

## Translating Research Essay: Self-Regulation

Mia Koch

For this essay, I reviewed an article from *Discover Magazine* titled “Calming Kids with Electronics May Effect Emotion Regulation Skills” by Carla Delgado. The article begins with a small anecdote about a mother calming her child with an iPad to pacify a grocery store tantrum. Delgado (2023) states that a concerning number of parents use technology to “calm” or “prevent” disruptive emotion regulation episodes. The author argues that providing technology to replace emotion regulation strategies is counterproductive and thus does not help develop beneficial and developmentally appropriate self-regulatory skills. The article includes two sources: a peer-reviewed paper from the *Journal of American Medicine* (JAMA) and a peer-reviewed article from *Computers in Human Behavior*. The author concludes with an integrative solution to electronics and emotion regulation.

The *JAMA* article (Radesky et al., 2023) was a longitudinal design that included 422 parents and their children aged 3-5. Data was collected to measure parental use of devices for calming measures, child executive function ability, and child emotional reactivity level. The authors administered the web-based surveys at three separate times: baseline (0 months), three months, and six months. Radesky et al. (2023) found that over time, parents increased the number of times they used a device to calm their child. The reason for increased device use may be because the parents and children needed to gain more experience practicing emotion regulation skills and thus needed to learn how to implement other strategies. Radesky et al. (2023) state that there are sex differences in emotion regulation as children develop. For example, using a device to help children self-regulate was associated with decreased executive function skills and higher emotional reactivity, especially in boys with higher temperamental

surgency (Radesky et al.,2023). Lastly, there was an association between emotional reactivity/surgency and using technology for calming purposes. Radesky et al. (2023) argue that more scaffolding and emotion regulation competency are needed but are often challenging to implement. Delgado (2023) correctly interpreted this article in that using technology to regulate is not beneficial for children.

The article from *Computers in Human Behavior* (Chen et al., 2023) included a sample size of 5,412 parents with kindergarten-aged children in China who were classified as medium-to-low SES. The one-time online survey consisted of questions regarding parenting self-efficacy, child screen time activities versus non-screen time activities (e.g., reading, playing outside, etc.), and the number of times parents read to their children. Results concluded that parents who rated themselves as having lower self-efficacy (also of lower education, SES status) were more likely to use technology instead of other engaging activities that encouraged literacy (e.g., reading.) Parents who had higher self-efficacy ratings not only exposed their children to more books but also engaged in more home literacy practices compared to parents with lower self-efficacy ratings. Although this article provided information about potential parental uses of screens for their children, it needed to provide insight into child self-regulation practices or parent facilitation of these practices. The article provided one explanation for why parents might use screens (e.g., low self-efficacy) but not in the relationship of self-regulation.

In sum, the article posted in *JAMA* (Radesky et al., 2022) provided excellent supporting evidence for this article. However, the article from *Computers in Human Behavior* (Chen et al., 2023) needed to provide high-quality supporting evidence. Chen et al., 2023 primarily focused on technology in the place of parental literacy activities and self-efficacy versus child self-

regulation and the use of technology. For this news article to provide the best supporting evidence, it should replace the Chen et al. (2023) article with a relevant article on self-regulation.

## References

- Chen, C., Chen, S., Wen, P., & Snow, C. E. (2020). Are screen devices soothing children or soothing parents? Investigating the relationships among children's exposure to different types of screen media, parental efficacy and home literacy practices. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *112*, 106-462. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106462>
- Delgado, C. (2023, January 26). *Calming kids with electronics may affect emotion regulation skills*. Discovery. <https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/calming-kids-with-electronics-may-affect-emotion-regulation-skills>
- Radesky, J. S., Kaciroti, N., Weeks, H. M., Schaller, A., & Miller, A. L. (2023). Longitudinal associations between use of mobile devices and emotional reactivity and executive functioning in children aged 3 to 5 years. *Journal of American Medical Association*, *177*(1), 62-70. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.4793