Institut für Didaktik der Demokratie

Leibniz Universität Hannover

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STEPin – Supporting parents to deal with the excessive online time and habits of their children: a prevention and intervention programme for all

National Monitoring Report

IO1–A2-1

Developed by:

Institut für Didaktik der Demokratie

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State of the Art in the field of IAB – Germany

A) Legal framework

The main focus of this category is on policies/laws that address increasing Internet addiction and abuse among children and young adults. The chapter includes a brief description of legislative developments in each country, a brief explanation of key laws, a list of key pieces of legislation and funding mechanisms, and initiatives developed.

General Information from the Federal Ministry of Health:

It is hard to imagine our world today without the Internet. For more than ten years, excessive computer and especially Internet use has also been observed, which has been compared to an addiction disorder. This is sometimes referred to as online or media addiction, but also as pathological Internet use. While media addiction also includes other media, online addiction focuses on the use of the Internet. Online computer game addiction, i.e. addiction to online games offered and played on the Internet, plays a particularly large role in this context. These games have a high addiction potential due to various factors inherent in the game (such as reward systems and integration into a social player network). According to a recent study by the University of Lübeck, however, the use of virtual social networks also contains a comparable addiction potential Recent epidemiological studies show that men and women are affected almost equally frequently. However, there are clear gender differences in the type of Internet use: according to these studies, 77.1 percent of 14- to 24-year-old Internet-using women mainly use social networks and only 7.2 percent mainly use online computer games, while 64.8 percent of Internet-using men mainly use online computer games and 33.6 percent use social networks. Although women and men are almost equally likely to have Internet-related disorders, significantly more males use the now diverse counseling and treatment services.

Internet and computer game addiction:

https://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/themen/suchtstoffe-und-suchtformen/computerspiel-und-internetabhaengigkeit/

Various terms such as "computer game addiction," "pathological Internet use," and "Internet addiction" are used to describe behaviors that exhibit many of the characteristics of addiction or dependence. According to the current state of scientific knowledge, the newly researched disorders in the area of computer game and Internet use are classified as non-substance-related addictions (behavioral addictions). For example, those affected no longer have their use of the Internet and computer games under control, they become excessively preoccupied with them in their thoughts, feel restless or irritable when they cannot use these offerings, or they neglect other important life tasks because of computer gaming or Internet use. While for the area of computer gaming there is widespread agreement that there are clear parallels to addictive behavior, it is currently not yet clear whether other Internet-related behaviors - in particular the excessive use of social networks should be mentioned here - can also be classified as behavioral addictions. An important step in clarifying when computer game use has disease value was taken in 2013 by the expert panel for the fifth revision of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Because evidence of disorders with disease value exists primarily in the area of pathological computer game use, the research diagnosis was limited to this and named Internet Gaming Disorder.

Legal situation in Germany:

JuSchG Jugendschutzgesetz

https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/juschg/BJNR273000002.html

Date of execution: 23.07.2002

Full Citation:

"Protection of Minors Act of July 23, 2002 (BGBl. I S. 2730), as last amended by Article 2 of the Act of October 22, 2020 (BGBl. I S. 2229)."

Status: Last amended by Art. 2 G v. 22.10.2020 I 2229.

Protection of minors on the Internet: What does the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media regulate?

https://www.bussgeldkatalog.net/jugendschutz-internet/

In Germany, the protection of minors on the Internet is governed by the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV). This treaty was concluded in 2003 between all the German federal states and contains provisions intended to protect children and young people from harmful offerings in the media and broadcasting.

The Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) monitors compliance with the regulations on the protection of minors and children on the Internet set out in the treaty.

However, this agreement only applies to operators of German websites. This means that around ten percent of the websites that can be accessed from Germany are affected.

Strengthening the law for the protection of minors

https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/jugendschutz-internet-1798644

https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/presse/pressemitteilungen/kabinett-beschliesst-neues-jugendschutzgesetz-161194

The new Youth Protection Act creates:

- Protection of children and young people from interaction risks such as bullying, sexual sexual harassment or cost traps
- Orientation for parents, professionals and young people through uniform age labels
- Enforcement of the regulations also against foreign providers that children and young people

use particularly frequently

In addition, the current Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Young People will be expanded into a modern Federal Agency for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Media. The Federal Agency will be responsible for ensuring that the platforms covered by the law meet their systemic precautionary obligations (e.g., safe default settings, complaint and help system). It is also to punish violations against foreign providers. The federal agency will create clear structures for the protection of children and young people in the media. The states remain responsible for content-related measures in individual cases, while the federal government focuses on the mass phenomenon of interaction risks and systemic precautions.

Listing of important initiatives:

1.Ins Netz gehen:

https://www.ins-netz-gehen.de/

“Ins Netz gehen” is an initiative of the German Federal Center for Health Education (BZH) that focuses on balanced media use. It is intended to provide food for thought on the subject of digital media and media addiction. The content is intended to help users find the right way to deal with digital media offerings and develop their own media skills. The users should above all question their own usage behavior and learn to critically assess it themselves, so that risks can possibly be identified themselves and emerging problems with digital media or even media addiction can be discovered at an early stage.

2. family.friends.followers

https://www.drogenbeauftragte.de/familiefreundefollower/

Is a campaign of the Federal Government Commissioner on Narcotic Drugs. When it comes to using digital media, people are increasingly crossing the line into a healthy use of digital media. That's why the campaign is trying to strengthen media skills and the conscious use of smartphones and the like, especially among children and young people. The Drug Commissioner's campaign "Family.Friends.Followers. Information materials, videos and brochures are available free of charge.

3. media addiction Listing of all offers from the Federal Agency for Civic Education

https://www.bpb.de/lernen/digitale-bildung/medienpaedagogik/212682/medienabhaengigkeit

4. computer addiction help

https://www.computersuchthilfe.info/

The DAK-Gesundheit has developed a new online contact point for media addiction together with the Computersuchthilfe Hamburg. Funded by the Federal Ministry of Health. This site is aimed at people with excessive media use and their relatives. The special concern of this website is to provide scientifically based information on problematic and pathological use of games and social media. The aim is to support those affected on their way to carefree use of smartphones, computers, consoles and/or tablets and to counteract the serious consequences associated with unhealthy media consumption. Published by the German Center for Addiction Issues in Childhood and Adolescence (DZSKJ). Funded by the Federal Ministry of Health and the DAK health insurance fund.

5. klicksafe initiative

https://www.klicksafe.de/

The "klicksafe" initiative has been promoting safe use of the Internet and new media since 2004 on behalf of the European Commission. The focus is primarily on children and young people. Since they are often unaware of the dangers that can lurk on the World Wide Web.

6. jugendschutz.net.

https://www.jugendschutz.net/ueber-jugendschutznet/#:~:text=jugendschutz.net%20is%20the%20common,children%20and%20youth%20on%20the%20Internet.&text=Funded%20by,%2C%20seniors%20women%20and%20youth.

Jugendschutz.net is the joint competence center of the federal and state governments for the protection of children and young people on the Internet. The youth ministries founded jugendschutz.net in 1997. Since 2003, the center has been linked to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) and researches dangers and risks in youth-related services. It calls on providers and operators to design their offerings in such a way that children and young people can use them without worry. jugendschutz.net is financed by the supreme state youth authorities, the state media authorities and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Funding mechanisms:

Government funding for youth protection on the Internet can come from the supreme state youth authorities, the state media authorities, the Federal Center for Health Education, the Federal Center for Political Education, and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth or the Federal Ministry of Health.

Funding basis and Legal basis:

Laws and state treaties

The German constitution assigns a high priority to the protection of minors. The legal basis is provided by two sets of regulations that have been in force since April 1, 2003: the Youth Protection Act (JuSchG) from the federal government and the Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Human Dignity and the Protection of Minors in Broadcasting and Telemedia (Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in Broadcasting and Telemedia - JMStV) from the federal states. The JMStV brings broadcasting and telemedia together under one supervisory umbrella and follows the principle of regulated self-regulation. The fundamental premises of youth media protection in all statutory regulatory frameworks are regulations designed to ensure that children and young people either have no access at all to certain media content, or are given access only in accordance with the various age groups.

B) Key social actors - the role of families and parents.

Partners should identify national stakeholders such as governmental organizations, social partner involvement, NGOs, and provide a brief description of the key social actors in their country. As the focus is on the role of parents and families, parent associations and other relevant stakeholders should be included.

List governmental organizations:

- Federal Ministry of Health
- Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
- Federal and state centers for political education
- Federal Office for Information Security
- Federal Center for Health Education
- The Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) https://www.kjm-online.de/
- Federal Working Group of State Youth Welfare Offices

http://www.bagljae.de/content/landesjugendaemter/kontakt-ljae/

- Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Young Persons (BPjM) https://www.bundespruefstelle.de/
- State Agency for the Protection of Minors in Lower Saxony https://www.jugendschutz-niedersachsen.de/

Listing of associations:

- Federal Association of Child Protection Centers e.V.
- Federal Association of the Service Industry e.V. (BDWi)
- German Family Association e.V.
- German Child Protection Association e.V. (DKSB)
- German Philologists' Association e.V. (DPhV)
- ECPAT Germany e.V.

- Innocence in Danger e.V.
- Interessenverband des Video- und Medienfachhandels in Deutschland e.V. (IVD)
- Verband Bildung und Erziehung e.V. (VBE)
- VPK - Bundesverband privater Träger der freien Kinder-, Jugend- und Sozialhilfe e.V. (Federal Association of Private Sponsors of Children, Youth and Social Aid)
- Bavarian Youth Ring https://www.bjr.de/ueber-uns.html
- German Child Protection Association e.V.
- German Children's Fund
- The media institutions

Listing of parents' associations:

- Lower Saxony Parents' Council https://www.ler-nds.de/Ueber-uns/
- Aktion Jugendschutz Bayern Landesarbeitsstelle Bayern e.V. https://bayern.jugendschutz.de/

C) Case studies - Scientific research

Studies by the Federal Center for Health on the subject of media and computer addiction

https://www.bzga.de/aktuelles/2020-12-15-neue-bzga-studiendaten-zur-computerspiel-und-internetnutzung/

https://www.bzga.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/studien/Drogenaffinitaet_Jugendlicher_2019_Teilband_Computerspiele_u_Internet.pdf

The BZgA study "The drug affinity of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany 2019 sub-band computer games and internet". The representative survey was conducted between April and June 2019 among 7,000 young people aged 12 to 25.

The data confirms that for teenagers and young adults, internet use continues to focus on communication and entertainment. 12- to 17-year-olds use computer games and the Internet for an

average of 22.8 hours per week and 18- to 25-year-olds for an average of 23.6 hours per week privately - i.e., not for school, study or work.

In the period from 2015 to 2019, the proportion of 12- to 17-year-olds and 18- to 25-year-olds with problematic Internet use increased again. It increased from 21.7 percent in 2015 to 30.4 percent in 2019 for adolescents and from 15.2 percent in 2015 to 23.0 percent in 2019 for young adults.

Internet-related disorders occur in 7.6 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds in 2019. In 2015, this figure was 5.7 percent. They currently occur among 4.1 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds and were 2.6 percent among this age group in 2015.

Among 12- to 17-year-old female adolescents and 18- to 25-year-old young women, Internet-related disorder and problematic use, respectively, are slightly more prevalent in 2019 than among male adolescents and young men of corresponding ages.

The situation during the corona virus pandemic in 2020 was not part of the survey period of this study and is not represented in.

Studies of the German Center for Addiction in Childhood and Adolescence (DZSKJ) University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf

https://www.computersuchthilfe.info/unsere-studien

Study 1: "Counseling and treatment services for pathological Internet use in Germany".

In 2009, a study funded by the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) conducted a survey that revealed initial findings on the structure of offerings for counseling and treatment of media addiction in health care and addiction support facilities in Germany, as well as their need for development (Petersen & Thomasius, 2010). Addressee-specific information from this study is available online at www.computersuchthilfe.info.

Study 2: "Excessive Internet Use in Families" (EXIF).

The study was conducted in cooperation with the Department of Media Education and Aesthetic Education at the Faculty of Education (University of Hamburg) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). The data collection was carried out by a market research institute directly in families nationwide. The central questions related to the frequency of problematic Internet use in adolescence and correlations with family aspects. A (quota) sample of 1744 family dyads (one adolescent each in the age range of 14 to 17 years and one associated parent) representative for Germany was examined with face-to-face interviews. A total of 3.2% of youth exhibited problematic Internet use. There were also correlations between generally poorer family functionality and higher expression for problematic Internet use. Thus, family aspects seem to play an important role for problematic Internet use in adolescence.

Study 3: "Problematic Internet use in adolescence from the parents' perspective".

The study was funded by the statutory health insurance company DAK-Gesundheit. Data was collected nationwide by telephone by a market and opinion research institute. The central questions were related to the prevalence of problematic Internet use in adolescence according to the parents' assessment and which family aspects are associated with it from the parents' point of view. A sample of 1000 parents (living with a child or adolescent between twelve and seventeen years of age) representative for Germany was surveyed. The participants of this study were interviewed by telephone. According to the parents' assessment, 4.7% of the twelve- to seventeen-year-old children and adolescents showed problematic Internet use.

Study 4: "Prevalence of Internet Gaming Disorder in a Population-Representative Sample of 12- to 25-Year-Olds."

The study was funded by the statutory health insurance company DAK-Gesundheit. The data collection (online survey) was conducted nationwide by a market and opinion research institute. The central questions related to the frequency of the new DSM-5 research diagnosis "Internet Gaming Disorder" (problematic use of online and offline computer games) among 12- to 25-year-olds in Germany and the relationship between these behavior patterns and psycho-social aspects. A sample of a total of

1531 persons between 12 and 25 years of age, representative for Germany, was studied. There was a prevalence of 5.7% for the new diagnosis of Internet Gaming Disorder in the age group studied (males were significantly more affected than females). Statistically significant associations were found between Internet Gaming Disorder and male gender, lower age, and neglect of social contacts due to computer game use.

Study 5: "WhatsApp, Instagram and Co. - social media is so addictive".

file:///C:/Users/Alexa/Downloads/2017%20WhatsApp,%20Instagram%20und%20Co.%20-%20so%20s%C3%BCchtig%20macht%20Social%20Media%20Ergebnisbericht.pdf

The study was supported with funds from the statutory health insurance company DAK-Gesundheit. The data collection (online survey) was conducted nationwide by a market and opinion research institute. The intensity of use as well as the effects of social media associated with use among children and adolescents aged twelve to seventeen were investigated. These aspects of media use were surveyed for the first time using this sample (N=1001), which is representative of Germany. Social media included messenger services such as Whats App or Snapchat, social networking sites such as Facebook or Instagram, and forums and blogs or web blogs. A key finding of the study is that the vast majority (85%) of children and young people aged twelve to seventeen actively use social media every day. Daily usage averages about three hours (166 minutes) across all age groups surveyed. Children and teens spend the most time using Whats App (66%), followed by Instagram (14%) and Snapchat (9%). In the study, 2.6% of twelve- to seventeen-year-old children and adolescents meet the criteria for social media disorder. According to this survey, one in three (34%) use social media to avoid thinking about unpleasant things. The use also takes place secretly in 14% of the children and adolescents. In the total sample, 8.2% of children and adolescents additionally show depressive symptomatology. In the group of those meeting the criteria for social media disorder, depressive symptoms were reported by one in three.

Study 6: "Money for games - when computer games become gambling"

file:///C:/Users/Alexa/Downloads/2019%20Geld%20f%C3%BCr%20Games%20Ergebnisbericht.pdf

The study was supported with funds from the statutory health insurance company DAK-Gesundheit. The data collection (online survey) was conducted nationwide by a market and opinion research institute. The central questions of this study were as follows: How much money do young people in Germany spend on the purchase of computer games and their design? What addiction risk do young people who regularly use computer games show? How do regular users with inconspicuous consumption differ from those with risky or dependent consumption? A representative sample of 1000 children and adolescents between the ages of twelve and seventeen was surveyed using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATIs). During the computer-assisted telephone interviews, the children and adolescents were asked about their computer gaming behavior.72.5% of children and adolescents between the ages of twelve and seventeen play computer games at least once a week. 15.4% of regular gamers (N=112) show risky or pathological gaming behavior in terms of a computer gaming disorder. They are more likely to report emotional and behavioral problems than inconspicuous gamers. More than half (52%) of regular gamers (89% boys) spent money on purchasing games or on extras in the six months prior to the survey (N=380). The average expenditure was 110.65 Euro.

Study 7: "Gaming, Social Media & Corona"

file:///C:/Users/Alexa/Downloads/2020%20Mediensucht%202020%20Gaming%20und%20Social%20Media%20in%20Zeiten%20von%20Corona%20Ergebnisbericht.pdf

The study was supported with funds from the statutory health insurance company DAK-Gesundheit. Between September 13 and 17, 2019, 10- to 17-year-old children and adolescents and one parent each from 1221 representative selected German households were surveyed about their use of games and social media via an online questionnaire by Forsa Politik- und Sozialforschung GmbH. An interim survey was conducted one month after the start of the German lock down in the period from April 20 to 30, 2020. For this purpose, the same households were contacted as in September 2019. The central questions of the study were:

- 1. What was the prevalence of risky and pathological use of digital games or social media

among children and adolescents according to the new WHO criteria before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 2) What are the motivations for use cited by children and adolescents under the lock down?
- 3) To what extent have usage times changed as a result of the lock down?
- 4) What media rules are established in German households?

Has there been a change as a result of the lock down? 2.7% of children and adolescents met the ICD-11 criteria of a gaming disorder (GD), i.e., pathological computer gaming behavior with regard to the previous 12 months (N=33), when surveyed in September 2019. The prevalence of pathological social media use was 3.2% (N=38). Nearly all children and adolescents surveyed (89%) reported playing digital games regularly in the past month to combat boredom. Social media was also used by the vast majority of child and adolescent users to combat boredom (86%). 89% report using it to maintain their social contacts. Both during the week and on weekends and vacations, individual daily digital game use time increased statistically significantly under lock down to a mean of 138.6 minutes during the week and 193.1 minutes on weekends ($p<0.001$). Both during the week (192.9 minutes) and on weekends (241.0 minutes), daily social media use increased statistically significantly under the lock down ($p<0.001$). Among parents, 37% reported rules about local digital device use in September and 31% in April. Regarding access methods, 53% of parents reported existing rules at the first measurement time point and 51% at the second measurement time point. According to parents, 67% (September) and 64% (April) of households had rules on content use. Consistent implementation was confirmed by 70% at the first and 64% at the second survey. Overall, the information on media rules is comparable at both survey time points.

U25 study "Euphoria was yesterday - Teenagers and young adults between happiness and addiction" (DIVSI)

https://www.divsi.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DIVSI-U25-Studie-euphorie.pdf

On November 19, Federal Minister for Youth Franziska Giffey and the German Institute for Trust and Security on the Internet (DIVSI) jointly launched the representative U25 study "Euphoria was yesterday - Teenagers and young adults between happiness and addiction."

Results of the U25 study:

For the vast majority of respondents, digital infrastructures and offerings are indispensable because they significantly facilitate access to information, speed up formerly tedious processes and inspire new things. 68 percent can no longer imagine life without the Internet (2014: 73 percent). From young people's point of view, the net is one thing above all: practical; 69 percent even say it makes them happy.

However, only 30 percent of the young generation still believe in the security of personal data on the Internet. A comparison with the study results from 2014 shows that young people today perceive significantly more risks when using the Internet than they did four years ago.

Many young people are also noticing a strong "brutalization" of manners online and are behaving with corresponding caution and restraint. Two-thirds of 14- to 24-year-olds perceive the Internet as a space in which those who express themselves must expect to be insulted or insulted. For 38 percent, this perceived "culture of insults" is a reason to refrain from expressing their own opinions on the Internet.

Needs and Gaps of Parents and Children and Adult Educators - Germany

This part of the report will provide an overview of the results collected through online questionnaires, targeting adult educators and parents/ children in order to identify their needs and gaps in terms of IAB.

The Needs of Adult Educators

A total of 5 adult educators took part in this research, with experience in the field of adult education from 4 – 30 years.

Target groups: All respondents work either directly (2) or indirectly (3) with parents as target groups. In the direct work, they offer adult education programmes for parents. Others reach parents indirectly by training adult educators who then target parents. In addition to these target groups, two of the interviewees work with children and young people and two stated that they also address teachers.

Knowledge regarding IAB: 80 percent of the respondents have had experience with IAB in seminars and have conducted seminars on this topic themselves.

The respondents describe their experiences from the seminars as follows:

- There is a great interest in participating in seminars on this topic among parents and teachers.
- Discussing observations of children who show excessive IAB; courses enable a change of perspective -> children and adolescents are put in the focus.
- Central contents were: How can addictive behaviour be recognised? When is internet use excessive or unhealthy? How could one take action against it?
- Further contents: How does such behaviour arise? What role do social media play in this? -> The reasons and mechanisms that can lead to problematic behaviour should be analysed.

Four respondents have themselves offered seminars on the topic of problematic internet behaviour. Some of these persons have also participated in such events as participants. One person has neither led nor participated in a seminar.

In terms of their knowledge regarding IAB, two persons describe it as very good. Two people would describe it as rather basic. One person says that they could know more about the topic.

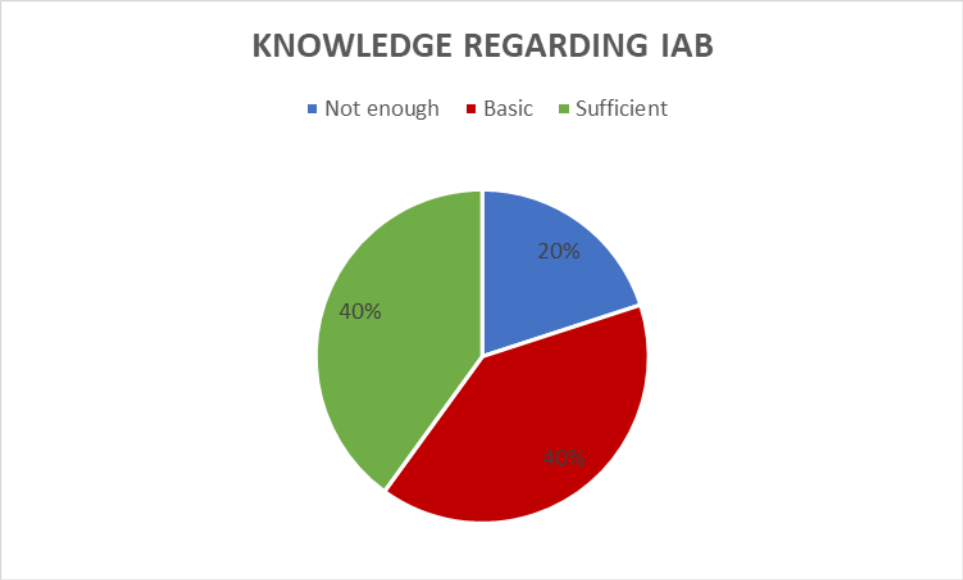


Figure 1: Adult Educators Knowledge regarding IAB

The willingness of the respondents to participate in training events on the topic of IAB is generally strong. Two people have already participated in such events and would participate again. One person would attend to learn about new findings and the state of research. Another person would join in if there was a case of IAB in their immediate personal environment.

Moreover, adult educators raised the difficulties that according to them educators encounter when dealing with this subject. For example:

- Adults should understand the young people's view of life without condemning them for addictive behaviour; developing a differentiated perspective: Not every enthusiasm is an addiction. Media addiction is not the media's fault, but a consequence of social conditions.
- How can good and transparent rules be established to prevent unhealthy media behaviour? (2)
- Promote digital literacy among young people and parents to prevent addiction.
- Constant availability of addictive media for children
- Creating online addiction is part of a business model behind which there is enormous economic power. The addiction factor is deliberately reinforced.

- How should parents behave as role models in dealing with digital media?

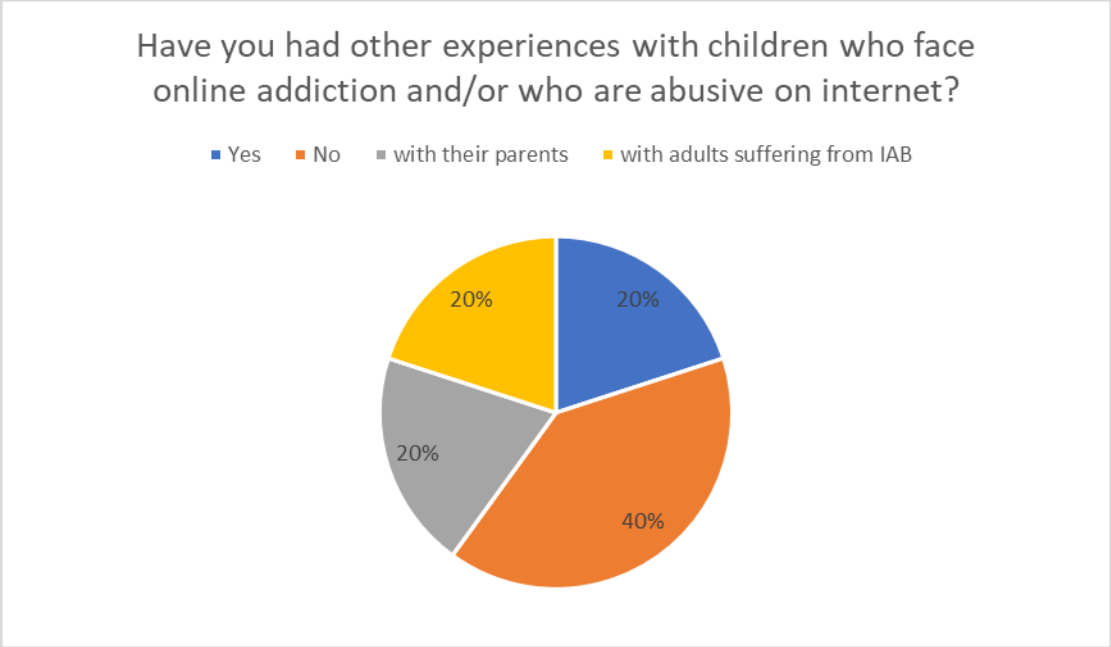


Figure 2: Experiences with children who face online addiction

If the survey respondents had the chance to make an effect on decisions in their own institution, they would suggest the following things:

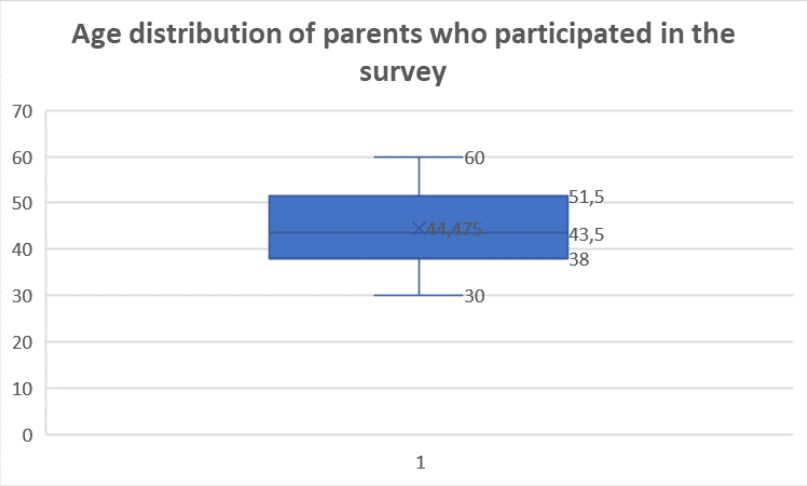
- The issue of IAB deserves more attention. There should be more courses with professional guidance on this matter.
- Further training for educators and psychologists in the field of social work and with regard to active media education (2)

One person does not see a need for any modification.

Notes: One respondent makes it clear in the remarks that online addiction affects adults as well as children. Therefore, it is not necessary to make a distinction between children and adults when it comes to this issue.

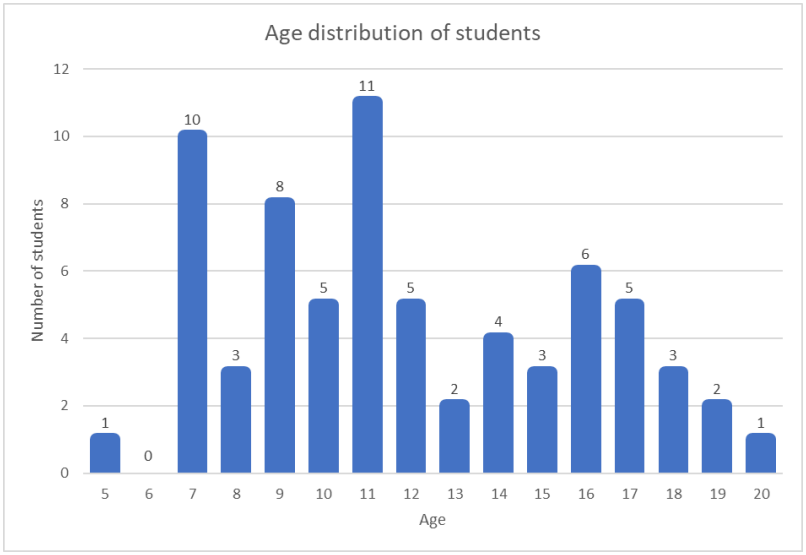
The Needs of Parents/ Children

To identify the needs of parents and those of their children, 40 parents took part in this survey. The age distribution of the parents is as follows:

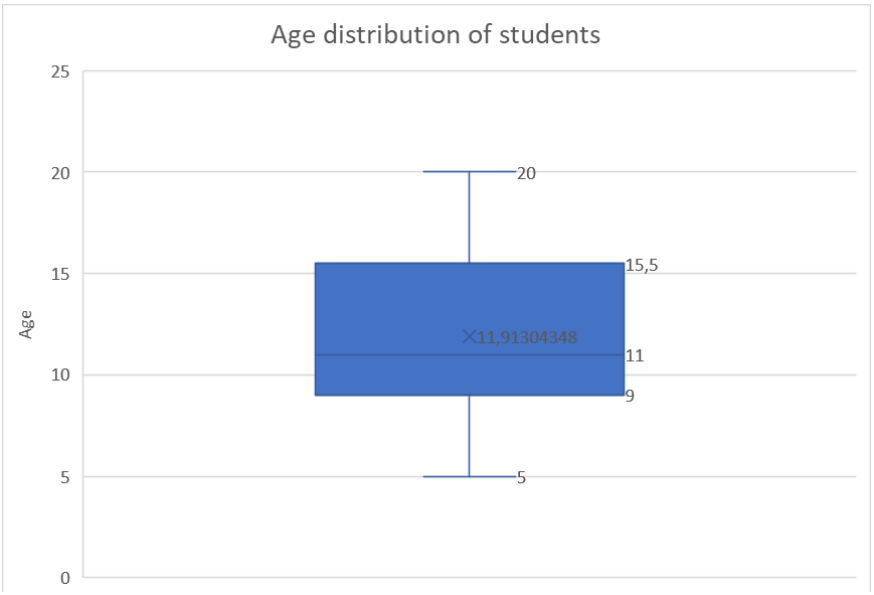


The youngest parent is 30 years old. The oldest parent is 60 years old. On average, the respondents are about 44.5 years old.

The respondents have between one and three children of school age. The statements of the interviewees refer to a total of 71 school children. The age distribution of the school children is as follows:



On average, the respondents' children were about 12 years old, as the following graph shows:



With regard to the ways in which students can access the Internet, different answers are given. These can be grouped into the following four main categories:

	Access possibilities to the internet from a technical point of view	**Possibilities of accessing the Internet from a pedagogical point of view**
Not limited	Good technical conditions (internet speed, devices etc)	Unrestricted use possible, no rules
Limited	Limited technical possibilities due to poor internet connection or lack of equipment	Precise regulations with regard to time of use and content

Some parents refer in their answers either to the pedagogical point of view or to the technical point of view regarding access to the internet. Some of the parents also include both dimensions.

22 parents and thus 55 percent of the respondents would describe their children's access possibilities as not limited. In part, however, these parents refer exclusively to the technical aspect in their answers.

Of the remaining 18 parents, 2 respondents attribute the limitations to their own technical circumstances: lack of devices or poor internet connection because they live in a rural area. The other 16 parents have clear rules for internet use, which explains the restricted access.

In addition to these categories, it can be stated that parents with several children allow use in different ways according to their children's age. Furthermore, some parents indicated that they have restricted technical use through certain software programmes. Thus, only limited websites can be visited.

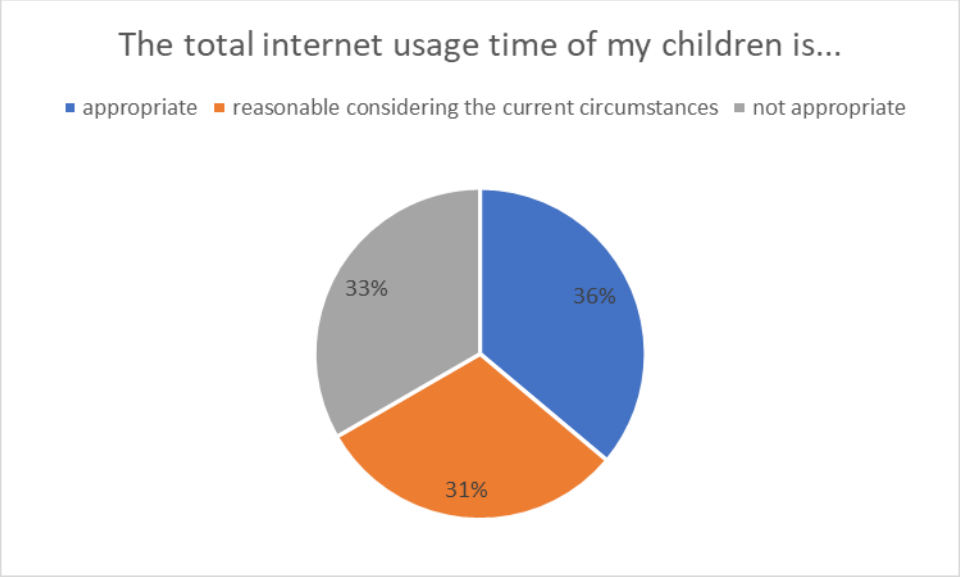
Reasonable online usage time?

With regard to online use, three main tendencies can be discerned from the respondents' answers. One part considers the use to be appropriate and justifies this with the reason that the duration of use is not so long because the time is fixed, for example, in a jointly agreed regulation. The parents have agreed on clear rules or also use programmes to observe usage times, so that they consider the overall usage to be appropriate.

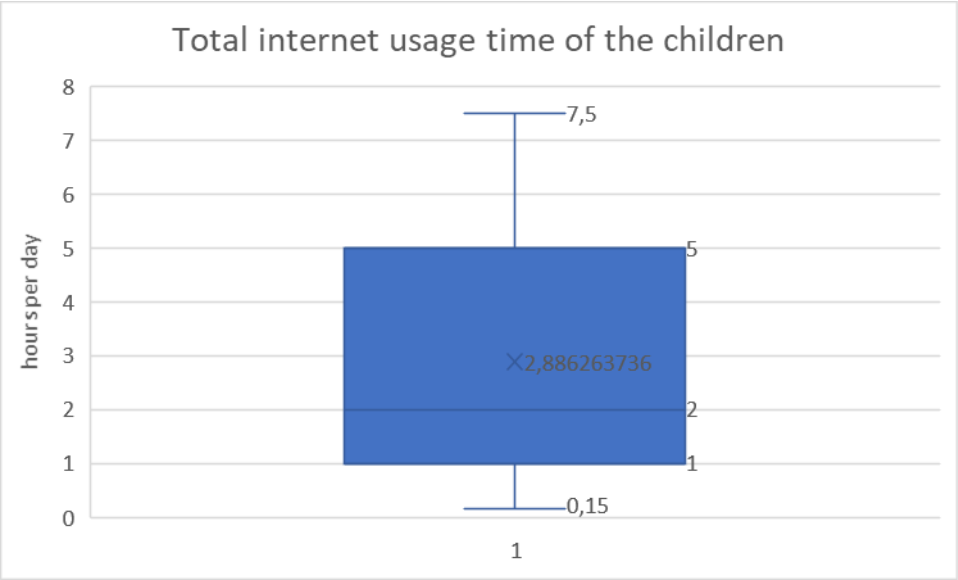
A second group of parents considers the media use time of pupils during the corona pandemic to be appropriate. Because the children do not have the opportunity to pursue their leisure activities or meet friends, this is the preferred alternative. They see it as positive that the children can meet or network with their friends online.

The third group considers the time spent online to be too high. Some parents say that they do not understand the attractiveness of so much online use. They also fear negative effects on students. They are afraid that students will not be able to read texts critically, that they will not learn to comprehend content and that children's behaviour in general will change. According to the parents, a lot depends on the way digital media are used.

The following overview shows the three groups and their percentages of opinion:



How much time do children spend online?

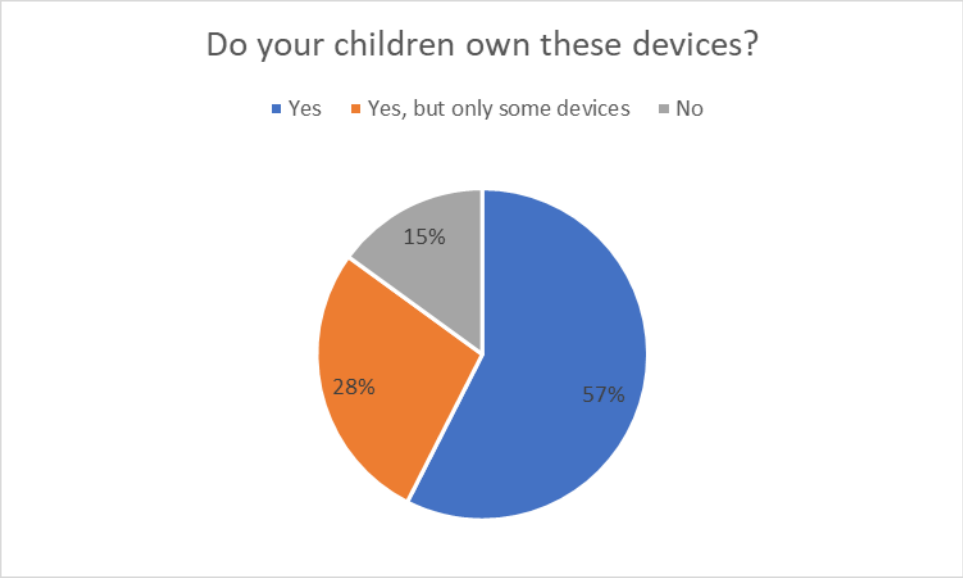


On average, the children of the respondents spend about 3 hours per day on the internet or use media during this time. The graph above shows that the standard deviation of two hours from the mean is quite large. Several parents emphasise that the total usage time has increased due to the pandemic situation. On average, according to parents, students spend 48.5 per cent of their total media use time on schoolwork. The other part of the time they spend on the internet for leisure. In addition, a connection between the time of use and age can be assumed: The older the pupils, the longer they use media or the longer they are allowed to use media.

In regard to the devices they are using to connect to the internet, the following table shows common and less common devices:

Often mentioned	Mobile phones, computer, laptop, tablet
Rarely mentioned	Game consoles, smart speaker, TV

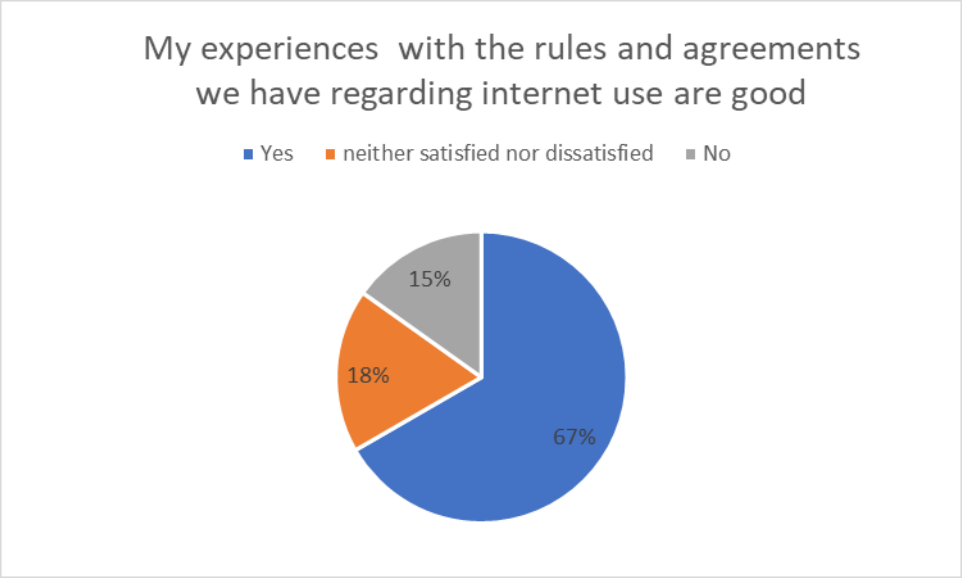
15 percent of parents said that their children do not have their own devices to go online.



More than three fourths of all parents have set rules for their children's internet use. Some parents have only made rules regarding the content, other parents have made rules regarding the time of use. The majority of parents, however, have made rules regarding both content and time of use.

Many parents use certain programmes or apps to control what the children do on the internet. One interviewee emphasises that it is very exhausting to enforce the rules for the children. Others think that the usage time should be balanced with other activities, such as stepping out into the fresh air. The a little less than 25 per cent of parents who have not made any rules justify it this way:

- Children are old enough
- Parents can rely on the children's ability to reason / trust
- The appropriate use of the Internet has been discussed before.
- No possibility of control due to their own working situation



More than two-thirds of the parents surveyed are satisfied with how the rules that have been made are working out in practice. Although there are minor disputes now and then, on the whole the rules work. Many parents describe supporting apps and software as helpful because they only allow the children a certain amount of time and also only allow certain content.

The parents who indicated "no" in this question think that it is difficult to enforce rules. The children would tend to break the rules or try to negotiate them. In addition, these parents would also have difficulties in controlling the rules.

Changes in pupils' internet use in recent times

22 out of 30 parents observe a change and an increase in internet use. However, the parents mainly relate these shifts to the corona pandemic. They say that usage time has increased due to the pandemic, because there are fewer alternative activities and because it is necessary for the school to use more digital media. The change in use, some parents note, has an effect on the students directly: they observe changes in behaviour; perceive that the children are more on edge or depressed; think that an addiction develops very quickly and that the children's use of language changes. In this respect, a part of the parents assesses the increase in online use as worrying, while another part assumes that this is mainly a pandemic effect. On the positive side, some parents observe that it is now easier for children to research things.

Parents who have not noticed any changes say that they are very much oriented towards rules. Since the rules have not changed and the time and content of use remain the same, nothing has changed.

Additionally, the following difficulties/ challenges have been identified by parents in their try to deal or prevent internet abusive behaviours:

- How can we reduce the time children spend on the internet and do more together with them?
- How can clear rules be established? How can parents implement them consistently?
- Controlling rules is exhausting and holds a lot of potential for conflict. Restrictive rules also create the potential for aggression on the part of the children. This puts a stress on the relationship between parents and children.
- How can I deal with it if my own child is addicted to the Internet? How can I prevent my child from becoming addicted to online games?
- How can one take action against the "power of online media"? What good alternatives can be offered?
- How to find a healthy balance between digital and real world?
- When working from home, how can you make sure that your children are not just surfing the internet all the time?
- If you prescribe your child's use, you take away their autonomy and you take on a strong observer role
- How can I as a parent set a good example with regard to online behaviour? How can I justify in an understandable way that I am heavily dependent on digital media for my job, while I forbid the children to do so?

With regard to problematic internet behaviour of children, 11 interviewed persons do not know any strategies how to deal with it. The other parents name the following strategies:

- Do as much as possible together, with family and friends.
- Talk a lot with your children, reflect on their own behaviour with them.
- Devices or certain games may be taken away or blocked for a certain period of time, or children may have to earn the right to use online devices.
- Limit the amount of time children can use devices.

- Set rules that are clear and unambiguous from the beginning and that are followed. Show consistency in following the rules.
- Show interest in what the children are doing on the computer. Talk to the children about what they are doing.
- Negotiate rules together with the children. Trust the children to take responsibility for themselves and see if this works.
- Use software that regulates the duration and content of use.

Finally, all the participants expressed their willingness to learn more about topics related to internet abusive behaviour. Specifically, on topics such as:

- There is a need for educational courses for adults on the topic of IAB.
- Other persons who care for the children should also be made more aware of how much time we spend on which online media and whether this is good.
- How can children be taught that the digital world is not a real world? Support in having conversations with your own children on this topic: How can such a conversation be successful?
- Promoting media literacy at an early age
- Address concrete examples such as internet pornography or bullying at school.
- Keeping up to date with what is currently popular among children and young people and what potential threats and risks are hidden behind it.
- Developing more understanding of what young people do online.

Conclusion

This short report has given an insight into the work of adult educators in Germany and shown in detail the experiences of parents in dealing with children and digital media. The responses show that problematic internet behaviour by children is an issue that many parents are overly concerned about, especially now in pandemic times. Many parents are thinking about the extent to which their children's online use is appropriate. This is exactly what the STEPin project will deal with.