



# i-Preschooler Study

## What do preschool children in Singapore use digital media for — entertainment and/or learning?

In this issue, we look at parents' attitudes towards their children's digital media use and whether they were aware of digital media use guidelines for young children.

### What does research tell us?

- Preschool children spend much of their time outside of preschool with their parents. Parents are children's first teachers and are the main gatekeepers for children's digital media use.
- Parents play an important role in shaping children's experiences in using digital media and ensuring their safety and well-being given the rapid evolution and complexity of technology on children's development and wellbeing (Zaman & Mifsud, 2017).
- Family practices, values and beliefs influence how a family communicates, plays and supports children's learning (Plowman et al. 2010).
- It is important that parents modify guidance practices for digital media use as children move from infancy to early childhood (Nikken & Schols, 2015).

#### References:

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### What is the iPreschooler study about?

The study examined the connections between screen time, parents' attitudes towards their child's digital media use and quality of life among preschool children in Singapore. Nearly 4500 parents of children aged 2 to 6 years enrolled in government-subsidised preschools were recruited. An online questionnaire package (SMALLQ® and PedsQL™\*) were sent out to parents through the preschools at 3 time-points each 12 months apart in 2018, 2019 & 2020.

\* SMALLQ® is an acronym for Surveillance of digital Media hAbits in Early childhood Questionnaire, c/o Professor Michael Chia and PedsQL™ is an acronym for Pediatric Quality of Life, c/o J. W. Varni (1998).

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### What did we find?

Findings are based on parent-reported survey responses collected in 2018.

1

The two most frequently used devices by preschool children were television (5-6 times a week) and mobile devices (3-4 times a week).



2

Parent media use was positively associated with child media use.  
More than 50% of time spent on digital media by children were unaccompanied by adults.

On a weekday,

34%

of parents had shared time  
with children in digital media.

On a weekend,

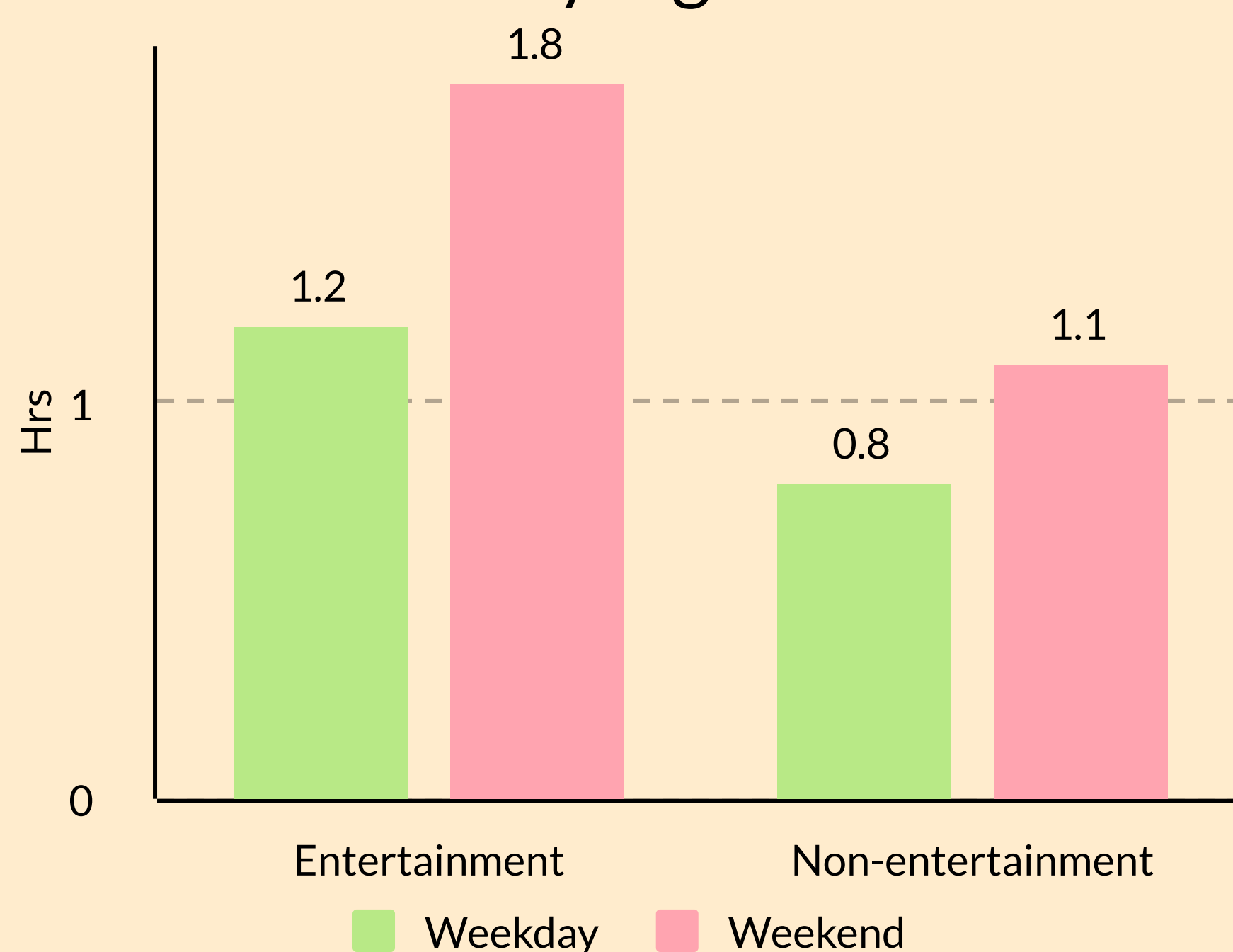
43%

of parents had shared time  
with children in digital media.

3

Outside of school, children spent significantly more time using digital media for entertainment than for learning, communicating with relatives, or creating media content.

Children's daily digital media use



60%

OF DAILY  
SCREEN TIME

is spent on  
entertainment  
on a weekday.

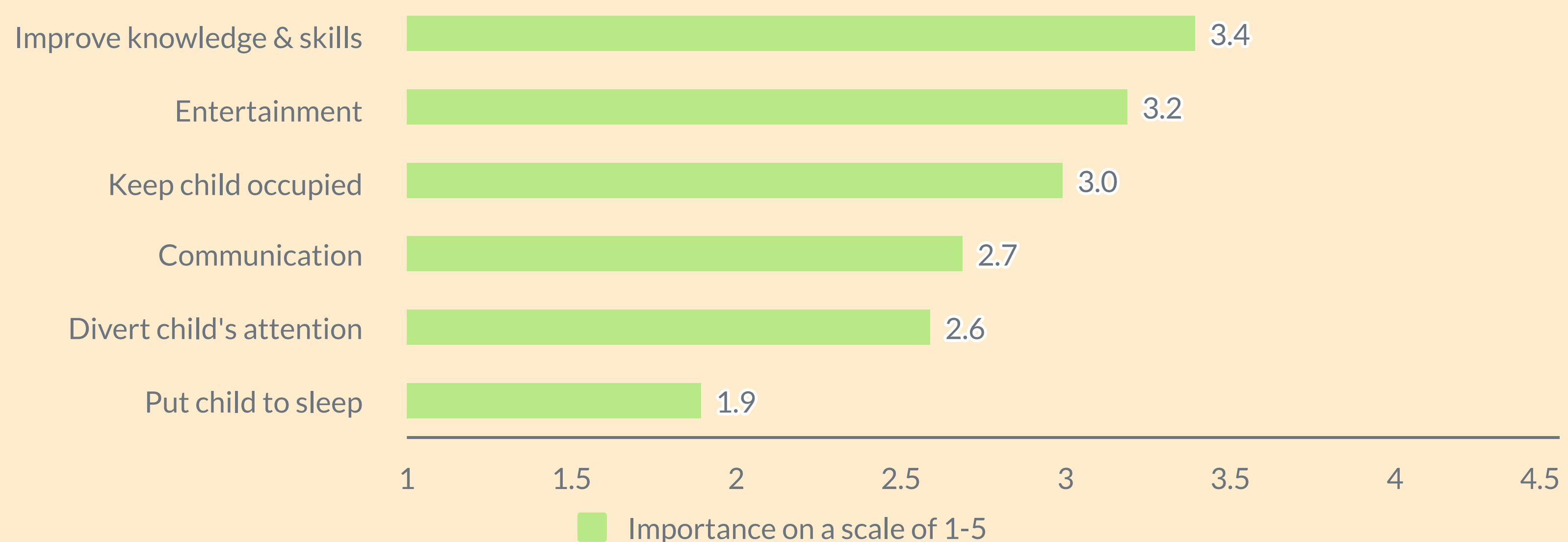
63%

OF DAILY  
SCREEN TIME

is spent on  
entertainment  
on a weekend.

4

Parents rated learning as the most important among the affordances of digital media. However, finding #3 above shows that children spent more time using digital media for entertainment than for learning.



5

Children whose parents were aware of and implementing digital media guidelines spent less time on digital media than those who were not aware or not keeping to the digital media guidelines.



# What does it mean for teaching and learning?

Teachers should:

- Foster close partnerships with parents on appropriate digital media use for children, such as providing information on the educational use of digital media and encouraging non-screen parent-child activities.
- Continue to role model and inculcate in children positive attitudes and behaviours towards the use of digital media (e.g., avoiding passive viewing, ensuring good posture when using digital media).
- Share useful digital media parenting resources such as:

<https://www.kkh.com.sg/news/announcements/singapore-integrated-24-hour-activity-guidelines-for-children-under-seven-years-launched>

<https://thechild.sg/resources-publications/>

