



HEALTHY HOME HEALTHY FAMILY

Perceptions and Behaviors Related to Screentime in 6 to 11-Year-Old School Children

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate children's behaviors and beliefs (importance, barriers, facilitators) about screentime (ST) (i.e., the time spent using TV/DVDs, computers, phones).

Methods: Children 6-11 years in FL, NJ, and WV completed a brief survey (n=193) and 44 participated in ST-related focus groups.

Results: Children reported watching TV 3.4±2.7SD days/week and playing video games 1.8±2.5SD days/week for >2 hours/day. Only 16% asked parents to buy food or drink they saw advertised on TV in the past week. Focus group conversations revealed that kids believed limiting ST is important for good health and reported that too much ST had negative effects on eye sight and can "weaken" your brain. To control ST, kids recommended doing other activities (going outside with friends, homework, playing games, or going places with family). Barriers to limiting ST included being "addicted" and wanting to watch new TV episodes or movies, and mimicking siblings' ST behaviors. Kids felt their parents thought it was important to limit ST, with many indicating parents put limits on ST. Common parent methods for limiting ST were limiting time or number of episodes kids could watch, banning TV, or confiscating tablets. When asked what advice they would give parents to help them limit kids' ST, many recommended setting a timer, telling kids to play outside or play with other toys, and giving kids other activities. Children said they liked doing other activities when encouraged by parents. Kids felt parents were good role models when they watched some TV with kids or offered other activities like family game night. Kids felt parents' ST didn't influence them because kids did not want to watch the same shows. Kids reported TV food or drink ads didn't make them ask parents to buy foods or beverages, but said these ads made them feel hungry or thirsty. Kids understood the purpose of ads, stating ads try to get people to buy products. Most kids said their parents did not talk with them about TV ads, but they recommended that parents teach kids that ads "just want your money" and discuss the (un)healthiness of advertised food and drinks.

Conclusions: Children's ST exceeded 2 hours most days/week, despite recognition of the importance of limiting ST for health. Including kids' ideas in obesity prevention programs could help parents learn new strategies for limiting ST.

Introduction

- Screentime (ST) is the time spent using TV/DVDs, computers, or phones and is a common lifestyle behavior in children.
- Extensive ST (>2 hours) has been associated with poor cognitive, educational, and health outcomes in families.
- This study assessed perceived importance, barriers to, and facilitators of limiting ST of school children.

Methods

Sample

- Schoolchildren aged 6-11
- From West Virginia, Florida, and New Jersey

Recruitment

- Children were recruited through flyers in the community, social media, schools, churches, and youth organizations

Data Collection

- Brief self-report survey completed prior to focus groups
- Focus groups conducted by trained moderators

Data Analysis

- Means and frequencies for survey data
- Constant comparison of qualitative data to identify the point of data saturation
- Trained researchers content analyzed focus group data to identify themes and trends

Funding Source

United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant Number 2017-680001-26351



Results

Limiting ST is important to children

- Limits are good for health
- Too much ST causes negative effects on eye sight and can "weaken" your brain
- ST takes away time from other activities
- Recognize it is important to parents to limit ST

Family influence to amount of ST

- Parents are important role models
- Offer other activities in place of ST
- Watch TV after children are in bed
- Older siblings feel responsible for limiting younger siblings ST
- Younger siblings copy older sibling's behaviors

Barriers to Limiting ST

- Being "addicted" and want to see how a show ends
- Desire to watch new TV episodes or movies
- Mimicking older siblings' ST behaviors
- Parents are too busy or tired to set limits

Strategies children can use to limit their own ST

- Do other activities
 - going outside with friends
 - homework
 - playing games
 - going places with family
- Set own limit of number of TV episodes per day
- Help siblings limit ST



Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Percent (n=194)
State	
Florida	33%
New Jersey	33%
West Virginia	35%
Grade	
Kindergarten	2%
1 st	19%
2 nd	12%
3 rd	20%
4 th	17%
5 th	17%
6 th	14%

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

- Focus groups conducted by trained researchers using moderator scripts
- Participants from varied geographic regions (FL, NJ, WV)

Limitations

- Focus groups conducted by different researchers in each state



Strategies children suggest parents use to help kids limit ST

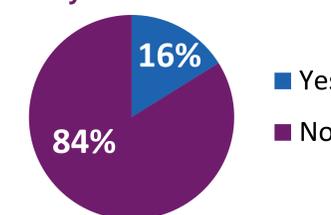
- Set time limit that screens can be on
- Set number of episodes kids could watch per day
- Ban TV or confiscate tablets
- Set a timer and have the device automatically shut off
- Tell kids to play outside or play with other toys
- Give kids other activities

Kids' perceptions of the impact of commercials

- TV food or drink ads do not influence them to ask parents to buy foods or beverages
- Advertisements make them feel hungry or thirsty
- Advertisements make children want the items they see
- Understand the purpose of ads, stating they try to get people to buy products
- Parents do not talk with them about TV ads
- Recommend that parents teach kids about advertisements
 - "just want your money"
 - discuss the (un)healthiness of advertised food and drinks



Last week, did you ask your parents to buy a food or drink you saw on TV?



"My brother makes sure I keep track of my time. I have a timer that keeps track of how much I do."

Kids Say...

"My little brother will watch TV when I am watching, I usually remind my little brother to go do something else..."

"I think we should have limited time for ST because we need to have room for other activities in the day like exercise and sleep."

"For every hour you watch TV, you have to play an hour of sports or read."

"When I see the food on TV it makes my tummy rumble. It makes me want the food."

"Before you start watching pick out 2 shows to watch and something to do after."

"My parents ask me to finish the episode and go outside, swim, read, take a nap, or do something besides being on an electronic [device]."

"I want to see what happens next on the show and keep watching the next show"

Conclusions

- Children's ST exceeded 2 hours most days/week, despite their recognition of the importance of limiting ST for health.
- Children acknowledge that ST is addictive and want to watch new shows, which can be barriers to limiting ST.
- To help limit ST, children recommend setting time or episode limits or doing other activities. Parents are seen as a helpful to remind children of the ST limits.
- Future nutrition education programs should aim to include kids' ideas to help parents learn new strategies for overcoming the barriers to limiting ST.