

Gentle Parenting as a Social-Class Practice: Audience Comments on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

Instagram content often juxtaposes two contrasting parenting styles, gentle parenting and VOC parenting, thereby sparking debates about parenting practices linked to social class. This study aims to explain how audiences construct gentle parenting through Instagram comments as an expression of class identity and a meaning negotiation. This research employs Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework, specifically the concepts of capital, habitus, distinction, symbolic power, and the struggle over classification, to explain the relationship between digital communication practices and the reproduction of class structures. This research employs an interpretive qualitative approach with discourse analysis of comments on 30 Instagram posts that juxtapose Nikita Willy's gentle parenting style and Lek Damis' VOC parenting style during the 2024–2025. Of the 1,007 comments reviewed, 83 were analyzed based on Bourdieu's concepts. The results show that the audience interprets gentle parenting as a practice dependent on economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. The audience primarily debates the distribution of privilege that enables the implementation of these parenting practices. The audience also actively evaluates, negotiates, and rejects the legitimacy of parenting narratives through comment sections. This study concludes that social media comment sections are digital communication arenas where the meaning of gentle parenting is produced, negotiated, and contested through class identity, and serve as spaces for a struggle over classification in both the establishment of and resistance to the legitimacy of parenting practices.

Keywords: gentle parenting, social class, Instagram comments, digital communication, Pierre Bourdieu

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INTRODUCTION

A debate has emerged on Indonesian social media over the practice of gentle parenting, highlighting social class differences. Gentle parenting is a method of raising children that emphasizes parental affection, emotional regulation, and setting boundaries without punishment (Pezalla & Davidson, 2024). This method emphasizes safeguarding children's emotional well-being and creating a peaceful environment (Sunseri, 2024). A celebrity who has popularized the concept of gentle parenting in Indonesia is Nikita Willy, who frequently creates content on gentle parenting (Gucci & Rachmawati, 2025). On the other hand, there is Lek Damis, a YouTube and TikTok creator who often demonstrates a parenting style that is strict and harsh (Fanisa, 2024). The public often refers to this parenting style as "VOC

parenting,” which prioritizes strict discipline and authoritarian control (Herliawati et al., 2025). Several Instagram posts have contrasted the conflicting approaches of Nikita Willy and Lek Damis in raising their children. These posts have sparked comments from netizens that highlight social class issues in society.

The concept of gentle parenting has gained popularity among Indonesian celebrities over the past decade. Gentle parenting has become part of the parenting practices of celebrities and influencers, who are perceived as members of the upper class within society's social structure. The perception that celebrities and influencers belong to the upper-class stems from their possession of economic capital, which accumulates material wealth; social capital, in the form of networks and social relationships; and cultural capital, in the form of personal competence (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). The growing discourse on gentle parenting is fueled by the virality of Nikita Willy's TikTok videos, as a celebrity perceived to possess high economic capital (Milazania, 2019), which reinforces the notion that the gentle parenting discourse is driven and shaped by the upper class.

The language and narratives of celebrities and influencers construct gentle parenting as a good way of child-rearing. The language and narratives surrounding gentle parenting on social media are designed to lead the public to view gentle parenting as a positive and supportive approach to child development (Holtz-Schramek, 2025). These narratives, in turn, lead to the formation of new parenting norms and standards (Holtz-Schramek, 2025). Celebrities serve as symbolic figures, perceived as representing societal norms and values, and thus capable of shaping public perceptions of personality, behavior, and morality (Andersen, 2019). The implication is that parents who adopt parenting styles similar to celebrities' are viewed as good parents, while those who do not are viewed less favorably. Thus, the discourse on gentle parenting promoted by celebrities and influencers produces and reconstructs ideal parenting standards that are deemed legitimate in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has shown that parents curate family and parenting narratives to project an identity as a good parent (Moignan et al., 2017; Praveen & M, 2025). Content shared by parenting influencers tends to emphasize specific parenting styles, which often reflect middle-class values (Beuckels & Wolf, 2025). Consequently, the gentle parenting content promoted by celebrities does not reflect diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds (Beuckels & Wolf, 2025; Holtz-Schramek, 2025), thereby creating a disconnect for parents facing

economic difficulties or a lack of material and non-material support (Holtz-Schramek, 2025; Pezalla & Davidson, 2024). Meanwhile, the decisions and practices of working-class parents are often based on material and social realities that differ from those of the middle class (Gillies, 2006). Therefore, content created by Lek Damis, a content creator from a lower socioeconomic background, is considered more relevant to audiences because of the shared social class. Furthermore, Indonesian society is considered more familiar with an authoritative parenting approach characterized by strict discipline and a more dominant family hierarchy (Fauzi & Islamiah, 2023).

These two contrasting parenting styles were pitted against each other in several Instagram posts comparing Nikita Willy's parenting with Lek Damis. Based on an initial review of the comments on these posts, the public tends to view parenting styles as linked to economic issues and social inequality. The dominant perception is that gentle parenting is a style that can only be practiced by the upper class. Thus, the parenting discourse in the comment sections is linked to class issues, particularly the framing of gentle parenting as an upper-class discourse.

This research examines parenting styles and social class by analyzing the comment sections of Instagram posts comparing Nikita Willy's parenting style with that of Lek Damis. Content that contrasts these two parenting styles serves as a platform for the public to express their views in the comments. This study finds that comment sections serve as a medium through which audiences can express public opinions and sentiments (Akhil Rajeev et al., 2025) and articulate intentions, desires, preferences, and identities (Choi et al., 2024; Cui & Mao, 2017). Thus, comment sections serve as spaces where individuals can express their class identity and reflect their social-class perspectives (Artime, 2016; Taiwo, 2025). Consequently, comment sections can serve as case studies for understanding the intersection of public discourse and class identity, in which class identity influences rhetorical practices and willingness to engage in public debate (Andersen, 2019; Min & Shen, 2023).

This research examines the expression of social class identity through comments on specific class-based symbolic narratives in parenting-style content. Specifically, this study seeks to identify expressions of social class identity in comments related to gentle parenting, analyze public perceptions of gentle parenting as a construction of a specific social class, and explain public views on symbolic narratives about parenting that a specific social class constructs through gentle parenting. To achieve these objectives, the research question is: How do audience comments on gentle parenting reveal perspectives on class identity, the practices of

a specific social class, and the symbolic narratives of parenting constructed by a specific social class?

In the social media environment, audiences serve as both consumers and producers, actively interpreting, accepting, or rejecting narratives by voicing their opinions (Trenz et al., 2020). Comment sections serve as a space for audiences to express emotions, share personal experiences and perspectives (Trenz et al., 2020), reveal public opinions and sentiments (Akhil Rajeev et al., 2025), and articulate intentions, desires, preferences, and identities (Choi et al., 2024; Cui & Mao, 2017). Thus, comment sections reveal the diversity of issues and concerns stemming from the public's own perspectives (Trenz et al., 2020). The diversity of perspectives in comments is both a response to the content and an expression of social positions shaped by life experiences, available resources, and differing interpretive frameworks. In this context, the debate over gentle parenting can be understood as a debate regarding the legitimacy of a class-based practice.

Therefore, this research employs Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework to address the research questions, as Bourdieu's concepts link economic and social stratification to the formation and affirmation of identity and social legitimacy in everyday practices. Bourdieu's concept of habitus addresses the practices, perceptions, and attitudes shaped by social history and class conditions (Bourdieu, 1991), which can explain how social class identity is expressed in responses to gentle parenting. An analysis of social space and capital can explain how practices are associated with specific social classes (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). Furthermore, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power can explain the invisible forces that shape certain standards and values, as they manifest in the construction of gentle parenting from the audience's perspective. On the other hand, Bourdieu's concept of the struggle over classification can elucidate how audience comments reveal their struggle to challenge the legitimacy of established standards and values (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, this study employs Bourdieu's theoretical framework because it allows for viewing responses to parenting styles as practices linked to social class, as well as the struggle to challenge the legitimacy of specific social classes.

METHODOLOGY

This research conducted a textual discourse analysis using an interpretive qualitative approach. The study analyzed comments on Instagram posts that compared the parenting styles of Nikita Willy and Lek Damis, which exemplified gentle parenting and VOC parenting, during the

period from 2024 to 2025. This timeframe was chosen because it reflects discussions on this topic over the past year, ensuring that this study reflects the latest research findings (Nepomuceno & Soares, 2019).

This research identified Instagram content by searching for the keywords “Nikita Willy Lek Damis” and reviewing the top 100 posts that appeared. The study then selected content that featured videos of Nikita Willy and Lek Damis’s parenting styles within the same post, whether displayed side by side or in sequence. Based on these criteria, the study included 30 posts from the first 100 that appeared. Next, the study analyzed all 1,007 comments on the selected posts in accordance with the unit of analysis. This study treats comments as expressions that reflect the audience’s personal experiences and perspectives stemming from their daily lives (Trenz et al., 2020) . Therefore, comments can reveal narratives in digital discussion spaces that serve to uncover the construction of meaning in society.

This research focuses on the relationship between parenting and social class using Bourdieu’s theoretical framework. To that end, this study includes comments that may address Bourdieu’s concepts, namely capital, habitus, distinction, symbolic power, and the struggle over classification. The concept of capital encompasses economic capital, related to material wealth; cultural capital, related to knowledge, skills, and cultural acquisition; social capital, related to social relationships; and symbolic capital, which refers to prestige and reputation (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). Comments containing statements that mention these forms of capital were included in this study. The concept of habitus explains how individuals’ practices, perceptions, and attitudes are shaped by historical and social factors and class conditions (Bourdieu, 1991), as evidenced by comments that mention views or actions related to daily experiences or habits. According to Bourdieu, the concept of distinction refers to the differentiation of social hierarchies through tastes and practices (Bourdieu, 2010), as observed in comments that distinguish between the actions of one social class and those of another. According to Bourdieu, symbolic power is an invisible force that operates when other forms of capital are deemed legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991), as seen in comments expressing judgments about parenting practices. The struggle over classification, which concerns the effort to uphold principles that possess legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991) , manifests in comments expressing opposition to established values or standards. Based on these criteria, 83 comments were identified as data for this research.

The analysis in this research was conducted in several stages. The first stage involved categorizing the comments into the forms of capital outlined in Bourdieu’s concept, namely

economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993), and analyzing the habitus and distinctions reflected in the comments. The results of the categorization based on capital and the analysis of habitus and distinctions produced a mapping that reveals expressions of social class identity. Subsequently, based on this mapping of social class identity expressions, an analysis was conducted using the concept of distinction to uncover the audience's perspectives on distinguishing gentle parenting as a practice associated with a specific social class. Subsequently, an analysis using the concepts of symbolic power and the struggle over classification was conducted to explain the audience's perspectives regarding the symbolic narrative of gentle parenting. To address the research question, this research elucidates how social class identity is expressed in perceptions of a specific social class's symbolic narrative within parenting styles.

This research uses data in the form of content and comments from public personal Instagram accounts. Although the data is publicly accessible, the researcher endeavored to apply digital research ethics principles to protect subjects' privacy. The procedures implemented included fully anonymizing the identities of account owners and commenters and paraphrasing quoted text so it could not be traced via digital search features.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzes audience comments on gentle parenting and highlights perspectives on class identity, specific social-class practices, and the symbolic narrative of parenting within a particular social class. These sections cover audience comments expressing social-class identity; gentle parenting as a practice of a specific class; gentle parenting as a symbolic force; and an overview of audience perspectives on the narrative of gentle parenting, based on an analysis using Bourdieu's concepts.

Audience comments on the expression of social class identity

Based on an analysis of 83 audience comments relevant to the research focus, it was found that interpretations of gentle parenting are closely linked to the audience's understanding of their social class position and experiences. These comments reveal how the audience connects gentle parenting to resource ownership, life experiences, and the knowledge and practices that distinguish social positions. Based on these patterns, the research findings were synthesized into three main categories: material conditions and resource availability; habitus and the adaptation of parenting practices; and class distinctions and symbolic boundaries. These three

categories demonstrate that audience comments serve as responses to gentle parenting content and as a space for constructing, negotiating, and maintaining the meaning of social class within parenting discourse on Instagram.

Material Conditions and Resource Availability

Comments in this category include remarks regarding differences in economic conditions, access to or lack of support, limitations in time and energy, and emotions influenced by economic circumstances. These topics reflect the audience's views on material conditions and resources that can determine their ability to practice gentle parenting.

Comments emphasizing differences in economic conditions typically mention money, salary, income, terms like "well-off" or "hard up," or references to "wealthy person." The audience identifies their own economic status as lower than Nikita Willy's and explains parenting styles based on financial capability. Examples of comments in this category include:

- "It all comes down to money."
- "A monthly salary of 1 billion vs. a monthly salary of whatever you can afford."
- "Unlimited spending fund definitely makes things easier."
- "This is the difference between the rich and the poor. Money can determine everything."

These comments directly reflect the importance of economic capital in shaping life's possibilities and practices (Bourdieu, 2010). The audience's self-identification with their lower-class economic position, in contrast to Nikita Willy, relates to the concept of class condition, which encompasses the material constraints and possibilities that shape life choices (Bourdieu, 2010). When comments describe parenting patterns based on financial capacity, they highlight the fundamental idea that material needs constrain such practices.

Furthermore, comments that highlight access to or the lack of support tend to emphasize the role of others who provide it, such as the housekeeper, partners, or family members, as well as the domestic chores that must be shouldered. The comments portray the audience as a class lacking a support system, making gentle parenting difficult to implement. Comments of this category include:

- "Nikita has a housekeeper to cook, do laundry, and clean. All she has to do is take care of her child, get ready, and shoot. However, you have to do everything yourself."
- "One has a full-time housekeeper, the other does not."
- "Lek Damis is all alone. No one helps her."

- “Nikita does not have much to worry about. As for us, we are the ones who have to figure everything out. Taking care of the kids is not just about the children; even the father ends up being taken care of instead of helping with childcare.”

These comments highlight a life dominated by needs (Bourdieu, 1990a). Time and emotional energy are required for gentle parenting practices, yet they are neglected by individuals caught in constant domestic and family demands. Individuals prioritize the functions and management of time and energy for domestic work over involvement in childcare (Bourdieu, 2010). Disparities in household arrangements directly reflect the ownership and composition of various forms of capital. Nikita Willy’s ability to afford the housekeeper depends on economic capital, which can generate social capital (Bourdieu, 1990a). A lack of support from family members or a partner indicates limited social capital. Different levels and compositions of capital define positional disparities within the social class (Bourdieu, 1990a). These observations highlight that the upper-class can delegate tasks to others, thereby enabling gentle parenting.

On the other hand, comments that reveal time constraints and exhaustion as markers of social class mention fatigue, time constraints, and heavy workloads. Audience comments depict a fast-paced lifestyle, work-related stress, and emotional exhaustion as characteristics of a particular social class. Examples of comments include:

- “When I am at home, just the two of us with the kids, I would rather use the VOC parenting type. Because there is already so much work piled up, whether it is housework, actual job-related tasks, taking care of the kids, or handling this and that. It is exhausting.”
- “Even with a housekeeper, it is still the same. I am twice as exhausted. It is like time flies by; before I know it, it is night again.”
- “When I am in my right mind, I am like Nikita Willy, but when I am exhausted, I turn into Lek Damis.”
- “Lek Damis has so much to take care of that she has no time to take care of herself; she is exhausted, overwhelmed, and eventually gets hot-tempered.”

The mechanism by which actions shift due to fatigue offers insight into the functions of habitus and the practical logic of action. The change in the characters’ actions in the commentary due to fatigue indicates that the audience reverts to the habitus shaped by their class conditions (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991). Lek Damis’ parenting style is presented as an automatic response adapted to urgent survival needs, functioning without conscious or

rational effort (Bourdieu, 1990b, 1991). This shift indicates that the aspiration toward gentle parenting, considered ideal, is abandoned in response to distressing circumstances. Given that gentle parenting is abandoned under pressure, these comments reveal that the ability to carry out parenting practices is not tied to intention or knowledge. Parenting practices fundamentally depend on the agent's position within the social field.

Meanwhile, some comments acknowledge that emotions influenced by economic conditions link stress, anger, and other emotional states to financial constraints. Some of these comments indicate that the audience recognizes that emotional control is a form of emotional capital that is diminished by the pressures of working-class life. Examples of comments in this pattern:

- “I almost never get emotional; I never get angry. It is just that this month my finances have been shaky, so even small things easily tempered me.”
- “It is not just those struggling financially; even those who are just getting by or those in slightly better situations face similar challenges. Sometimes I get hot-tempered because I am so exhausted.”
- “It depends on the time of the month. If it is early in the month, I am Nikita; if it is late in the month, I am Lek Damis.”

Emotional crises caused by financial stress demonstrate that emotional stability is not an innate trait, but a fragile state that depends on consistent material support. When economic needs resurface, the emotional facade carefully maintained through gentle parenting collapses. Consequently, the individual reverts to an emotionally driven state of necessity, becoming like Lek Damis. This shift in behavior illustrates that practices result from habitus interacting with a specific social field (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b). Habitus provides generative schemas for action, but these schemas are activated by the resources available at the moment (Bourdieu, 1990a). When conditions are favorable, such as the financial situation at the beginning of the month, ideal dispositions can be realized (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b). However, when conditions deteriorate, such as financial circumstances at the end of the month, dominant dispositions triggered by stress and driven by necessity come to the fore (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b). This highlights the distinction between acting consciously, which is striving to be like Nikita Willy, and acting in accordance with the practical and immediate logic derived from habitus.

The audience interprets the ability to practice gentle parenting as a consequence of unevenly distributed material and social resources. An individual's position in the social field is related to the possession and composition of various forms of capital that help shape living conditions

and the range of actions available to agents (Bourdieu, 1990a, 2010) . Economic capital enables individuals to obtain domestic help and reduce work-related stress, while social support provides resources that can alleviate the burden of parenting. The availability of time and emotional well-being then become the conditions that make certain parenting practices possible. Meanwhile, resource constraints may lead individuals to prioritize practical and immediate needs. Thus, this category demonstrates that differences in gentle parenting practices are related to social position and the resources that shape the range of possible actions. These findings provide a foundation for understanding how these conditions are internalized within the habitus and subsequently influence the audience's adaptation of parenting practices. The significance of this category lies in showing that social class identity is not merely expressed through explicit references to economic status but is articulated through everyday experiences, inherited dispositions, and evaluations of which forms of parenting are considered realistic.

Habitus and Adaptation of Parenting Practices

In this category, audience comments include those expressing support for VOC parenting as a working-class habitus, comments on family habitus or transgenerational experiences, and comments on blending two parenting styles as a strategy. These three types of comments reflect the internalization of parenting dispositions and practices.

Comments expressing support for VOC parenting as a working-class habitus reveal the audience's positioning as a social group accustomed to strict parenting styles due to their living conditions. Audience members often identify as Lek Damis and cite the realities they face to explain their support for VOC parenting. Comments in this category include:

- “I am just like Lek Damis.”
- “95% of Indonesian mothers are the Lek Damis type.”
- “Lek Damis is a very real figure among working-class mothers.”
- “Lek Damis's parenting style is exactly my style, but it turns out to be beneficial.”
- “Children raised with VOC parenting are physically and mentally stronger.”

The audience's view that VOC parenting is the reality rooted in their daily conditions aligns with the concept of habitus. The practices are objectively adapted to achieve desired outcomes, meaning that the parenting style practiced is an expression of the practical logic necessary for survival (Bourdieu, 1990b) . The argument that VOC parenting is more beneficial and produces children who are physically and mentally stronger reflects a pragmatic, functional

approach driven by necessity (Bourdieu, 1990b). The act of identifying themselves as Lek Damis serves as a unifying social identity label, thereby functioning as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990a). This social identification label legitimizes VOC parenting practices by asserting that they constitute a common social reality. Thus, these comments reveal a personal perception of belonging to a class united by similar conditions and experiences.

Comments regarding family habitus or transgenerational experiences often compare the past and the present parenting styles, many of which are based on personal experience. Comments in this category often reflect the habitus passed down by parents. Examples of comments include:

- “My mother is like Lek Damis, but she truly loves her children.”
- “Seeing how Lek Damis raises her children reminds me of how I was raised when I was little.”
- “I am the product of Lek Damis-style parenting.”
- “That is how people were raised back in the day.”

Comments reflecting parenting practices learned from parents indicate that dispositions are embedded in individual and family histories (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991) and are linked to parenting styles. Behavioral patterns learned in childhood are often acquired without explicit instruction, shaping how individuals perceive and act as parents in adulthood (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991). The awareness that current approaches stem from an inherited past demonstrates that habitus functions as a formative structure (Bourdieu, 1991). Lek Damis’ parenting style is maintained not as a conscious, calculated choice, but as an expression of categories of perception and judgment acquired during childhood.

Comments on blending two parenting styles as a strategy for adopting a parenting approach indicate that the audience may switch between gentle parenting and VOC parenting depending on the circumstances. Comments in this category indicate that the audience acknowledges a desire to practice gentle parenting. However, in reality, they end up practicing VOC parenting, or shift between the two depending on the situation. These comments reveal a flexible class identity shaped by necessity or situational pressures. Examples of this pattern include:

- “I want to be like Nikita, but in reality, I am Lek Damis.”
- “Moms are actually shape-shifters: they know when to be Nikita Willy and when to be Lek Damis.”
- “I start gentle, but if I am not listened to, I turn into VOC.”

The shift from gentle parenting to VOC parenting under pressure illustrates that practices are governed by deep-seated and ingrained dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). When facing exhaustion due to a heavy workload, individuals revert to the pragmatic, quick, and limited actions necessary for survival, in line with their deeply ingrained initial dispositions.

The comments in this category indicate that parenting practices are influenced by dispositions internalized through life experiences, family, and social conditions. Support for VOC parenting suggests that this parenting style is accepted as a practice aligned with the living conditions and experiences of the working class. In contrast, transgenerational parenting experiences demonstrate how these dispositions are passed down and reproduced through experience. Meanwhile, the audience's shifts between gentle parenting and VOC parenting demonstrate that habitus provides a tendency to act that can be actualized differently depending on the circumstances faced (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b). Thus, this category shows that the audience interprets parenting practices as practices shaped by social dispositions and internalized experiences. Gentle parenting and VOC parenting are framed as practices that can be negotiated and adapted to the audience's habitus and the social situation they face.

Distinction and Symbolic Class Boundaries

This category includes audience comments that contrast themselves with the upper class or celebrities, as well as comments that view parenting knowledge as a privilege of a certain class. In this category, the audience uses parenting practices and knowledge to identify social positions and construct symbolic boundaries between classes.

A key characteristic of comments that contrast themselves with the upper class or celebrities is the argument that there is a dividing line, where the gentle parenting practiced by Nikita Willy, as a celebrity, is deemed unsuitable for peasants. Examples of comments in this category include:

- “Do not compare rich celebrities with peasants.”
- “That is not a fair comparison because of the class difference. Compare those on the same level.”
- “Parenting by the wealthy, who do not have to think much, versus parenting by the hard up, who have a lot on their minds.”

The audience consciously positions themselves and celebrities within an objective social space defined by economic and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1990a). The statements emerging in the comments reveal a social hierarchy. The audience asserts that parenting practices are

determined by one's position within the social structure, based on the capital one possesses. The audience's comments reject the idea that celebrities' symbolic capital is universal; rather, they emphasize that gentle parenting practices reflect economic capital and privilege.

Comments that view parenting knowledge as a privilege of a certain class often mention education, parenting knowledge, or access to knowledge. Comments in this category indicate that modern parenting knowledge is regarded as cultural capital inaccessible to all social classes. Some of the comments include:

- "Do not compare their economic status, compare their parenting knowledge."
- "It is nice to be the child of a wealthy person who uses modern parenting methods."

These comments explicitly link parenting competence to parenting knowledge. Bourdieu defines this as cultural capital, which encompasses the skills, knowledge, and cultural mastery necessary to understand and navigate social life (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). This cultural capital is considered inaccessible to all social classes, reflecting the fact that this specific, time-consuming process of socialization and institutional training is not evenly distributed (Bourdieu, 1993, 2010).

Audiences recognize class differences through the practices, knowledge, and symbolic legitimacy inherent in parenting practices. The distinction between celebrity parenting and that of ordinary people illustrates a process of distinction in which audiences position gentle parenting practices as a specific social class's practice and reject them as a universal standard. Meanwhile, the view that parenting knowledge is a privilege suggests that cultural capital shapes the ability to understand and apply specific parenting practices (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993, 2010). Thus, this category indicates that audience comments reflect processes of classification and the establishment of symbolic boundaries between social groups. Through these distinctions, the audience negotiates its social position while simultaneously questioning the legitimacy of gentle parenting when it is presented as a universally applicable parenting norm. In this context, the comment section reveals judgments and distinctions regarding who possesses the resources, knowledge, and social position deemed necessary to practice gentle parenting.

The three categories of comments outlined in this section indicate that the audience interprets gentle parenting as a practice linked to their social position and the surrounding life circumstances. The categories of material conditions and resource availability suggest that economic capital and social capital shape the audience's ability to provide the time, support, and capacity required to implement specific parenting practices (Bourdieu, 1990a, 2010).

Furthermore, the audience's assessment of gentle parenting is shaped by a habitus rooted in economic circumstances and family parenting experiences, such that a practice is understood based on internalized dispositions and experiences (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991). On the other hand, audiences who have adopted a new parenting disposition may revert to their old dispositions when faced with practical pressures and demands (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). Furthermore, differences in the possession of capital and experience serve as the basis for the audience to make distinctions and establish symbolic boundaries between themselves and other social groups, including through evaluations of access to knowledge and parenting practices (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993, 2010). Thus, these three categories reveal the relationship among resource ownership, the formation of dispositions, and social differentiation, thereby making gentle parenting a practice whose meaning is inextricably linked to class position.

Gentle parenting as a practice of a specific social class

Audience comments describe material conditions while simultaneously establishing symbolic boundaries regarding who is considered capable, deserving, and legitimate to practice gentle parenting. Therefore, the concept of distinction is relevant to explaining how parenting practices serve as markers of social position. Several of the comments analyzed reveal assessments of gentle parenting as a form of distinction. The comments mention that economic, emotional, and leisure-time factors influence the emergence of this distinction.

Economic status role in distinction

The emphasis on financial capacity is not only related to material survival but also to how economic status determines access to certain lifestyles (Bourdieu, 2010). Explicit contrasts between "the wealthy" and "the poor" highlight this distinction. In a class-stratified society, economic differences become social differences, and the ability to afford or practice a certain parenting style serves as a marker of distinction (Bourdieu, 2010).

Comments related to the identification of economic status indicate that gentle parenting is viewed as a luxury practice, one that requires freedom from economic necessity, thus giving rise to the terms "affluent" and "non-affluent." This perspective aligns with Bourdieu's analysis of how the possession of economic capital creates a distance from material needs, which in turn enables the development of everyday practices considered distinct (Bourdieu, 2010).

Emotional control as a distinction

The ability to remain emotionally calm is implicitly regarded as a virtue associated with the leisure time and privilege enjoyed by the upper class. Bourdieu argues that practices of distinction are based on a distance from necessity (Bourdieu, 2010). Emotional control, patience, and positive engagement in gentle parenting require time and psychological resources that stem from freedom from pressing economic pressures (Bourdieu, 2010). These traits are internalized as dispositional control, which is an integrated form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990b, 2010).

A decline in emotional control under financial pressure reveals that emotional consistency is not an innate trait but rather a fragile disposition dependent on reliable material support. When economic needs resurface, the carefully maintained emotional facade collapses, leading to a return to a need-driven emotional repertoire (Bourdieu, 1990a). This explains comments such as: “I am Nikita Willy at the beginning of the month, but I turn into Lek Damis by the end of the month.”

Distinction through Needs and Leisure Time

The fundamental difference between approaches to child-rearing lies in a tension among needs, freedom, and leisure time. The audience identifies the ability to practice gentle parenting as a luxury made possible by a degree of economic freedom (Bourdieu, 2010). References to “hard up people who have a lot on their minds” acknowledge that parenting styles are shaped by a habitus formed under conditions of scarcity (Bourdieu, 1990a). The need to “think a lot” stems from the allocation of limited resources and the constraints of daily economic management. Ultimately, these constraints leave no psychological or material space for approaches like gentle parenting, which require more resources.

Conversely, the comment “wealthy people who do not have to think much” is characterized by a disposition derived from high economic capital, which affords practical freedom by freeing one from pressing needs. Gentle parenting is interpreted as a manifestation of this freedom, thereby enabling the upper class to engage in practices that symbolically distinguish them from other groups (Bourdieu, 1990a, 2010).

These findings indicate that the audience views gentle parenting not as a universal parenting technique, but rather as an upper-class practice that arises from a combination of economic capital, free time, emotional stability, and distance from the demands of daily life. The comments confirm that the ability to be gentle, patient, and responsive is a direct result of

one's position within the social structure. Individuals with sufficient financial, time, and domestic support can exhibit dispositions consistent with gentle parenting, while those living under constraints must adapt their parenting practices to the logic of necessity. Thus, gentle parenting functions as a form of distinction, a marker that affirms upper-class privilege, while the other social class identifies this approach as an unattainable luxury. These findings identify that parenting styles are always tied to the material and symbolic conditions that surround everyday life (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). The significance of this category is that it shifts the interpretation of gentle parenting from an individual parenting preference toward a socially situated practice, whose perceived feasibility is associated with the unequal distribution of economic and symbolic resources.

Gentle parenting as symbolic power

Symbolic power operates through social recognition of those deemed to possess authority (Bourdieu, 1991). In the context of social media, celebrities and influencers gain legitimacy because they are perceived as successfully leading ideal family lives. This legitimacy makes the parenting practices they showcase more readily accepted as normative standards compared to the experiences of peasants. Therefore, when celebrities or influencers repeatedly present gentle parenting with high economic, cultural, and symbolic capital, this practice can be perceived as the ideal standard of parenting.

Audience comments on economic differences function as sociological operators, expressing practical knowledge of social structures by classifying oneself and others according to economic criteria (Bourdieu, 2010). The use of language, such as "the wealthy," is a component of the symbolic struggle over classification. Such language reveals one's position and expresses the needs that shape one's choices (Bourdieu, 2010).

By framing economic aspects as something capable of determining everything, comments regarding economic disparities reveal an understanding of economic power (Bourdieu, 2010). Furthermore, these comments indicate that the audience is engaged in a symbolic struggle over the definition and legitimacy of everyday practices (Bourdieu, 2010). The contrast between the well-off and hard-up groups frames the discussion as an imposed classification. The lifestyle and practices of one group are established as legitimate or aspirational, while the other group is viewed as the opposite.

The relationship between specific parenting knowledge and social class illustrates how symbolic power operates to define and legitimize social hierarchies. The possession of a

complex parenting philosophy constitutes a specific cultural acquisition that the upper class, which is characterized by high cultural capital, converts into symbolic capital in the form of prestige or reputation (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). The act of transforming knowledge into social value constitutes a struggle over classification, in which one group seeks to impose its standards as a universal definition and claim legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). When public commentary implies that knowledge of gentle parenting is a prerequisite for ideal parenting, it indicates symbolic violence. This unseen emphasis reinforces the perception that the practices of the dominant class are objectively superior, while rejecting the legitimacy of approaches rooted in the needs or conditions of different classes (Bourdieu, 1993, 2010).

The recurring references to Lek Damis are part of a class struggle. By identifying themselves with Lek Damis, the audience collectively engages in the politics of group formation (Bourdieu, 1990a). This process aims to establish a legitimate definition of the audience's social segment (Bourdieu, 1990a). The act of referring to themselves as Lek Damis transforms the collective's objective position into a recognized and named social identity, which uses this unifying label as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1991). This legitimizes VOC parenting by asserting that such practices constitute their social reality. These comments reveal their perception as a class bound by similar conditions and experiences.

The audience consciously positions themselves and the celebrities within an objective social space defined by economic and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1990a). Statements such as, "Do not compare wealthy celebrities with peasants," or "That is not a valid comparison because of the class difference," are direct statements about social hierarchy and the reality of social distance. The audience asserts that parenting practices are not universally applicable because they are shaped by a person's position within the social structure, which, in turn, is determined by the possession of capital (Bourdieu, 1990a). The significance of this analysis is that it demonstrates that the class dimension of gentle parenting operates through the symbolic legitimacy attached to particular forms of parenting knowledge and practice.

Audience perceptions of the gentle parenting discourse

Based on the analysis using Bourdieu's concepts, this research found that the audience perceives gentle parenting as a class-based discourse. The audience views gentle parenting as a parenting practice accessible only to the upper class. The audience also perceives this parenting style as a practice heavily dependent on material resources and cultural knowledge, making it difficult to apply for those who still face financial constraints.

The audience explicitly links gentle parenting to financial status and views it as a luxury. Comments from the audience confirm that economic capital is significant for opening up possibilities in daily life. Thus, the audience equates the ability to practice this parenting style with financial capability.

The ability to maintain a gentle parenting approach is seen as dependent on external support and the absence of domestic burdens. A high-resource social position allows individuals to delegate household tasks, such as cooking, laundry, or cleaning, to domestic workers. This situation enables individuals to engage in other activities during their available free time. Gentle parenting is seen as requiring a significant investment of time, emotional energy, and psychological resources. Audience members facing heavy workloads and the demands of domestic responsibilities must prioritize resource allocation and management. Consequently, individuals without external support face barriers to practicing gentle parenting. Therefore, the audience views gentle parenting as a parenting practice that combines economic capital and social capital, resources that most working-class parents lack. The narrative of gentle parenting is seen as too far removed from the audience's lived reality.

The audience often acknowledges a desire to practice gentle parenting but realizes they quickly fail under the pressure of real-world demands. Their comments reveal an aspiration to practice gentle parenting, yet life's realities compel them to abandon it. The audience views gentle parenting as an ideal, while VOC parenting is seen as a survival strategy. This highlights the impracticality of gentle parenting given the audience's social circumstances. Behavioral shifts stemming from exhaustion or financial hardship demonstrate that ideal practices are abandoned when basic needs take precedence. The ability to practice gentle parenting is thus heavily influenced by the pace of life and economic pressures. For the audience, emotional behavior reflects the unequal availability of psychological resources between the upper and working classes. These behavioral changes indicate that managing oneself to practice gentle parenting depends on an individual's position within society and their freedom from the constraints of necessity.

The audience recognizes that knowledge of gentle parenting is a privilege reserved for certain social classes because it is not universally accessible. Knowledge about parenting is considered cultural, a resource with high symbolic value that serves as a marker of distinction capital (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993). The audience views gentle parenting as a disposition arising from a stable, upper-class lifestyle marked by a lack of pressing needs. Meanwhile, VOC parenting is viewed by the audience as a working-class habitus. Thus, the narrative of gentle

parenting is understood as not stemming from the audience's own experiences and not reflecting their habitus. Consequently, comments emerge reflecting the perception that gentle parenting is enjoyed only by wealthy children.

Gentle parenting is identified as a practice free from the constraints of economic necessity. This practice serves as a marker of distinction, separating celebrities from peasants by virtue of differences in economic capital. Possession of economic capital creates distance from the pressures of necessity and opens up possibilities for the development of other practices. The audience views gentle parenting as a practice of distinction, which both differentiates and reinforces social class differences (Bourdieu, 2010).

The link between gentle parenting practices and material conditions leads the audience to reject the symbolic status of gentle parenting as a universal parenting approach. The audience portrays this parenting style as a reflection of economic capital and privilege. Furthermore, when gentle parenting is presented as the ideal approach, the audience interprets it as a form of symbolic violence, positioning upper-class practices as a universal standard that fails to account for structural limitations. Comments such as, "Do not compare wealthy celebrities with peasants," are expressions of rejection of this symbolic legitimacy.

Thus, the audience views gentle parenting as an upper-class practice that is difficult to implement for individuals facing stressful living conditions, pressing needs, and limited support. On the other hand, the audience positions VOC parenting as a practice that better reflects their own class habitus. Consequently, the audience perceives gentle parenting as a representation of class structure and a symbol of privilege. This perspective gives rise to both resistance and negotiation regarding the narrative of gentle parenting.

Most of the comments do not dispute the effectiveness of gentle parenting as a parenting practice. The debate often centers on the social prerequisites that make gentle parenting possible. Thus, the main focus of the audience's debate is the distribution of privilege, which is seen as determining who has the opportunity or ability to practice gentle parenting. This shift in focus indicates that parenting discourse on social media serves as a medium for the audience to discuss class inequality through the language of parenting (Bourdieu, 1991).

These findings indicate that the audience does not act as passive recipients of the parenting narratives circulating on social media. Through their comments, the audience actively evaluates, negotiates, and even rejects the legitimacy of parenting practices promoted by public figures. Thus, the comment section serves as a discursive arena where diverse class

experiences converge to redefine the meaning of gentle parenting in daily realities (Bourdieu, 1991).

The significance of these findings lies in demonstrating that the expression of class identity in the comments emerges not only through references to economic status, but also through material experiences, parenting dispositions shaped within the family, and the process of distinguishing oneself from other social groups (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1991, 2010). Thus, the audience's comments reveal that class identity is produced through how individuals interpret their living conditions and relate them to parenting practices, making "gentle parenting" a medium for articulating social position in digital communication.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the audience perceives gentle parenting as a class construct dependent on the possession of economic, social, and cultural capital. An analysis of 83 comments reveals that the audience views gentle parenting as a practice accessible only to the upper class, who have sufficient time, energy, and domestic support. In contrast, VOC parenting is viewed as an expression of working-class habitus, a pragmatic response to life's pressures, resource constraints, and work schedules with limited space for parenting. These findings reveal that social media comments reflect a reinterpretation of class identity and distinction, as well as the audience's efforts to articulate their personal material realities. Audience comments reveal a response to gentle parenting as a symbolic struggle, specifically a rejection of the claim that this upper-class parenting practice is universal. By examining audience comments as discursive practices, this research demonstrates the relevance of Bourdieu's theory in explaining how parenting narratives function as mechanisms of class reproduction and resistance in digital spaces.

This research shows that the meaning of gentle parenting on social media is shaped through the audience's negotiation of class identity. Thus, this research expands the field of digital communication research by demonstrating that comment sections are not merely spaces for interaction but also arenas for the production, reproduction, and resistance to class-related social meanings. Theoretically, this research expands the application of Bourdieu's ideas in digital communication studies by demonstrating that social media comment sections can be arenas of struggle over classification, where audiences either uphold or reject the legitimacy of specific cultural practices. In practice, these findings suggest that promoting parenting

practices on social media must account for the diversity of social circumstances to avoid reproducing parenting standards relevant only to specific social groups.

Future research on parenting should consider capital structures and habitus to avoid reproducing symbolic violence in parenting discourse. Further research could be conducted by expanding the study to other platforms, comparing responses across social classes or regions, or exploring how algorithms reinforce symbolic hierarchies in discussions about parenting.

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