Young Children (0-8) and Digital Technology: A Qualitative Exploratory Study- National Report Switzerland based on the 2016 Survey

# Keywords

* children
* digital technology
* media use
* mediation

# Details

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English

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Report and working paper

## Topics

* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Social mediation
* Other

## Sample

8 families from the German-speaking part of Switzerland with at least 1 child who was 6-7 years of age

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

High-quality content online for children and young people

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Industry

# Abstract

- Children are fascinated by all kinds of digital technology and they play an integrated yet not dominant role in their lives. Affinity and demand for digital media use vary among children based on their individual predisposition and the influence of their parents but they all are curious about ICT and keen to explore them more. - Children's online and offline activities are well balanced. Traditional play and outdoor activities are common in Swiss families and highly enjoyed by children, digital media is simply another source of entertainment. Social activities with family members or with other children are mainly preferred over playing with digital media. - Swiss children are modest users with rather basic skills. Digital skills vary among young children, depending on what they are allowed and fostered to do by their parents. In international comparison, Swiss children do not spend a lot of time with digital media and their skills are rather basic. - Children learn the handling of digital media intuitively and rather incidentally by watching others. More complex processes like making several devices work together or using new games, they mostly learn with the help of their parents. - Children use digital media for both relaxation and personal challenge. Whereas DVDs and Audiobooks are happily played repeatedly as a way to relay themselves, kids enjoy applications and activities with an exciting, competitive edge which challenge them to new levels, bring new information, give them a possibility to prove themselves and improve their skills. - Children love play time with their parents, no matter if online or offline, and would love to have more if it. Especially children who have no siblings and those who spend a lot of time in external child care wish that their parents spend time with them and like them as partners also for playing with media. - Parents have a role model function. Children's perception of the relevance of ICT is mainly triggered by their parents' media use. Parents are mostly aware of their role model function for balanced media use but also sometimes find it hard to live up to it. A healthy media regulation requires the allocation of time and engagement from the parents. - A trusting relationship is essential for monitoring children's activities and being able to protect them from risks. Most parents manage to maintain a trusting relationship with their children, so the kids would come to talk to them about uncomfortable experiences or things they do not understand. In addition, children in general do not use ICT without their parents' permission, even though devices mostly are not locked for children. - Young children have no clear concept of the internet and the possibilities and risks that are related to it. They understand that devices need to be protected (with passwords and careful handling) but mostly have no understanding of how being online could bear negative consequences for them and their identity. In terms of possibilities they perceive digital media (respectively google) as a source of incredible knowledge that has an answer, picture or video to any possible question or topic. - Children's favorite digital device is the tablet PC but in general, activities are more important than the device it is used on. The tablet PC seems to stand out as the device which is most fun to use for kids since it is easy to navigate via apps and a big touch screen. Moreover, it has the broadest range of options for use. For most other devices the activity it is used for seems to be more important than the device itself. The TV is still a favorite source for passive media consumption due to its endless and self-created content. Watching films on YouTube is popular as well due to its never-ending content. Portable devices seem to be preferred since they can be used in cosy places. Children love to listen to Audiobooks, also as a passive background story when drawing or playing traditionally. -Children perceive the TV program and online content as an endless source of entertainment, which seems to have an addictive effect on children and makes it hard for them to let go of. Media with limited and therefore known content, such as DVDs, Audiobooks, games they have already played, etc. seem to be easier to turn off if needed because they can always come back to it. - Digital devices are commonly used as momentary caregivers in certain situations, for example when doing housework or in public situations to keep children occupied for a while. Most but not all parents use the "babysitter function" responsibly and simply combine the screen time of their kids with situations where it is practical in terms of family organisation.

# Outcome

- Children are fascinated by all kinds of digital technology and they play an integrated yet not dominant role in their lives. - Children's online and offline activities are well balanced. - Swiss children are modest users with rather basic skills.- Children learn the handling of digital media intuitively and rather incidentally by watching others. - Children use digital media for both relaxation and personal challenge. - Children love play time with their parents, no matter if online or offline, and would love to have more if it. - Parents have a role model function. - A trusting relationship is essential for monitoring children's activities and being able to protect them from risks. - Young children have no clear concept of the internet and the possibilities and risks that are related to it. - Children's favorite digital device is the tablet PC but in general, activities are more important than the device it is used on. -Children perceive the TV program and online content as an endless source of entertainment, which seems to have an addictive effect on children and makes it hard for them to let go of. - Digital devices are commonly used as momentary caregivers in certain situations