

# MEDIA AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS AND EDUCATORS

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IZVORNI ZNANSTVENI RAD / DOI: 10.20901/ms.9.18.2 / PRIMLJENO: 25.07.2018.

**ABSTRACT** *The authors conducted a survey with a nationally representative sample of Slovene parents of 1- to 6-year-old children, collecting parental opinions about their and their children's media habits. The survey also collected the data about parents' behaviour in terms of educating their children about the media as well as the data regarding parents' opinions about positive and negative effects of the media on their children. The authors established that role modelling is crucial in developing children's media habits. Statistically, parents' own media habits significantly affect media exposure of their children and their opinion about what an appropriate daily screen limit for their children is. The extent to which parents are exposed to the media as well as the level of their formal education have a statistically significant impact on parents' behaviour in terms of educating their children about the media and on their opinion about the influence of the media on their children.*

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## KEYWORDS

MEDIA EDUCATION, MEDIA EXPOSURE, PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, PARENTS, MEDIA HABITS

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## INTRODUCTION

The ubiquity of the media brings about new challenges for parents of children of all ages. As many habits are internalized in a child's primary socialisation and as upbringing in the first couple of years essentially determines a child's cognitive development, in a digital age even parents of very small children need to consider their media knowledge and habits, reflect on their attitude towards media and develop parental styles that allow their children to grow up and become media-literate individuals. The results of surveys on media exposure of preschool children (Holloway *et al.*, 2013; Hesketh *et al.*, 2013; Duch *et al.*, 2013; Ciboci *et al.*, 2014; Lemish, 2015; Farrell *et al.*, 2016) show that the media are becoming increasingly an integral part of young children's everyday life. They are a very vulnerable group of audience as their ability to access and use different types of the media has only started to develop. Because of their young age, their capacity to analyse, evaluate and reflect on the media messages, the ability to create media content and to focus on creative problem solving is limited (Hobbs, 2010; De Haan and Sonck, 2012; Mascheroni and Murri, 2014).

Adults, through different social roles, perform various tasks in media education of small children (Lepičnik Vodopivec, 2011). Parents or other family members influence a child's knowledge of the media through examples, conversations and by sharing their experience. They are the role models that children imitate. Their own media habits influence their children's use of media (see for instance Anand and Krosnick, 2005; Genc, 2014; Vittrup, 2009; Ofcom, 2015). Parents teach children how to use the media. Parents become their role models and the ones who can cultivate a critical thinking mindset and value judgments. By setting boundaries and interpreting a media message they can influence their child's media habits and experience.

In 2015 we conducted a survey (Rek and Milanovski Brumat, 2016), collecting data on media exposure of preschool children and their parents' habits and opinions on selected elements of educating preschool children about the media. We also collected data on parents' media exposure. Parents of children aged 1-6 years were asked to assess their and their children's daily time spent using various types of the media. The data collected on a broader media reception process, following media exposure, was limited. This research was quantitative and did not attempt to respond to qualitative issues. The data were collected using paper and online questionnaires. 1,087 parents of 1-to-6-year-old children were included in the survey. The subjects participated voluntarily – they were not financially compensated for the participation in the survey. Their participation was anonymous, not involving names or any identifiable information about subjects. The data were collected with the help of 47 kindergardens, evenly located in all geographical regions. In the school year 2014/2015 there were 979 kindergardens and dislocated units in Slovenia, with 84.750 children aged 1-6 years (76,8% of the population) attending them (Statistical office RS, 2015). The research sample of parents resembles the population in terms of age and of geographical location of families and thus preschool children were controlled. The sample as such was not additionally adjusted (weighted). Parents who

responded to the survey questions were rather evenly distributed in two age groups: the one of 1-to-3-years of the child's age (50.6%) and the one of 4-to-6-years of the child's age (49.4%). The data collection process was supported by the Slovenian Research Agency, within the Infrastructure program of the Faculty of Media - Collecting, Managing and Archiving Data on Media Literacy (contract number: 1000-16-2916, decision number: 6316-10/2014-51, date: 17.12.2014)<sup>1</sup>.

In this article we present selected survey results and analyse them with the aim of establishing the impact of media-related habits of parents on media habits of their children. We aim to learn:

- >whether higher media exposure of parents also results in significantly higher screen exposure of their children;
- >which factors influence parents' opinion on the appropriate daily screen limit for children;
- >which factors influence parents' habits related to educating their children about the media (selected habits: parents' presence when their child is being exposed to the media, rule setting regarding the child's use of the media; talking with the child about what he/she watches in media);
- >which factors influence the parents' opinion on the selected positive and negative effects of media on their children.

The factors included in our analysis were mainly of demographic nature, including the following:

- >the child's gender;
- >the child's age;
- >living environment (rural/urban);
- >the parents' level of education;
- >the parents' age;
- >shared custody;
- >the extent of parents' media exposure.

## MEDIA AND PARENTING

To help children make wise media choices, parents should monitor their media-related behaviour. Studies have shown that demographic factors, behaviour and attitude of parents towards the media does affect media-related behaviour of their preschool children. Victoria Rideout and Elizabeth Hamel (2006) showed that children of parents with lower incomes and lower levels of education are more exposed to media. Lower income and lower levels of education indicate more TV viewing and less reading performed by parents, but also more TV and less reading to the children. Ellen Wartella *et al.* (2013) also noticed a correlation between parents' media habits and their children's media habits.

<sup>1</sup> A full survey report, including questionnaires used to collect data is available at <http://pismenost.si/otroci/>.

Higher screen exposure of adult members of the family results in significantly higher screen exposure of their children. Children, living in media-intensive families are on average exposed to screens for five hours a day, compared to one hour and a half of screen exposure in low-intensive media families (Wartella *et al.*, 2013). Parents media habits also affect a child's passive exposure to the media. In media-intense households, television is turned on all or most of the time, and therefore increases the passive exposure (the TV is on in the background) of preschool children to media messages (Rideout *et al.*, 2014). Matthew Lapierre *et al.* (2012) established that on a typical day children aged eight months to eight years are on average subject to passive TV exposure for more than four hours. The research points to a significant difference in passive exposure of children, depending on their parents' income and education level.

Many young children (one fifth of 0 to 2-year-olds and more than one third of 3- to 6-year-olds in the USA) have a television in their bedroom (Vandewater *et al.*, 2007). The most common reason parents provided when being asked why their young children have a TV set in their room was that it made other televisions in the house available for other family members to watch the shows of their own liking (54%). Other commonly cited reasons are: it keeps the child occupied so the parents can do things around the house (39%); it helps the child fall asleep (30%); and it is used as a reward for good behaviour (26%) (Rideout *et al.*, 2006: 18). Dennison *et al.* (2002) showed that a child's exposure to TV increases if there is a TV set in his/her room. The presence of TV sets in children's bedrooms increases their television viewing time by approximately one hour per day.

In recent years the use of smart phones and tablets by preschoolers has also grown significantly (Formby, 2014; Baek *et al.*, 2013). Ofcom's report (2014) showed that there has been a significant increase in access to, ownership of and use of tablet computers by children of all ages. Baek *et al.* (2013) surveyed parents about the content their preschoolers search for on their mobile phones and about their children's use of such phones. Two thirds of parents indicate that children use their cell phones to watch cartoons, half of them for playing games, one third for listening to songs and stories and one fifth for educational websites. Entertainment is a dominant domain of preschoolers's computers use also in Australia. Zevenbergen (2008) showed that most of the time preschoolers use computers for entertainment, especially for playing games (80%), web browsing (40%) and writing (20%). Given that exposure to screens (like computers, tablets or mobile devices) is, as in the case of TV exposure, also higher in media-intense families (Wartella *et al.*, 2013), we can assume that the exposure to entertaining content in such families is also higher.

As the media are ubiquitous and practically common denominators of all our lives, it would be hard to expect that young children would be excluded from these processes. For children, the mass media are just another environment and, the same as activities and events in physical reality, media-related activities can have positive and negative effects. Studies have shown that excessive media use can lead to attention problems, school difficulties, sleep and eating disorders, obesity. Mediation is seen as an efficient way parents can use to educate their children about the media (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008; Garmendia *et al.*, 2012). Parents should monitor what media and what messages their

children use and access. Furthermore, they should also assess the quality of the media content their children are exposed to. They should co-view TV, cartoons and videos with their children and use this activity as a way of discussing contents and values important to them. The same as with all other activities and fields of life, they should also establish rules and limits in media exposure, keep the TV set and Internet-connected electronic devices out of the child's bedroom and they ought to define selected daily events (like meals) as a media-free time (APA, 2013).

### MEDIA EXPOSURE OF PRESCHOOLERS AND THEIR PARENTS IN SLOVENIA

Slovenian children aged 1 to 6 years are mostly exposed to television, video content and radio, as shown in Table 1, which provides the data about average exposure times of preschoolers to various types of the media.

Table 1. Average exposure times of two age groups of preschool children (in minutes: seconds daily)

	Live TV	DVD or video	Radio	Computer or tablet	Video games	Magazines Newspapers	Mobile phones without calls	Total for listed activities
1- to 3-year- old children	27:54	23:11	30:03	9:54	4:15	18:21	6:27	120:05
4- to 6-year- old children	44:53	32:00	25:03	17:16	12:05	20:13	8:17	159:47
Both groups (1-6 years)	34:42	26:23	26:23	13:18	7:54	18:36	7:48	135:04

Parents were asked to estimate the time of their child's passive presence in the room (time when a child is present in a room where a TV set is on). An average estimate is eighty minutes a day, which is much higher compared to the active time spent watching television (34:42 min). The presence of screens in Slovene preschool children's rooms is low. Only 7.25% of preschoolers aged 1 to 6 years have a TV set in their room and only 5.3% of them have their own computer in their room. The most common electronic device in preschoolers' room is the radio/DVD player, which is present in 64.5% of 1-3 years olds' rooms and 75.9% of 4-6 year olds' rooms.

A closer look at the collected data points to significant differences in media exposure of Slovene preschool children as presented in Table 2. Children were divided into three groups similar in numbers (border framework 33 and 66 percentiles) as follows: a) heavy media users (more than 2 hours of daily exposure to the media, N = 370); b) moderate media users (between 1h 15 min and 2 hours of daily exposure to the media, N = 360); c) light media users (less than 1h 15 min daily media exposure, N = 357).

Table 2. Preschoolers' media exposure – heavy, moderate and light users (in minutes: seconds daily)

	Light*	Moderate*	Heavy*
Live TV	13:56	28:28	65:30
DVD or video	11:08	20:39	50:08
Radio	6:18	17:02	59:13
Computer or tablet use	1:33	7:18	31:16
Video games	0:28	3:00	20:44
Magazines, newspapers	7:14	17:16	33:10
Mobile phones without calls	0:53	3:02	18:02
Sum in minutes	41:30	96:45	278:03

\* n>330 for each group

Children who fall into the group labelled as 'heavy media users' are on average exposed to the media almost seven times more compared to 'light media users'. They watch five times more television. Differences are severe in computer, tablet and mobile phone use. The exposure of children aged 1-6 years who fall into the category of 'light users' to electronic devices is low. Preschoolers who fall into the category of 'heavy users', on the other hand, spend more than four hours per day using various digital devices.

To gain insight into the state of media exposure in Slovenian families, we asked parents to assess their own media exposure in their spare time (outside work). The results are provided in Table 3, showing how many minutes a day parents, in their opinion, are exposed to TV, radio, computers and tablets, magazines, newspapers and mobile phones.

Table 3. Average media exposure times of preschoolers' parents – in their spare time, outside work (in minutes: seconds daily)

	A parent watches TV	A parent listens to the radio	A parent uses the computer or tablet	A parent uses the mobile phone	A parent reads magazines newspapers	Total for listed activities
Parents of up to 3-year- old children	81:51	129:55	65:26	27:43	18:18	323:13
Parents of 4- to 6-year- old children	77:05	134:45	66:28	27:41	18:46	324:45
Both groups (0-6)	79:30	132:19	65:56	27:42	18:31	323:58

On average, parents of preschoolers are, in their spare time (outside work), exposed to five hours and a half a day to various types of the media. The most widely used medium is radio, which is, on average, turned on for a little more than two hours a day. TV viewing is closely followed by the use of computers and tablets, while mobile phones are, on average, used for about half an hour a day.

As a variance in parents' media exposure had been identified, we divided them into three groups similar in numbers (border framework 33 and 66 percentiles) as follows:

- a) parents – heavy media users (more than 6 hours of daily exposure to the media, N = 381);
- b) parents – moderate media users (between 3 and 6 hours of daily exposure to the media, N = 362);
- c) parents – light media users (less than 3 hours of daily media exposure, N = 344).

Table 4. Parents' media exposure – heavy, moderate and light users (in minutes: seconds daily)

	Light*	Moderate*	Heavy*
A parent watches TV	41:31	82:13	110:54
A parent listens to the radio	25:24	64:14	289:56
A parent uses the computer or tablet	32:26	60:02	101:41
A parent uses the mobile phone	20:50	24:19	37:03
A parent reads magazines, newspapers	9:36	18:43	26:21
Sum in minutes	129:47	249:31	565:55

\* n>330 for each group

If a parent falls within the heavy media users group, he or she is on average exposed to the media more than four times more than the light media users, as evident from Table 4. They are three times more exposed to screens like TV and computers or tablets and seem to avoid silence as their radio is on eleven times longer than in the case of light users.

A significant proportion of parents is present when their preschoolers use the media (see Table 5). Most of the parents set rules regarding the content their children can watch and they also talk to their children, although to a lesser extent, about the media content.

Table 5. Parents presence, interaction and rules (average value of answers on a scale 1-5)

Question	Parents of up to 3 years old children	Parents of 4-6 years old children	Both groups (1-6 years)
Are you present when your child uses the media?	4.41	4.15	4.28
Do you set restrictions/rules about what children should watch?	4.53	4.5	4.52
Do you talk with your child about what you see in the media?	3.88	3.89	3.88

Parents estimated that, on average, a daily screen exposure limit for up to 3-year-old children should be 46.71 minutes and for 4-6 year olds 55.43 minutes. They perceive that the appropriate age for their child to autonomously use smartphones and browse the internet for fun is around eleven years. They think children can autonomously play video games a bit earlier, on average at the age of 9.5 years.

Table 6. Parents' opinion on positive and negative aspects of their children's exposure to the media (average value of answers on the scale 1-5)

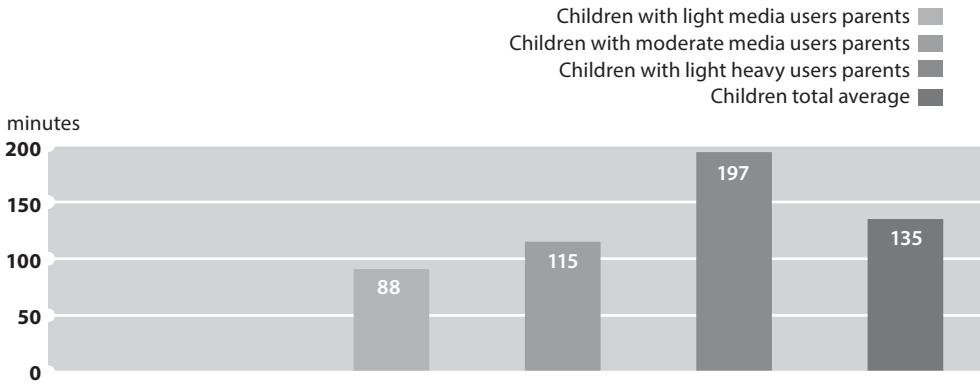
Question	Parents of up to 3 years old children	Parents of 4-6 years old children	Both groups (1-6 years)
Positive aspects			
My child learns many useful things by using the media	2.81	2.88	2.84
Negative aspects			
Screens impair speech development in children	2.9	2.86	2.88
The media have a negative impact on the mood of children	3.33	3.42	3.37
The media have a negative impact on children's health	3.14	3.16	3.15

On average, parents do not seem to have very strong opinions on either positive or negative aspects of media use by their children, as most of the values fall into the middle of a 1-5 scale, where 1 means that they strongly disagree and 5 means that they strongly agree.

### PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS AND EDUCATORS – DO THE MEDIA-RELATED HABITS OF PARENTS AFFECT THEIR CHILDREN'S MEDIA HABITS?

The extent of parents' media exposure has a statistically significant effect on media exposure of their children (ANOVA –  $F(2.1083) = 42.024$   $p=0.000$ ). The mean values indicate that with the increased media exposure of parents (from light to moderate to heavy) the time of media exposure of their children also increases, as presented in Figure 1. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient points to a statistically significant positive correlation between the extent of media exposure of parents and their children ( $r = 0.426$ ;  $n = 1086$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ).





▲ Figure 1. Comparing the media exposure of parents (heavy, moderate and light media users) with the media exposure of their children (in minutes)

Children of light media users parents are exposed to media-related activities on average 88 minutes daily. The average exposure of children whose parents are moderate media users is 115 minutes daily. Heavy media users parents' children spend on average 197 minutes daily being exposed to media. We used the post hoc Scheffe comparison to test groups differences and found out significant differences between light <> heavy and moderate <> media user parents at  $p = 0.000$ .

Parents' own media habits also affect significantly their opinion on an appropriate daily screen limit for their children, as it can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Factors influencing parents' opinion on their child's appropriate daily screen limit

	Means (minutes)	ANOVA statistics
The child's gender	Girls M = 50 Boys M = 52	F (1, 1052) = 0.92; $p > 0.05$
The child's age	1 to 3-year-old M = 47 4 to 6-year-old M = 55	F (1, 1057) = 15.34; $p < 0.00^*$
Living environment	Urban M = 48 Rural M = 53	F (1, 1038) = 4.52; $p < 0.05^*$
The parents' education	Primary M = 72 Secondary M = 59 Higher M = 47	F (2, 1050) = 12.52; $p < 0.00^*$
The parents' age	Below 30 M = 56 30-39 M = 49 40-49 M = 50 Above 50 M = 53	F (3, 1055) = 0.42; $p > 0.05$



	Means (minutes)	ANOVA statistics
Shared custody	Yes M = 53 No M = 51	F (1, 1047) = 0.27; p>0.05
Parent media user	Light user M = 39 Moderate user M = 51 Heavy user M = 62	F (2, 1056) = 34.87; p<0.00*

\*significant differences in means

Parents' opinions on appropriate daily screen limits are affected by child's age, living environment (urban/rural), parents' level of education and the extent of parents' media exposure. On average, parents set stricter limits for children in the younger age group (1-3 years old) compared to the older one (4-6 years old).

Table 8. Factors influencing parents' presence when a child is being exposed to media-related activities

	Means (minutes)	ANOVA statistics
The child's gender	Girls M = 4.29 Boys M = 4.27	F (1, 1074) = 0.06; p>0.05
The child's age	1 to 3-year-old M = 4.41 4 to 6-year-old M = 4.15	F (1, 1079) = 29.07; p<0.00*
Living environment	Urban M = 4.33 Rural M = 4.24	F (1, 1060) = 3.06; p>0.05
The parents' education	Primary M = 3.83 Secondary M = 4.29 Higher M = 4.30	F (2, 1072) = 1.27; p>0.05
The parents' age	Below 30 M = 4.31 30-39 M = 4.29 40-49 M = 4.19 Above 50 M = 4.00	F (3, 1077) = 0.79; p>0.05
Shared custody	Yes M = 4.21 No M = 4.29	F (1, 1069) = 0.65; p>0.05
Parent media user	Light M = 4.30 Moderate M = 4.33 Heavy M = 4.20	F (2, 1078) = 2.84; p>0.05

\*significant differences in means

The presence of parents when their preschoolers are using media is relatively high regardless of parents' education, age or their own media habits. The presence is affected by the age of the child, as it slightly decreases as a preschooler grows older (Kovačič and Rek, 2016). The parents' level of education and the extent of parents' own use of media seem to affect the setting of rules regarding the media contents the children can use. The higher the education level, the stronger is the awareness of parents that the rules about media contents their child is exposed to in the media, should be set. Parents who

are moderate media users are most inclined towards rule setting, compared to light and heavy media users (see Table 9).

Table 9. Factors influencing parents' rule setting regarding the media contents children can use

	Means (1-5 scale) 1 = never, 5 = always	ANOVA statistics
The child's gender	Girls M = 4.49 Boys M = 4.54	F (1, 1074) = 0.81; p>0.05
The child's age	1 to 3-year-old M = 4.53 4 to 6-year-old M = 4.50	F (1, 1079) = 0.19; p>0.05
Living environment	Urban M = 4.56 Rural M = 4.49	F (1, 1060) = 1.82; p>0.05
The parents' education	Primary M = 3.50 Secondary M = 4.45 Higher M = 4.55	F (2, 1072) = 6.03; p<0.05*
The parents' age	Below 30 M = 4.51 30-39 M = 4.53 40-49 M = 4.46 Above 50 M = 4.75	F (3, 1077) = 0.33; p>0.05
Shared custody	Yes M = 4.52 No M = 4.42	F (1, 1069) = 1.02; p>0.05
Parent media user	Light M = 4.53 Moderate M = 4.60 Heavy M = 4.41	F (2, 1078) = 4.83; p<0.05*

\*significant differences in means

None of the analysed demographic factors nor the extent of media use by the (heavy, moderate, light users) parents have a statistically significant effect on talking with their child about what he/she watches in the media. The parents' opinion on selected positive and negative effects of media use on their children are statistically significant in the case of parents' education and the extent of their media use.

Table 10. Factors influencing parents' opinions on positive and negative effects of the media on their children

My child learns many useful things by using media		My child learns many useful things by using media		My child learns many useful things by using media	
Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics	Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics	Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics
The child's gender					
Girls M = 2.84	F (1, 1058) = 0.03; p>0.05	Girls M = 2.90	F (1, 997) = 0.29; p>0.05	Girls M = 3.13	F (1, 1051) = 0.21; p>0.05
Boys M = 2.85		Boys M = 2.86		Boys M = 3.16	



My child learns many useful things by using media		My child learns many useful things by using media		My child learns many useful things by using media	
Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics	Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics	Means (1-5 scale)	ANOVA statistics
The child's age					
1 to 3-years M = 2.81	F (1, 1062) = 1.51; p>0.05	1 to 3-years M = 2.90	F (1, 1001) = 0.32; p>0.05	1 to 3-years M = 3.14	F (1, 1055) = 0.10; p>0.05
4 to 6-years M = 2.88		4 to 6-years M = 2.86		4 to 6-years M = 3.16	
Living environment					
Urban M = 2.85	F (1, 1044) = 0.11; p>0.05	Urban M = 2.93	F (1, 983) = 1.81; p>0.05	Urban M = 3.17	F (1, 1038) = 0.74; p>0.05
Rural M = 2.83		Rural M = 2.82		Rural M = 3.13	
The parents' education					
Primary M = 2.80	F (2, 1056) = 0.39; p>0.05	Primary M = 2.33	F (2, 995) = 4.28; p<0.05*	Primary M = 2.50	F (2, 1049) = 3.89 p<0.05*
Secondary M = 2.78		Secondary M = 2.73		Secondary M = 3.03	
Higher M = 2.87		Higher M = 2.95		Higher M = 3.21	
The parents' age					
Below 30 M = 2.73	F (3, 1060) = 3.32; p<0.05*	Below 30 M = 2.82	F (3, 999) = 0.59; p>0.05	Below 30 M = 3.06	F (3, 1053) = 1.23; p>0.05
30-39 M = 2.86		30-39 M = 2.89		30-39 M = 3.19	
40-49 M = 2.93		40-49 M = 2.91		40-49 M = 3.08	
Above 50 M = 4		Above 50 M = 3.50		Above 50 M = 2.67	
Shared custody					
Yes M = 2.74	F (1, 1052) = 0.89; p>0.05	Yes M = 2.82	F (1, 991) = 0.15; p>0.05	Yes M = 3.28	F (1, 1045) = 1.02; p>0.05
No M = 2.85		No M = 2.88		No M = 3.14	
Parent media user					
Light M = 2.73	F (2, 1061) = 4.48; p<0.05*	Light M = 3.01	F (2, 1000) = 3.9; p<0.05*	Light M = 3.30	F (1, 1054) = 4.53; p<0.05*
Moderate M = 2.95		Moderate M = 2.90		Moderate M = 3.12	
Heavy M = 2.84		Heavy M = 2.75		Heavy M = 3.04	

Higher educated parents and parents who are themselves light media users are more inclined to see the negative effects of the media on speech development and on the health of their children. There is also a significant difference between means in different parents age groups concerning their opinion on the positive effect the media can have

on children in the form of useful things children can learn from the media. However, the difference is obvious, especially in the case of parents aged over fifty. Other age groups of parents do not deviate as much in this respect. Parents of preschoolers are rarely over fifty years old. In our sample of 1,087 parents there were only four parents in this age group. The sample size is much too small to provide any valid conclusions in this respect. However, it may tentatively indicate that there might be intergenerational differences in this respect since parents that are fifty or over fifty are digital immigrants educated in the predigital-media-exposure age. As grandparents may too have a significant effect on upbringing in early childhood, the age-related attitudes towards media effects on children may be worth further exploration. The differences relating to "Media have a negative impact on the mood of children" were not significant for any question and were therefore not shown in Table 10.

## DISCUSSION

This study confirmed in many aspects the already existing academic claims about the exposure to media-related activities of preschool children regarding their parents' media habits and the level of their parents' education (see for instance Rideout and Hamel, 2006, 2014; Wartella *et al.*, 2013; Vandewater *et al.*, 2007). It confirms that role modelling is crucial in developing children's media habits. Statistically, parents' own media habits significantly affect children's media exposure as well as their opinion on an appropriate daily screen limit for their children.

We noticed a severe difference between parents' opinions on an appropriate screen limit for their young children and their actual exposure to screens. An estimated average daily screen exposure limit for children aged one to three years, according to all parents included in our survey, should be 46 minutes, which is much less than they actually daily spend in front of screens (72 minutes). The difference is even bigger with 4 to 6-year-olds, where an estimated appropriate screen limit was set at 55.43 minutes. However, the data on media exposure of this age category show that children are actually exposed to screens on average for 114.31 minutes a day, which is twice as much as an appropriate screen limit should be in their parents' opinion. The reasons for the gap between the parents' opinion and the actual behaviour should be further explored.

A significant proportion of parents is present when their preschoolers use media. They set rules regarding the content their children can use and they also, although to a lesser extent, talk to children about media contents. However, many issues concerning the parent-child correlation remain open for further research. Based on our research design, we cannot give any claims about the following: a) the nature of parents' presence (whether a parent is just present in the same room and does not monitor the media activities of their child or he/she pays attention to their child's activities or even gets engaged in them); b) the nature of rules that parents set regarding the media habits of their preschooler; or c) the way they interact with their children about the media content. Further research is needed to learn how parents' knowledge, habits and value judgements regarding the

messages transferred by the mass media may affect various aspects of children's lives and development. Such an insight would be valuable as to the quality of contents that children are exposed to, as well as to the kind of interactions with the parents and other significant others (like educators in kindergardens, peers, grandparents) may affect the child's media experience even more than the actual exposure times.

If parents often use media as an electronic baby-sitter for a considerable amount of time and play only a passive role as media educators, various negative effects may develop as the child gets older. The more parents communicate with their children about media messages and put them in context, the more they participate in their child's media activities using them to discuss the topic and influencing value judgments, the more educational value media may hold.

In our survey, we noticed that a majority of parents do not have strong opinions on neither positive nor negative media effects on their children (learning opportunities, health, mood or speech development). We assume that they themselves do not reflect on the whole range of complex issues that may be connected to their child's media habits. Parents were asked whether they were familiar with the recommendations regarding the use of the media for preschoolers and 44.26% of them claimed that they were. They were also asked if their pediatrician had ever discussed the topic of media-related effects on their children's health and 95.5% claimed that this was never a topic of their conversation with their child's paediatrician.

In Slovenian society the issue of media education is mainly centred around the issue of the ability to use various media (Frau-Meigs, 2017). Cognitive, emotional and social competences related to media messages or the ability to create and focus on creative problem solving, which are also important competences of a media-literate person, are not strongly present in our discourse on the media. Accordingly, the parents, when educating their children about the media, seem to focus more on the skills of how to use various media, and less on their children's reception, analysis, reflexion and evaluation of media texts. Further studies, employing in-depth interviews or focus group methodology could provide more insights on the topic.

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# MEDIJI I DJECA PREDŠKOLSKE DOBI: ULOGA RODITELJA KAO UZORA I UČITELJA

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**SAŽETAK** *Proveli smo istraživanje na nacionalno reprezentativnom uzorku roditelja u Sloveniji, prikupljajući mišljenja roditelja djece od 1 godine do 6 godina glede njihovih medijskih navika i medijskih navika njihove djece. Također smo prikupili podatke o ponašanju roditelja kada je riječ o obrazovanju njihove djece o medijima te njihova mišljenja o pozitivnim i negativnim učincima medija na njihovu djecu. Utvrdili smo da je ponašanje roditelja ključno za razvoj medijskih navika njihove djece, odnosno da su im roditelji uzor. Statistički gledano, medijske navike roditelja značajno utječu na izloženost njihove djece medijima i na mišljenje o tome koliko dnevno njihova djeca trebaju biti izložena zaslonima raznih uređaja. Stupanj izloženosti roditelja medijima i stupanj njihova obrazovanja imaju statistički značajan utjecaj na to kako roditelji obrazuju svoju djecu za medije te na njihovo mišljenje o utjecaju medija na djecu.*

## KLJUČNE RIJEČI

MEDIJSKA EDUKACIJA, MEDIJSKA IZLOŽENOST, PREDŠKOLSKA DJECA, RODITELJI, MEDIJSKE NAVIKE

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