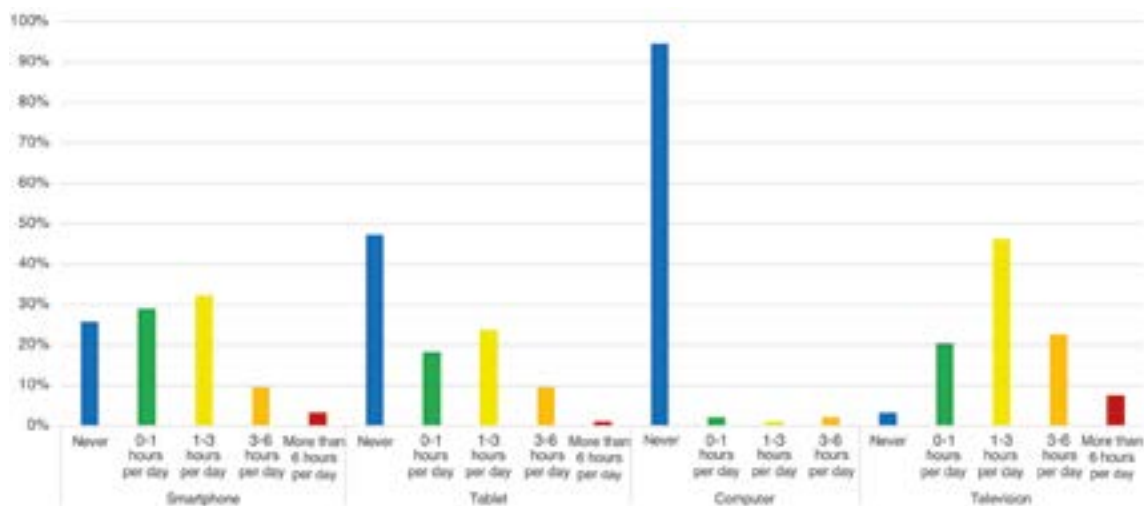


Family functioning, digital devices and language development in preschool children: What do we know?

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Digital devices, like smartphones or tablets, have become part of family life during the last decade. There is growing evidence that the use of traditional media (TV) and the new digital media might influence children's cognitive and social development. Some studies have highlighted the positive effects of digital devices' use, mainly through suitable design apps, which help to increase children's vocabulary, creativity and concepts of mathematics and science. At the same time, the overuse of such devices can have negative effects on child sleep quality, social interactions and cognitive development. Family can play a major moderate role between the use of digital devices and children's development. Parental guidance, such as setting limits on the device time usage or consumed contents, is crucial to prevent the harmful effects of over-usage on child development. This study aimed to analyse the relationship between family functioning, digital device use and language development in preschool children.

Ninety-three dyads of parent-child have participated in cross-sectional, observational descriptive-correlational study. The average age of the children was 4.75 (SD=0.828) years old. The main findings showed that the majority of the parents (>70%) used the TV and the smartphone between 0 to 3 hours/day, outside the working hours. The same tendency was observed for children. Statistically significant correlations were found between the amount of time parents use some digital devices (tablets, smartphones, TV) and the amount of time of children's usage. Also, a statistically significant correlation between children's time spent on digital devices and language development (more time usage ~ poorer language) and between family cohesion and satisfaction and children's time usage (less cohesion/satisfaction ~ more time usage) was found. This work was awarded with the best oral communication in a scientific congress and received great attention from the mass/social media.



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FIGURE 1

Time spent by children using digital devices at the weekend.

FIGURE 2

The time spent using digital devices has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

