# Parental technology use linked to impaired development in children under five



A recent study from the University of Wollongong in Australia has highlighted the adverse effects of parental technology use on young children, particularly those under the age of five. The research, published on May 5, examines the phenomenon known as "technoference," referring to the interference of technology in family interactions. It suggests that when parents engage with their devices while in the presence of their children, it can significantly hinder the children's cognitive and social development, lower attachment levels, and increase psychological issues.

The study synthesised data from 21 previous investigations involving 14,900 participants worldwide, all of whom had children aged between 0 and 4.9 years. The researchers sought to assess the relationship between parental technology use (PTU) and various developmental aspects of children, including motor skills, cognitive ability, psychosocial health, physical activity, screen time, and sleep.

Findings indicated that continuous distractions from devices could have lasting effects on young children. The authors noted, “It may foster a sense of being ignored or lead children to feel they must compete for their parents’ attention.” This distraction not only disrupts daily interactions but may also impede the development of crucial social and language skills as parents become increasingly focused on their screens.

The study echoes concerns raised in a September 2024 report, which suggested that excessive screen time among parents can deteriorate children's language development. Lead author Tiia Tulviste from the University of Tartu stated, “While reading e-books and playing some educational games may offer language learning opportunities...during the first years of life, the most influential factor is everyday dyadic face-to-face parent-child verbal interaction.”

The implications of this research propose that modern parenting may be at risk of compromising vital developmental opportunities due to technological distractions. By prioritising device engagement over direct interaction, parents may unintentionally inhibit their children’s emotional and cognitive growth. As families navigate the complexities of modern technology, these findings underscore the need for awareness regarding its potential impact on nurturing relationships.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.uow.edu.au/media/2024/we-reviewed-100-studies-about-little-kids-and-screens.php> - This article from the University of Wollongong discusses a comprehensive review of 100 studies on the influence of screen use on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, highlighting the adverse effects of parental technology use on young children.
2. <https://www.frontiersin.org/news/2024/09/12/families-too-much-screen-time-kids-struggle-language-skills-frontiers-developmental-psychology> - This study from the University of Tartu examines the impact of excessive screen time among parents on children's language development, emphasizing the importance of face-to-face interactions for early language development.
3. <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-024-18447-4> - This research published in BMC Public Health investigates the association between mobile device screen time and language development among toddlers, finding that higher screen time is linked to poorer language skills.
4. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/journal/technoference-parent-mobile-device-use-and-implications-for-children-and-parent-child-relationships/> - This article from ZERO TO THREE discusses the concept of 'technoference,' referring to the interference of technology in family interactions, and its implications for parent-child relationships and children's development.
5. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9067/9/10/1577> - This study published in the journal Children examines the relationship between screen time of preschool-aged children and their mothers, and children's language development, highlighting the impact of both children's and mothers' screen time on language skills.
6. <https://www.jmir.org/2025/1/e57636/> - This meta-analysis published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research evaluates the association between parental technoference and child problematic media use, providing evidence of the impact of parental technology use on children's media habits.
7. <https://nypost.com/2025/05/06/lifestyle/parents-obsessive-technology-use-may-have-serious-long-term-effects-on-babies-and-toddlers-study/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data