Screen Time and Early Language Development in Bulgaria

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Screen Time and Early Language Development in Bulgaria An important line of research focuses on the association between digital media use and language development during early childhood. Existing literature however, it is prone to several biases – under-representation of non-Western cultures and of children under the age of 3, in both academic studies and guidelines on digital media; and a focus on vocabulary growth as the sole metric for communicative development. This recent study was conducted in Bulgaria in 2021-23 offering insights into the evolving relationship of language development and media use in the post-Covid family realities. Language development was assessed via the short form of the Bulgarian adaptation of. Parents of 421 children aged 16 to 36 months provided information online to the short form of the CDI Words & Sentences inventory and a questionnaire on digital use. First exposure to screen media occurred early, M = 15.89 months, and their daily TV exposure ranged from 0 to 5 hours, M = .91. They also used smartphones (M = .53 hours) and tablets (M = .14 hours. The average cumulative daily screen time for children was M = 1.59 hours. A stepwise linear regression showed that children's age (beta = .74), gender (beta = .14) and daily screen time (beta = .14) made significant unique contributions as predictors of vocabulary. Parental education level and digital time no significant contributions. In a logistic regression on word combinations all three child-related variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model and none of the parent variables did. Finally, a stepwise linear regression identified parents' screen time (beta = .27) followed by age (beta = .19) as significant predictors of children's screen time. The results are interpreted within the specific cultural and media context in the country and child rearing practices.