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The Effects of Technology on Toddlers

As time evolves, media remains one of the most common forms of consumption among adults and children today. We've all consumed this form of media at some point, whether it was on social media, television, or in articles. Electronics, like phones, tablets, desktops, and laptops, have provided access to a wide range of digital services that are used by practically everyone. Children in the 21st century spend most of their childhood in front of a screen, but the more pressing issue here is how much time do toddlers spend watching TV and/or using digital devices daily? According to multiple studies, excessive screen time can negatively impact toddlers in many ways, including their development, behavior, and health. Pediatricians and child development experts warn that prolonged exposure to screens can lead to attention problems, sleep issues, and obesity. By understanding the extent of screen time and its effects, we can better address this growing concern.

What does this have to do with children, specifically toddlers? Toddlerhood is one of the most important times for growth and development for the child, during this time they develop their behavior or temperament which shape their social interactions (Colson and Dworkin 255). According to multiple studies, excessive screen time can negatively impact toddlers in many ways. For instance, shortening attention span, induce anxiety, and even impair academic performance. The upward trend of media consumption has been the biggest in toddlers that live in wealthier countries, for example, the United States of America, whereas a toddler in a low-income country may consume some media or none at all (Souza and Cabello 7). To strengthen our findings, we will use a mixture of website articles and scholarly articles that will provide valuable information on the important developments toddlers go through and how the average time of media consumption affects the certain developments of toddlers.

More than ever children are spending a lot of time on their screens which are preventing some from engaging in reading books, interacting socially with others, or even play time with friends. Toddlers have been shown to have an average of 2 hours of screen time a day whether it was viewing TV or video games (Ravichandran et al.). These averages have been alarming due to some parents even encouraging their child to access these types of entertainment, because of the fact that it allows adults to complete their usual errands in their day-to-day life without their toddler bothering them or distracting them. (Ravichandran et al.).

A recent study indicates that children who experience higher amounts of screen time at the age one, exhibit delays in communication and problem solving skills by the age of 2 and 4. According to developmental behavioral Pediatrician Aseel Al-Jadiri, M.D., it's important to understand how much screen time is appropriate and to focus on fostering healthy interactions in today's screen-dominated environment (Al-Jadiri, 2023). Aseel Al-Jadiri explains, "In my

practice, I've seen children who become dependent on screens all day long, and they can't separate themselves from their phones/devices. Trying to turn the phone off causes meltdowns, aggression, or dysregulation." A child's development is influenced by both innate factors (their inherent traits) and environmental factors (their experiences). Social interaction is vital for a child's development, as face-to-face communication helps infants learn to understand facial expressions and build social skills. Dr. Al-Jadiri points out that human interaction is essential because children absorb how to play, socialize, and communicate from those around them. Instead of relying on numerous toys, parents should use available resources to engage their child and prioritize spending quality time together, providing full attention to support healthy development. Another alternative is finding educational and effective shows that are suitable for the child's age, as unsupervised screen time can expose them to inappropriate content such as violence, bullying, or sexual material.

I am Breanna Townsend, and I am the mother of a two-year-old daughter. I have noticed that my daughter benefited greatly from the educational programs I used to play for her when she was younger. However, now that she is two and I have become busier, I've observed behavioral changes when she has too much screen time. For example, she has meltdowns when the screen is turned off and shows signs of frustration, which, while possibly normal for her age, seem to be exacerbated by excessive screen exposure. She has learned a lot from a YouTube creator named Ms. Rachel, who teaches babies sign language before they are able to speak. Through Ms. Rachel's show, my daughter has picked up signs for "more," "please," and a few other words. I believe this show is a valuable educational resource that can be very beneficial during the early years.

According to the Today show's website, Rachel Griffin Accurso, known online as Ms. Rachel transitioned from a New York City preschool teacher to a YouTube and TikTok sensation, impacting children globally. Alongside her husband Aron, a Broadway composer, she co-creates the popular YouTube channel "Songs For Littles." This platform offers educational videos and music classes tailored for toddlers and preschoolers. Ms. Rachel launched the channel after her son Thomas was diagnosed with a speech delay, aiming to provide resources she wished she had when facing similar challenges. "As a parent, you want to do everything possible to support your child." she shared with NBC News' Gadi Schwartz, highlighting the channel's origins and her educational mission. With a master's degree in music education from New York University, Accurso brings her viral content to life from a recording studio in her one-bedroom apartment. The "Songs for Littles" YouTube channel has amassed over 6.2 million subscribers and garnered more than 3 billion views. Its success lies in Ms. Rachel's straightforward approach, utilizing close-up shots of her mouth, strategic pauses for interaction and integration of sign language and body gestures to enhance speech and language development in young viewers.

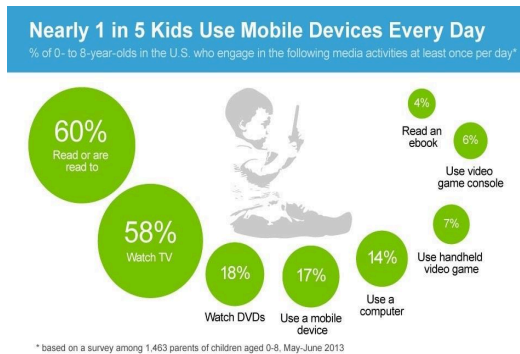
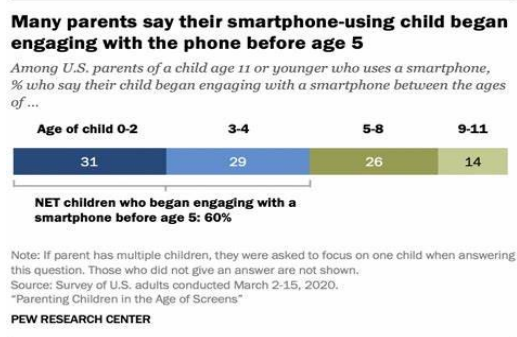
In addition to Breanna's testimony, I have found similar behavior as a babysitter. My name is Ximena Sanchez and I have been a babysitter for 5 years, not including babysitting for family members before I took it as a side job. I have babysat for all types of children and parents, which has allowed me to learn many different parenting styles and how it has affected their children, especially with technology. Most of the strict parents I've dealt with have rules like screen time only on the weekends, no phones or tablets at the table during dinner time, and they can only play educational and interactive games during their limited time. What I have taken from these rules being implemented on the children is that these kids are extremely easy to deal with since they are used to having routine and rules all the time. They are also way more

developed in their language skills as well as their social skills. These kids will have more in depth conversations as well as more energy, which would allow them to want to play outside for a longer time and be more active. On the contrary, I had parents who did not have a limit on screen time at all. These children were more difficult to deal with when it came to discipline, since their main punishment was taking away their devices. They would have extreme meltdowns and temper tantrums, making it difficult for me to get to other duties. Another thing I noticed was that these kids were more prone to delayed speech and lower social skills since they were more dependent on their devices. Apart from this, wearing prescription glasses at an earlier age was a lot more common within these kids, due to the prolonged exposure of screen time.

Surveys have shown that around 92% of 1 year olds have already used some type of mobile device, and even some starting at the age of 4 months (Hill). Although it may seem "fun" or interesting to allow children to consume a large amount of technology at such a young age, do the benefits outweigh the negative consequences? It has been shown that screen viewing during 18 months or before can negatively impact the child's language development, their ability to read, their memory, and even problems falling asleep (Hill). Toddlers who continue to view TV at prolonged hours are more likely to develop problems around age 7 such as paying attention (Hill). This can affect their academic progress in school since elementary is meant to be an interactive time to learn and socially converse with the classmates around them. It's important to note that regardless of how educational the TV service may be it is still TV, and is best recommended to limit the screen time to only 1 hour a day for the 18-month- 5-years of age range (Hill).

In the final analysis, much of the information we have provided demonstrates the negative implications that toddlers experience when exposed to excessive screen time. The

negative impacts of screen time on toddlers during adolescence include poor development, behavior, health, temperament, social relationships, decreasing attention span, generating anxiety, and lowering academic performance. These results have been proven and show how the media can be so harmful to developing brains. Therefore, we believe in making change, by informing parents of the harmful effects the media has on the developmental process of their babies. This begins with parents wanting to initiate a change. This resource should persuade parents not to allow their children access to electronics at a young age, by showing a list of the negative effects of the media. It will also provide advice on how to decrease screen time for children who have already been exposed. As a team, we wish to see more children away from technology and more engaged in hands-on learning, playing outside, and making friends. Ultimately, we merely want to urge parents to make the necessary changes to improve their children's health and future.



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