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Abstract

Children are being exposed to technology from an increasingly younger age. Portable touch screen devices that can be activated with a simple tap on a screen are especially popular with toddlers. The purpose of this study was to examine parental factors, namely attitudes, beliefs, motivations and parents’ own use of portable touch screen devices, and find out if they could influence the amount of time and type of content a toddler was using on portable touch screen devices. To understand why these parental factors might be critical to study, the Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction and Social Learning Theory will provide the theoretical framework to undergird the study.

A quantitative research approach was utilized and a survey research design was used to collect parent responses through a single questionnaire. A total of 164 parents took part in the study and responded to questions regarding their attitudes and beliefs towards portable touch screen device use, situations in which they would allow their child to use the devices and, lastly, how much time they and their toddlers spent on portable touch screen devices on a typical day.

Results indicated that parental attitudes and parents’ own use of portable touch screen devices significantly predicted the amount of time a toddler spent on portable touch screen devices. Furthermore, parental attitudes and motivations also significantly predicted the type of content a toddler was using on the portable touch screen devices. Parental attitudes also emerged as the predictor with the strongest relationship with both time spent and content used by toddlers. However, parental
beliefs were not found to be significantly linked with either time spent or content used by toddlers.

This research has given some insight into the parental factors that may affect how much time and how toddlers are using portable touch screen devices. These findings could be used when developing local guidelines on toddlers’ portable touch screen device use or to help parents be more mindful of when and what they allow their toddler to access. Future research in this area could consider using other data collection methods such as interviews or observations to gain a more holistic look at this issue.