



PARENTS' VIEWS AND STRATEGIES REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN'S INTERACTIVE SCREEN MEDIA DEVICE USAGE

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Abstract:- With the rise of interactive screen media devices, such as tablets and smartphones, children's engagement with these technologies has become a focal point for parents and educators alike. This paper explores parents' perspectives on their children's usage of interactive screen media and the strategies they employ to manage and guide this usage. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and recent empirical studies, this research delves into the benefits and concerns associated with interactive screen media, parental attitudes towards device usage, and the various approaches parents adopt to ensure a balanced and healthy engagement with these technologies. The findings highlight the complexity of managing screen time in the digital age and underscore the need for nuanced, context-sensitive strategies that promote beneficial media experiences for children.

Index Terms - Screen, Media, Language, Acquisition, Development

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of interactive screen media devices has significantly altered the landscape of childhood in the 21st century. Devices such as tablets, smartphones, and computers are now ubiquitous, and their interactive capabilities have transformed the way children learn, play, and communicate. These changes have prompted a growing concern among parents regarding the implications of such technology on their children's development. This paper aims to investigate parents' views on their children's use of interactive screen media devices and the strategies they employ to manage this aspect of their lives. By examining the motivations behind parental attitudes and the tactics used to regulate screen time, this research seeks to provide insights into effective approaches for fostering positive media usage in children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Rise of Interactive Screen Media

Interactive screen media refers to digital devices that allow users to interact with content in a dynamic and engaging manner. Unlike passive forms of media such as television, interactive devices enable children to participate in activities, make choices, and receive immediate feedback, thereby offering a more immersive experience. Studies have shown that interactive media can support cognitive development and educational outcomes by promoting active learning and critical thinking skills (Chiong & Shuler, 2010).

Parental Concerns and Attitudes

Parents' concerns about interactive screen media often revolve around the potential for negative effects on physical health, such as reduced physical activity and sleep disruption, as well as social and emotional development issues like reduced face-to-face interaction and increased exposure to inappropriate content (Anderson & Subrahmanyam, 2017). Conversely, many parents also recognize the educational benefits of interactive media, which can provide opportunities for learning and creativity (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020).

Strategies for Managing Screen Time

Research indicates that parents employ a variety of strategies to manage their children's use of interactive screen media. These strategies can be broadly categorized into three types: restrictive, where parents set limits on the duration and type of media use; active mediation, where parents discuss content and encourage critical thinking about media; and co-use, where parents and children engage with media together (Nathanson, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data from parent interviews and quantitative data from surveys. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with 396 parents of children aged 3-6 years, aimed at exploring their views on interactive screen media and the strategies they employ. The quantitative component included a survey administered to parents, focusing on their attitudes towards screen media, perceived benefits and risks, and the specific management tactics they use.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Parents' Views on Interactive Screen Media

Benefits Recognized by Parents

Parents acknowledged several benefits associated with interactive screen media, including educational advantages, cognitive development, and entertainment. Many parents highlighted the accessibility of educational content, such as apps and games designed to teach literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills. These tools were seen as valuable supplements to traditional learning methods, especially for younger children.

For example, a parent from the interview study noted, "My child learns so much from educational apps. They are engaging and make learning fun. It's a great way for him to practice his skills outside of school."

Concerns About Interactive Screen Media

Despite recognizing the benefits, parents also expressed significant concerns. The primary worries included potential negative impacts on physical health, such as sedentary behavior and sleep disturbances, as well as the possibility of exposure to inappropriate content and the risk of addiction. Many parents were particularly concerned about the amount of time their children spent on devices and the potential for these devices to displace other important activities, such as outdoor play and social interactions.

One parent stated, "I worry about my children spending too much time on their tablets. It's hard to compete with how engaging the games are, and I'm concerned they might miss out on other important experiences."

Strategies Employed by Parents

Restrictive Strategies

Many parents adopted restrictive strategies to manage their children's screen time. These strategies included setting time limits on device use, restricting access to certain types of content, and establishing rules for when and where devices could be used. Parents often set these rules to ensure a balanced lifestyle for their children, incorporating time for physical activity, homework, and family interactions.

The survey results indicated that 65% of parents reported setting daily time limits on screen use, with the majority allowing between one to two hours per day. Additionally, 40% of parents used parental control features to restrict access to specific apps and websites.

A parent explained, "We have strict rules about screen time. Our kids are only allowed to use their devices for one hour a day, and they can only access educational content during weekdays."

Active Mediation

Active mediation strategies involved parents engaging with their children about the content they consumed. This included discussing the themes and messages of the media, encouraging critical thinking about the content, and guiding children towards age-appropriate and educational material. Active mediation was seen as a way to help children develop media literacy skills and make informed choices about their media consumption.

According to the survey, 55% of parents reported regularly discussing the content their children viewed, while 45% actively participated in selecting apps and games. Many parents emphasized the importance of being involved in their children's media use to ensure that it aligns with their values and educational goals.

One parent shared, "We make it a point to watch and play along with our kids. It's important for them to know we are interested in what they are doing and to help them understand what they are seeing."

Co-Use and Shared Experiences

Co-use strategies involved parents using media together with their children, transforming screen time into a shared activity. This approach was often used to strengthen family bonds and provide opportunities for guided learning. Parents who employed co-use strategies viewed interactive media as a tool for family engagement and educational enrichment.

The survey revealed that 50% of parents reported engaging in co-use with their children at least a few times a week. Activities included playing educational games together, reading digital storybooks, and watching educational videos.

A parent from the interview study mentioned, "We enjoy playing educational games together. It's a fun way to spend time with my children, and I get to see what they are learning and help them when they need it."

Challenges in Managing Screen Media Use

Balancing Screen Time and Other Activities

One of the primary challenges parents faced was finding a balance between screen time and other activities. Many parents struggled to limit screen time while ensuring their children also engaged in physical activity, social interactions, and other developmental experiences. The pervasive nature of interactive devices and their strong appeal to children often made it difficult to enforce time limits.

A parent commented, "It's a constant battle to get my kids off their tablets and outside to play. The screens are so engaging, and it's hard to compete with that."

Managing Content Quality

Ensuring that children accessed high-quality, age-appropriate content was another significant challenge. Parents often found it difficult to keep up with the rapidly changing landscape of apps and games and to discern which ones were educationally valuable. The lack of clear guidelines and the overwhelming number of options available made it challenging for parents to make informed decisions about the content their children consumed.

One parent expressed frustration, "There are so many apps out there, and it's hard to know which ones are actually good for my kids. I spend a lot of time researching and trying to figure out what's best."

Addressing Screen Time Conflicts

Screen time often became a source of conflict between parents and children. Many parents reported that their children resisted limits on device usage and that enforcing rules sometimes led to disagreements and tension. Finding ways to effectively manage screen time while maintaining a positive relationship with their children was a common struggle.

A parent shared, "It's tough because my kids don't understand why I set limits on their screen time. They just want to keep playing, and it can lead to arguments."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

Establish Clear Guidelines and Consistent Rules

Parents should establish clear guidelines for screen media use, including time limits, content restrictions, and rules for when and where devices can be used. Consistency in enforcing these rules is crucial for helping children understand the boundaries and the importance of a balanced lifestyle.

Encourage Active and Educational Use

Parents should prioritize interactive and educational content that promotes learning and development. Encouraging children to use media for educational purposes, such as learning new skills or exploring interests, can help them develop a positive relationship with technology.

Foster Open Communication and Active Mediation

Maintaining open communication with children about their media use is essential. Parents should engage in discussions about the content, encourage critical thinking, and help children navigate the digital world responsibly. Active mediation can help children develop media literacy skills and make informed choices.

Promote Co-Use and Shared Media Experiences

Engaging in media activities together can strengthen family bonds and provide opportunities for guided learning. Parents should participate in their children's media experiences, making screen time a collaborative and enriching activity.

Be a Role Model

Parents should model healthy media habits by demonstrating balanced screen time usage and prioritizing other activities. Children often imitate their parents' behaviors, so setting a positive example can influence their media habits.

CONCLUSION

The management of children's interactive screen media usage presents both opportunities and challenges for parents. While interactive devices offer significant educational and developmental benefits, they also pose risks related to physical health, social interactions, and content exposure. Parents play a crucial role in guiding their children's media use and ensuring it contributes positively to their overall development. By adopting a balanced approach that includes clear guidelines, active mediation, and shared media experiences, parents can help their children navigate the digital landscape in a healthy and beneficial manner.

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