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

KMOP SKOPJE

STEPin

Introduction

This document aims to identify, select and exchange national policies, laws, regulations as well as case-studies, scientific studies, state of the art-work in the fields of internet abusive behaviour, online addiction, gaming etc. as well as the already collected best practices (IO-A1) in the STEPin-partner-countries.

In an initial phase of the project development each partner will carry out a research in his country (includes all partners). LUH (P1) will also develop a methodology of evaluation for the following peer-review of national reports. Hereby, every national report is evaluated by another partner based on criteria described in the methodology.

Analysis of needs and gaps

Partner: *KMOP Skopje, N. Macedonia*

I. Results of the online-survey

Results of the survey with parents

A total of 18 parents of children aged 10 to 18 took part in the survey. The parents' age ranged from 31 to 48 years. Participants shared that they have multiple devices at home with access to internet, including mobile phones, desktop and laptop computers, tablets and smart TVs, with all of them indicating that their child has his/her own device. The majority of the parents described their children's access to internet at home as "addictive", "obsessive", "24/7" and "unlimited", while fewer considered it "adjusted to the child's age and free time" and "limited". There were considerable differences in the amount of time that children spend online, ranging from 2 to 12 hours a day. Most of the parents noted that their children usually dedicate 4-5 hours of their daily online time on school work and studying, while 2-3 on leisure time activities, including games, watching YouTube videos, social media, listening to music, browsing topics they are interested in and communicating with their friends. The majority of the parents think that the time their children spend online is inappropriate and often unproductive. However, some recognize that the social distancing measures imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic have led to increased time online, and as children do not have much choice in spending their leisure time they opt for online activities. Regarding rules/regulations for their children's internet-use, many of the parents use time-limitations, some oversee the content that their children access, while others do not have any restriction or rules of this kind. Many of the parents express their concerns that children's socialisation with their peers mainly takes place online, as well as that the increased internet time leads to lower motivation and interest among children for other types of activities, low concentration level as they are exposed to unprecedented amount of information, lack of communication with the other household members and lack of physical activity. Most of the parents are not familiar with strategies for dealing with their children's excessive online-time, and are interested in improving their knowledge in this field.

Results of the survey with educators

The survey included a total of 10 adult educators of different professions and backgrounds, including project managers, organisers of educational activities, social workers and psychologists, with a professional experience range from five to seventeen years. The surveyed educators have been working with various groups, such as children, youth, marginalised communities, persons with disabilities and elderly, and the majority of them had organized or facilitated educational activities for parents. None of the educators have had any experience with classes or courses related to dealing with online addiction and/or internet-abusive behavior of children, or other experiences with children who face online addiction and/or who are abusive on internet. Some indicated that they have been informing themselves on this topic through reading online sources and watching related documentaries. Most of the educators thought that they are either not sufficiently familiar or moderately familiar with this topic. They pointed out a wide spectrum of challenges in dealing with online addiction and/or internet-abusive behaviour of children, such as the parents' lack of time to dedicate to their children, the lack of alternative activities available to children other than Internet-related ones, the lack of awareness among parents and educators of the need for a proactive approach towards dealing with children's and their own excessive internet use, and the perception that the extended use of technology is simply part of the modern living. All of the survey participants recognized the need for training and educating parents as children's role models, and helping them become more conscious of their own Internet use habits and the way their children engage with the Internet and technology. They also suggested awareness-rising campaigns for the wider public, as well as campaigns tailored to children. All of the participants expressed an interest in attending learning courses about online addiction of children/internet abusive behaviour.

II. Results of research regarding national legislation, studies, main actors & best practices

a) Legislation framework

Problems related to high levels of internet usage, online gaming and gambling among children and young adults are not recognized as a potential public health burden within the national legislative and policy framework in N. Macedonia. As a result, there is lack of prevention and treatment policies and programmes to reduce the health, social and other problems associated with excessive internet use, as well as lack of campaigns and programmes to promote

awareness, education and training amongst children, young people, parents, educators, public health specialists and clinicians. 'No action' policy is considered unsustainable as it may jeopardise the ability of the country to take advantage of the opportunities that new diagnostic tools, treatments, and preventive approaches on internet-use-related addictions seem to offer.[1]

b) Identification of main social actors – the role of families and parents

Multiple stakeholders in the country have a responsibility when it comes to addressing problematic internet use among children and young adults. Parents in particular can help children and young people develop healthy digital lifestyles and prevent problematic internent use. Parents' school councils, and the existing informal and formal associations of parents of children with developmental disabilities can be forums for fostering knowledge and practices exchange. Educators are also among the key social actors who can embrace children's balanced approach to technology and the internet. This important topic should be addressed within the educators' initial training and formal education. Academic and other research institutions and organisations need to conduct more studies—longitudinal, experimental, participatory and qualitative, that will fill in the major knowledge gaps, help to understand the implications of excessive internet use among children and young adults and shape government initiatives and health care and education policies. Non-governmental organisations, especially those working with children, young people, educators and parents have an essential role in the provision of non-formal education and awareness raising. Finally, governmental bodies working in the areas of public health, education and information society (such as the Ministry of Health, the Institute of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education, Ministry of Information Society and Administration) have a responsibility for designing and adopting public policies and programmes which can have far-reaching implications.

c) Case studies – Scientific research

[1] Lopez-Fernandez, O. and Kuss, D. J. (2019). Harmful internet use Part I: Internet addiction and problematic use. Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS) of the European Parliament https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624249/EPRS_STU(2019)624249_EN.pdf [Date accessed: 02.04.2021].

Despite an increasing use of the electronic devices, the internet and gaming platforms, there is lack of country specific comprehensive data on the prevalence of internet addiction and excessive internet use among children and young adults. There are very few studies that address some aspects of children's internet use patterns and habits. In a 2020 survey, conducted by the Children's Embassy "Megjashi", around 80% of children aged 12 to 17 have indicated that they often spend their free time online, either surfing on the internet or on social media.[2] Children themselves think that there is no need for these activities to be forbidden by their parents, but they should be time limited and supervised.[3] While, in the recent HBSC study, overall 9% of the adolescents in the country (aged 11, 13 and 15) were classified as problematic social media users.[4] Problematic use among 13- and 15-year-olds was more common among girls. Problematic social media use is characterized by addictionlike symptoms such as loss of control over one's use of social media at the expense of other important life domains, including relationships with peers and parents, and hobbies.[5] Another study has investigated the psychometric properties of the established Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT) on a Macedonian population of undergraduate students, in which exploratory factor analysis determined the presence of a three factor structure of the IAT - "Withdrawal and social problems", "Time management" and "Failure and neglect.[6] The study concluded that this version of the IAT is a valid instrument with sound psychometric properties for measuring Internet addiction in a sample of participants from south-east Europe and may be used for further research. No randomized control trials and longitudinal studies in prevention and treatment of disorders could be found.

d) Best practices (collected for the mapping-tool, see IO1-A1)

[2] Stojanovski, A., Teovska, A., Djabirska, E., Miftaroska, E, Capa, E., Julita Postolova, J., Kostadinovska, K., Petrovska, M., Eftimovska, M., Djambas, M., Jordanovska. M., Duka, S. and Ziberi, T. (2020). Alternative report on the state of children's rights in Macedonia – from children's perspective. First Children's Embassy in the World Megjashi - Republic of Macedonia. http://www.childrensembassy.org.mk/content/pdf/Childrens%20report%202020.pdf [Date accessed: 30.03.2021].

[3] Ibid.

[4] Inchley, J., Currie, D., Budisavljevic, S., Torsheim, T., Jåstad, A., Cosma, A., Kelly, C., Arnarsson, Á. M. and Samdal, O. (2020). Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (Hbsc) Survey in Europe and Canada International Report Volume 2. Key Data. World Health Organization. http://www.hbsc.org/publications/international/ [Date accessed: 30.03.2021].

[5] Ibid.

[6] Mihajlov, M. and Stojmenski, A. (2017). Internet Addiction: Evaluating the Psychometric Properties of the IAT in Macedonia. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing book series (AISC, volume 665)

Best Practice example/template

Title	Guide for cyber security of children at home and at schools
Location	N. Macedonia
Organisation/Institution	Center for Research and Policy Making
Contact Data	http://www.crpm.org.mk/, crpm@crpm.org.mk
Target Group/Context	Children, parents and professionals working with children
Content/Learning Outcomes	They have produced online publications for children, parents and professionals working with children tackling a range of issues related to Internet use, as well as organised educational events on related topics.
Description of the Process	No data available.
Resources needed	No data available.
Evaluation of the Methodology	No data available.

Title	Surf safely
Location	N. Macedonia
Organisation/Institution	Government of the Republic of N.Macedonia
Contact Data	https://surfajbezbedno.mk/
Target Group/Context	Children, parents and professionals working with children
Content/Learning Outcomes	This is a website of a past Governmental campaign on safe online surfing, that includes a rage of resources for children and parents to support children and young people in using the Internet in a safe, responsible and productive manner.

Description of the Process	No data available.
Resources needed	No data available.
Evaluation of the Methodology	No data available.

Title	Surf safely
Location	N. Macedonia
Organisation/Institution	VIP Makedonija (This telecommunication company has changed its name in “A1 Makedonija”)
Contact Data	https://www.a1.mk/, komunikacii@a1.mk
Target Group/Context	Primary school pupils
Content/Learning Outcomes	The educational programme “Internet is not just a game… click safely" was implemented in 2018 in primary schools in the city of Skopje. It covered more than 700 fourth grade students from 10 primary schools in eight municipalities in Skopje. The programme aimed to further children’s knowledge on various issues related to Internet use.
Description of the Process	No data available.
Resources needed	No data available.
Evaluation of the Methodology	No data available.