A Survey on Early Screen Exposure during Infancy and Autism

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Abstract : This survey was conducted to explore the hypothesis that excessive screen exposure combined with a subsequent decrease in parent-child interaction during infancy might be associated with autism. The main questions being asked are: Were children with autism exposed to long hours of screen time during the first 2 years of life? And what was the reason(s) for exposure at such an early age? Other variables were also addressed in this survey. An Arabic questionnaire was administered online (June 2019) via a Facebook page, relatively well-known in Arab countries. 1725 parents of children diagnosed with autism participated in this survey. Results show that 80.9% of children surveyed who were diagnosed with autism had been exposed to screens for long periods of time during the first 2 years of life. It can be inferred from the results of this survey that over-exposure to screens disrupt the parent-child interaction which is shown to be associated with ASD. The results of this survey highlight the harmful effects of screen exposure during infancy and the importance of parent-child interaction during the critical period of brain development. This paper attempts to further explore the connection between parent-child interaction and ASD, as well as serve as a call for further research and investigation of the relation between screens and parent-child interactions during infancy and Autism.

Keywords : attachment disorder, autism, screen exposure, virtual autism

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