Mapping Patterns of Restricted and Repetitive Behaviours and Media Use in Youth Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Typically Developing Youth

Eric D. Gilliland
University of Windsor, gillilae@uwindsor.ca

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries
Consistent with the TCPS 2 (4.7) this is a research summary provided to participants and should not be considered a formal publication of results.

Recommended Citation

This Completed Summary is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship at UWindsor. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Result Summaries by an authorized administrator of Scholarship at UWindsor. For more information, please contact scholarship@uwindsor.ca.
Introduction

- Researchers have started to give more attention to how media use relates to youth mental health and development.

- Some new research suggested youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may use media in problematic and addictive ways.

- Studies have not looked into the idea that the media use shown by these youths may be "old" ASD symptoms that look new or different when using media.

Current Study

- Explored the connection between every day “sticky behaviors” (e.g., focused interests, fixed routines, repeated behaviors) and media “sticky behaviors.”

Method:

- A sample of 36 parents of 4- to 11-year-old children (ASD = 25; non-ASD = 11) was collected using an online survey.

Results:

Main Findings

- **Parent reports** showed:
  - Media “sticky behaviors” happened more in children with ASD than children without ASD.
  - More everyday “sticky behaviors” related to more media “sticky behaviors” in children with ASD.
  - Child age or everyday skills part of independence (e.g., eating without help) did not relate to media “sticky behaviors” for children with or without ASD.
  - The child's number of devices did not relate to child age or everyday skills part of independence for children with or without ASD.
  - Higher or lower levels of everyday skills part of independence did not relate to “sticky behaviors” involving sensation (e.g., touch, smell) or focused interests/routines.
**Exploratory Findings**

- There were many exploratory findings. Here are a few examples of what parent reports showed:
  - Children with ASD got upset more often, strongly, and for longer when their media use was stopped than children without ASD.
    - More distress related to more “sticky behaviors” in children with ASD.
  - Both children with and without ASD had more skills with newer media devices (e.g., smartphones) than with older media devices (e.g., TVs).
  - Children both with or without ASD liked cartoon and animated video, picture, and TV content more than other content.

**Conclusions**

- Media “sticky behaviors” may be like the everyday “sticky behaviors” seen in children with ASD.
- Media “sticky behaviors” may change how researchers and clinicians think about addictive media behaviors for children with ASD.
- Researchers and clinicians should explore media “sticky behaviors” further.