

*Иновации, предизвикателства и тенденции в постмодерното образование
Innovations, Challenges and Tendencies in the Post Modern Education*

MEDIA IN PRESCHOOL AGE OF CHILD'S LIFE

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Abstract. In a world where media, technique and technology occupy an important place in the human existence, the control of their presence in children's and youth's life is difficult. Besides the opportunities and didactic positivity that media as assets for educational activity possess, they can still be a source of negative impacts. That's why, the child's empowerment, since its early childhood, for proper media utilization in the educational aims is essential. Family and pre-school institutions are the key areas that have the power to do so. They can continuously and systematically perform selection and target the positive media influence in child's development. During the media application process, several aspects must be considered, including: child's age, transmitted media content, as well as the continuous monitoring and control of child's activity.

We conducted a survey in February and March 2013, in order to perceive the media usage in the families and their influence on the children. Our sample of the survey is consisted of 143 parents of children who attend major groups in two kindergartens in urban environment – Stip.

By examining the views and opinions of the parents we wanted to see: how child's leisure time has been organized, regarding the media usage; parents' information and opinion about the available educational child's contents; media influence on child's perception and behavior.

Keywords: media influence, leisure time, preschool child, parents views

Presence of media in the preschool child's life

Development line and the future of every society depends on its citizens. The formal and informal educational forms are significant factors involved in the development process of every human personality. The media are an integral part in these educational forms and in the human leisure time.

Numerous studies have shown the increased presence of the media, the ICT, in human's life. In this paper, when we speak about the media, the focus will be on: TV usage, computer and internet usage, as well as the usage of the books. Our country follows the world trend of increased media participation and presence in every part of human's life. This trend is confirmed by the State Statistical Office (SSO) data of the Republic of Macedonia. A growing number of Macedonian households

have computer and internet access. The data show that in the first quarter of 2012, 64.2 percent of the households used a computer and 58.3% of the households had internet access at home, unlike 2011 when 61.2 percent of the households used a computer and 55.0% of the households had internet access at home. (SSO, Usage of information and communication technologies in households and by individuals, 2012, p. 4)

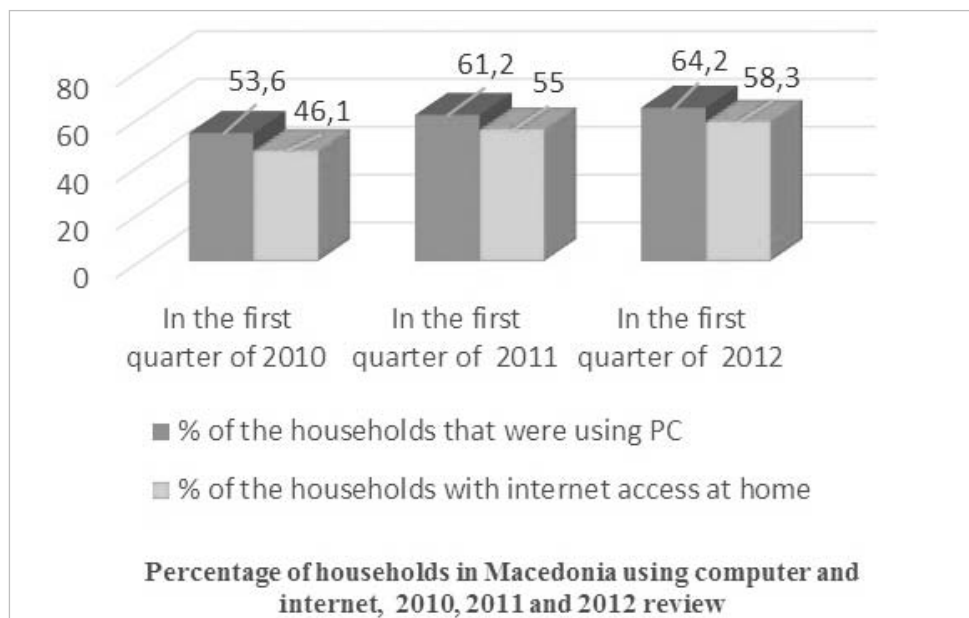


Chart 1 shows the SSO data, for the internet and computer usage by Macedonian households in the period from 2010 till 2012.

The media have power, specific only for them, and our functioning nowadays can't be imagined without them. Besides media usage for pleasure and fun, their great power is seen in: enabling access to information at any time, long-distance connection and improvement of the learning environment and enrichment of the learning. Despite these advantages, the media (TV, internet) are the easiest way to transfer and spread information that would negatively influence and built human's personality. Many authors point out the advantages and disadvantages of the media usage. Depending on their way of usage, the media can positively or negatively impact the different aspects of child's development (physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, communication and creativity aspect).¹⁾ From one hand the media are: a window to the world, a source of knowledge during the whole human's life. They encourage creativity, increase social interaction. Also they can develop/enhance: coordination of movement, child's independence, perception, attention and symbolical presentation (Дмитровић, 2011; Stanisavljević-Petrović,

2011). Punie points out that the presence of ICT enhances the learning environment and enriches the learning experience. Moreover, the power of ICT is in learning stimulation, in motivation of the individual and, at the same time, in providing an opportunity for the individual to do certain activities (as cited in Lepičnik-Vodopivec & Samec, 2012, p. 54). From the other hand, the media are factors for unsociability, poor physical development, negative behavior, creativity reduction and reduction of creative thinking, self-emotional environmental separateness, and predominance of the virtual over the real world (Дмитровић, 2011; Stanisavljević-Petrović, 2011; Krivokapić, 2008).

The dangers and disadvantages of ICT usage was divided into three categories, by Plowman, McPake and Stephen:

1. dangers and disadvantages of ICT usage for the child's socio-cultural development;

2. dangers and disadvantages of ICT usage for the child's cognitive development;

3. *dangers and disadvantages of ICT usage for the child's wellbeing* (Lepičnik-Vodopivec & Samec, 2012, p. 55).

The media are an integral part of human's life. They are present in the preschool child's life, they are present in adult's life, every day starts and ends with them. They muddle through human's life and quietly, imperceptibly and surreptitiously change it (Дмитровић, 2011).

Zorica Stanisavljević-Petrović in her work „Medijsko vaspitanje u vrtiću“ underlines the specificity that pre-school period has when the education of children is concerned.

„In this period, to a greater extent than in other periods of the child's personality development, the spontaneous learning is expressed, i.e. the child accepts spontaneous influences from the immediate environment to a greater extent“ (Stanisavljević-Petrović, 2011: 385).

Kamenov talks about the spontaneous learning influence to the preschool child in the creation of numerous knowledge *„during spontaneous learning, which is non-systematically realized (same as the media influence) quite complex knowledge and skills are created, which also include adoption of contents from the social experience“* (Stanisavljević-Petrović, 2011: 385).

Because of that, in order to properly build the child's personality, the control and continuous monitoring of preschool child, as well as the monitoring and guidance of the manner of the time spend in kindergarten and leisure time, is essential and necessary. Here, the family, parents, kindergarten, educators as well as the immediate environment are the factors with a major role and importance. The family and the educators should be a good example for the child, they should be able to select the media advantages and to direct them toward the child, and at the same time to put away the negative media influence and do not allow this influence to be part of child's life.

The increased percentage of Macedonian households that use computer and Internet opens the door for bigger accessibility of these media to preschool child.

Therefore we decided to conduct this research, to discern not only the type and the usage frequency of the media in preschool child's life, but also to see the behaviors that children manifest as a result of the media influence and the parents opinions in relation to media advantages/disadvantages for their children.

Research methodology

The subject of this research are parents' views and opinions regarding the involvement of the media in preschool children lives. Using descriptive method we tried to detect how much and in what way is children's leisure time filled with activities related to media and how they impact on their lives.

The survey was conducted in February and March 2013 in two public kindergartens (Astibo and Vera Ciriviri Trena) in Stip, Republic of Macedonia. The population of our study included the parents of the 5 and 6 years old children (big group). The sample of the survey was comprised of 149 parents. In 6 of the questionnaires (anonymous), there was no clear general information about the parents, so the research results, which are presented below, refer to 143 respondents. The sample was selected randomly, by having included 50 % (average) of children from one big kindergarten group. For the survey needs, a questionnaire was prepared²⁾, which was submitted to the parents of the children, by the educators from the big groups, with the help of the kindergartens' professional services. The questionnaire contains four groups of questions: general information for the parents and children; ways of leisure time organization – media presence in child's life; parents' opinion and information about educational contents and their opinion about their child's behavior and action as a result of the media influence. The research results are presented in the same order.

Analysis and results of the conclusions

General information for the parents and children

The children included in our study were mainly on the age of 5 and 6. The percentage of 5 years old was higher (69.23%). From 143 surveyed parents we received information that the children originate from complete families, all families have two parents. In terms of the employment status: both parents work (83.92%), only one parent works (13.99%) both parents do not work (2.10%). In most of the cases (58,74%) the work engagement of the parent is 8 hours per day, 6 days a week; (35.66%) 8 hours per day, 5 days a week; (3.50%) 7 hours per day, 6 days a week; (1.40%) work more than 8 hours per day, 6 days a week and (0.70%) 4–5 hours per day, 5 days a week. Parents' leisure time depends on their work engagement. We examined parents' work engagement in order to see parents' workload and to see how much time they have to devote to their children and to work with them. More than half of the parents have only one day off in a week, which reduces the time they can spend with their children. However, the parents are trying to spend the available time they have with their children. (79,02%) from the children spend 6 to 8 hours per day

in the kindergarten. From these data and from the data of the time that parents spent with their children after work engagement, we concluded that the parents mainly spend their available leisure time with their children. During their weekends, parents spend almost whole of their available leisure time with their children.

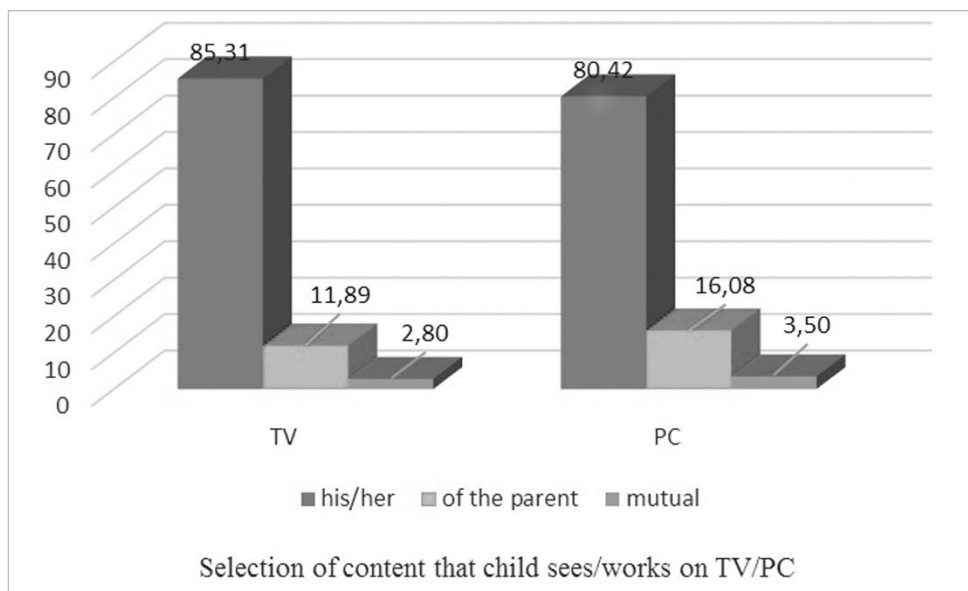
Leisure time organization – media presence in child's life

Mass media are more prevalent in children's lives. In this section of the questionnaire we attempted to identify the situation of the media presence (TV, computer, internet and books) in preschool child's life, here in Stip. More than half of the children are using the computer daily, which indicates its mass usage. A small percentage of children do not use computers at all (9.1%). These results are presented in Table 1 (page 17).

The child's interest in watching TV content or in computer activity was also tested by examining how much time per day a child spends in front of the TV or computer. The results obtained are presented in table 2 (page 17).

Most of the children (37,76%) watch 30-60 minutes TV per day, and (34,27%) 60-90 minutes per day. As for the work on the computer, most of the children (45,45%) spend 30-60 minutes per day in front of the PC. The two activities compared lead us to a conclusion that the children spend more time watching TV, than in front of PC. This situation is confirmed in Serbia as well. Preschool Serbian children watch TV more frequently, than they sit in front of PC and play games. (Tubić, & Đorđić, 2009, p. 34)

Mainly, the children choose the TV content that they want to watch by themselves and they also choose the PC content they want to watch, or an activity that they'll work on the PC mainly by themselves. These results are shown in Chart 2.



By surveying parents, educators association in Belgrade came to data about the way the children choose TV content. Because of their work engagement, the parents don't have enough time for their children, so they leave children to dial channels they want to see on TV by themselves, and at the same time the parents are able to do their house work. On average, the children in Belgrade spend up to 6 hours per day, which is a worrying situation (Дмитровић, 2011).

Allowing children to choose whatever they want to see on TV or work on computer by themselves is of great importance from one hand, because in that way child's interest is respected, but on the other hand, the children's age do not allow them to always make decisions by themselves and parents need to constantly monitor and guide child's choice.

The results of our survey reveal that, in most of the cases (56.64%) the children watch cartoons, in the other cases, the children, besides cartoons, watch children festivals and songs as well as educational programs. A small percentage of children watch series (Turkish, Spanish ...). From the chosen and watched TV content, we can say that this content is mainly typical for the children, but it should be emphasized that not every cartoon should the child watch. Much of the cartoons contain elements of violence, and not every cartoon is appropriate for this age group of children. So, we can say that, even though the children choose, if we can say suitable, content still remains the risk, because the children make the choice by themselves. Therefore, the presence of an adult person during these activities is of great importance. From the survey, we noticed a small percentage of children who watch television alone (16.78%). In all other cases the children watch television with a member of the family: a parent, a brother/sister, grandmother/grandfather, which makes us consider that there is always an insight and oversight of the contents that the children are watching. But the here comes the question: what kind of escort is that? – it seems passive, because the content choice is made mainly by the children. So, when we talk about adults presence, we do not think only of their physical presence, most important is their active presence in terms of helping, guiding and selecting contents which the child would watch.

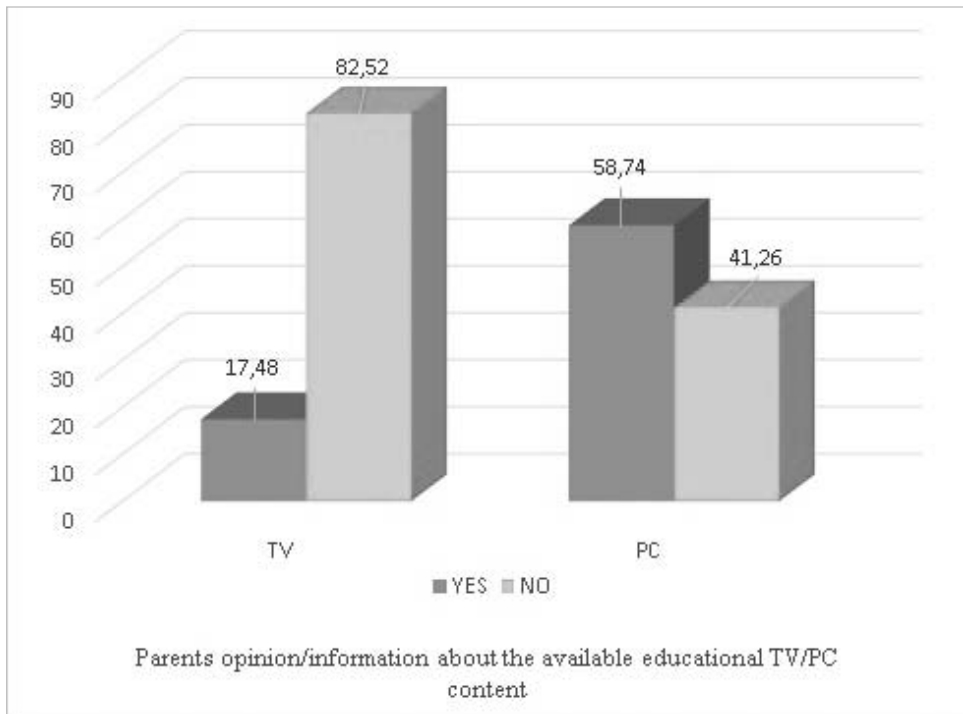
31.47% of the children only play games as a computer activity, besides this activity, the children watch cartoons and children's festivals and songs in front of the PC. 23.08% of the children are left alone while using the computer. The remaining percentage of children use the computer with a member of the family: with a parent or brother / sister. The computer usage, especially the Internet, can easily take the child into indecent sites and content. It is very difficult to provide safe Internet access for the child, and for this reason, child's work must be always controlled.

The selection of books for this age of children is very high. Their application in the child's daily life is of great importance. There are many books that can

be used as an important parents' device in school preparation process for their children, familiarization with our and other alphabets, obtaining information for the other living beings on the planet and so on. We notice that the parents often use books and they generally buy it, but there are parents who find different ways for their child to use a book (some of the parents borrow literature from the library, because of their financial situation). Quite often (33.57% daily) and (42.66% two or three times a week) of the parents are using a book in the games with their children. The parents are using the following books: book for basic reading and writing in Macedonian language, literature for children, children's encyclopedias, and in some cases, less frequently, literature for initial reading and writing in English is used. 41,96% of parents are buying a book for their child once a month, 30.07% buy it 2–3 times a year, and others buy it for many occasions and celebration in the family.

Parents opinion and information about the available educational content

What we can point out is the large percentage of parents (82.52%) who consider that there is not enough educational content on TV intended for the age of their child. A large percentage (41.26%) of parents do not have any information, they don't know any educational online games. These data are shown in Chart 3.



31,47% of the children attend the available educational contents frequently, 42,66% sometimes, and 25,87% rarely. We conclude that the children attend educational content not very often. The majority of parents around 75% think that cartoons, programs and shows which their children watch as well as PC games that are played by their children induce a sense of cooperation, assistance, care and honesty.

Child behavior and action as a result of the media influence

The media influence is seen also in children clothes and behavior. Dmitrović talked about the marketing role of the television, and he emphasized the emergence of the popular characters on children's clothes, food products, etc. after some of the cartoons were shown. In our study, 42.66% of parents point out that when their children choose clothes to buy, they choose clothes with images from cartoon characters that they have seen. In other cases the child's choice depends on the clothing colors, they also choose modern clothes, etc.

It is common for the movie or cartoon watched to impact the children's behavior. 47.55% of parents have noticed such behavior of their child which is identified with a character from a movie or a play. These results are shown in Table 3 (page 18). The children mainly imitate: take role of a teacher, mother, princess, repeat cartoon dialogues and mainly their behavior is normal and positive.

The media influence is huge and attention should be paid to the selected content. The character and the role that the child would be equated with, in the everyday life, depends on the things he/she previously watched.

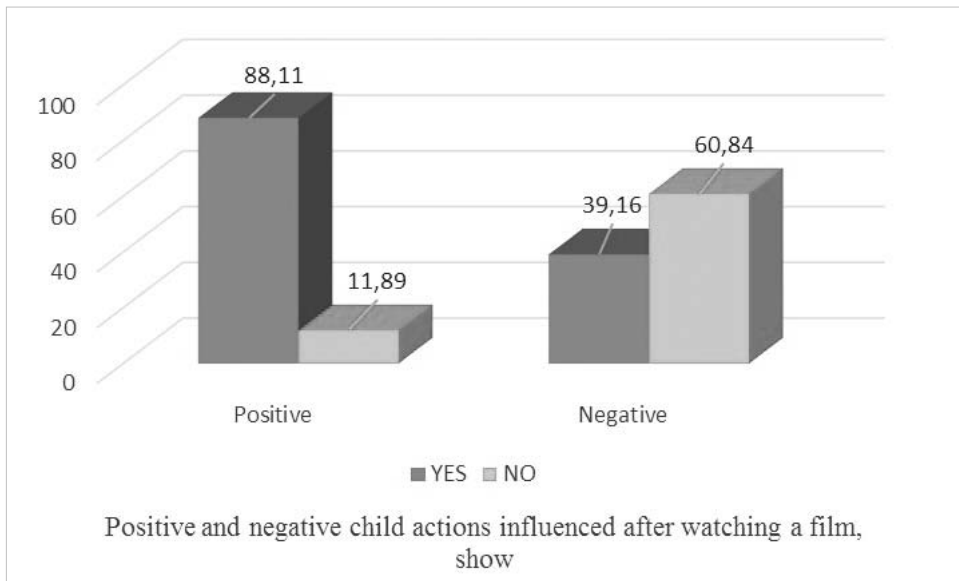
A small percentage of the parents 28.67% sometimes allowed their children to watch content not appropriate for their age, just to sit still. In table 4 (page 18) are shown these results.

After watching a movie or a show, the conversation parent – child is very important. The aim of the conversation is: the parent to explain something to his/her child if it hasn't understood well, the parent through the conversation reveals what his/her child sorts out and what it has not noticed from the watched content, and they should always pull out a message from the watched content. More than half of the parents practice this type of conversation, but a large percentage of parents (44.76%) sometimes practice this type of conversation with their children. Table 5 (page 19) shows these results.

This conversation should be constantly applied. It should be a practice that will be applied consistently. 76.92% of parents point out that the child generally knows to separate positive from negative actions and behavior in popular films, shows, etc.

In the daily activities (88.11%) of the children showed positive behavior that they have accepted from the watched movie or show. 39.16% of children show negative behavior that they have accepted from the watched movie or

show. Therefore, the conversation between parents and their children is very important. Through the conversation, the parent will point out and explain the situation in order to remove the negative child behavior. The positive and negative children's behavior after watching a movie or show is presented in chart 4.



Conclusion

The new way of life imposes a fast pace of life in which people are preoccupied and overloaded. This leads to reduced leisure time and decrease in the mutual family time. It imposes numerous risks in terms of the potential impacts on the uncontrolled child's life. More than half of the parents work on Saturdays, which decreases the time they can spend with their children. But on the other hand results show that almost all parents try to spend the rest of the time with their children. Preschool children spend a lot of time apart from their parents, so the time that they spend together must be quality used.

The results of the survey initiate a state of mass (daily) media usage (computer, television) in preschool child. These media are a necessity in today's living, but firstly, the parents should be familiar with the benefits and disadvantages of the media in order to only use the benefits. Here comes the question: How much is the TV content that children watch and the activity on the PC they have, controlled? We concluded that in these activities most of the children have always been accompanied by a family member. But what kind of escort

is that? – it seems passive, because the content choice is made mainly by the children.

On one hand it shows respect for child's wishes and interests, but it should be known that not every choice is good for the child, not every cartoon / movie / show that the child chooses to see corresponds to his age and not every characters action is easy to comprehend. So adults should appear in the role of controllers, routers, advisers, commentators.

From the aspect of time spent using these media, the children from our sample belong to the category of „light“ viewers (less than 4 hours).³⁾

The parents highlight the lack of educational TV content. A large percentage of parents are not familiar with the online educational games. So, the conclusion that, the media don't offer enough educational content for children would be too severe. It seems that the issue is the insufficient parents' information about them. Besides the need for enrichment of TV programs with additional child contents, it is necessary to provide more information of the parents about the existing educational online content and information for the ways they can play a positive role in the organization and realization of children leisure time.

The content that the children watch has inevitably influenced their behavior. This is evident in the large percentage of children (about 40%) who insist on clothes with pictures of cartoon characters. The influence is also confirmed with the determined positive children's behavior gained after watching a movie or show. The percentage of the negative behavior is much smaller. After seeing the film, cartoon, show, after reading a book, the conversation between the adult and the child is very important. It should be an integral part of each of those activities. Using the conversation, the parents will explain what the child hasn't understood or has understood incorrectly, they will allocate the positive and negative features together; the conversation will help the child to learn a message from the watched or read content. The child should not and must not be deprived from this.

We should not allow, and we should not leave space for the negative media influence to come into child's life. From all of the factors: family, kindergarten, environment, the age of the child requires: help, consultation, quality teaching and education. They are all an important part in the development process of child personality. The media are an integral part in all of them, that's why everyone needs to be careful and insist on their proper usage. We should not allow the media to be used simply to fulfill our time. It should be used all the benefits that it brings with it.

Table 1. Computer usage

	How often does your child uses the computer	
	F	%
Every day	86	60,14
2–3 times a week	34	23,78
Once a week	10	6,99
Does not use it at all	13	9,09
Total	143	100

Table 2. Daily usage of TV and computer

	How many minutes per day does your child watch TV		How many minutes per day does your child spend in front of the PC	
	F	%	F	%
up to 30 minutes	5	3,50	31	21,68
30–60 minutes	54	37,76	65	45,45
60–90 minutes	49	34,27	25	17,48
90–120 minutes	27	18,88	7	4,90
120–180 minutes	6	4,20		
180–240 minutes				
More than 240 minutes			2	1,40
Doesn't watch TV/ doesn't use PC	2	1,40	13	9,09
Total	143	100	143	100

Table 3. Child behavior

	Have you noticed that your child manifests an identical behavior as some of the movie or a play characters he has watched	
	F	%
YES	68	47,55
NO	75	52,45
Total	143	100

Table 4. Allowing the child to make a content selection, regardless of their suitability, just to sit quietly and to not annoy you

	Do you allow your child to make a content selection, regardless of their suitability, just to sit quietly and to not annoy you	
	F	%
YES		
NO	102	71,33
Sometimes	41	28,67
Total	143	100

Table 5. Conversation with the child after watching a show, movie

	After watching a show, movie, do you discuss it with your child	
	F	%
YES	74	51,75
NO	5	3,50
Sometimes	64	44,76
Total	143	100

Acknowledgement

Special thanks for the engagement of the professional services and educators from the big groups in the kindergartens “Vera Ciriviri Trena” and “Astibo” Stip in the realization of the survey.

NOTES

1. According Anđelković, N. as cited in Stanisavljević-Petrović, 2011, p. 393
2. Adapted version of the questionnaires used in the research of:
Tubić, T., & Đorđić, V. (2009). Televizija i kompjuterske igrice – razbibriga ili stil života?. *Norma*, 14(1), 29–38.
Marić-Jurišin, S., & Marković, B. (2011). Uticaj televizije na razvoj interesovanja kod mladih. *Kultura*, (133), 401–412.
3. George Gerbner, (as cited in Dmitrović, 2011, who talks about the existence of two categories of viewers: „heavy“ and „light“. In the first category belong those who spent more than four hours per day in front of the TV, and in the second, those who spent less than four hours per day in front of the TV

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