isolation space among students with prolonged social media use, which accounts for the paradox of physical presence without socio-emotional engagement in the classroom. Third, this study presents empirical evidence based on triangulation (interviews, observations, and documentation) that demonstrates the transformation of external parental control into student self-control in the context of democratic parenting. Thus, this study provides a new conceptual contribution to the discourse on social education and adolescent digital literacy.

Theoretically, the findings of this study strengthen the relevance of Baumrind's Authoritative Parenting Theory and Social Displacement Theory to contemporary digital education. This research demonstrates that the influence of social media on social attitudes is not deterministic, but rather mediated by the quality of communication and control within the family. Furthermore, integrating Mead's theory enriches the understanding of how external stimuli (parenting styles and social media) are processed into social attitude responses through the mechanisms of the self and mind. Practically, the results of this study have direct implications for parents and schools. Parents should adopt a democratic, dialogue-based parenting style as the primary strategy for managing

children's social media use. Meanwhile, schools are expected to emphasize not only technical regulations governing device use but also to develop social-digital literacy programs that foster empathy, interpersonal communication, and self-control among students. At the policy level, these findings can inform the development of educational policies that balance digital acceleration with the strengthening of social character education, particularly at the junior secondary level.

This research has several limitations that require consideration. First, the qualitative case study design limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Second, the research focused on a single educational unit; the varying socio-cultural contexts of other schools were not accounted for. Third, the measurement of social media usage intensity still relies on documentary data and subject testimonies, which may be subject to bias. Given these limitations, several recommendations can be made. Future research is recommended to employ a mixed-methods approach that combines the depth of qualitative analysis with the rigor of quantitative generalization. Furthermore, other variables, such as peer-group influence, digital literacy, and students' psychological well-being, need to be integrated to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Expanding research across diverse regions and educational levels is also highly recommended to develop a cross-contextual understanding of the formation of students' social attitudes in the digital era.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the quality of students' social attitudes at the junior high school level is shaped by a complex interaction between parental parenting styles and the intensity of social media use. The main findings indicate that authoritative (democratic) parenting, characterized by a balance between behavioral demands and emotional support, plays a significant role in the development of students' self-regulation, empathy, and social competence. This parenting style facilitates the rational internalization of values, so that students' social compliance does not depend on external control but rather grows into an internalized, stable moral awareness across various social contexts. Conversely, excessive social media use has been shown to correlate with a decline in the quality of face-to-face social interactions in the school environment. Students with high levels of digital media use exhibit tendencies toward social withdrawal, fragmented attention, and shallow, transactional interactions. These conditions indicate the emergence of social displacement and alienation, in which the digital space gradually supplants the physical social space as the center of students' interpersonal engagement. Overall, this study confirms that the family serves as the primary foundation for social character formation, while social media acts as a reinforcing or weakening variable depending on the accompanying parenting framework. Democratic parenting has been shown to serve as a protective factor, preserving students' social attitudes amid digital disruption. Therefore, efforts to strengthen social character education are inseparable from the synergy between families, schools, and critical digital literacy, to ensure that technological developments do not erode but instead support the quality of students' social and human relationships.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all parties who contributed to the completion of this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

PAEP was responsible for the research design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. MH and P, contributed to conceptual development, research methodology guidance, and critical review of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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