

# Digital Childhood: To Study the Time Spent by Children on Sunday

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To study the time spent by children on Sunday in children aged 6 years to 12 years.

**Design:** Prospective study.

**Setting:** Paediatric department of a tertiary care teaching hospital.

**Participants:** Total 300 cases were included in the study. Cases were children of age group 6 years to 12 years coming to paediatric OPD during 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

**Methods:** After informed consent, detailed history was taken and parents were asked for the details of their child's activity on Sunday.

**Results:** About 25% time is spent for watching television averagely, with some variation between boys & girls (boys>girls).

**Conclusions:** The total time spent by boys on electronic based equipments is 57.5% & by girls is 50%.

**Key words:** Sunday; Electronic media; TV; 6 years to 12 years.

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## Introduction

Recent years have seen an explosion in electronic media marketed directly at the very youngest children in our society: a booming market of videotapes and DVDs aimed at infants aged 1 to 18 months, the launching of the entire television networks specifically targeting children as young as 12 months, the development of a variety of handheld video game players for preschoolers, and a multimillion-dollar industry selling computer games for children as young as 9 months. Despite this plethora of new media aimed at the very young, little is known about children's use of such media. Thus, the total time spent

by children on holiday need to be reviewed in relation to media and other factors. Few existing studies focus on the media use of children who are younger than 5. In this article, we provide a brief overview of time spent by children on Sunday in age group of 6 years to 12 years.

## Methods

This prospective study was undertaken in the Department of Paediatrics during 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. Cases were children of age group 6 years to 12 years coming to the Paediatric OPD during the study period.

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The study included 300 children who were aged 6 years to 12 years. Parents of these children were asked about how their children spent their Sunday. Of those 300 parents, 284 parents responded well in the subsequent visit and provided the details of the activities which their children do on Sunday. Therefore, the sample used comprised information for 284 children.

Parents were asked to report what their child did the following on the Sunday: watched television, watched a video or DVD, played video games on a console, played hand-held video games or mobile games, played computer games, used the computer for something other than games like internet, read story books or news papers, did painting, listened to music, went for tuitions, did homework, slept, chatted with their parents or grandparents, played indoor or outdoor

sets in their home, availability of television set in bedroom or child's room. Data were entered in MS Excel, cleaned and completeness checked.

## Results

Total 300 cases coming to the Paediatrics OPD between age group 6 years to 12 years were studied. Out of those 300 cases, 284 gave proper feedback. In those 284, 154 were boys & 130 were girls. 8 hours of night sleep is considered for both boys & girls. Rest 16 hours were studied for the activities & the average distribution of their day-time showed as per given in table no. 1. In those 16 hours, averagely 1 hour is spent on day-to-day activities like bathing, tea, lunch, dinner, etc. About 25% time is spent for watching

**Table 1**

Activity	Average Time Spent (hrs:min)	
	Boys	Girls
Watching television	04:30	03:44
Watching a video/ DVD/ movie	00:40	00:23
Playing video games on a console	01:04	00:39
Playing hand-held video games or mobile games	00:43	00:38
Playing computer games	00:54	00:50
Using computer for something other than games like internet	00:35	00:31
Reading story books/news papers	00:30	00:44
Painting	00:18	00:50
Listening to music	00:46	01:15
Tuitions	00:45	00:50
Doing homework	01:05	01:15
Sleeping	00:45	00:50
Chatting with their parents or grandparents	00:31	00:35
Playing indoor games (chess, carom, etc.)	00:44	00:50
Playing outdoor games	00:50	00:30
Going for friend's birthday	00:20	00:30
Day-to-day activity (bath, tea, lunch dinner, etc.)	01:00	01:00
<b>Total</b>	<b>16:00</b>	<b>16:00</b>

games, went for friend's birthday. Parents were then asked to report on the amount of time their children spent using these various activities on the Sunday.

Also, parents were asked about the details of their family like total number of television

television averagely, with some variation between boys & girls (boys>girls). The total time spent by boys on electronic based equipments is 9 hours 12 minutes (57.5%) & by girls is 8 hours (50%).

**Table 1**

Parameter	Yes	No
Number of televisions: $\geq 2$	42	242
Bedroom television	28	256
Access to either cable- or satellite-based channels	225	57
Video game console	140	144
Hand-held video game or mobile games	227	256
Computer	85	146
Internet access	28	200

The other parameter study shows that most of them are living in homes with at least 1 of each product; nearly 15% live in home with  $\geq 2$  televisions. 80% children in this age live in homes with access to either cable- or satellite-based channels. Approximately 50% of the households had a video game console, and about 80% had access to a hand-held video game or mobile games. Even more households (30%) reported having a computer, and 10% of all households have internet access. Although none of this is perhaps surprising, we did find it surprising that many of these young children have televisions in their own bedrooms. This was true for almost 10% of children. The most common reason that parents named for having a television in their child's bedroom was that it frees up other television in the house so that other family members can watch their own.

## Discussion

The impetus for this study came from the striking lack of empirically based knowledge about the extent of exposure to and use of media and technology by young children. This study provides the most recent information available regarding the extent of media use and media access of school going children between age group 6 years to 12 years.

In addition, the results of this survey make it clear that young children today are growing up in a media-saturated environment. For this cohort of children and presumably for future cohorts as well, access to and use of media

have become part of the fabric of their daily lives.

Much has been made of the vast array of media and technology that are used by children today, and it is clear that they have far more choices available to them than previous generations. However, it is also true that this study indicates that children's use of electronic media is still, by and large, dominated by television. Also, young children do play video games or use the computer. The use of these media is for as same duration as they spend for watching television, which is not a trivial amount of time in a young child's day.

To state that television and DVD ownership was virtually ubiquitous in the homes of young children does not adequately capture the extent of media saturation in these homes. Overall, it seems clear that these children will be very different from previous generations of children with respect to their comfort with technology and the extent to which they use all forms of technology in their daily lives. An environment that directly exposes children to television—that is, being in a constant television household and having television in the child's bedroom—is related to higher chances of decreasing outdoor games.

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