

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SCREEN TIME FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



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Background:

Recently, there has been a growing research interest in the impact of screen media use among young children [1-3]. However, the extent to which it might be associated with children's mental health problems is still unclear.

In this study, we examined relationships between screen time and children's emotional and behavioural problems, child BMI, physical activity, as well as parental characteristics.

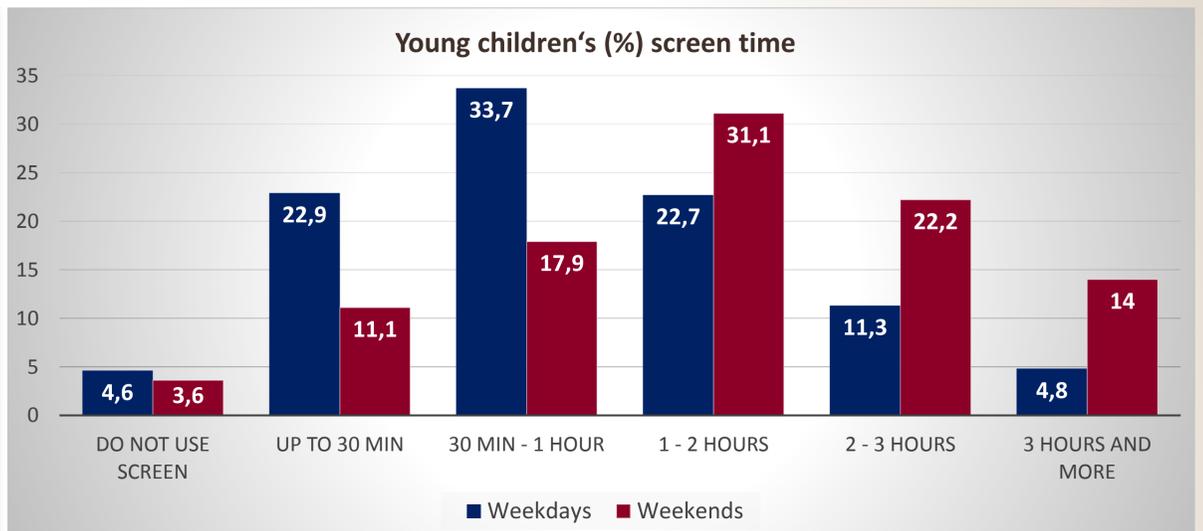
Methods:

Participants: 962 Lithuanian pre-schoolers (the mean age was 42.57 months, SD=15.23).

Parents reported on their child's emotional and behavioural problems using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL/1.5-5) and on peculiarities of their child's screen media use. Age, parental education, body mass index, health-related behaviour were included as covariates.

Results:

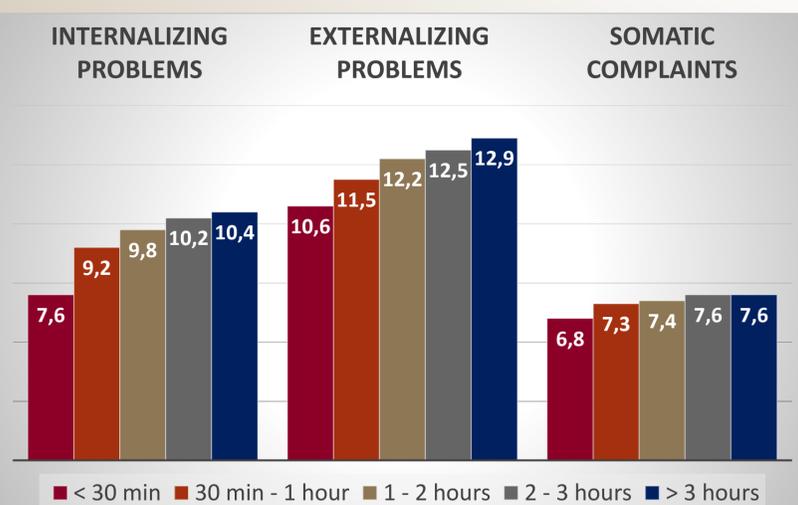
Increased screen time exposure was positively associated with children's internalizing and externalizing problems. Overall, 44.9% of children have at least one electronic device in their bedrooms. Those children spent on the average longer hours on the screens as well as had more mental and physical health problems.



Correlations of the studied variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| Child BMI | -.030 | -.024 | -.107** | -.113** | .063 | .067 | .019 | .034 | .055 | -.261** |
| Screen time (weekday) / 1 | | .762** | -.175** | -.227** | .130** | .043 | -.027 | .182** | .136** | .177** |
| Screen time (weekend) / 2 | | | -.099** | -.190** | .119** | .122** | -.054 | .130** | .114** | .292** |
| Maternal education / 3 | | | | .460** | -.097** | -.063 | -.041 | .134** | -.067* | .069* |
| Paternal education / 4 | | | | | -.117** | -.110** | -.004 | -.142** | -.099** | .077* |
| Maternal BMI / 5 | | | | | | .153** | .023 | .063 | .062 | .035 |
| Paternal BMI / 6 | | | | | | | .013 | -.030 | -.009 | .061 |
| Physical activity / 7 | | | | | | | | -.071* | -.016 | -.072* |
| Internalizing problems / 8 | | | | | | | | | .682** | .033 |
| Externalizing problems / 9 | | | | | | | | | | -.056 |
| Child's age / 10 | | | | | | | | | | |

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01



Conclusions:

The results of the study might have important implications for child mental health and wellbeing. Future interventions might be more effective if they are targeted at the positive and negative effects of screen time on the development of children.

Impact:

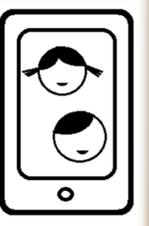
The results of the study can significantly add to the international discussions on risk and protective factors of screen media use in early childhood.

References:

- [1] American Academy of Pediatrics (2013). Policy statement: Children, adolescents, and the media. *Pediatrics*, 132: 958-961.
- [2] Duch, H., Fisher, E. M., Ensari, I., & Harrington, A. (2013). Screen time use in children under 3 years old: A systematic review of correlates. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 10, 102.
- [3] Lauricella, A., R., Wartella, E., & Rideout, V. (2015). Young children's screen time: The complex role of parent and child factors. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 36, 11-17.



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