

Sleep habits and screen exposure of pre-schoolers: the role of gender

I. Pavlinac Dodig¹, R. Pecotic¹, E. Marusic², L. Lusic Kalcina¹, M. Valic¹, Z. Dogas¹

¹University of Split School of Medicine, Neuroscience, Split, Croatia

²University Hospital Split, Split, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Both sleep habits and screen exposure are recognized as modifiable risk factors for the overall health in children, and the current study aims to address the role of gender in order to recognize where boys and girls are the most vulnerable when it comes to screen exposure, sleep habits and daytime sleepiness.

METHODS

A total of 196 children and parents participated (average age was 6 (6-7) years). Both children and their parents were assessed in paediatrician's office during regular pre-school medical assessment. A sleep habits and media usage questionnaire

RESULTS

In a total sample, 54% of boys reported to own a cell phone or tablet in comparison to 41% of girls ($P=0.087$), whereas 45% of boys reported to own a video game console (and 13% of girls ($P<0.001$)). When asked about playing digital games, boys more often reported to play (84%) when compared to girls (72%; $p=0.036$). Boys more commonly reported to have a computer in their bedroom (13% vs. 3% girls; $P=0.02$), and 27% of boys reported to have a TV in their bedroom (vs. 17% girls ($P=0.191$)). 70% of girls and 72% of boys reported watching TV before bedtime ($P=0.825$). An increased proportion of boys reported to play digital games before bedtime (29% vs. 20% girls; $P=0.181$). In the full sample, parents reported less often that their children play digital games (12.8% vs. 25.6% when children assessed; $P<0.001$). Boys and girls similarly assessed total sleep time ($P=0.927$), weekday ($P=0.538$) and weekend bedtimes ($P=0.698$). Average amount of days taking naps during daytime was higher among boys (4.8 ± 1.8 vs. 3.8 ± 1.9 in girls; $P=0.022$). Overall ESS score was similar (3.8 ± 2.9 vs. 3.9 ± 3 ; $P=0.737$) but boys reported higher sleepiness when assessing the need for sleep while sitting in a classroom ($P=0.036$).

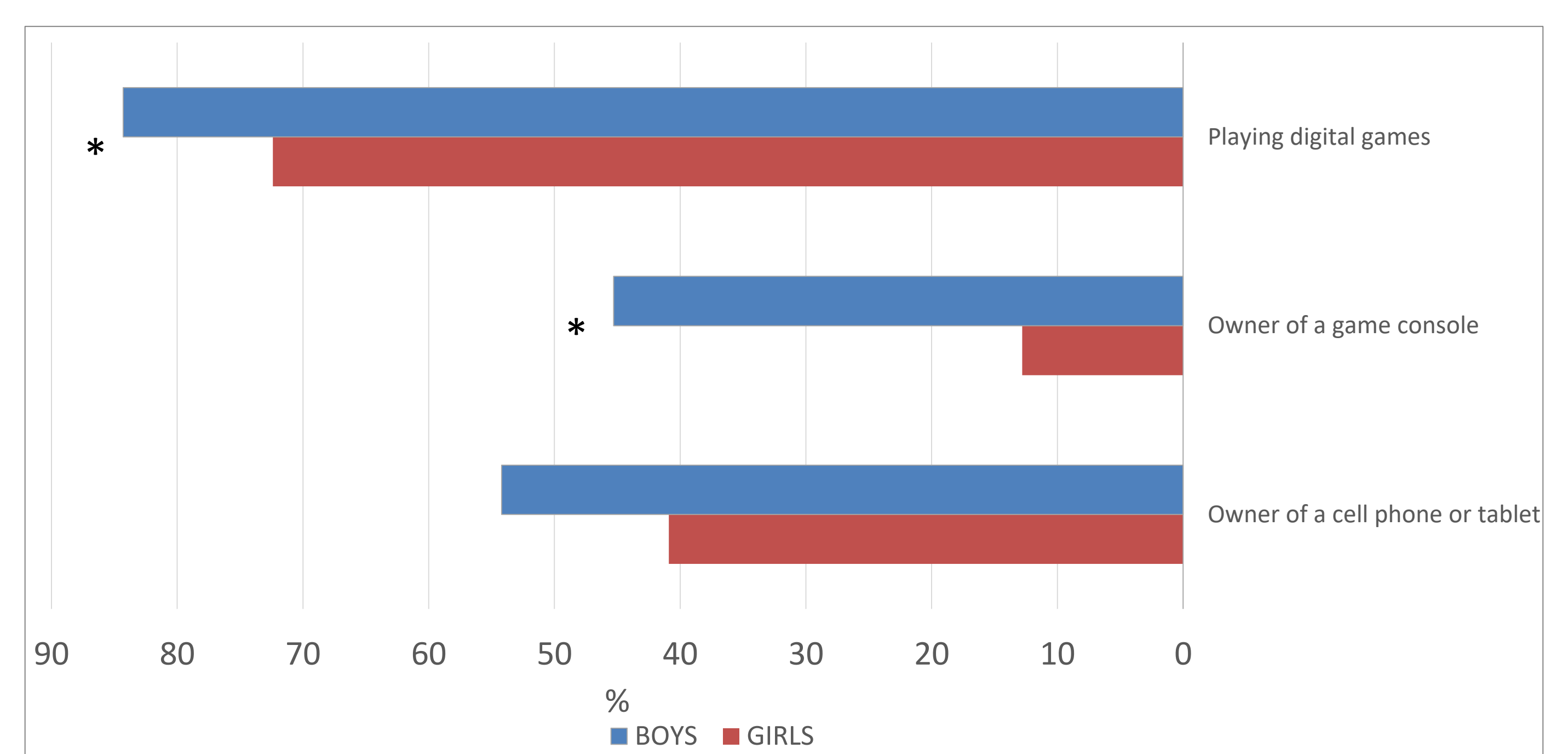


Figure 1. Screen exposure in both genders. * $P<0.05$

Table 1. Sleep habits in both genders

	GIRLS	BOYS	P
TST	9:40±0:55	9:41±1:02	0.927
Weekday bedtime	21:17±0:36	21:13±0:42	0.538
Weekday waketime	7:35±0:47	7:26±0:42	0.190
Weekend bedtime	21:44±0:38	21:42±0:42	0.698
Weekend waketime	8:19±0:45	8:11±0:54	0.225

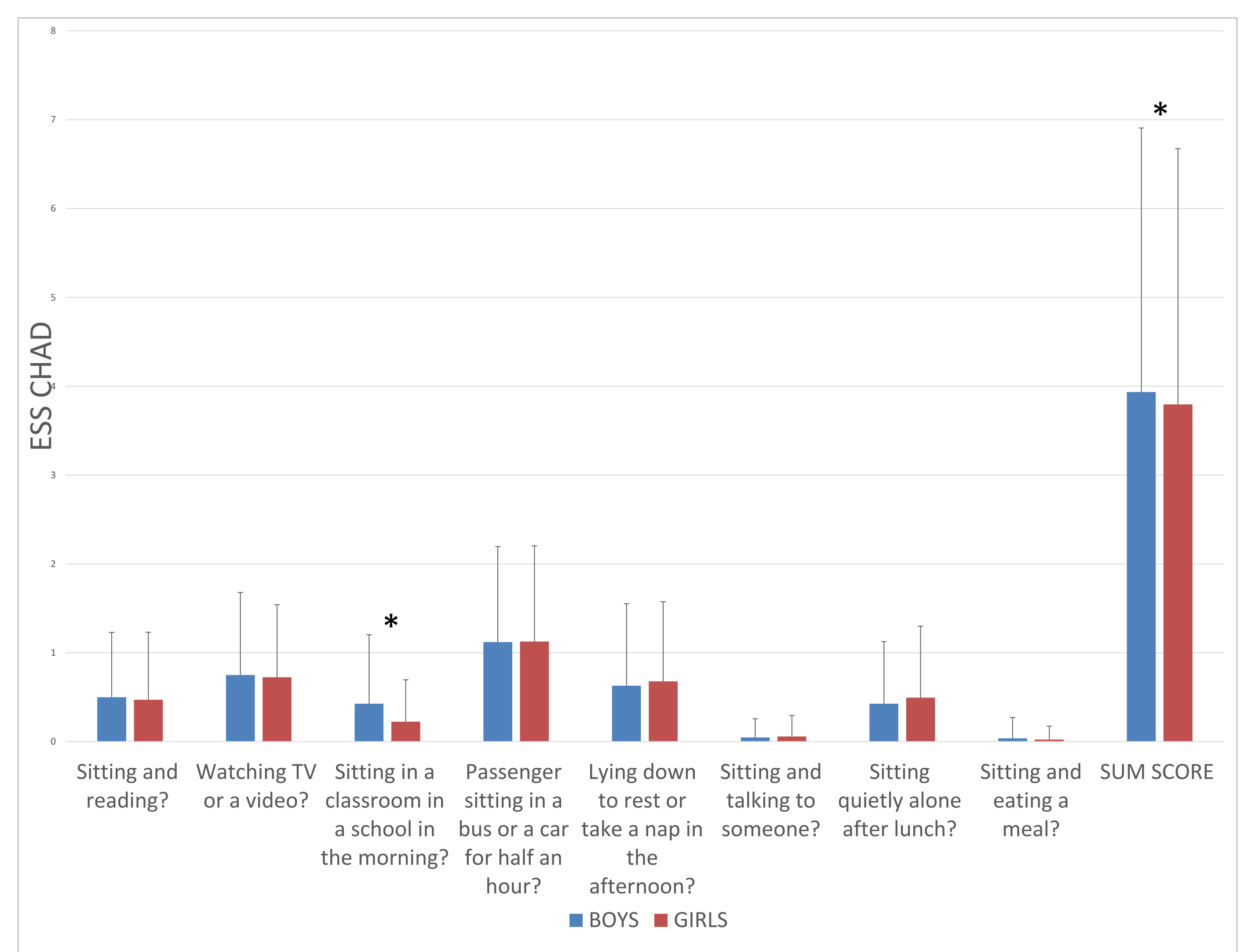


Figure 2. Daytime sleepiness in both genders * $P<0.05$

CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the vulnerability of boys when it comes to screen exposure in pre-school years. It appears that boys may be compensating with an increased amount of daytime sleep.

REFERENCES

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CONTACT

Contact e-mail adress: rpecotic@mefst.hr or ivana.pavlinac@mefst.hr

