Parents’ Instrumental use of Media in Childrearing: Relationships with Confidence in Parenting, and Health and Conduct Problems in Children

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## Sample

" In all, 516 parents reacted (response rate about 26%), of which two thirds (68.2%) were mothers. About one in five parents (18.2%) reported to be a single parent, whereas the other respondents represented an intact family. The respondent’s education was measured as one of 7 types in the Dutch educational system and then recoded into 3 consecutive
levels; as compared to the Dutch population (CBS 2014), 54.1% of the sample (versus 63%) had a level equal to prevocational secondary education or less (aggregated types 1 up to 4), 39.2% (versus 27%) had a level equal to senior general secondary education (aggregated types 5 and 6) and 6.8% (versus 9%) had a university (master, PhD) educational level (type 7). Respondents reported the age of the oldest child living at home. To realize an even spread of families with children up to 4 years, between 4 and 6 years, between 7 and 9 years, and between 10 and 12 years, respondents were stratified on the age of their reference child such that each of the four age categories represented about 25% of the sample. There were somewhat more sons (55.8%) than daughters and almost half of the parents (45.2%) indicated that they had only one child living at home, whereas another 43% said they had two children. The remaining parents (11.8%) indicated that they had three or
more children living at home." (Nikken, 2019, p. 535)

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Using an online questionnaire among 516 Dutch parents (children between 1 and 12 years; 68% mothers, 18% single parents) this study explored whether parents see media devices as useful tools in childrearing, and how parent-family characteristics and parental perceptions on parenting, media effects and child development predict the acceptance of instrumental media use. Findings revealed that parents saw media as a) a distractor providing the parent relief in childrearing, b) a babysitter when the parent is unavailable, and c) a tool to modify children’s behavior. Whereas 20 to 30 percent found media useful as a modifier or babysitter, only about 10 percent perceived media helpful as a distractor. Acceptance of the different types of instrumental media use depended more on parental perceptions than on parent-family variables: i.e., instrumental use of media was primarily endorsed by parents who are less confident about their parenting, have less support from a partner, expect positive effects from the media, and report health and conduct problems in their children.

# Outcome

Findings revealed that parents saw media as a) a distractor providing the parent relief in childrearing, b) a babysitter when the parent is unavailable, and c) a tool to modify children’s behavior. Whereas 20 to 30 percent found media useful as a modifier or babysitter, only about 10 percent perceived media helpful as a distractor. Acceptance of the different types of instrumental media use depended more on parental perceptions than on parent-family variables: i.e., instrumental use of media was primarily endorsed by parents who are less confident about their parenting, have less support from a partner, expect positive effects from the media, and report health and conduct problems in their children