

More time on digital devices means kids less likely to finish homework

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In findings that will not surprise the parents of any school-aged child, new research finds that the more time children spend using digital devices, the less likely they are to finish their homework.

Children who spent two to four hours a day using digital devices outside of schoolwork had 23 percent lower odds of always or usually finishing their homework, compared to children who spent less than two hours consuming digital media.

Researchers will present their abstract, "Digital Media Exposure in School?Aged Children Decreases the Frequency of Homework," at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) 2016 National Conference & Exhibition in San Francisco on Friday, Oct. 21.

For the study, pediatricians from Brown University School of Public Health analyzed children's use of digital media to better understand how it relates to childhood "flourishing," or overall positive well-being, which can be measured by behaviors and characteristics including diligence, initiative, task completion, and interpersonal relationships. They used data from the 2011?2012 National Survey of Children's Health to analyze the media use and homework habits of more than 64,000 children ages 6 to 17 years, as reported by their parent or guardian.

When examining children's use of digital media, including watching TV, using computers, playing videogames, using tablets and smartphones, or using other digital media devices for purposes other than school work,

researchers found 31 percent were exposed to less than two hours of digital media per day. Another 36 percent used digital media for two to four hours per day; 17 percent were exposed to four to six hours; and 17 percent were exposed to six or more hours of digital media per day.

For every additional two hours of combined digital media use per day, there was a statistically significant decrease in the odds of always or usually completing homework.

Children who spent four to six hours on digital media had 49 percent lower odds of always or usually finishing their homework than those with less than 2 hours per day. Those with six or more hours of media use had 63 percent lower odds of always or usually finishing their homework compared to children who spent less than two hours per day using media.

The authors found a similar relationship between digital media exposure and four other measures of childhood flourishing, including always or usually caring about doing well in school, completing tasks that are started, showing interest in learning new things, and staying calm when faced with challenges. The trends all remained significant regardless of the child's age group, sex, or family income level.

Prior studies have shown a wide variety of negative health and behavioral consequences of digital media exposure. This study adds to what is already known by showing that digital media exposure is associated with decreased measures of overall child well-being.

"It is important for parents and caregivers to understand that when their children are exposed to multiple different forms of digital media each day, the combined total digital media exposure is associated with decreases in a variety of childhood well-being measures including [homework](#) completion, task completion, interest in learning new things,

and staying calm when challenged," said study author Stephanie Ruest, MD, FAAP. "Parents should consider these combined effects when setting limits on digital media devices."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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