Young children's television viewing and the quality of their interactions with parents: A prospective community study

# Details

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## Sample

A representative sample of two birth cohorts of children born in 2003 or 2004 and their caregivers living in Trondheim, Norway, were invited to participate in the Trondheim Early Secure Study (TESS). An invitation letter together with a questionnaire tapping emotional and behavioral problems, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) 4–16 version (Goodman, 1977), was sent to the parents in addition to a reminder about the regularly scheduled health check-ups for 4-year-olds (N = 3,456), and the majority (n = 3,358) attended. To increase sample variability, children who scored higher on the SDQ questionnaire (associated with more behavioral difficulties) were oversampled. The inclusion criteria included that participants were proficient in Norwegian, and consequently, 176 were not eligible for further testing. Additionally, 166 parents missed being informed about the study at the initial health check-up, leaving a total of 3,016 potential participants. After providing information about the study, the health nurse obtained written informed consents from 2,475 parents (82.1% consent rate). The SDQ scores were divided into four strata (0–4/44.2% of the population, 5–8/29.5% of the population, 9–11/18.5% of the population, and 12–40/7.8% of the population), and a random number generator was used to select a given number of participants from each stratum (0.37, 0.48, 0.70, and 0.89) that would be invited for further assessments. Following these procedures, 1,250 children and their families were asked to participate in further testing at the university, of which 995 (79.6%) attended. Two years later (T2), 795 families participated. In all, 953 had usable data at T1 (485 boys) and 737 at T2 (382 boys). The mean age of the children at T1 was 4.4 years (SD = 0.18) and 6.7 years at T2 (SD = 0.25). In general, parents had a high educational level (17.2% had some education beyond high school, whereas 58.3% had a college degree). T1 was conducted during the fall of 2007 until the summer of 2009. T2 was conducted during the fall of 2009 until the summer of 2011.

## Implications For Parents About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

# Abstract

Television is one of the most commonly viewed forms of media by children throughout the world. Excessive television viewing can influence the quality of children’s relationships and interactions with their parents. We examined the emotional availability (EA) of children toward their parents by assessing child responsiveness and child involvement, using a cross-sectional and longitudinal design. We employed a large and representative community sample of Norwegian 4-year-olds (n = 995) who were followed up at 6 years old (n = 795). The results illustrate that, when viewing excessive amounts of television, children are less likely to be involved with their parents in ordinary toy-play. We argue in favor of the displacement hypothesis, stating that time- demanding technologies are negatively related to the quality of parent–child relationships because spending more time watching television will leave less time for developing nurturing social relationships.

# Outcome

The results illustrate that, when viewing excessive amounts of television, children are less likely to be involved with their parents in ordinary toy-play. We argue in favor of the displacement hypothesis, stating that time- demanding technologies are negatively related to the quality of parent–child relationships because spending more time watching television will leave less time for developing nurturing social relationships.