

An extra hour of TV beyond recommendations diminishes toddlers' kindergarten chances

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Every hourly increase in daily television watching at 29 months of age is associated with diminished vocabulary and math skills, classroom engagement (which is largely determined by attention skills), victimization by classmates, and physical prowess at kindergarten, according to Professor Linda Pagani of the University of Montreal and the CHU Sainte-Justine children's hospital.

"This is the first time ever that a stringently controlled associational [birth cohort](#) study has looked at and found a relationship between too much toddler screen time and kindergarten risks for poor motor skills and psychosocial difficulties, like victimization by [classmates](#)," Pagani said. "These findings suggest the need for better parental awareness and compliance with existing viewing recommendations put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The AAP discourages [watching television](#) during infancy and recommends not more than two hours per day beyond age 2. It seems that every extra hour beyond that has a remarkably [negative influence](#)."

Journalists are welcome to use the following responses in their own reports. Interviews and further information (including the original French text of this document) can be obtained by contacting media relations at the University of Montreal. The University of Montreal is officially known as Université de Montréal.

Question: Why did you conduct this study?

Pagani: Much of the research on school readiness has focused on how kindergarten characteristics predict later success. Kindergarten entry characteristics predict long-term psycho-social adjustment and economic characteristics like income and academic attainment. Being innovative, my focus has been to examine what predicts kindergarten entry characteristics. Adding further originality, I also wanted to focus on neglected yet crucial aspects of school readiness such as motor skills, which predict later physical activity and reading skills, likelihood of being "picked-on", which predict [social difficulties](#), and skills at linked to doing what you are supposed to be doing when having been given instructions, which are in turn linked to attention systems that are regulated by the brain's frontal lobe development.

Question: Who participated in this study?

Pagani: 991 girls and 1006 boys in Quebec whose parents reported their television viewing behaviour as part of the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development.

Question: How did you come up with the figure of an extra hour of TV?

Pagani: The standard deviation is a commonly used statistic tool that tells us what is within a normal range compared to the average. One standard deviation from the average daily amount of television viewed by the toddlers in this sample (105 minutes) is 72 minutes. Some of the children who participated in the study were two or even three standard deviations away from the average, and their kindergarten indicators were correspondingly worse than those who were one standard deviation away.

Question: Where did you examine television viewing?

Pagani: This study only looks at the most common form of screen time, which is in the home. However, it may be an underestimate because many child care settings use television as an activity during care giving.

Question: Why would these results be important for everyday life?

Pagani: Because of kindergarten's power to predict future productivity, the identification of modifiable factors that foretell not being ready for the transition to formal schooling represents an important goal for a productive society. By statistical standards, the results show highly controlled modest associations, yet these are net effects which suggest a developmental course which could ultimately compromise achievement, social relations, physical prowess, and preferences and habits toward a healthy lifestyle.

Provided by University of Montreal

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