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TECH & TOTS: UNDERSTANDING PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PRESCHOOL TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

Annotation. *As technology becomes increasingly prevalent in early childhood, understanding parents' perspectives on preschool technology access is critical for fostering balanced development. This study explores how parents view the role of digital devices in the lives of their preschool-aged children, examining their concerns, expectations, and the strategies they use to manage screen time. Through qualitative interviews the research identifies key themes, including the potential educational benefits, fears of addiction, and the challenge of setting boundaries. It is a qualitative study and 10 parents participated the research. Findings highlight that while parents acknowledge the value of technology for learning, they also express concerns about excessive use, the impact on social skills, and the difficulty of maintaining a balanced routine. The study concludes with recommendations for promoting responsible technology access in preschool settings, emphasizing the importance of guidance, educational content, and active parental involvement in shaping healthy tech habits for young children.*

Key words: *Parents, technology, preschoolers, interviews, children*

Анотація. *Оскільки технології стають все більш поширеними в ранньому дитинстві, розуміння поглядів батьків на доступ до дошкільних технологій є критичним для сприяння збалансованому розвитку. У цьому дослідженні розглядається, як батьки бачать роль цифрових пристроїв у житті своїх дітей*

дошкільного віку, вивчаються їхні проблеми, очікування та стратегії, які вони використовують для керування часом перед екраном. За допомогою якісних інтерв'ю дослідження визначає ключові теми, включно з потенційними освітніми перевагами, страхом залежності та проблемою встановлення меж. Це якісне дослідження, у якому брали участь 10 батьків. Висновки підкреслюють, що хоча батьки визнають цінність технологій для навчання, вони також висловлюють занепокоєння щодо надмірного використання, впливу на соціальні навички та труднощів підтримувати збалансований розпорядок дня. Дослідження завершується рекомендаціями щодо сприяння відповідальному доступу до технологій у дошкільних закладах, наголошуючи на важливості керівництва, освітнього контенту та активної участі батьків у формуванні здорових технологічних звичок у маленьких дітей.

Ключові слова: батьки, технології, дошкільнята, інтерв'ю, діти

Introduction. In today's digital age, technology plays an increasingly significant role in children's lives, starting from their earliest years. The accessibility of smartphones, tablets, and educational apps has made technology a regular part of preschoolers' daily routines. While these digital tools offer new learning opportunities, they also raise questions about the potential impacts on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Parents, as primary caregivers, play a crucial role in determining how, when, and to what extent young children engage with technology. Understanding parents' perspectives on preschool technology access is essential for developing balanced, informed approaches to technology use in early childhood education. This study explores the concerns, expectations, and attitudes of parents regarding technology in preschool settings, providing valuable insights into how families navigate the benefits and challenges of raising digitally savvy children. Today, technology has become and continues to be an indispensable part of children. Children encounter many technological devices such as televisions, smart phones, digital cameras, tablets, and computers in their environment and easily learn to use them. However, improper use also brings with it many negativities, and these negativities

affect children the most. In the last decade, children's use of technology has increased rapidly and children have begun to spend a large portion of their time with the internet, televisions, computers, smart phones, and other technological devices [15]. While the need to be familiar with computers and digital information was a concept that emerged at the beginning of formal education for children in the recent past, today it has become a part of children's lives from the moment they are born [7]. In a rapidly changing world, the view that education provides a more prosperous and respected life for individuals and society reveals the need for more education. Developments in technology and science are changing the structure of society and forcing the education that will ensure adaptation to society to be different. Modern technology and innovations are the result of the differences created by previous technological developments in education and are preparing the society of the future. The method and content of education are also changing as a result of the changes in information technologies [2]. The correct use of digital technological tools in the preschool period supports children's cognitive, social-emotional development, early literacy and math skills [11]. Research indicates that the reason why parents are willing to have their children in front of the screen is because it is distracting, provides peace and acts as a caretaker while they are doing housework [1]. Many studies reveal the negative effects of young children using technology; while some state that it is suitable for development with aspects such as providing different formats and rich content. When the studies conducted on the views of parents of preschool children on the use of technological devices are examined, the focus is generally on the positive and negative effects of technology on child development in the preschool period [6]. It is stated that their children are individuals who are addicted to technology or have fears that they will encounter unapproved content [8]. In one study, it was stated that the majority of families do not monitor their children during technology use and are busy with other things [9]. Because all the information and experiences acquired in early childhood are transferred to other periods of life [4]. For this reason, mothers and fathers need to improve themselves in the use of technology before children, learn to use technology in a healthy and more effective way, and be a good model for their children in this

regard. It is stated that children who use devices such as television more in their homes learn to read later than children who use them less [14]. NAEYCF determines the positive effects of technological tools on children as development in language and vocabulary, logic mathematical understanding, problem solving skills, self-management and social skills [12]. The results obtained from the research provide important findings regarding the distribution of screen time of children aged 5-6 according to technological tools. At this point, children spend an average of 161.9 minutes per day in front of the screen, while a significant portion of this time is spent in front of the television with 78.9 minutes. After television, the digital technological tool that children spend the most time on in terms of screen time is the smartphone with 35 minutes, and the tablet computer is third with 27.6 minutes. The digital technological tool that children spend the least time on in terms of screen time is the portable computer with 21 minutes [3]. In this period of technological development, information technologies offer new and exciting opportunities to each individual and especially to students, renewing learning and teaching methods. This new world offers students of all ages the opportunity to learn at their own pace and time, as long as they have access to appropriate e-learning tools. Studies conducted in the context of Turkish on young children's media use provide important clues about preschool children's use of digital technology and screen time. In a study conducted to examine the use of digital technology and screen time by young children and their families, it was determined that children live in technologically rich environments and that smartphones, televisions and tablet computers are the most common technological devices in homes [10]. Video cameras and cameras can also be used in preschool education; language education, game activities, music, art and literacy teaching. They serve to record and present children's activities and to record and present rare and interesting events. Video cameras can be used with computers and become more functional. They are also used in preschool education to inform families about activities and to reward children. CDs are technological tools that can store video recordings and allow them to be used whenever desired. They can make activities exciting in preschool programs and

provide fun learning experiences [5]. It is an inevitable fact that children whose parents use computers want to use this technology.

Purpose of the Research. The purpose of this research is to determine the place of technology use, which has an important place in our lives, in children's lives and the effects of technology use in and outside of school according to the opinions of parents. The research addresses the question of '*what are the effects of technology use on the development of preschool children?*' as the main problem of the research.

Method. Research Model: A qualitative research method was used in this study. Qualitative research is a type of research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in a natural environment [16]. The study is in the phenomenological design of qualitative research types. The opinions of preschool teachers and other parents were used, and the qualitative research method was used to obtain information about how often preschool children use technology and how they are affected by technology, and content analysis was used in the analysis of the data obtained from observations and interviews.

Working Group: The working group of the research consists of 1 primary school with a kindergarten class affiliated with the Ministry of National Education located in Konya City Center in the 2020-2021 academic year and 10 parents of children in this school. The working group of the research was determined using the easily accessible case sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods used in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling works on a sample determined for a specific purpose (Şimşek, 2012). In this context, in determining the working group of the research, easily accessible case sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods that allows the selection of volunteer and easily accessible parents of preschool children who are suitable for the purpose of the researcher, was used.

Data Collection Tools: An interview form was created by the researchers during the data collection phase. An interview is to ask detailed, qualitative questions about a subject to a person who is interviewed and to obtain detailed and in-depth information

about the subject. The interview technique is an observation technique that provides flexibility and depth to the researcher and the person being interviewed. The interview technique can be done with a single person or with a group; These are studies conducted by talking to each other, asking questions and recording the information received. An unstructured interview form prepared by the researchers was used to obtain data in the study. The unstructured interview technique of the interview method was used. In an unstructured interview, questions are open-ended, and in-depth data collection is possible. This type of interview is a powerful technique that helps obtain rich and valuable data. 10 questions were prepared in accordance with the purpose of the study.

The following questions are prepared for the parents to respond:

1. *What are the benefits of using technology in preschool education?*
2. *Where should a preschool teacher use technology in the classroom? (smart board, CD player, computer, etc.)*
3. *Which developmental areas (language development, social development, motor development) does the use of technology contribute positively/negatively to the preschool child?*
4. *Should technological devices (tablet, computer, phone, etc.) be offered as a reward tool for preschool children? Why?*
5. *What are the points to consider when using technology?*
6. *How often should preschool children be allowed to use technology?*
7. *What kind of a method should be followed to protect children from the dangers they may encounter while using the internet?*
8. *What should be considered when limiting the use of technology by preschool children?*
9. *What methods should be used in children's reactions to restrictions on the use of technology?*
10. *How should preschool children be a model for using technology?*

Findings. In this section, in line with the purpose of the research, 1 primary school affiliated with the Ministry of National Education located in the city center of Konya

and having a kindergarten class, and 10 preschool parents in this school participated in the research in the 2020-2021 academic year. The participants' views on the use of technology in the preschool period were examined through their answers to unstructured questions. For this purpose, the findings obtained by analyzing the interview data are included.

What are the benefits of using technology in preschool education?

Parent 1: I think that if interactive and productive content is used, it will make the learning process easier for children. There needs to be an understanding of being a consumer of technology and producing with technology.

Where should a preschool teacher use technology in the classroom? (smart board, CD player, computer, etc.)

Parent 8: Technological tools should be used in every suitable environment for children to learn better.

Parent 5: It is now much easier to access a lot of information and images with technology. Videos, documentaries or photographs that appeal to visual senses related to the learning outcomes can be used.

Which development areas (language development, social development, motor development) does the use of technology contribute positively/negatively to preschool children?

Parent 1: Their vocabulary can develop, but their social development is negatively affected.

Should technological devices (tablets, computers, phones, etc.) be offered as a reward tool to preschool children? Why?

Parent 2: No. Nowadays, it causes addiction in children. Rewards that will allow the child to spend time with the child and develop his/her social life should be given.

What are the points to be considered in the use of technology?

Parent 7: It can be provided within a certain period of time. The age is the age of technology and depriving the child of this means not preparing him/her for the time he/she lives in. The benefits are greater after drawing boundaries.

How often should preschool children be allowed to use technology?

40% of parents said that care should be taken to ensure that it is appropriate for the child's age and development level,

20% of parents said that a time limit should be set for the child,

40% of parents said that children should not be allowed to use technological devices.

What kind of a method should be followed to protect children from the dangers they may encounter while using the internet?

Parent 7: For example, 40 minutes for a 4-year-old child. But this period is not 40 minutes at a time. It should be given in 3 or 4 periods. The purpose of dividing the time is not to allow the child to become hypnotized in front of the screen, or to stop the video/game from time to time during the minutes they are watching and ask questions that will distract them, such as «Wow, how did you get that score just now, what do you think will happen to this hero, what would have happened if he had done....it wouldn't have happened, etc.». I think it would be useful.

What should be considered when limiting preschool children's use of technology?

45,8% of parents stated that a family filter should be used; 29,2% stated that children should be directed to other activities; and 25% stated that they will watch with the child.

What methods should be used in children's reactions to restrictions on technology use?

Parent 9: Attention should be paid to age and developmental characteristics, the effect of the games played on their socio-emotional development, their duration and the habit of conscious internet use.

How should a preschool child be a model in technology use?

Parent 6: Attention should be paid to age and developmental characteristics, the effect of the games played on their socio-emotional development, their duration and the habit of conscious internet use.

Conclusions. In conclusion, understanding parents' perspectives on preschool technology access offers crucial insights into how families navigate the digital

landscape with young children. Parents play a key role in determining the appropriate balance between the benefits and potential risks of technology exposure during early childhood. While many parents recognize the educational value of technology, concerns about screen time, developmental impacts, and appropriate content remain significant. This study highlights the need for ongoing communication between educators and parents, as well as the development of clear guidelines and resources to support informed decisions about technology use in early childhood. As technology continues to evolve, fostering a collaborative approach between families and educators will ensure that children benefit from digital tools while maintaining a healthy and balanced developmental trajectory. The use of technology in early childhood education can provide many educational benefits, but it should be progressed by making smart choices with careful examination and research. Technology can be used as only one way among many in early childhood education. Therefore, it should be used in a balanced and creative way. Considering the principle of 'development is a whole', which is one of the principles of development, it is a critical point in children's use of technology. Families have argued that technology use should not be presented to children as a reward tool. Rewards can cause addiction to technology. In addition, imposing limits on the use of technology or diverting children's attention to another direction has prevented addiction. The research has indicated that mothers and fathers need to be informed about the educational and pedagogical benefits of technology and need guidance from IT experts or relevant educators. At this point, seminars can be given to parents on how to use technology correctly and effectively for their children. At the same time, technology can be made more efficient for children by introducing content, programs and relevant websites that support their education and development [13].

Here are some recommendations for the parents about use of the edutech of the preschoolers

- *Set Clear Boundaries:* Establish consistent limits on screen time for your preschooler, ensuring a balance between digital play and other essential developmental activities like outdoor play, reading, and creative tasks.

- *Choose Educational Content:* Prioritize high-quality, age-appropriate educational apps, videos, and games that foster learning and cognitive development. Review content regularly to ensure it aligns with your child’s needs.
- *Co-view and Co-play:* Engage with your child while they use technology. Participating in their digital activities helps you understand what they are learning and ensures content is safe and appropriate.
- *Create Tech-Free Zones and Times:* Designate areas or times in your home, such as during meals or bedtime, as tech-free zones to encourage family interactions and prevent technology overuse.
- *Model Healthy Tech Habits:* Demonstrate a balanced approach to technology use. Children often imitate their parents' behaviors, so showing moderation in your own screen time can positively influence your child's habits.
- *Communicate with Educators:* Stay informed by talking to teachers about how technology is being used in the classroom, and collaborate on strategies for balancing educational benefits with screen time concerns at home.
- *Prioritize Offline Social Interaction:* Encourage face-to-face playdates and social activities that help preschoolers develop interpersonal skills, which are essential for their social and emotional growth

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