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A PERCEIVED EXISTING WORLD: CHILDREN'S, TEACHERS', AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES USE

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ABSTRACT

Social media sites (SMS) are increasingly being used by children and teenagers. They may cause both benefits (such as increased social capital) and risks as a result of this (e.g., cyber-bullying). As a result of internet mediation behaviors, parents and teachers have a significant impact on how their children perceive the world. Existing research on children's and adults' perceptions of the risks and benefits of SMS use in the home and school contexts is scarce. This study examined how adults mediate children's and parents' perceptions of SMS risks and

benefits. Within this research, a group of 976 people were involved, including 313 parents (aged 28–48), 214 teachers (aged 26–54), and 449 kids (aged 7–12). Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to learn about their use of SMS, their perceptions of the risks and benefits, and their internet mediation habits with adults. According to the findings, the most important benefit is the creation of social capital through bonding. Children are aware of stranger danger, but they are not aware of the additional risks they face when using computers and mobile devices (e.g., cyberbullying). Restrictive mediation practices among parents and teachers are influenced by concerns about stranger danger, child safety, and a lack of online responsibility in children. In light of these findings, it is critical to shift the focus of e-safety education away from stranger danger and toward discussing the broader SMS risks and benefits. This will require more financial investment and policy support to overcome current obstacles.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children in elementary school, who have grown up in a digital world since birth, are increasingly involved in online activities (Turner, 2015). Social media sites (SMS) have shaped online communication since their inception in 2004. Mobile text messaging (MTM) can be found in many online communicative services like Facebook, SnapChat, and Instagram; as online platforms that allow the user to create a profile, share information, and interact. Gaming platforms like Fortnite, which place less emphasis on the sharing of content, also allow for socializing online (Du, Grace, Jagannath, & Salen-Tekinbas, 2021). Despite MTM's average 13-year age restriction, only 4% of 5–7-year-olds and 21% of 8–11-year-olds have an SMS profile (Ofcom, 2019). Using SMS can be advantageous, but it also comes with a slew of dangers. When it comes to risk, adults show it in their meditative involvement (Lee & Chae, 2012; Livingstone et al., 2017). Mediation is the process of restricting, monitoring, and communicating about children's media usage (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Children say that both their parents and teachers have taught them about internet safety, highlighting the mediating role that both parents and teachers play in helping children become more internet-savvy (Ofcom, 2019; Shin & Lwin, 2017). There is a dearth of studies focusing on children's perceptions of SMS use. SMS's age restrictions have led many parents to believe that SMS is out of reach for children aged 7–12. Investigating how parents and teachers view SMS is critical in figuring out what motivates their mediation behaviors and how that affects children's access to and understanding of the risks and benefits of SMS use both personally and socially.

1.1. Benefits and risks of SMS use

According to Mesch and Baker (2010), online interpersonal communication is only possible to a certain extent when people are open about their online identities. This means that in order to use SMS, the user must provide personal information (English & John, 2013). The audience's reaction is shaped by how appropriate online disclosure is (Lin & Utz, 2017). The disclosure's content and the audience it's intended for determine whether or not it's appropriate (disclosure personalism framework; Bazarova, 2012). For example, disclosing private information to a friend privately (e.g., via a direct message) is preferable to disclosing it publicly (Bazarova, 2012). It's possible that the inappropriate disclosure (over-disclosure) will damage a person's reputation and undermine their sense of self-worth. In the event of an appropriate disclosure, however, people's social capital may increase, leading to higher levels

of self-esteem. Online disclosure behaviors, it could be argued, are a key driver of SMS use's risks and benefits. As a result of their greater life experience, adults are more likely than adolescents to successfully disclose, it is possible that children are less successful because they are not as aware of the over-disclosure risks (Lange, 2016; Livingstone et al., 2011; Runions, Shapka et al., 2013). Cyberbullying (the use of digital means to direct aggressive or hostile behavior towards an individual with the intention of upsetting or harming, Meter & Bauman, 2015; Tokunaga, 2010) is more common in children than in adults. Children who have grown up in a technologically advanced environment, on the other hand, may be adept at managing their online disclosure (Ofcom, 2019). The maintenance of social networks can have an impact on social capital if information is shared online (Putnam, 2004). A person's self-esteem, social skills, and overall well-being can be impacted positively by bridging (forming) and bonding (strengthening) friendships It's possible, however, that using SMS for social capital goals will lead to more over-disclosure (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; Ellison et al., 2007), which could lead to misunderstandings in friendships and a deterioration of those friendships. For this reason, the risks and benefits of SMS that are associated with social capital may be greater during childhood (Leonard, 2005).

From an early age, children develop a positive self-perception of themselves (Burns, 1979; Goffman, 1978). A person's self-concept takes into account how they see themselves in the present, the past, and the future in light of their values and beliefs (Altheide, 2000; Goffman, 1978; Rettie, 2009). Importantly, online self-presentation allows children to more strategically explore their self-concept: conveying information about the self in order to manage others' impressions of it (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). In contrast to offline communication, SMS disinhibition encourages children to reveal more about their true or ideal selves, or even aspects of their false selves (impress/compare, deceive, or explore) than they would be able to do without it (Schouten et al., 2007). Online presence can increase the visibility of cyberbullies, which can lead to victimization. If left unresolved, friendship problems caused by misunderstandings online can lead to cyberbullying. Additionally, experimenting with one's ideal self or a blatantly false self can expose children to ridicule from their peers if the no authenticity is discovered (Dredge et al., 2014). Cyberbullying has been linked in numerous studies to short- and long-term mental health consequences (Cowie, 2013; Smith, 2012; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett, 2006).

1.2. Parents and teachers

The goals of the parent are embedded in their perceptions of that scenario, and these goals influence parenting styles (Baumrind, 2005; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Internet parenting is a new style of parenting that has emerged in the digital age (Livingstone et al., 2017). Most prevalent in the digital age are internet parenting styles that show restrictive mediation behaviors (ultimate goal of limiting access to risks; Livingstone et al., 2017) in the digital age (De Morentin; Cortés; Medrano; & Apodaca: 2014; Kirwil: 2009; Livingstone: 2017). Mediating behaviors (the ultimate goal of improving access to opportunities and benefits; Livingstone et al., 2017) are not as prominent in the study population. Families can benefit from Internet parenting styles by incorporating them into their digital literacy practices, which can help shape children's attitudes toward technology use at home. A good example of this is the use of enabling mediation behaviors to promote a family digital literacy environment that includes the use of SMS. There is evidence that children who engage in restrictive mediation

behaviors spend less time online, which means they are less exposed to the risks as well as the benefits that come with that time spent online. The benefits of enabling mediation behaviors for children are increased, but so are the risks (Livingstone et al., 2017). Negative SMS perceptions are positively predicted by restrictive mediation behaviors in children (Lee, 2013). Enabling mediation behaviors, on the other hand, may improve children's overall perceptions of mediation. In other words, parents' mediation behaviors and perceptions affect their children's access to and perceptions of SMS use, which is critical to understand. Parents' online guidance is just as well remembered by children (Ofcom, 2019), highlighting teachers' influence on SMS use. Teachers in Pakistan primarily use e-safety education to mediate children's SMS use. Students' perceptions of e-safety lessons vary greatly from school to school, and these lessons have received a great deal of criticism. It's not uncommon for e-safety to be overlooked in favor of more important subjects like Literacy and Numeracy (Woollard, 2011). Additionally, e-safety calls for technical resources (such as laptops and iPads), which are often scarce in educational institutions (Alkhattabi, 2017). E-safety education is hampered by these roadblocks for teachers. Consequently, this could have an effect on how children perceive the trade-off between risks and rewards. Over-disclosure concerns about blurring the personal and professional spheres often influence teachers' perceptions of SMS use (Sharples, Graber Harrison & Logan 2009; de Zwart, Lindsay & Phillips 2011). Teachers' negative perceptions may be influenced by their concerns about elementary-aged children, who are perceived as posing a greater safeguarding concern (Hew & Brush, 2007).

Educators who have a negative attitude toward texting and social media may teach in a riskier manner. To make matters worse (Livingstone et al., 2017), this could lead to children seeing the risks as greater than the benefits (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Teachers who view SMS use favorably, on the other hand, may deliver lessons that are more balanced, taking into account both the risks and the benefits. With reference to Bronfenbrenner, the influence that parents and teachers have on kids' attitudes toward SMS usage highlights the importance of the Microsystems (immediate environment; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). It is clear that the macrosystem (social and cultural environment) has an impact on children's digital development when we consider how SMS use influences e-safety education in a broader societal context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). When it comes to exploring individuals within this model, Christensen (2016) contends that they can't be treated as a stand-alone entity because of their social connections with other systems. As a result, this research takes a cross-comparative approach to finding out how people's perceptions differ across different groups. This is a new way of looking at how development is influenced by the relationships between these groups.

2. CURRENT STUDY

Few studies have looked at how parents and teachers influence children's perceptions of SMS benefits and risks. We know that children between the ages of seven and twelve are using SMS, and advice from parents and teachers is a valuable resource. However, we don't know how children's perceptions of SMS use's risks and benefits are influenced by adults' perceptions and mediation behaviors. Using thematic analysis of one-to-one semi-structured interviews and a cross-comparative approach, this study will examine how parents, teachers, and children (7 to 12-year-olds) view the risks and benefits of SMS use. Over-disclosure,

social capital, self-presentation, and cyberbullying will be discussed with kids to see how they perceive the risks and benefits. We'll talk to parents and teachers about the risks and benefits of SMS use, as well as their coping mechanisms. Studying how adults' perceptions of the risks and benefits of SMS use affect children will aid in the development of educational materials, interventions, and policies to encourage children to use the service.

3. METHOD

Participants

Participants were gathered from eleven different Pakistani elementary schools in order to ensure that the findings could be applied across the country (Table 1). A random sample of students from every school was drawn at random. Because the principal investigator is a former elementary school teacher (now an assistant professor) who taught at seven of the institutions (three in Sukkur and four in Khairpur), these institutions were contacted directly. A total of four new schools were found after sending emails to every school in Pakistan. Over 1300 people took part in the study, including 313 parents (aged 28–48 years) and 214 teachers (aged 26–54 years; 64.3% female; Mage = 35.69 years), as well as 449 students (aged 7–12 years; 40% female; Mage = 9.60 years). A technical error in the recording process resulted in the omission of data from one child.

Table 1. Participant demographic information for district and school type

Category	**N= 976**					
	District's Name			**School type**		
	Khairpur	**Shikarpur**	**Sukkur**	**Private**	**Public**	**Total**
Parents	100	112[a]	101	213	100	313
Teachers	114	50	50	123	91	214
Children	121[b]	173[a]	155	293	156	449
Total	335	335	306	629	347	

Note: [a] One parent and two children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). [b] One child registered with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Participants were enlisted using opt-in consent letters distributed to parents (when picking up their children from school) and teachers (within the staff room). These letters included information on the study's nature, participant ethics (right to withdraw; informed consent; anonymity of data), and the lead researcher's email address if they wanted to confirm their interest in participation in the study via email. These parents and teachers were contacted after expressing an interest to set up an interview at their school on a specific date and time. Prior to the interview, children were verbally informed by the lead researcher about the ethics of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. The children were then asked to provide their own verbal consent before the interview began. Unless the lead researcher felt their safety was in jeopardy, the children were told that their answers would not be shared with their parents or other children. Except for one child whose parent was not interviewed, parents and children were recruited from the same family in pairs. Two of the children were interviewed by the

same parent with two different interviewers. To ensure perceptions could be linked to both teacher and parent mediation, all but one of the teachers interviewed had taught a child directly.

3.1. Measures

3.1.1. Interview questions

For parents, teachers, and children, there was a separate flow chart (Appendices A–C) for each set of interview questions. Participant-led data was used to implement this design, which adheres to high standards of academic rigor in qualitative research (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005; Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017). According to Deatrick and Faux's (1991) suggestions for child participants, a flow chart was put into action. All interviews began by asking participants if they had SMS accounts or had access to them, as well as what their general online activity was (Table 2). Participants who said they didn't have or use SMS were asked what they did with them. As a result, all participants had a clear understanding of SMS as defined by Du et al. (2021) and Lu and Yang's (2014) definition of SMS (online platforms with the ability to create a profile, share information, and communicate with others).

Table 2. SMS profile ownership amongst children, parents and teachers; not including co-use

	Profile ownership, n (%)						
	Facebook	**Instagram**	**SnapChat**	**YouTube**	**Whatsapp**	**Other[a]**	**None**
Children	31 (7%)	62 (13%)	180 (40%)	121 (27%)	121 (27%)	148(33 %)	54 (21%)
Parents	241(77 %)	119(38 %)	144(46 %)	85(27%)	144(46 %)	0	66(21 %)
Teachers	184(86 %)	137(64 %)	30(14%)	30(14%)	92(43%)	15(7%)	45(21 %)

Note: [a] Examples include: Roblox, Music.ly; Funimate; Minecraft; Fortnite.

To gauge parental and educator comfort with SMS, we asked them how often they sent and received text messages. Parents and teachers who did not send SMS messages were asked the same questions as the children: What were SMS used for? The risks and benefits of SMS use were investigated by asking parents and teachers about their children's/pupils' use of SMS. Parents and teachers were surveyed about their parenting and teaching methods related to SMS use as part of an investigation into internet mediation behaviors. Using Livingstone's (2017) definitions, the internet mediation behaviors were operationalized. Responses that showed openness and support for children's SMS use exhibited enabling mediation behaviors, whereas responses that suggested limiting children's SMS use exhibited restriction mediation behaviors.

3.1.2. Vignettes

To collect more qualitative data from younger children, vignettes were implemented (Barter & Renold, 2000). These topics were covered in vignettes, including over-disclosure as well as social capital and cyberbullying. Co-use vignette was also used to start a discussion about the mediation behaviors of parents. In order to avoid having the data skewed by nuances within these notions, they were divided into sub-notions (Table 3). As a part of the experiment, students were asked to write advice for a fictional child and explain whether or not they would follow that behavior. Is there a reason/no reason?' (See Table 3 for more information.) Throughout all interviews, the names of imaginary children remained the same.

Table 3.
Vignettes and their related theoretical notions and sub-notions used in the child interviews

Theoretical notions	Sub-notions	Vignette
Over-disclosure	Public	Claire has a Facebook account. On her public profile she has her date of birth, school, and the name of the town she lives in
	Private	Sam sends Sarah direct messages on Instagram telling her about his secrets
Social capital	Bridging	David made a new friend on Facebook
	Bonding	Adam uses Instagram to keep in touch with his old friends from elementary school
Self-presentation		Azeem worries about posting photos on Instagram in case he does not get any likes
Cyberbullying	Victimization	Rachael read a status on Facebook that was about her and it made her feel upset
	Perpetration	Craig posted a photo of Rebecca on his SnapChat story to make his friends laugh
Co-use		Sameer shares his SnapChat account with his mum

3.2. Procedure

This study followed the COREQ guidelines (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). Prior to data collection, this study was submitted to the first author's university's research ethics committee for a full ethical review. Following this, ethical approval was granted. Additionally, this study adhered to the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines. The lead researcher underwent a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and conducted all interviews with children, parents, and teachers with a team of fifty Ph.D students of a local university. Between May and June 2020, the lead researcher, an assistant professor (previously an elementary teacher), led the conducted all interviews. The lead researcher was familiar with child protection protocols and had experience communicating with children, parents, and teachers in a school setting as a former teacher. The lead researcher had prior experience with qualitative methodologies and analysis; in addition, they received advanced training prior to conducting the data collection for this study. The lead researcher had previously worked with seven of the schools and thus was acquainted with several of the children, parents, and teachers. To avoid biases or preconceived notions about the lead researcher, first names were used throughout the interview; this was done in part to avoid children feeling as if they were communicating with a teacher. Each participant was reminded of the lead researcher's status as an assistant professor and their interest in children's SMS use. The majority of interviews took place on school grounds during the school day; however, two parents and three children (two families) were interviewed in separate rooms in their homes upon request. Interviews were scheduled for approximately 30 minutes to allow for the school day. Parents and

teachers' interviews lasted an average of 29 minutes, while children's interviews lasted an average of 26 minutes. Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder that was placed on a table between the participant and the lead researcher. Participants verbally consented to their interviews being recorded prior to the device being turned on. All recordings were immediately transferred to a computer for transcription. Each participant was assigned a unique numerical code in addition to their category (e.g., Child 1). Each participant's unique ID code and demographic information were saved in a password-protected file and added to the transcription later. All participants received a written and verbal briefing and consent form prior to the interview, as well as a verbal and written debriefing following completion.

3.3. Data analysis

All recordings were verbatim transcribed into Microsoft Word documents by the lead researcher (to ensure accuracy and breadth of familiarity with the data) and then imported into NVivo software. According to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) framework, inductive thematic analysis was used to elicit and interpret semantic patterns within relevant contexts. To ensure that themes and sub-themes were not prematurely formulated in NVivo, codes were constructed independently within the context of each individual transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2013); these were then semantically compared. Contextually, initial codes were compared to identify emerging sub-themes. Finally, we compared these codes across all participant groups to identify overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Through the use of thematic maps, these themes were combined to form broader themes and sub-themes. These themes were then further analyzed and refined, both through repetition of the preceding process to ensure consistency and homogeneity and through discussion with co-authors (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

4. RESULTS

The data revealed three major themes: 'digital footprint', 'social capital', and 'e-safety'. Each theme had subthemes, which are depicted in Figure 1.

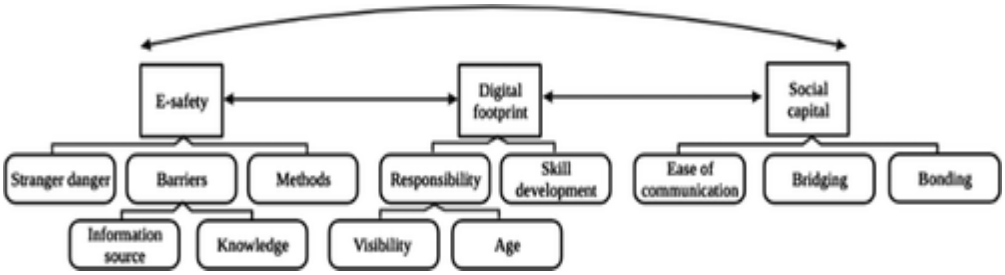

Figure 1: A summary of the key themes.

Among the key themes are e-safety, which includes the subthemes of stranger danger, barriers (information source; knowledge), and methods, digital footprint, which includes the subthemes of visibility (responsibility; age), and skill development, and social capital, which includes the subthemes of communication ease, bridging, and bonding.

4.1. Digital footprint

Children's digital footprints ('the digital traces each of us leaves as we live our lives'; Weaver & Gahegan, 2007; p.324) were associated with responsibility; this was frequently associated

with SMS age restrictions. Parents who described restrictive mediation behaviors ('we would regularly take their phone and look through it to make sure they were acting appropriately', Parent 12) perceived younger children as not responsible enough' (Parent 9) or 'old enough' (Parent 2) to use SMS, despite the uncertainty of official age restrictions: 'like Facebook is like not until you're a... Is it thirteen?', (13th parent). Similarly, teachers outlined the importance of age restrictions in relation to the responsibility of having a digital footprint: 'it's about whether a child is mature enough to use it' (Teacher 5). Parents describing enabling mediation behaviors ('I don't have a lot of restrictions on their internet use,' Parent 5) expressed concern about the potential stigma associated with the perceived irresponsibility of allowing younger children to use social media: 'I purposefully and intentionally registered my son...despite the fact that Instagram was not intended for 12-year-olds', (Tenth Parent). According to parents and teachers, children associated responsibility with their age, 'if you're my age, some friends can't really keep secrets' (Child 1), and then with SMS's age restrictions, 'no, I'm too young now [...] there are age restrictions' (Child 15). Additionally, the responsibility to be visible online was discussed. Parents outlined visibility as primarily dangerous: 'I am aware that you can...link...you can go on and on, so that a friend of a friend can look...so that is bad. (Parent 9); this was also outlined by teachers: 'knowing that whatever you say is permanent...because once it's there...even if you delete it, someone could screenshot it'. (Teacher No. 4) This risk was also associated with cyberbullying: 'someone out there will find that or take a screenshot and distribute it widely' (Teacher 11); 'people were saying mean things and she lashed out on Twitter, she can't take that back' (Parent 12). Teachers frequently outlined their efforts to educate their students in this regard: 'I...m-make them aware that when they take a photo, it has a digital fingerprint that they haven't considered", (Teacher No. 10). Additionally, children identified visibility as a risk factor. Children associated public visibility with excessive disclosure: 'people may pose as your friends if they know everything about you', (13-year-old child). Children, on the other hand, did not view private visibility (i.e., disclosing general information to contacts) as risky: 'Like your date of birth and that...should be in a private profile,' (Child 6). According to some parents and teachers, a positive outcome of a digital footprint is skill development: 'I believe she is going to be a budding filmmaker' (Parent 7). These parents and teachers frequently expressed co-use mediation behaviors: 'my son put up a lot of pictures and some text with it, so we decided to keep and use that [...] as a nice introduction to sort of...photo journalism' (Parent 1); 'using it in the phone function to do things like light and dark and contrasting and shading' (Parent 2). Parents exhibiting restrictive mediation behaviors lacked technological knowledge but recognized their child's skill development: "I'll say, 'oh, I don't know how to do that!' and she'll say, 'oh, pass it here, mummy!', (Eleventh parent). Teachers also recognized their limited knowledge in comparison to their students, stating, "I need to be at the top of my game, but I am not because they are so much more invested" (Teacher 10). Children, on the other hand, discussed skill development far less than parents and teachers: 'YouTube could also help you if you enjoy creating things' (Child 12).

4.2. Social capital

The convenience of communicating online was cited as a benefit of SMS use by parents: 'with our hectic lives nowadays, we don't have time to pick up the phone and call them, and so I just think Whatsapp and SnapChat keep us in the loop really' (Parent 4), teachers, 'a more convenient way to communicate' (Teacher 12), and children, 'well, Whatsapp is simple...you

can just type it away' (Child 6). Alternatively, communication ease was associated with an increased risk of cyberbullying: 'my class was having an argument on Whatsapp [...] they were including my stepsister, who does not even attend school.' (Teacher No. 1) Additionally, children associated ease of communication with cyberbullying, specifically perpetration: 'you might go further and post worsen stuff' (Child 7). Apart from this, children did not discuss cyberbullying extensively; Tokunaga's (2010) definition of cyberbullying states that actions must be repeated in order to be considered cyberbullying, and children's experiences appeared to involve isolated aggressive incidents rather than repeated events: 'Yeah, so I posted one of those like, "that's stupid," and then it was kind of like a fight.' (Child No. 4) Particular emphasis was highlighted on social capital bonding as a key objective of SMS use as well as a benefit. Parents and teachers outlined how to bonding with friends and family across distances:'my friends and family live in [country], so it's much easier to contact them and...stay in touch that way' (Parent 2); 'through Facebook, I'm going to see a friend in [country] this summer' (Parent 3). (Teacher 5), interestingly, children emphasized this as well: 'if you have a friend who lives far away, you can communicate with him' (Child 9). Along with bonding social capital, parents and teachers discussed, 'remaining connected to a larger community' (Parent 12), implying that SMS can help bridge social capital gaps. Although children did not see this as beneficial, they did state that they would accept friend requests only if they knew them in real life (Child 7).

A minority of parents viewed social capital online as beneficial for their children, primarily for bonding with friends: 'their friends will be on there with their own accounts, and they'll be able to communicate with their friends and things' (Parent 5); bonding with family: 'she's his godmother, and they send lots of like silly SnapChats and things to each other' (Parent 12); and ease of communication: 'he knows he can speak to me or his dad at (Parent 4). These parents frequently demonstrated co-mediation behaviors: 'in the evenings, we watch YouTube as part of our bedtime routine' (Parent 5). Teachers perceived the ability for their students to 'chat with friends outside of school' (Teacher 3) as a beneficial opportunity. For instance, connecting with larger communities and developing skills for collaboration/networking: 'breaking down barriers, you 'know sharing experiences' (Teacher 14). These perceptions are connected to an educational approach, most notably in terms of digital literacy:' schools use Twitter to share learning, and some schools post writing and other things on their' (Teacher 6).

4.3. E-safety

E-safety was primarily motivated by the risk of stranger danger. Parents and teachers frequently outlined concern about stranger danger:' speaking with sort of adults on the other side [...] those things really scare me' (Parent 4). Excessive disclosure was regarded as a predictor: 'basically anything traceable that can be used to put them to the school' (Parent 9); 'you wouldn't walk into a football stadium and plaster your phone number across the scrolling display for all to see, so why would you do it back?', (13-year-old teacher). Catfishing (a stranger concealing their true identity through a disguise/pretense; Harris, 2013) was identified as a form of stranger danger: 'you could be conversing with someone who claims to be this person but is actually someone else entirely'. (Parent 13); 'people can put a completely false identity and you would believe them completely' (Teacher No. 9) Grooming was also highlighted as a form of stranger danger: 'it was a man, there were questions he was asking

that really concerned me [...] all that grooming side of things' (Parent 5); 'they're all really, really savvy and they could, again, just draw all these youngsters in' (12-year-old teacher). Children expressed similar concerns to their parents and teachers about stranger danger: 'I would not add them because they could be a stranger' (Child 12). Similarly, children identified excessive disclosure as a predictor: 'people can look and like find out where you live and they might come over' (Child 8). Contrary to what parents and teachers believed, children did not express support for catfishing and grooming but rather outlined physical dangers, specifically kidnapping: 'if you have information about the location of your school, strangers could come and kidnap you from your school' (Child seventh). Children outlined the risk of being tracked down by strangers in vague terms: 'they can look you up on other social media platforms and find your location' (Child 9). All participants frequently discussed e-safety procedures. Parental mediation behaviors were perceived as a socially acceptable e-safety strategy: 'you just wonder, "where were the parents then"' (Parent 4) and primarily repressive in nature. Parents viewed settings as beneficial for minimizing children's risk exposure (primarily to stranger danger): 'I believe that is the primary objective, checking privacy and settings.' (Parent sixth). Teachers were similar in that they frequently viewed settings as an e-safety strategy: 'we try to educate children that this is proof that the website is safe.' (Teacher No. 5) Additionally, parents expressed their intentions to monitor their children's SMS use: 'I'll do it behind your back or through technology we've installed in the house' (Parent 13), and to prohibit private use: 'we've got our computer down in the living room' (Parent 8). Additionally, teacher mediation behaviors demonstrated monitoring and restriction of use: 'there are some things they should NOT be doing, and that is something we really need to convey' (Teacher 14).

Frequently, these teachers and parents felt they lacked knowledge about SMS: 'I began using the internet in 1993, which is quite a long time ago, and it was quite different back then; it's kind of outgrown me.' (Parent 1): 'I am aware that it exists, but I lack sufficient knowledge about it' (Teacher 10th). Few parents and teachers expressed enabling mediation behaviors: 'I don't have many restrictions on their internet arm, so...practically, they could access anything and everything as it goes...don't necessarily have a problem with that' (Parent 5), these participants presented confident SMS knowledge and engaged in regular conversations with children: 'they'll come to me with a message from someone and...consider...what to do next'. (Parent 12) 'I've demonstrated the computer's capability through the use of things like Inscape and Sketch up, which allow for the design of things', (14-year-old teacher). Empowering children's independent SMS use was a priority for parents and teachers, but was hampered by safety concerns: 'you want them to use technology... but you also want to ensure they know how to use it safely.' (Parent 6); 'as long as it is properly utilized, it is an excellent platform' (Teacher 4).

Teachers who described enabling mediation behaviors frequently alluded to the difficulties associated with delivering e-safety education. These included a lack of resources: 'it's not something I've had to investigate here; we don't even use iPods...' (Physician 9) And a lack of time: 'as classroom teachers, if you have to go out looking for information...in busy...busy lives... you may not do that' (Teacher 11). Barriers to SMS use included its negative reputation: 'we don't use the internet because there are so many dangers' (Teacher 4) and the higher priority placed on core subjects: 'if you have English and Maths targets to meet, that

will take precedence over learning about social media sites' (Teacher 11). Children described e-safety methods that mirrored the mediation behaviors of their parents and teachers. Children frequently explained how to use settings: 'if you have a private account, anyone who wishes to view your page must request it' (Child 9). Selective contact, 'I just don't believe it's appropriate to friend someone I don't know' (Child 3), and disclosure restriction were also highlighted, 'you shouldn't like tell anyone your address...or email...or...your age...and like things like that' (Child 15).

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to elicit information about parents', teachers', and children's perceptions of the risks and benefits of SMS use, as well as adults' mediation behaviors. Adults recognize the value of internet use but are concerned about stranger danger; these risks inform restrictive mediation styles in the home and school environments. Adults and children alike placed a premium on stranger danger, with the majority of parents reporting using restrictive mediation styles. Our findings indicate that adults and children have similar perceptions of the benefits of SMS usage, particularly in terms of bonding social capital. Additionally, our findings demonstrate a novel method for examining cross-comparative relationships between children's and adults' perceptions.

5.1. Digital footprint

Adults recognized the significance of the digital age and acknowledged that their children would eventually have a digital footprint. Adults and children alike viewed responsibility as critical. Nonetheless, the definition of responsibility varied (Ungar, 2009), restrictive parents, as well as a significant number of teachers, perceived SMS age restrictions as a sign of responsibility. Enabling parents frequently tended age restrictions, assessing responsibility instead on the basis of their child's decision-making (Ozgur & Ucar, 2016). Those who believed their children would make poor online choices were more likely to co-use, while those who believed their children would discuss their use were more laissez-faire. Similarly, research on parent-child communication and parenting styles reflects similar findings (Fitzpatrick, Marshall, Leutwiler, & Krcmar, 1996; Noller & Bagi, 1985).

5.2. Benefits of SMS use

All participants perceived social capital bonding as beneficial. SMS is frequently used to communicate and organize plans, as well as to keep in touch with friends who live further away (Cornejo, Tentori, & Favela, 2013; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009). With limited opportunities for social interaction, SMS provides children with a more open platform for communication (Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2013; Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Children expressed the value of maintaining long-distance friendships through bonding (Haynie, 2004). The developmental benefits of social capital and well-being are inextricably linked to maintaining these friendships during childhood (Ferguson, 2006; Morrow, 1999). Notably, our findings indicate that social capital is critical for children and that SMS can help them achieve these goals. Finally, enabling parents described SMS co-use with their children, whereas enabling teachers described more interpretive behaviors, both expressing a desire to assist children in developing digital independence. Children who used SMS in conjunction with their parents emphasized the importance of social capital, corroborating findings about how parental mediation techniques affect children's SMS benefit exposure (Livingstone et al.,

2017). Children did not identify that they were taught about the benefits of social capital in school; thus, the educational message received by children may be predominantly negative (boyd & Hargittai, 2013; Hew & Brush, 2007).

5.3. Risks of SMS use

Children's lack of understanding of stranger danger was identified in early internet research (Kraizer, Fryer, & Miller, 1988; Moran, Warden, Macleod, Mayes, & Gillies, 1997). Children can now easily access online platforms and communicate on their own (Sharples, Graber, Harrison, & Logan, 2008). Fear of stranger danger motivates both parents and teachers to engage in restrictive mediation behaviors, even those who are typically more enabling (Foster, 2014). Online connection is viewed as a precursor to developing relationships with strangers (boyd & Hargittai, 2013). Adults were especially concerned about stranger's catfishing children with the intent to groom them and employed restrictive mediation behaviors to prevent this. Children, on the other hand, were vocal about the risks of bridging online and were explicit about their desire to bond only social capital; this suggests that adults' perceptions of the risk associated with children's bridging online behaviors may be less relevant today (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). Children perceived strangers physically locating them as the ultimate risk (Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponte, & Staksrud, 2014), though this was rarely elaborated upon. Teachers expressed concern that stranger danger education in elementary schools frequently fails to outline the realities necessary to avoid frightening children; this is also recognized in the literature (Sharples et al., 2009). Perhaps this contributes to children's limited understanding of the consequences.

A small percentage of children recognized the risks of excessive disclosure leading to cyberbullying. When children elaborated on this, they frequently discussed strategies for resolving victimization, such as informing parents or resolving the issue themselves. While these strategies are frequently used in response to traditional bullying (Demaray, Malecki, Secord, & Lyell, 2013; Rigby, 2005; Sampasa-Kanyinga, Lalande, & Colman, 2020), they have been shown to be ineffective in the context of cyberbullying (Machackova, Cerna, Sevcikova, Dedkova, & Daneback, 2013). For instance, a child may attempt to resolve an issue but is unable to do so due to online disinhibition (Suler, 2004) or misinterpretation (Steer, Betts, Baguley, & Binder, 2020). Indeed, it has been identified that seeking support from friends (Fitzpatrick & Bussey, 2014) and school (Chan & Wong, 2020) is particularly effective in coping with cyberbullying. As a result, it appears as though children lack appropriate coping mechanisms for cyberbullying. Children expressed far more concern about stranger danger risks than they did about cyberbullying risks. While enhancing privacy settings is critical for minimizing visibility to strangers, it does not eliminate the risk of excessive disclosure (Schacter, Greenberg, & Juvonen, 2016). Even when visibility is restricted to friends, over-disclosure is still possible (if not more so) (Dennehy et al., 2020). Adults' restrictive mediation behaviors are influenced by societal fears of stranger danger (Furedi, 2001). In reality, the likelihood of being contacted by a stranger is significantly lower than the likelihood of being subjected to other risks, such as cyberbullying (Livingstone et al., 2017).

5.4. E-safety

Teachers demonstrating restrictive mediation behaviors emphasized age restrictions and stranger danger risks; they also demonstrated a lack of understanding regarding SMS use (Krumsvik, Jones, fstegaard, & Eikeland, 2016). Restricted teachers mitigated online visibility concerns by foregoing a digital footprint out of fear of violating professionalism policies (Rodwell, 2017). Enabling teachers demonstrated increased confidence with SMS use and possessed a digital footprint, allowing for more flexible e-safety education and lowering the barrier of prioritization. There is a strong correlation between identified confidence and flexibility in teaching (Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik, 2018; Wilson & Stacey, 2004). Additionally, these teachers may possess abilities to protect themselves from unwanted contact (Nikolopoulou & Gialamas, 2015). Simply based on these findings, e-safety education ranged from daily to once a term, highlighting the lack of consistency across schools. Core subjects such as literacy and mathematics were frequently outlined as being prioritized over subjects where e-safety is most likely to be delivered (Shipton, 2011). For teachers who lack comprehension, prioritizing e-safety education within an already overburdened curriculum is improbable (OECD, 2005). As Shipton (2011) argued, there is a lack of prioritization within school budgets for funding pupil devices.

6. CONCLUSION

This study is unique in that it examines adult and child (aged 7–12 years) perceptions of the risks and benefits of SMS use, as well as the role of adult mediation adults. Our findings demonstrate that younger children (aged 7–12 years) use SMS for the purpose of bonding social capital. Children are aware of the risks associated with stranger danger and utilize settings to mitigate them. Unfortunately, children are unaware of additional risks, such as cyberbullying. Adult mediation behaviors, including internet parenting and instructional styles, influence children's perceptions of the risks and benefits of SMS use, as well as their access to SMS. Adults place a high premium on stranger danger risks, which has an effect on children's perceptions of online risk. All adults are harmed by their lack of knowledge about SMS when it comes to educating children about their SMS use. Practical barriers to delivering e-safety education are another impediment for teachers. Elementary schools should prioritize SMS education for children as young as eight years old and educate teachers to equip them to deliver effective e-safety instruction. Our study is unique in its methodological approach, as it takes a cross-comparative approach to addressing community perspectives. In theory, our study demonstrates the critical role of significant adults as key mediators in children's SMS use in order to promote their development safely. However, this should be done in a balanced manner, taking into account both the risks and the benefits.

7. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study's participants came from a diverse range of geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds throughout Pakistan. However, a limitation is the absence of representation from a broader ethnic background. According to research, parental mediation behaviors, as well as parenting techniques in general, vary according to ethnic origin due to cultural differences (Greenberg & Mastro, 2008; Swindle, Ward, Whiteside-Mansell, Bokony, & Pettit, 2014). By incorporating these measures, we can conduct additional research on adult mediation in children's SMS use. Additionally, the lead researcher was familiar with several of the participants due to their previous roles as teachers in their respective schools. To avoid biases or censorship, the lead researcher made a concerted effort to ensure participants feel

comfortable sharing information, such as by using first names and ensuring that data was anonymized. Despite this, some participants' responses may be limited due to social desirability bias. It is important to take this into account when interpreting the findings. A consequence of this study is the application of a cross-comparative approach to the examination of perspectives within a community. By examining the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers, this study provides an in-depth examination of the social influences that shape children's development. In the digital age, this is a novel methodological approach that is important for understanding how children's perceptions and behaviors are shaped in an ever-changing connected world. Future research should take a similar approach in order to deepen our understanding of the complexities of children's digital reality.

Notably, this study demonstrates the similarities and differences in perceptions among parents, teachers, and children regarding the risks and benefits of SMS use, as well as the influence of mediation behaviors on these. The implications are that adults are placing an excessive emphasis on stranger danger, which is distorting children's perceptions of the security that online settings provide. Due to vague and widely disparate e-safety policies, teachers currently have mixed feelings about their ability to educate children about SMS use. Schools should prioritize e-safety education in terms of SMS use, regardless of age restrictions, and ensure that children are not only protected from relevant risks (include more information about cyberbullying, rather than just stranger danger), but also empowered to reap the benefits.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The corresponding author can provide the data that support the findings of this study upon request. Due to privacy and ethical restrictions, the data is not publicly available.

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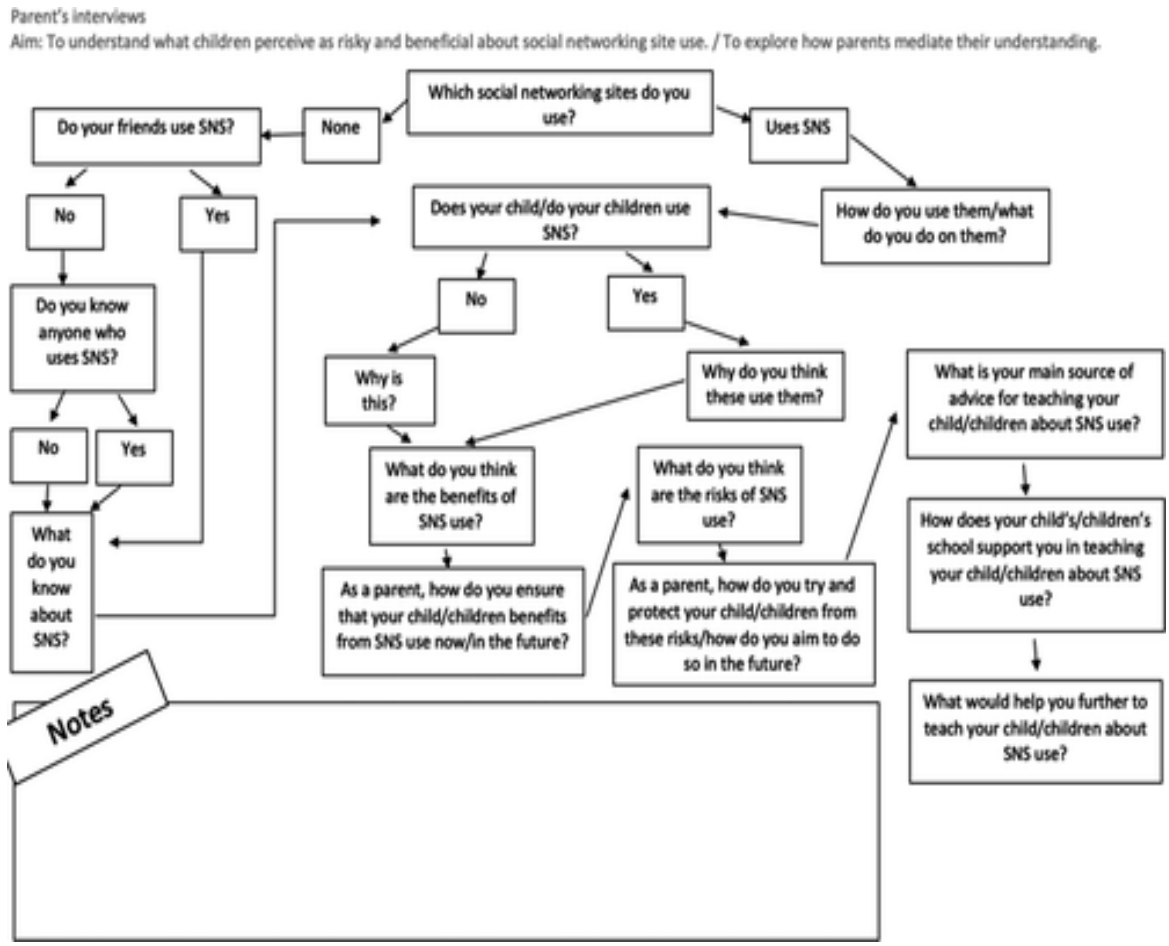
APPENDICES:

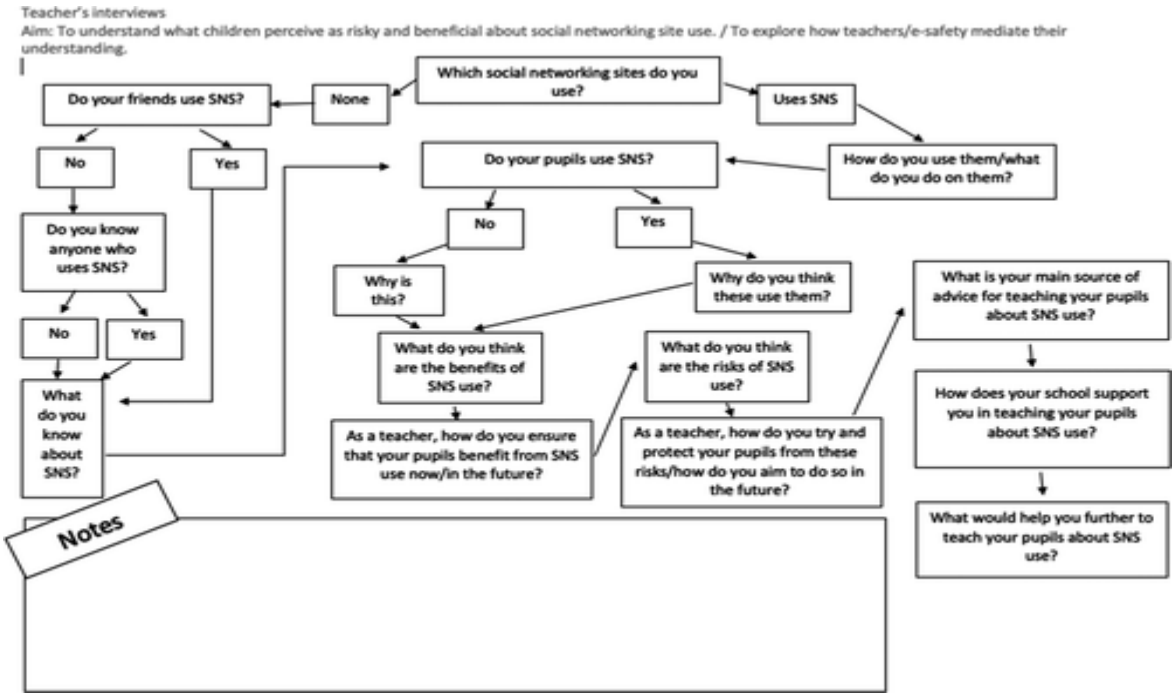
Appendix A

Interview flow chart: Parents



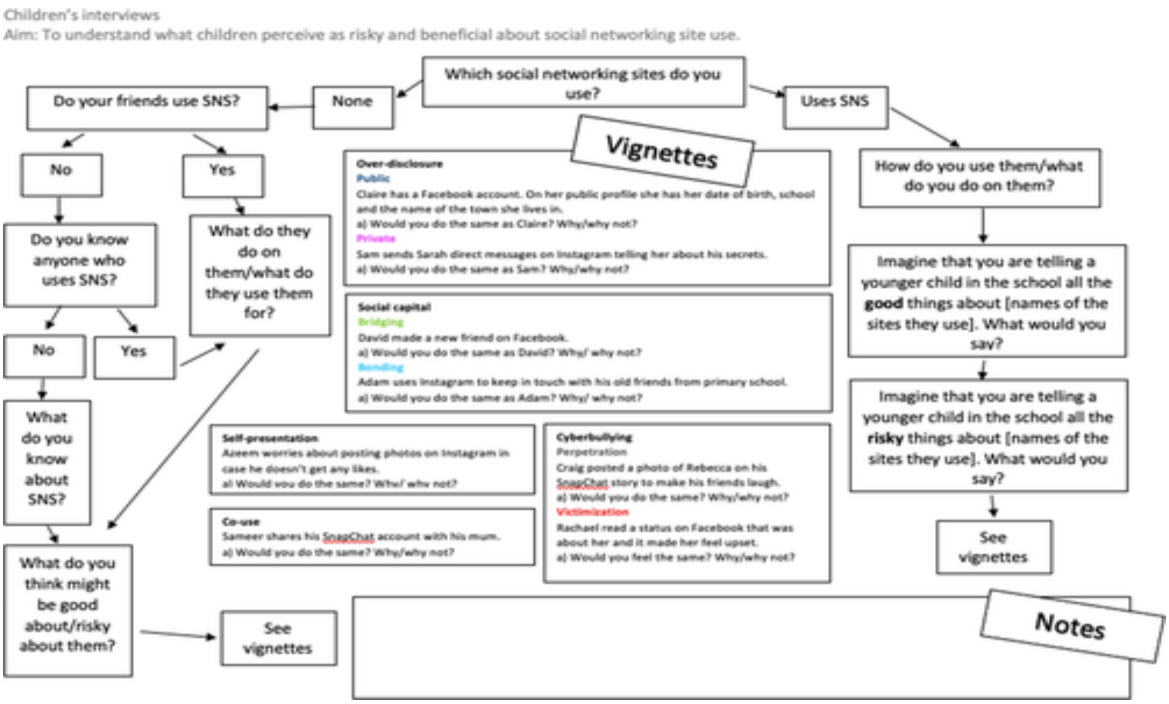
Appendix B

Interview flow chart: Teachers



Appendix C

Interview flow chart: Children


Children's interviews
Aim: To understand what children perceive as risky and beneficial about social networking site use.
Which social networking sites do you use?
None
Uses SNS
Do your friends use SNS?
No
Yes
Do you know anyone who uses SNS?
No
Yes
What do you know about SNS?
What do they do on them/what do they use them for?
What do you think might be good about/risky about them?
See vignettes
Vignettes
Over-disclosure
Public
Claire has a Facebook account. On her public profile she has her date of birth, school and the name of the town she lives in.
a) Would you do the same as Claire? Why/why not?
Private
Sam sends Sarah direct messages on Instagram telling her about his secrets.
a) Would you do the same as Sam? Why/why not?
Social capital
Bridging
David made a new friend on Facebook.
a) Would you do the same as David? Why/ why not?
Bonding
Adam uses Instagram to keep in touch with his old friends from primary school.
a) Would you do the same as Adam? Why/ why not?
Self-presentation
Azeem worries about posting photos on Instagram in case he doesn't get any likes.
a) Would you do the same? Why/ why not?
Co-use
Sameer shares his SnapChat account with his mum.
a) Would you do the same? Why/why not?
Cyberbullying
Perpetration
Craig posted a photo of Rebecca on his SnapChat story to make his friends laugh.
a) Would you do the same? Why/why not?
Victimization
Rachael read a status on Facebook that was about her and it made her feel upset.
a) Would you feel the same? Why/why not?
How do you use them/what do you do on them?
Imagine that you are telling a younger child in the school all the good things about [names of the sites they use]. What would you say?
Imagine that you are telling a younger child in the school all the risky things about [names of the sites they use]. What would you say?
See vignettes
Notes