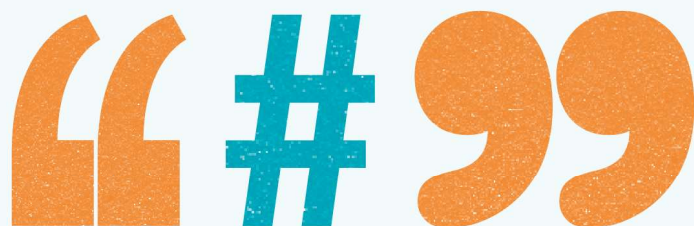


deSHAME2

Croatia research



Title of the research:

„How Do Parents Use the Internet? Internet Usage Habits and Online Activities of Parents of Primary and Secondary School Students“

Research team:

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Research leader:

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- supported by the European Health and Digital Executive Agency - HaDEA of the European Commission, which has allowed Croatia to join the countries with an organized national Safer Internet Center.

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DESHAME2: NATIONAL RESEARCH OF INTERNET USAGE AND ONLINE BEHAVIOR OF PARENTS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CROATIA

Safer Internet Centre, in the framework of the project „Safer Internet Centre Croatia: Making Internet a good and safe place“ conducted the first systematic, international comparative study aimed at deepening the understanding of internet use, online behaviors of parents, and parental mediation of children's online behaviors. The research was conducted with the support of the UK organization, Childnet International: <https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame>.

The aim of this quantitative research is to gain insight into Internet usage among the general population of parents through:

- a better understanding of how Internet content is used
- parental practices regarding children's Internet use in primary and secondary schools
- parent's perceptions of children's exposure to harmful content

The research also covers the area of partnership relationships: how Internet use is related to the quality of parents' partnership relationships.

The target population for the research is adult citizens of Croatia who are parents of children in higher grades of primary and secondary schools. The study was conducted in 20 counties and the City of Zagreb, covering parents of children in 21 secondary schools and 21 primary schools in a criterion non-proportional stratified sample. In the research, parents of students from 5th grade of primary schools to 4th grade of secondary schools participated, with two classes from each grade level. The final sample consisted of 759 primary school students and 956 secondary school students, resulting in a total of 1,715 responses.

Responses about parents' internet use show that parents participate in various online activities daily, with Meta Corporation services being the most frequently used media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Messenger). Some content, such as instant messaging and YouTube, is used for several hours a day, and 10% of parents report being online for more than 8 hours a day.

Results revealing parents' behaviors regarding their children's online activities show that parents use various strategies for restriction, supervision, and communication in the area of internet usage. More than half of the parents who participated in the study rarely or never discuss online safety with their child or set rules regarding their child's internet use. Particularly concerning is the fact that every 5th parent in the study has no supervision over their child's use of mobile phones/tablets before bedtime, while every third parent has never prohibited their child from accessing certain online content.

Particularly important are the results indicating why communication between parents and children about online activities is challenging, which could serve as a basis for developing systematic support programs for parenting in the digital age. 75.2% of parents discuss online difficulties with their children only if the child mentions a problem, and about 10% of parents report that discussing internet safety topics is difficult because their child knows more than they do. Additionally, over 13% of parents believe such conversations could lead to conflicts with their children. A smaller portion of parents also mentions that these conversations are about what their child is learning in school and that they do not have time to discuss online difficulties with their children.

It is also important to note that more than 30% of the parents who participated in the study are very concerned about how their children use the internet. They worry about various issues, from searching for harmful content such as adult material to involvement in harassment, violence, and online abuse. As many as 30% of parents emphasize that they would not take any action if they found out their child was involved in online difficulties, and more parents would seek help on the internet rather than discuss online problems with their children.

The contribution of the research is reflected in its potential practical implications, particularly:

- Developing preventive programs for children, parents, and professionals who work with children.
- Empowering children to recognize online harassment and know how and to whom to report it with confidence.
- Creating educational materials for schools and parents to prevent sexual abuse and online harassment among children.
- Developing educational materials to prevent problematic internet use and reduce the consequences of exposure to harmful content.
- Gaining a better understanding of the impact of the internet and modern technologies on the quality of partnership relationships.