

THE EFFECTS OF GADGETS IN CONFLICT BEHAVIORS AMONG PRESCHOOLERS

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This article brings to the fore the influence of gadgets on preschoolers, as well as their effects on behavior and self-esteem. The article presents the influence of gadgets in the child's development, being a determining factor for the conflictive, aggressive behaviors that appeared at a given moment in preschoolers. The effects of virtual violence on children are presented, studies that highlight the adverse effects of gadgets used at a young age. Through a study, we highlighted the influence of the virtual world on the preschooler's self-image, because self-esteem influences the conflicting behaviors that appear among preschoolers. The research showed, along with other studies, the negative influence of gadgets on the preschool child, as long as the time allocated to them exceeds a certain threshold and the content of the viewed materials is not in a relationship congruent with the degree of maturation of the body and the cognitive and affective potential of the user.

Keywords: *conflicts, preschoolers, gadgets, kindergarden, self-esteem.*

EFECTELE GADGETURILOR ÎN COMPORTAMENTELE CONFLICTIVE ÎNTRE PREȘCOLARI

Acest articol aduce în prim-plan influența gadgeturilor asupra preșcolarilor, precum și efectele acestora asupra comportamentului și stimei de sine. Articolul prezintă influența gadgeturilor în dezvoltarea copilului, fiind un factor determinant pentru comportamentele conflictuale, agresive aparute la un moment dat la preșcolari. Sunt prezentate efectele violenței virtuale asupra copiilor, studii care evidențiază efectele adverse ale gadgeturilor folosite la o vârstă fragedă. Printr-un studiu am evidențiat influența lumii virtuale asupra imaginii de sine a preșcolarului, deoarece stima de sine influențează comportamentele conflictuale care apar în rândul preșcolarilor. Cercetarea a arătat, alături de alte studii, influența negativă a gadgeturilor asupra copilului preșcolar, atâta timp cât timpul alocat acestora depășește un anumit prag și conținutul materialelor vizualizate nu este într-o relație congruentă cu gradul de maturizare a acestora. corpul și potențialul cognitiv și afectiv al utilizatorului.

Cuvinte-cheie: *conflicte, preșcolari, gadgeturi, grădiniță, stima de sine.*

Introduction

People find it difficult to tear themselves away from the television. Most of them can't live a single day without at least watching the news program, and when the TV is missing from their home, they become irritable, nervous, argumentative, etc. Many people complain that they can't do their housework because of the TV, because it eats them up all the time or because, after a few hours of watching, they feel much more passive, less focused and less able to solve family problems than before viewing. It is impossible to find an activity by which children are quieted so quickly and almost immobilized for a long period of time, as happens when they are sitting in front of the television. Besides, this is also the reason why parents and in some cases educators use the TV as a sedative. [Mirela Pandelică, 2023, p. 54].

More and more parents sense the negative effects that watching TV has on their children and avoid exposing their little ones to such things, or at least limit their access to TV to one short cartoon a day. Even if some do not understand how this affects their children, they can notice the effects: the child stares at the moving images, his eyes water or his head hurts.

Waldorf pedagogy agrees with this idea and offers us the explanation of the fact that preschoolers should not watch TV at all. On television, everything moves much too fast for the child's ability to perceive. The tension increases through the rapid change of the image and filming angles, but it makes understanding difficult.

The fantasy of the child sitting in front of the television is deactivated, his eyes remain fixed on a gray surface and follow the rush of bright points. He is unconscious, hypnotized, in a state of trance and receives images that follow one another with the speed of lightning and which are deposited in his subconscious, from where he accesses them when needed and gives short answers, which he does not connect and which seem to be fragments of what he saw on television.

Television, by its very nature, can only offer simple stimuli that can only be answered in a simple way - the horse on the screen cannot be touched, cannot be reached, cannot be played with, can only be looked at, but only for a short time.” [Knipping, Ursula, „Pedagogia Waldorf în grădiniță”, Editura Triade, p.3]

I found this experiment who tests the hypothesis that background, adult television is a disruptive influence on very young children’s behavior. Fifty 12-, 24-, and 36-month-olds played with a variety of toys for 1 hr. For half of the hour, a game show played in the background on a monaural TV set. During the other half hour, the TV was off. The children looked at the TV for only a few seconds at a time and less than once per minute. Nevertheless, background TV significantly reduced toy play episode length as well as focused attention during play. Thus, background television disrupts very young children’s play behavior even when they pay little overt attention to it. These findings have implications for subsequent cognitive development. [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18717911/>, accessed at 27.11.2023, 11.35].

Australian Bureau of Statistics, announced that Australian health survey discovered that pre-school children have often at least one screen-based electronic device in their own bedroom. [<https://www.abs.gov.au/>, accessed at 27.11.2013, 11.50].

Gani, (2017) emphasized the fact that preschoolers master digital languages very well. The presence of gadgets brings major changes among children, several studies show the impact of the use of gadgets in early childhood. [Cho & Lee, 2017, p. 303-311], states that it has been scientifically proven that screen time reduces the attention span of preschoolers. interaction with gadgets, time spent in front of screens, without interaction with people has a negative impact [Zivan et al., 2019].

Also, a study from 2018 reveal that young children are too often exposed to mobile devices (MD) and most of them had their own device. The adverse effects of a early and prolonged exposure to digital technology on pre-school children has been described by several studies. Aim of the study is to analyze the consequences of MD exposure in pre-school children. Analizing the documented effects of media exposure on children’s mental and physical health, according to recent studies, devices may interfere with learning, children development, well being, sleep, sight, listening, caregiver-child relationship. In according to literature, the Italian Pediatric Society suggest that the media device exposure in childhood should be modulated by supervisors. [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29898749/>, accessed at 27.11.2023, 12.29].

The television does not stimulate the child’s creativity and development and it is good that a preschool child should not be left in front of the television. Later, when he gets to school, he can have gradual and selective access to television.

The so-called educational shows confuse the child through substitutions with monsters or unreal characters, with which he identifies years after watching some animation series. For example, in 1997 in Japan, about 700 children were hospitalized with spasms and respiratory disorders after „enjoying” the animated series „Pokemon”. Every parent knows from experience that all children imitate the attitude, gestures and behaviors of their favorite heroes on television and which, unfortunately, are often not positive.

Cartoons exist through speed and changing proportions, and their message is often imbued with aggression and violence. They are interesting later, around 10 years. Before this age, children replace images with their own observation. For the child, it is not the sharing of knowledge that is important, but the own active observation of an animal and the life that accompanies its observation. That’s why if he observes an animal alone, even a cockroach, it is more educational for the child and more stimulating than any animated film.

On the other hand, the sound plays an important role when the child is listening to music or watching TV, because he gets used to a background noise and then he cannot fall asleep without it, or he will not be able to do his homework later on total silence, because he is used to constantly hearing noises or music. Some preschool children refuse to eat if they are not watching a video or a music clip at the same time. Or all these are distractions that prevent them from concentrating. In addition, they can make them always wait for the

surrounding environment to entertain them, which can have consequences on the quality of their life and the ability to feel good even in solitude - one of the causes that lead to maturity in emotionally dependent girls by other people.

Culture, states Vâgotsky (1985), is what sculpts the system of the self through values, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors learned in the family and then reinforced by other social environments (school, workplace, friends, teachers, girlfriends, neighbors, extended family). Each individual learns how to behave appropriately, what is good, what is beautiful, what is true. He learns directly or indirectly, the condition being that he has contacts after which a certain potential is confirmed or denied.

Through all these exchanges, transactions with those around, with parents and family in the first place, the child builds his self. The construction of the self starts from childhood and continues until adulthood and can be influenced by certain factors that can distort reality.

During the preschool period, the child acquires a physical perspective on the self, developing what we call the body schema made up of the child's physical parts and bodily motor activities.

Between 3 and 5 years, self-control, self-service, initiative, gender concept and relationships with other children are acquired.

Any action undertaken by the child awaits confirmation, this serves as an evaluation, a guide that guides his behavior, attitudes and conduct. Some confirmations can serve as reinforcements for a behavior, others on the contrary, based on the feedback received, the child creates his own profile of values, which defines his self-esteem and respect for his own person. The lack of it cannot direct the steps towards good knowledge, towards knowing what is good and what is bad, towards the formation of a real self-image.

The use of gadgets and penetration into the virtual space for a long time diminishes the time devoted by the child to inter-human relations, robotizing him and leaving him little time for feeling and thinking about himself.

Every child has needs, desires and emotions. On the way they are received and responded to, on the experiences the child lives in relationships with the people in his immediate environment (family, group of friends and/or colleagues, educators) his subsequent attitude towards life depends, that's why the virtual world could intervene with modifications of the surrounding world, the mirror of the soul being thus deformed.

For young preschoolers, the most important source of self-esteem formation is the teacher's or parents' assessments, the virtual world not providing the child with an answer. The messages transmitted by them are internalized by the child, leading to the inoculation of the feeling of adequacy or inadequacy as a person.

Children with real self-esteem are better able to cope with risky situations and behaviors that could arise in unhealthy interpersonal relationships or in failures. Adults (parents and educators) must support them in terms of identifying, expressing and controlling negative emotions by: constantly encouraging them to express their own emotions, building a safe, approving environment for them; selecting activities beneficial to development (in this sense, children's interaction with the virtual world should be supervised), teaching children to use their imagination in expressing their emotions („*What would you like to say to the person who bothered you?*"); the narration of a similar situation experienced by an adult ("*When I was your age, it happened to me too... and I did this...*"), as well as the acceptance of one's own person.

I support them by expressing requirements taking into account the child's age, by planning activities in advance. (When he knows that more difficult situations arise for the children, to do his best to help them overcome them. If he anticipates the children's needs, the probability that they will be cooperative will increase), by focusing on the positive aspects (acquisitions, achievements) and mention them, by offering the option to choose (this gives the feeling of controllability of the situation by themselves and, as a result, they will oppose less), but also by offering rewards. [Mirela Pandelică, 2023, p.68].

The self-concept represents the set of all the individual's representations about himself accompanied by their appreciation.

If self-image is a descriptive dimension of personality (it is how a person describes himself, how someone thinks he is) self-esteem or self-respect is an evaluative dimension of personality (it shows us how how satisfied we are with our self-image or how much we like our own person).

The self-image answers the question: „Who am I and what can I do?”. It is a „filter” through which people perceive reality, for example some people will only remember failures and attribute successes to chance, thus maintaining a negative self-image.

Self-esteem refers to how we self-evaluate, how „good” we consider ourselves compared to others or our own standards, it expresses the extent to which we accept or approve of ourselves.

Self-esteem reflects how much we are worth in our own eyes, expresses the feelings towards ourselves as persons - in other words, the favorable or unfavorable attitude towards us.

So a person who describes himself in mostly positive terms will have a positive self-image and a high level of self-esteem, while a predominantly negative self-description expresses a negative self-image and a low level of self-esteem. low self-esteem.

Therefore, building self-esteem depends on parenting practices, on the way parents see and take care of their children. Children with good self-esteem, confident in their abilities, usually have parents with good self-esteem, tolerant, who clearly and firmly define the limits. Within these limits, children have the opportunity to be creative and independent, while also having the feeling that they are protected. These parents satisfy the child’s needs for a healthy development, respect his opinions and take them into account when making decisions that concern the family [Coman, Petruța, Aspects of the socialization process of the young child, page 7-10, in Methodological Laboratory no. 1-2/2006, supplement of the “Primary Education” magazine, Miniped Publishing House, 2006].

Respecting the child’s opinion, asking for his opinion about things or situations that concern his or his family’s life, although imposed by the Child Law, as his right, depends to the greatest extent on the mentality of the community. Self-respect (esteem) is important because it represents a quality that persists over time. A girl who at preschool age has a sense of her worth will grow up as an adult with good self-esteem, will be able to assume responsibilities and will become a mother who will respect her children. Childhood experiences play an essential role in the development of self-image. Thus, childhood successes and failures, as well as the ways in which parents react to them, define the image we will have of ourselves. The attitude of parents, teachers, colleagues, siblings, friends, relatives, contributes to the creation of the self-image of the future adult. For example, repeated negative labels „you’re good for nothing”, „you’re stupid”, will induce the child to distrust himself, creating a negative self-image for him, as long as a child is repeatedly told that he is smart and capable, he will come to believe this, integrating it as part of his self-image. Also, the attitude of certain virtual heroes, through their actions and appearance, can influence the attitude about one’s own person. Little girls identify with characters whose image is artificial and which is not in agreement with the real role of women in modern society. They dream of becoming princesses, creating a distorted image of themselves in relation to their own possibilities.

Starting from the fact that self-esteem and the presence of gadgets influence the behavior of preschoolers, we bring to the fore an experimental study carried out on a group of 5 preschoolers aged between 5-6 years, belonging to a group of preschoolers from the Kindergarten with Program Extended „Light of the Forest”, Pitesti, Argeș county:

The theoretical objective is to argue the influence that the virtual world has on the preschool child’s self-image. The main practical-applicative objectives of the study are:

O1: Exposure of children to various gadgets for a period of one hour that does not have significant negative effects on children

O2: Experiential psychodiagnosis of children’s self-image by applying the dynamic exercise “Orchard” following children’s exposure to various gadgets.

O3: Children’s involvement in usual activities within the usual kindergarten program focused on self-discovery and expression.

O4: Experiential psychodiagnosis of children’s self-image by applying the dynamic exercise „Our World” following children’s involvement in usual activities within the regular kindergarten program focused on self-discovery and self-expression.

O5: Measuring and evaluating the effects on preschoolers’ self-image following the two games undertaken.

In the continuation of the investigation, we started from the following general hypothesis: when children

get involved in activities carried out in the virtual space, their self-image becomes more and more distant from what they are in reality.

Data collection methods and tools

In order to collect the data, an experiential diagnostic procedure was used, consisting of the children's involvement in experiencing some dynamic games, as a basic tool for the observation sheet of video images centered on self-image. This instrument was built by the method of groups of experts, and the fidelity was evaluated by two procedures:

Inter-rater reliability as measured by the rank correlation coefficient. The obtained value of the Spearman Rho coefficient was medium to strong and statistically significant at a threshold of 0.001 (Spearman Rho =0.5, Sig=0.000, which indicates a high interrater agreement.)

Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value indicates a very good internal consistency (0.914).

We can say that the conceived tool has a high fidelity.

Content validity was ensured by the involvement of experts in the construction of exercises, items, and response options.

The „t” test performed revealed a significant difference between the group of children with behavioral disorders in terms of the global score obtained by the FOIV ($t=2.294$, Sig.=0.029).

We can thus state that FOIV has a good validity.

Results analysis

After completing the rating sheet of the results at the initial application, a data distribution was obtained with an average of 76.5 and a standard deviation of 9.63, a maximum of 86.00 and a minimum of 60.00.

In the final application, the data distribution had the following characteristics: average 100.2, standard deviation 7.66, the minimum being 89.00 and the maximum 108.00.

- The hypothesis of the research was that the world of gadgets influences the preschooler's self-image in a negative way.

- To determine the extent to which the data confirmed the hypothesis, the «t» test was used, for dependent samples, performing a before-after test.

- After comparing the scores and the probability, a significant value of $t=-4.386$ was obtained at a significance threshold of $p=0.012$, the research hypothesis was confirmed, so a statistically significant result was obtained.

Through experiential techniques, the child's self-image takes shape, highlighting the role of using gadgets not as a source of information or entertainment, but as a way of spending free time, practically, a way of life.

Supervision of children's actions is a priority for adults, and its lack can bring major damage to the structure on which the personality will later develop, contributing, together with age-specific activities, to the creation of a profile that allows it to adapt to the environment and implicitly, the development.

The involvement of children in activities designed to develop creativity, the body and to allow the child to express himself freely, has proven to be effective, the child's self-image, as well as his way of acting, behavior in general proving to tend towards positivity, unlike of static activity, lacking dynamism and purpose. The virtual world, through the lack of palpability and most of the time conscious understanding, penetrates inside, without effort, without limits and above all without control. The child is put in the position of and select and organize contents by themselves, which far exceed their psychic possibilities, physical and psychic maturation not reaching the threshold that would allow this fact.

Conclusions

The presented research showed, along with other studies, the negative influence of gadgets on the preschool child, as long as the time allocated to them exceeds a certain threshold and the content of the viewed materials is not in a relationship congruent with the degree of maturation of the body and the cognitive and affective potential of the user.

The limits of this research are given by the small number of subjects involved in the study, the experiential diagnosis not allowing the interaction with a large number of subjects for optimal results, but the results of the study can constitute a starting point for other studies regarding the so widespread phenomenon, the virtual world.

Due to the fact that gadgets pursue only the economic side of life by marketing various programs, devices, toys that resemble certain characters (the virtual world promotes characters far different from the real world, some supernatural, others tending to perfection, with special powers, far of the child's real potential).

Children identify with these characters by creating an imaginary world (the imaginary world is normal at this age if it has a positive, healthy basis) and with the passage of time it does not diminish, but evolves.

Boys identify with heroes, girls with princesses. An example in this sense could be represented by the so-called “princess” syndrome, which comes with a baggage of frustrations that can cause controversies and conflicts between preschoolers. [Mirela Pandelică, 2023, p.75].

By identifying with these characters, whom they watch daily and for a long time, they move away from childhood, with its vulnerabilities and pleasures, with the games of movement that develop the body and implicitly the mind, passing into another stage of age and behaving agree with her. Hence, we can notice behaviors in which violence, irascibility, and inappropriate clothing predominate, which inevitably lead to conflicts.

It is natural for the personality to take shape on a background created by the imagination, but the heroes in the book give the possibility of adjusting the behaviors over time, unlike the heroes of the cartoon series that appear daily in front of children and to which the child becomes dependent, practically in every day guiding his steps.

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