FIZINĖS IR PSICHIKOS SVEIKATOS VEIKSNIAI ANKSTYVOJOJE VAIKYSTĖJE: NAUDOJIMOSI INFORMACINĖMIS TECHNOLOGIJOMIS VAIDMUO

Engl. transl.: Analysis of physical and mental health in early childhood: the importance of screen media use

# Keywords

* Early childhood
* Physical health
* Emotional and behavioral problems
* Screen media
* Physical activity

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## Authors

Jusienė R.;Praninskienė R.;Petronytė L.;Breidokienė R.;Laurinaitytė I.;Rakickienė L.;Urbonas V.;Babkovskienė E.;Vitkė L.

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## Sample

1165 Lithuanian children (556 girls (47.7 %) and 609 boys (52.3 %) aged 1.5–5 years old (mean age – 42.93 months, standard deviation –15.32 months).

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Healthcare

# Abstract

Objective. To analyse some of indicators of physical and mental health in the sample of pre-school age children and the proximal environmental factors of their health problems, with particular focus on using screen media.
Research materials and methods. Data of 1165 Lithuanian children (556 girls (47.7 %) and 609 boys (52.3 %) aged 1.5–5 years old (mean age – 42.93 months, standard deviation –
15.32 months) were analysed in this study. Study has been conducted in May – December 2017. The CBCL/1½-5 (Child Behaviour Checklist, version for parents) has been used to
evaluate behavioural and emotional problems of the children. Information about children’s physical health, environmental and familial factors has been collected based on the parents’
answers to a semi-structured children environment and development questionnaire, created by the authors of this study.
Results. Analysis of a sickness (e.g. acute viral diseases) rate of the children revealed that 62 % of them, according to their parents, suffer from such diseases less than 6 times a year. 31 % of these children – approximately 6-12 times year, while the remaining 7 % – more than once
a month. Frequency of sickness was significantly related to the children’s attendance of kindergarten and eating unhealthy (low nutrition calorie-dense) food. Almost 38 % of children were reported to have some serious health problems or chronic conditions. These children were also having more emotional and behavioural problems, more often eating unhealthy foods, and their parents reported higher levels of distress. Additionally, 10.3 % of the children aged 1.5-5 years had borderline or clinical level of emotional disorders, and 7.1 % had borderline or clinical level of behavioural disorders. Two-thirds of the children were physically active and spent time outside for about one hour or more than an hour. Almost a quarter (24 %) of the participant children used screens for approximately 2 hours on working days, compared to almost one third (31 %) on weekends. Another third of the children were using screens for 3 hours or more on weekends. More than half of children (55 %) were using screens during mealtimes. Correlational analysis revealed that overall screen time and mealtime screens increased with children’s age and were related to eating unhealthy foods,
having more gastrointestinal symptoms, and having higher scores of emotional and behavioural problems. Emotional problems were also significantly related to a lower physical
activity and less time spend outside. Results of logistic regression revealed that lower parental education, parental distress and emotional crisis or distress in the family were the most significant predictors for increasing risk of young children’s emotional and behavioural disorders. Screen time, in addition, was significant predictor of risk for
children’s behavioural disorders.
Conclusions. Health professionals should pay particular attention to young children’s proximal environment and children’s or parental health-related behaviours, especially those related to use of screen media. Mental and physical health are interrelated, and also related to parental or familial distress, eating unhealthy foods, using screens for longer hours and during meals in early childhood. Parents of children with emotional problems should be also educated about significance of physical activity.

# Outcome

Analysis of a sickness (e.g. acute viral diseases) rate of the children revealed that 62 % of them, according to their parents, suffer from such diseases less than 6 times a year. 31 % of these children – approximately 6-12 times year, while the remaining 7 % – more than once
a month. Frequency of sickness was significantly related to the children’s attendance of kindergarten and eating unhealthy (low nutrition calorie-dense) food. Almost 38 % of children were reported to have some serious health problems or chronic conditions. These children were also having more emotional and behavioural problems, more often eating unhealthy foods, and their parents reported higher levels of distress. Additionally, 10.3 % of the children aged 1.5-5 years had borderline or clinical level of emotional disorders, and 7.1 % had borderline or clinical level of behavioural disorders. Two-thirds of the children were physically active and spent time outside for about one hour or more than an hour. Almost a quarter (24 %) of the participant children used screens for approximately 2 hours on working days, compared to almost one third (31 %) on weekends. Another third of the children were using screens for 3 hours or more on weekends. More than half of children (55 %) were using screens during mealtimes. Correlational analysis revealed that overall screen time and mealtime screens increased with children’s age and were related to eating unhealthy foods,
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