Erasmus+ Programme
Key Action 2 - Cooperation Partnerships in School Education

FIELD RESEARCH COUNTRY REPORT

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Czech Republic

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A Systemic APproach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education
Grant Agreement No. 2022-1-IT02-KA220-SCH-000090043

ASAP

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Short Description	This document presents the results and key finding of qualitative and quantitative field research conducted in the Czech Republic among preadolescents, parents, teachers, and school leaders, within the context of the Erasmus+ ASAP project. The aim of the field research was to provide further insights on the relationship among preadolescents, digital/social media, cyberbullying, and digital/media literacy.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a mixed-methods study conducted among preadolescents (ages 11–13), their parents, and teachers. The research explored how these groups engage with digital technologies, their experiences and concerns around online behavior, and the support systems available to children navigating the internet. The findings are intended to inform the design of an educational program that promotes digital resilience, emotional well-being, and safe autonomy in online environments.

The study combined quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and focus groups. A total of 234 preadolescents, 84 parents, and 35 teachers participated in the survey. In addition, qualitative data were gathered through focus groups with children and parents and interviews with teachers and school leaders. The research focused on patterns of device use, social media activity, time spent online, negative online experiences, emotional reactions, and the dynamics of support-seeking and oversight from adults.

Children in the study reported high levels of digital access and independence. More than 90% owned a smartphone, and the vast majority used it daily to access the internet, with YouTube and WhatsApp being the most commonly used platforms. TikTok and Instagram also featured prominently in their online lives. Most children spent two to four hours online during school days, with usage increasing on weekends. While 17% of children acknowledged encountering something distressing online in the past year, most handled these incidents independently or turned to peers or siblings. Only a minority involved adults, and formal reporting was rare. When it came to parental oversight, responses were mixed. One-third of children expressed a desire for less involvement from parents, around half were satisfied with the current level, and only a small number wanted more. Emotional responses to adult monitoring ranged from feelings of safety and protection to frustration and embarrassment.

Parents in the sample were also digitally active. Most reported using smartphones daily and had regular internet access. Their oversight strategies varied considerably. While some used tools such as parental control apps or set clear rules around screen time, others preferred to trust their child's judgment. Approximately one in four parents reported that their child had experienced something negative online in the past year, and most indicated that they handled these incidents within the family. Many parents expressed concern about their child’s online safety but struggled to find a balance between protective supervision and allowing autonomy. They also reported a lack of clear, accessible guidance from schools and indicated a strong interest in working more closely with educators to address digital issues.

Teachers described their role as preventive and reactive, depending on the situation. Most had high digital literacy and made regular use of online tools for teaching and communication. While they had little visibility into children’s online lives outside school, they often intervened in cases where online conflicts spilled into the classroom, particularly in group chats or peer-related disputes. Teachers frequently relied on structured prevention methods, such as třídnické hodiny and collaboration with school counselors or psychologists. They noted that some children confided in teachers more easily than in parents, especially when they feared harsh reactions at home. However, many incidents still

went unreported. Teachers expressed a clear need for ongoing training and more systematic coordination with parents in addressing students' digital challenges.

Across all three groups, the study found shared recognition of the importance of digital engagement and awareness of potential online risks. Smartphones were the dominant device for all participants, and most used the internet daily. Social media use highlighted generational differences, with children favoring platforms like TikTok and Instagram, while adults were more likely to use Facebook and WhatsApp. Although negative online experiences were not pervasive, they were common enough to warrant attention, with about one-fifth of each group acknowledging some form of distress related to digital activity. Children often chose to manage these issues informally and hesitated to involve adults, particularly when they anticipated emotional or punitive responses.

The research highlights a significant gap between children's desire for autonomy and adults' attempts to provide oversight. Parents and teachers share a protective instinct, but their approaches are not always aligned, nor are they consistently communicated to children. Children, for their part, want to feel supported without being controlled. This tension points to the need for an educational model that reinforces trust, open communication, and shared responsibility across home and school settings.

To address these findings, the proposed educational program should focus on four key areas. First, it should empower children by offering practical, skills-based strategies for managing digital risks, including how to use reporting tools, regulate emotions, and seek appropriate support. Second, it should involve parents through structured workshops or resources that help them set clear but respectful boundaries and shift from reactive monitoring to proactive dialogue. Third, it should support teachers by enhancing digital literacy content within the curriculum and providing professional development on current trends, prevention techniques, and collaboration with families. Finally, the program should aim to unify home and school approaches through consistent messaging, adaptable tools, and team-based responses involving students, educators, and parents.

As digital environments continue to evolve, so too must educational responses. By strengthening the trust between children and adults and equipping all stakeholders with the tools they need, this program seeks to create a safer, more supportive framework for young people navigating online life.

Introduction

The field research, described in this report, is part of the Work Package 2 (WP2) of the ERASMUS+ project ASAP, which combines the activities of both desk and field research. In WP2, we investigated the relationship between preadolescents (kids from 11-13 years of age) and social media in our society with a focus on the educational school context from a transdisciplinary perspective, as well as from a transnational perspective – through the study of the existing situation in five partner countries (Italy, Portugal, Check Republic, Croatia and Slovenia) highlighting common, transversal features as well as specific local issues in the different contexts.

WP2 consisted of desk and field research. One of the main objectives of WP2 was to collect, analyze, and share data on the relationship among pre-adolescents, digital/social media, and the school context in the five partner countries by listening to the voice of the target groups (school kids, teachers, families, school leaders) and to enable comparative transnational analysis.

Desk research showed that studies focusing particularly on the period of preadolescence are scarce (or even fully lacking in some countries), which highlights the importance of conducting thorough field research to learn more about this target group. Hence, field research aims to promote and further contribute to studies on pre-adolescence as an age of growth and development with specific, inherent features and not just as a transition phase between childhood and teenage-hood, in which it is usually included.

The main research objective of the field research was to investigate the challenges of preadolescents related to the use of social media and Internet in general – from the perspective of preadolescents themselves and from the perspective of their parents, teachers and school leaders. We wanted to understand how pre-adolescents behave/would behave when they are faced with a problem/challenge in the online world (e.g., what they do/would do, who they talk to/would talk to, etc.). Also, we tried to find out more about the needs of all target groups (pre-adolescents, parents, teachers, school leaders) – what they would require to be able to address the issues and challenges related to the use of social media among preadolescents better and more efficiently?

The findings of the field research provided relevant input for the development of educational materials and design of the ASAP Educational Program. In that way, we ensured the educational program to be aligned with the actual needs of the target groups.

This report describes the findings of the field research, conducted in the Czech Republic.

1. Research method

The field research follows a cross-sectional study design, as data was collected at a single point in time, providing a "snapshot" of the current situation. To achieve the predefined research objectives and the aims of WP2, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. For the qualitative component, focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights from members of the target groups regarding online risks and safety among pre-adolescents. The quantitative component involved structured online surveys, which were used to objectively measure and quantify phenomena related to online risks and safety among pre-adolescents while also facilitating cross-country comparisons.

1.1. Target population and sample

In the field research conducted in the **Czech Republic**, the following target groups were addressed:

- Pre-adolescents: children aged 11–13,
- Parents of pre-adolescents,
- Teachers of pre-adolescents,
- School leaders.

Sampling of participants for qualitative and quantitative research was non-random: purposeful, convenient, and/or self-selective, depending on the target group. Participants were primarily recruited through schools that were involved in the project as Associated Partners. These schools had expressed their support and interest in participating in the project activities in advance, including research and data collection, and they facilitated access to the participants.

In the Czech Republic, the qualitative component of the research involved a total of 30 pre-adolescents, 15 parents, 10 teachers, and 3 school leaders. For the quantitative component, structured online surveys were completed by 234 pre-adolescents, 84 parents, and 35 teachers. No quantitative data collection was conducted with school leaders.

1.2. Data collection instruments

As no suitable standardized and validated data collection instruments were available to meet the aims of the ASAP project and research objectives of WP2, data collection instruments were designed by the project's expert team, composed of project partner representatives with prior experience and expertise in research, data collection, and construction of data collection questions. Data collection instruments were first piloted/tested with a small group of respondents and then the final versions were translated (using back-and-forth translation to ensure consistency and comparability) into the Czech language.

The following data collection instruments were designed for the purpose of this field research:

- The focus group protocol for pre-adolescents,
- The focus group protocol for parents of pre-adolescents,
- The focus group protocol for teachers of pre-adolescents,

- The scenario for semi-structured interview with school leaders,
- The online survey for pre-adolescents,
- The online survey for parents of pre-adolescents,
- The online survey for teachers of pre-adolescents.

1.3. Data collection procedure

Prior to data collection, the decision of the Research Ethics Committee at DOBA Business School was obtained to justify that the field research was aligned with research ethics standards and principles. The decision was issued on 7 February 2024.

Three focus group discussions with preadolescents and one focus group discussion with teachers took place face-to-face in schools, while two focus group discussions with parents were conducted in person and one was carried out online using the MS Teams platform. Each focus group lasted approximately 1.5 hours and was moderated by two researchers: one led the discussion while the other served as an observer, noting non-verbal cues and taking notes. Three semi-structured interviews with school leaders were also conducted in person, each lasting around one hour. Both focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded. Participants were asked to speak openly about their behaviors, experiences, insights, needs, and expectations related to social media and general internet use among pre-adolescents.

All three online surveys (for pre-adolescents, parents, and teachers) were hosted on the 1ka platform (www.1ka.si), which was moderated by DOBA Business School, the WP2 leader. Parents and teachers received the survey link via email and could complete it at a time and place of their choosing. Pre-adolescents completed the survey in school settings, typically during computer classes. They used school computers, tablets, or their own mobile devices to access the survey through a direct link or QR code. The surveys primarily used closed-ended questions, with a few open-ended prompts that allowed respondents to elaborate in their own words.

In all data collection formats (focus groups, interviews, and surveys), personal data that could reveal participants' identities (e.g., information on consent forms) were stored separately from the databases containing content-related responses and analysis. Data were analyzed and presented at the sample level only, with no reference to individual participants or identifiable personal data.

Qualitative research in the Czech Republic took place between February and April 2024, while quantitative data collection occurred between February 2024 and January 2025.

2. Qualitative research

The qualitative component of the field research involved focus group discussions with preadolescents, parents, and teachers, as well as semi-structured interviews with school leaders. In total, 30 children, 15 parents, 10 teachers, and 3 school leaders participated. The data were collected across several schools participating as associated partners in the project. The discussions focused on children's online behavior, challenges, emotional responses, and the role of adult support. Each of the following sections presents insights from a specific target group.

2.1. Grouped data from the pre-adolescent focus group

Emotional reactions to exclusion and online harm

Children were asked how they would respond if they discovered hurtful messages circulating about a classmate excluded from a WhatsApp group. Most believed the child would feel "upset," "sad," or even "betrayed." A few imagined he might try to ignore it or not care. When discussing what should be done, some suggested reporting the incident to a teacher or parent, while others felt it was better to confront the group directly or to remain indifferent because "these people talk about everyone." A few joked about extreme responses such as changing schools. While children recognized the emotional toll of online exclusion, they expressed different ideas about how to respond—ranging from self-management to involving adults.

Online strangers and safety boundaries

A second scenario involved a child who meets someone in an online game and is later asked personal questions or invited to meet in real life. Most children reacted with caution, saying they would block the person, leave the game, or give false information. While some firmly stated they would never meet an online contact in person, others said they might consider it—with parental knowledge or if accompanied by a friend. Across responses, children showed general awareness of the dangers posed by strangers online, though a few were more relaxed, believing they could stay safe by lying or concealing details.

Common online risks and coping strategies

Children described a range of online problems, including spam messages, scams, inappropriate images, strangers asking for personal details, and phishing links leading to money loss. In most cases, their approach was to block, ignore, or mislead the sender. Interestingly, some mentioned that their grandparents or parents had also fallen for similar scams, such as clicking on suspicious links. The ability to recognize and avoid risk was evident, although not always accompanied by reporting or preventive behaviour.

Seeking help or staying silent

When dealing with digital problems, many children preferred to handle things on their own. They spoke of "just ignoring it" or "not making a big deal," reflecting a strong desire for independence. If they did talk to someone, it was more likely to be a friend or sibling who, in their view, would understand the situation and not overreact. Parents were seen as a mixed resource—helpful if they

had technical skills or a calm approach, but often described as overreactive or prone to lecturing. A few children said they would rather turn to extended family, such as a grandparent or aunt, to avoid "making a big deal out of it."

Communication and trust with adults

A recurring theme was children's perception that adults don't fully understand their digital world. Many felt misunderstood or judged—especially by parents who dismiss gaming or online interests as "a waste of time." They worried that even small issues could provoke exaggerated reactions. Still, some described individual adults—mothers, teachers, or other relatives—as trustworthy, empathetic, or "chill." Teachers were sometimes mentioned as safer to talk to than parents, although children often hesitated to raise online problems at school unless they directly involved classmates or became serious.

Understanding of "safe internet use"

When asked what "safe use" of the internet meant, children cited several practices: never sharing real names, addresses, or bank details; blocking or reporting suspicious users; and taking screenshots in case they needed adult help later. They emphasized being aware of who they are talking to and taking steps to verify people's identity where possible. Their responses reflected a reasonably mature understanding of risk, although actual behavior may still depend on context and perceived severity.

School involvement and perceived boundaries

Most children reported minimal intervention by teachers in their personal online issues. While some recalled classroom lessons about internet safety, they did not usually view teachers as the right people to approach for help. A few said they would tell a teacher if the issue involved classmates or impacted the school environment, but personal matters were considered outside the school's role.

Recommendations for better dialogue

Despite their reluctance to involve adults, many children had ideas for improving communication. They wanted adults to listen more patiently, avoid overreacting, and stop delivering moralizing lectures. Some expressed frustration that parents were too tired or distracted to engage properly. Suggestions for teachers included facilitating open group discussions where children could speak freely, though some worried this could compromise their privacy.

Concluding observations

Across the focus groups, preadolescents demonstrated a basic understanding of online risks—ranging from bullying and scams to unsafe interactions with strangers. They generally manage low-level issues on their own and turn to adults only when they perceive a serious threat. Many children felt ambivalent about seeking help, balancing their need for autonomy with the fear of being dismissed, punished, or misunderstood. They expressed a strong desire for more empathetic, calm, and respectful communication with adults—especially in moments of digital vulnerability.

2.2. Grouped data from the parent focus group

Reactions to children secretly using social media

When presented with a scenario in which a child installs TikTok without parental permission, parents expressed a mix of emotions. Some felt betrayed or disappointed, describing the situation as a breach of trust: "I'd feel like my child broke our agreement; it would upset me." Others reflected on their own youth, acknowledging that curiosity is natural: "I was the same as a kid, always testing limits; so I might understand it on some level." Despite their frustration, most parents said they would opt for a calm conversation rather than a harsh response. As one participant put it, "I'd talk about the situation and see why my child did it," showing a clear preference for open dialogue over punishment.

Balancing protection and independence

Parents agreed on the importance of setting boundaries to ensure online safety, but they also wanted their children to develop independence and critical thinking. Many mentioned teaching basic safety rules, such as not sharing personal information or responding to messages from unknown people. However, they also stressed that banning apps outright was not effective in the long run. "We can't lock them away from the internet," one parent said. "They need to develop the skills to use it safely." The general sentiment was that empowering children to make good decisions is more sustainable than relying solely on restrictions.

Perceptions of online risks and challenges

Parents listed various concerns about the online environment, including vulgarity, anonymity, and the potential for harmful interactions. They noted that people—both adults and children—tend to be bolder and more aggressive behind screens. This increased boldness was seen as a risk factor for exposure to cyberbullying, personal attacks, and other forms of digital harm. One parent warned that "children can face anything we adults can imagine—there's no limit to the negativity or harm they might encounter online." Their concerns reflected a broad awareness of the dangers children may face while navigating digital spaces.

How children respond to problems online

According to the group, a child's reaction to an online issue depends heavily on whether they feel threatened and whether they trust the adult they would approach. "If my child feels genuinely in danger, they'll come to me," one parent explained. "They need someone they know will help rather than judge." While many children are willing to talk to parents, others may turn to friends first. Parents recognised that building trust is crucial, and several emphasized the need to avoid overreacting in order to maintain open lines of communication.

Parental engagement and communication styles

Parents acknowledged that their ability to engage in conversations about online life varies. Some strive for consistent availability, saying they try to listen even when busy. Others admitted they are sometimes distracted or impatient. One parent noted, "Sometimes I'm working and not very patient," while another reflected that "often kids just need to vent rather than get a solution." Despite these differences, most agreed that simply being willing to listen is a key factor in helping children navigate digital challenges.

Relationship with schools and digital education

Few participants reported receiving structured support from schools on digital safety. Most rely on personal experience or online resources. "I gave them all the advice I thought necessary, but I haven't

received any materials from school," one parent noted. Several saw potential in stronger school–family collaboration, suggesting joint educational activities for students, parents, and teachers. They believed that open dialogue across these groups could help establish shared expectations and reinforce safe online behavior.

Key insights and reflections

A recurring theme was the tension between enforcing rules and empathising with children's curiosity. As one parent summarised, "I'd forbid them, but at the same time I know what it's like to be curious." Trust and communication were viewed as essential. Parents emphasised the need for children to feel safe when coming forward, without fearing judgment or punishment. At the same time, they acknowledged the lack of school-provided resources and expressed a desire for greater alignment between home and school in how online risks are addressed.

Differences among participants

While parents shared many core concerns, their approaches varied in practice. Some enforced stricter rules on app usage, while others preferred guided exploration. The frequency and depth of digital-safety conversations also differed. Likewise, some were more inclined to trust their child's judgment, whereas others leaned more toward monitoring and control. Despite these differences, all expressed a need for better understanding of the evolving digital world and how best to support their children in it.

Final observations

Overall, the parents in this focus group acknowledged that online exploration is inevitable and that their role is to provide guidance, support, and a sense of security. They expressed concerns about being under-resourced and sometimes unsure about best practices. Across the board, there was strong interest in more structured, school-supported initiatives to address online safety. Many saw collaboration between families and schools as an essential next step toward providing children with consistent, informed guidance in an increasingly digital world.

2.3. Grouped data from the teacher focus group

Responding to harmful peer interactions online

Teachers were presented with a scenario involving a student WhatsApp group where one pupil was targeted with insulting messages. Their responses reflected the tension between formal school policy and practical intervention. While mobile phone use is prohibited during school hours, most teachers acknowledged that online incidents often occur outside of class but still affect the school environment. As such, schools frequently intervene based on moral and social responsibility.

Typical initial steps included holding class discussions—often without the targeted student at first—to better understand group dynamics and design a sensitive response. Teachers emphasized encouraging the affected student to document the messages and discuss them with staff. Importantly, they highlighted the need for a team-based approach, involving the class teacher, school counselor, psychologist, or prevention methodologist. Rather than responding alone or emotionally, they preferred coordinated action to ensure long-term impact and consistency.

Goals of intervention and prevention

Teachers agreed that effective intervention must go beyond resolving individual incidents. They aimed to address the broader classroom culture, fostering accountability among all involved—including bystanders. Prevention frameworks and school crisis plans were cited as essential tools. While the process was described as time-consuming, teachers stressed the importance of handling cases with care to avoid worsening the situation.

Online issues disclosed by students

Although students may delay disclosing online problems, teachers reported hearing about a variety of concerns over time. These included anxiety from excessive group chats, embarrassment caused by unauthorized image sharing, and confusion about emojis or slang with implied sexual content. Teachers often followed up to ensure that students understood why certain behaviors were harmful and how to avoid them in the future. Their focus was not only on resolution, but also on learning and behavior change.

Changes in digital behavior over time

When comparing student behavior to five years ago, teachers observed several key shifts. Children now show greater awareness of privacy, such as knowing not to post photos without consent. However, the desire to gain followers or become influencers has become more prominent, often overshadowing concern for safety or emotional impact. Teachers also noted that many students now socialize primarily in online spaces, leading to fewer face-to-face interactions and more conflicts unfolding through digital channels. The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still visible, with some students displaying reduced confidence and social skills in offline settings. One teacher remarked that parents increasingly expect schools to handle digital education and discipline, despite its being only a partial part of the school's role.

Comfort in discussing online issues

Many teachers described school hours—such as class meetings or language lessons—as opportunities for students to talk about online experiences. Several noted that students sometimes feel more comfortable opening up at school than at home, perceiving teachers as calmer and less likely to overreact. "When they tell a parent, they risk being punished or yelled at, but they know a teacher will have a cooler head," one teacher explained. This relative emotional safety made some teachers valuable confidants, particularly when students lacked open conversations at home.

Support networks and seeking help

Students typically turn to parents or a trusted teacher for support, but many first seek reassurance from peers. Some prefer to report problems in pairs or after discussing the situation with friends. Teachers agreed that open communication, respectful attitudes, and a sense of partnership helped create a safe environment for disclosure. Building trust was seen as essential to enabling children to speak up about difficult topics.

Strategies for building dialogue and trust

Teachers outlined several methods for fostering open and respectful dialogue. These included treating students as partners rather than subordinates, weaving digital safety topics into regular lessons, and using class meetings (*třídnické hodiny*) to normalize the sharing of experiences. One teacher

emphasized the importance of ensuring that students know they won't be judged or harshly punished if they come forward with a problem. Creating a safe, empathetic space was central to all efforts.

Training and resources for teachers

The group described a variety of resources and learning strategies. Many rely on one another for insights, as well as on pupils, who are often more familiar with emerging trends. Some mentioned external organizations, such as "Do Světa," that provide specialized training for prevention staff. Schools often maintain their own libraries of resources and internal curricula, though teachers also noted the need to adapt quickly to new situations as they arise. While they recognized the challenges posed by social media, they also saw its potential as an educational tool. As one teacher put it, "There are plenty of valuable sources if used properly."

Key insights and challenges

Teachers repeatedly stressed the importance of team-based responses, involving prevention specialists and other staff to ensure careful, consistent handling of cases. They reported that students often turned to them rather than parents because they feared less emotional fallout. Prevention efforts were seen as bearing fruit, with children showing increased awareness—particularly around photo consent and privacy.

At the same time, several lingering challenges remained. Teachers questioned how effectively parents could address digital behavior, particularly when time or skills were limited. They also observed that some students are drawn to the validation and visibility offered by influencer culture. Striking the right balance between harnessing the educational value of digital tools and supporting students' emotional well-being remained an ongoing concern.

Final observations

The focus group highlighted a shared commitment among teachers to handling online issues through collaboration, prevention, and communication. Many reported working closely with school staff and, when necessary, parents or even the police. Prevention was seen not as a one-time activity, but as a continuous process of building awareness, trust, and dialogue.

While teachers felt increasingly prepared through in-house training and practical experience, they acknowledged the fast pace of digital change. Ongoing adaptation, resource development, and partnership with families were seen as essential to helping children navigate digital risks with confidence and support.

2.4. Grouped data from school leaders

Integrating technology in education

All three interviewed school leaders highlighted the importance of integrating digital tools into regular teaching, though each institution approaches this differently. One leader emphasized a "personal approach to students supported by modern technology," noting their preference for explaining rules rather than enforcing them rigidly. Another described an IT-focused curriculum in which all teachers are expected to meet a minimum standard of digital literacy. This school invests in advanced software and hardware, and recently introduced staff training on artificial intelligence. A third school leader stressed the cross-curricular nature of digital competence and referenced a new computer science

curriculum introduced in the third grade, which includes not only office tools but also robotics and critical thinking.

Despite variations in approach, all leaders shared the view that technology is an essential learning tool. However, they also cautioned that it should not come at the expense of critical thinking, social development, or offline competencies.

Current digital policies and practices

Each school has established its own policies to manage student device use and digital conduct. For instance, one school permits mobile phones in class but uses designated stands or a phone deposit system to reduce distractions. Another bans mobile phone use during breaks to encourage face-to-face interaction. Digital platforms such as Google Classroom and EduPage are widely used for distributing assignments, managing attendance, and communicating with students and families.

Training and development were also considered key. One school leader mentioned that teachers can attend various courses at the school's expense, including workshops focused on emerging technologies. Project-based learning and prevention programs that address digital topics are embedded in the curriculum in at least two of the participating schools. As one leader summarised, "Our aim is to ensure technology supports learning but doesn't overshadow the human approach."

Experiences with social media misuse

All three leaders reported encountering minor incidents of social media misuse within their schools. These included inappropriate WhatsApp chats leading to peer conflicts, the sharing of altered images or videos of teachers and students, and cases driven more by boredom or humor than malice. While such incidents were usually isolated and quickly resolved through mediation, leaders remained alert to the underlying risks.

The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were frequently mentioned. One leader observed that increased screen time during lockdowns led to greater anonymity and more inappropriate online behavior. Another noted a rise in students' low self-esteem, particularly in connection with social comparisons made online.

Prevention strategies and school responses

Prevention practices vary but often revolve around personal relationships and trust. Two leaders emphasized the benefits of working in smaller schools, where digital conflicts can be addressed individually and informally. While most did not rely on formal anonymous reporting systems, one school maintained a "confidential mailbox" mainly used for minor complaints.

Teacher collaboration plays a central role in prevention. Staff training, internal prevention plans, and collegial information sharing help maintain consistency. Leaders also recognised the importance of parent involvement. One school runs themed cafés for parents on topics like technology and well-being. Others involve parents on a case-by-case basis or distribute basic information through class meetings, but noted the absence of systematic parent education materials.

Student engagement in shaping school policy was generally limited. Only one school referenced a school parliament that occasionally discusses digital topics. Even in that case, participation was described as sporadic rather than structured.

Areas for improvement

All leaders acknowledged several areas needing development. One concern was that students, despite being frequent technology users, sometimes lacked basic digital skills—such as composing formal emails or navigating online learning platforms responsibly. One leader called for more access to specialized software for creative or technical work, such as web design and video editing.

In terms of online behavior, leaders identified a need to better equip students with communication and conflict-resolution skills to prevent cyberbullying. One noted that students are still not actively involved in prevention strategies and suggested that giving them a more prominent role could be a future improvement.

Parental engagement was another area flagged for enhancement. While one school has a formal structure for involving parents, others rely on individual communication or offer occasional updates, but lack comprehensive, consistent programming. Finally, the leaders emphasized the challenge of keeping up with the ever-evolving digital environment, including rapidly changing social media trends and platforms.

Key insights and reflections

The leaders collectively expressed a strong commitment to ensuring that digital tools serve educational purposes without undermining students' social and emotional well-being. They described most incidents as small-scale and easily resolved, thanks to established trust between students and teachers. Rather than relying on punitive measures, they preferred to approach problems with empathy and understanding.

Teacher training was seen as a strength, particularly where schools had clear internal policies and access to relevant resources. Still, gaps in parental involvement and student voice were acknowledged as areas requiring further investment.

Differences across school contexts

Some differences emerged based on school size and focus. Smaller institutions appeared better positioned to respond flexibly and personally to digital challenges. One school, with a strong IT orientation, demonstrated a more advanced digital infrastructure, while another, a traditional primary school, emphasized social recovery after COVID and used structured prevention programs. Approaches to parental engagement also varied—from structured parent sessions to more ad hoc communication.

Student empowerment was limited overall, though some structures such as student councils or parliaments existed. Only one school, however, referenced these bodies as a potential avenue for digital policy discussions.

Final observations

School leaders shared a common dedication to creating a safe and developmentally appropriate digital environment for students. They emphasized the need for open dialogue with staff, students, and families, and recognized that social media-related incidents—while sometimes unavoidable—could often be resolved through trust, mediation, and swift response.

Looking ahead, they saw opportunities for strengthening parental support, increasing student involvement in digital policies, and closing practical skills gaps. Ultimately, all three agreed that prevention is not a one-time solution but an ongoing process, requiring flexible strategies and continuous updates in response to the fast-paced nature of the digital world.

2.5. Conclusions

Preadolescents: balancing independence and support

Children in this age group show a clear preference for handling online problems independently, especially when the issues are minor—such as blocking strangers or ignoring mean messages. They are unlikely to turn to adults unless they feel genuinely threatened, such as in cases of blackmail or explicit harassment. When they do seek help, they often carefully choose whom to approach.

Children hold mixed feelings about involving adults. Some trust their parents, particularly those with technical skills or a calm, supportive attitude. Others fear overreactions, punishment, or a loss of digital privileges. In these cases, they may turn instead to siblings, friends, or even grandparents, who are seen as less emotionally reactive.

Despite their autonomy, preadolescents display a basic understanding of online risks. They can articulate safety practices such as avoiding personal data sharing, blocking or reporting suspicious users, and questioning the intentions of online contacts. However, this caution sometimes coexists with risky ideas—like giving false information or considering a real-life meeting if a friend comes along.

Teachers, while generally trusted, are rarely seen as the first point of contact for personal online issues—unless the situation directly involves classmates or the school environment. Even then, some students prefer to keep more serious incidents private, suggesting that they see such matters as outside a teacher’s domain.

Children repeatedly express a desire for more empathetic adult communication. They want adults to listen without judgment, avoid immediate scolding, and create an atmosphere in which it feels safe to share concerns.

Parents: protection, partnership, and perceived distance

Parents are highly motivated to keep their children safe online and emphasize rules about privacy and stranger interaction. At the same time, they acknowledge the importance of fostering independence and preparing children to navigate the digital world responsibly. Most seek a middle ground—equipping their children with guidelines while also trusting them to learn through experience.

Communication between parents and children varies. Some report open-door policies and aim to be approachable at any time. Others admit that stress, work, or emotional reactions sometimes get in the way of consistent conversations. Many recognize that children often withhold minor incidents and tend to speak up only when a problem becomes serious.

Support from schools is often seen as minimal or inconsistent. Most parents rely on their own knowledge or online research to guide their children and would welcome more structured guidance from schools. They express a strong interest in joint educational activities or consistent school-home messaging.

Parents also voice concern about the influence of social media, especially around cyberbullying or exposure to harmful content. They advocate for unified strategies that reinforce positive online behavior both at home and in school settings. While most believe the family holds primary responsibility, they see collaboration with schools as essential.

Teachers: coordinated responses and evolving awareness

Teachers tend to approach digital incidents using a team-based model, involving school counselors, psychologists, or prevention methodologists when needed. Situations like cyberbullying are rarely handled by one teacher alone; instead, responses are planned collectively to ensure they are sensitive and appropriate.

Many schools integrate prevention into everyday routines, using class sessions (*třídnické hodiny*) or themed lessons to raise awareness of digital issues. These programs often focus on privacy, content sharing, and responsible online behavior. Teachers believe regular exposure to these topics helps shape students' digital habits over time.

There are cases in which students confide in teachers more easily than in parents, particularly when teachers maintain a calm and constructive tone. Still, teachers acknowledge that they do not always see the full picture. Children may delay disclosure or choose not to report issues that they consider private or unrelated to school.

Educators are acutely aware of shifting trends in digital behavior. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect students' social skills, and many now interact primarily through digital platforms. Teachers note the growing influence of online fame and "influencer" aspirations. As these trends evolve, teachers adjust their prevention efforts accordingly.

At the same time, they remain mindful of the limits of their responsibility. Incidents that occur outside of school hours are often considered family matters—unless they impact classroom relationships or climate. Training for teachers often happens reactively, based on new developments or emerging needs, though many schools draw on national prevention frameworks or expert resources.

Cross-group reflections and comparisons

Across the three groups—children, parents, and teachers—there is a shared recognition of online risks. Everyone agrees that preadolescents face potential harms, from privacy violations to cyberbullying and emotional stress. There is also a common understanding that children need both technical strategies (e.g., blocking, reporting, using screenshots) and emotional support to navigate these challenges.

However, approaches to solving problems vary. Preadolescents lean toward peer support and self-reliance, involving adults only when a situation becomes serious. Parents encourage open dialogue but may unintentionally discourage communication through overreactions or lecturing. Teachers advocate for structured prevention and calm, team-based responses, but they often remain unaware of incidents that occur beyond the school context.

Trust and communication gaps are a recurring theme. Children crave empathy and calm listening. Parents want to protect but often lack consistent guidance, leading to friction. Teachers can be neutral, trusted adults—but are usually only brought into the conversation when an issue affects the school setting.

There is a broad, shared desire for more effective collaboration. Children would be more willing to share if adults responded with understanding. Parents suggest joint family–school activities or consistent, age-appropriate materials. Teachers call for alignment between school policies, home practices, and external support systems, such as police or counseling networks.

Finally, all three groups acknowledge the rapidly evolving nature of digital life. Trends in social media, communication platforms, and digital behaviors shift constantly, requiring flexible rules, updated training, and proactive prevention strategies.

Final observations

Children are increasingly navigating the digital world with autonomy, turning to adults mainly when serious problems arise. While they understand basic online safety principles, they often hesitate to ask for help due to fear of judgment or punishment. Their need for calm, empathetic adult support remains high.

Parents take their safeguarding role seriously but often feel they are managing these challenges in isolation. Many lack structured resources and would benefit from deeper collaboration with schools to promote consistent guidance and shared responsibility.

Teachers implement prevention and intervention strategies through collaborative school structures. They strive to build trust-based relationships with students and integrate digital safety into the curriculum. However, they also recognize the need for more systematic family engagement to reinforce these messages at home.

The overarching theme is the importance of open, respectful, and coordinated communication. When preadolescents, parents, and teachers work together, they create a more supportive environment—one in which children feel empowered to explore digital spaces safely and responsibly, while knowing they have trusted adults to turn to when needed.

3. Quantitative research

The quantitative research was conducted through structured online surveys completed by 234 preadolescents, 84 parents, and 35 teachers. The surveys aimed to explore patterns of device use, online habits, exposure to online risks, emotional responses, and the nature of parental or school support. The following sections present an overview of the findings for each target group, followed by a comparative analysis.

3.1. Preadolescents - grouping and overview of the collected data

Demographic overview

The survey gathered responses from 234 children, mostly aged 11 to 13, attending 5th to 7th grade. The sample was nearly evenly split between boys and girls, with a small number choosing not to disclose gender. Most children were born between 2010 and 2012, placing them squarely in the early preadolescent age bracket.

Online access and device use

Internet access was widespread. Over 90% of respondents reported they could go online “often” or “always,” and only 2% said they never had access. The vast majority (92%) owned their own mobile phone, and nearly 9 in 10 used it daily to go online. In contrast, use of computers, tablets, or gaming consoles was much less frequent. Only about 18% used a computer daily, and tablet or console use was typically weekly or occasional.

Smart TVs, however, were surprisingly prominent: nearly half of the children used a smart TV to access the internet daily or weekly, suggesting that streaming platforms and entertainment apps are an important part of their digital routines.

Social media and platform preferences

YouTube and WhatsApp emerged as the most popular platforms, with over 90% of children reporting regular use. Instagram (67%) and TikTok (60%) also showed high engagement, while Snapchat was used by just over half of the respondents. In contrast, only a quarter of children reported using Facebook, indicating that the platform is rapidly declining among this age group. Other apps like Discord, Pinterest, BeReal, and Twitch had more modest user bases. Children also mentioned platforms like Roblox, Kick, and Telegram in open-ended responses.

Time spent online

Screen time during school days was most commonly reported as 2 to 4 hours daily. About a fifth of the children said they spent more than 5 hours online, even on school days. On weekends, online time increased sharply—over 40% of respondents said they spent more than 5 hours online on a typical weekend day, and about 1 in 6 reported 9 or more hours.

Exposure to negative content

Roughly 17% of children stated they had seen something upsetting or disturbing online in the past year, with another 13% choosing not to answer the question. Among those who did encounter

negative experiences, most described these incidents as rare—either occurring just once or only a few times.

When faced with upsetting content, the majority of children did not take formal steps to address it. Only a small portion reported blocking the sender, changing privacy settings, or reporting abuse. Emotional responses such as fear, anger, or embarrassment were mentioned, but not consistently across the group. Many chose not to answer questions about their feelings, and no single emotional response stood out.

Help-seeking and reactions

Self-reliance was a strong theme. Most children reported that they did not talk to anyone about their online problems—not even parents, siblings, or teachers. Teachers, psychologists, or other official channels were mentioned rarely. When they did act, it was usually through informal steps like ignoring the issue or relying on friends and siblings for emotional support.

Parental involvement and perceptions

Parental mediation around internet use appeared inconsistent. A third of children said their parents rarely or never encouraged them to explore the internet constructively or talked about safety. Around 40% said parents sometimes checked on their internet use, but another 40% said they were never or almost never monitored. Children believed that parental monitoring was mostly motivated by a desire to keep them safe, but feelings about this were mixed.

When asked how they felt about being checked on, most children reported neutral or mildly positive reactions. However, a minority expressed feeling angry, embarrassed, or "not trusted." About a third of the children said they wished their parents would be less involved in their online activities, while nearly half felt the current level of involvement was appropriate. Only a small minority (around 7%) expressed a desire for greater parental oversight.

Concluding observations

This group of preadolescents appears digitally active, highly autonomous, and primarily mobile-based in their online habits. Most have personal smartphones, engage heavily with social and entertainment platforms, and spend significant time online—especially on weekends. They are aware of the digital landscape, but their approach to safety tends to be self-managed. They rarely escalate problems or seek help unless the issue becomes severe.

Parental engagement is present but not always consistent or welcome, with many children expressing a desire for less oversight. Teachers and formal supports remain peripheral in their digital lives, unless a school-related incident occurs. Overall, the data paints a picture of children who are navigating the digital world largely on their own terms, equipped with basic safety awareness but limited adult guidance unless they explicitly choose to seek it.

3.2. Parents - grouping and overview of the collected data

Demographic overview

Among the 84 parents who completed the full survey, the majority (approximately 90%) were mothers. About 57% reported that the child in question was a girl, 41% a boy, and a small number chose not to disclose gender. Although the survey targeted parents of children aged 11–13, some

respondents reported ages outside this range or listed multiple children. Nevertheless, most answers clustered around the intended age group.

Parents in the sample were diverse in age, with birth years ranging from the early 1970s to the late 1990s. Educational backgrounds were split fairly evenly—about half had a university degree, while the other half completed secondary school. A very small number reported only primary education. Income levels also varied, though the majority identified their household as being "about average." Most participants were employed and had regular access to the internet, with nearly 70% reporting they were "always online."

Device use and digital habits

Smartphones dominated as the primary device for going online, with nearly nine in ten parents using them daily. Computers and laptops were also commonly used, though less frequently. Tablets and gaming consoles were rare, and smart TVs were used occasionally, often for streaming or media consumption.

In terms of time spent online, most parents reported 1 to 3 hours of daily internet use during the week, with a modest increase on weekends. This reflects a pattern of moderate engagement with digital media, likely balancing work, communication, and leisure.

Social media use

WhatsApp and Facebook were the most widely used social platforms among parents, followed by YouTube, Instagram, and Spotify. TikTok and Snapchat saw very low use, highlighting a generational divide between parents and their children in terms of preferred platforms. Only 1–2% of parents reported not using any social media at all.

Children's device access and smartphone introduction

Virtually all parents confirmed that their child has their own smartphone. About half of the children also had their own computer or laptop, while fewer had exclusive use of tablets, gaming consoles, or smart TVs. The age at which parents decided to give their child a smartphone varied, but many did so between the ages of 6 and 10. Common motivations included the child's safety, ability to stay in touch, and growing independence. Peer pressure ("everyone else has one") and educational needs were also mentioned frequently.

Children's online and social media behavior (as perceived by parents)

Parents confirmed that their children are active online, with WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok being the most commonly used platforms. Spotify and Snapchat followed, while Facebook was less relevant for younger users. Most parents said their children created their own social media accounts, though some—particularly on YouTube and WhatsApp—were created with parental help.

Parental mediation and communication

When asked about how often they engage with their child on digital safety topics, most parents reported frequent conversations around content risks, internet safety, and online behavior. Over half regularly suggested how to stay safe or explained why some content could be harmful. However, only a small percentage reported physically sitting with their child while they were online—likely due to the child's age or growing independence.

In the past year, many parents noted that their children had occasionally asked for advice or shared something upsetting they encountered online. A smaller group said their child had helped them with digital tasks, or that they had occasional disagreements about internet use.

Household rules and monitoring

Most parents reported having household rules around screen time and online activity. About 75% used some form of content filtering or supervision, and half used location tracking or contractual time limits via mobile services. While many families had open agreements about checking children's online activity, about a quarter of parents said they checked unilaterally, and a few did so without the child knowing.

When asked how much they knew about their child's online life, most parents said they knew "quite a lot," though nearly a quarter felt they only knew "a little." Parents typically checked app downloads or viewed browsing history occasionally. Only a minority reported checking messages or contacts regularly.

Online distress and parent response

About one in four parents reported that their child had been upset by something online in the past year. These incidents were usually infrequent and included exposure to bullying, disturbing videos, or spam in group chats. Most parents responded by talking with their child or encouraging offline breaks. A smaller number took stronger actions, such as reporting the issue to the school or using parental control apps more aggressively.

Despite these challenges, parents generally felt reasonably confident in their ability to help their child navigate troubling experiences online. Half said they felt "sufficiently" capable, and about a quarter said they felt "very capable." However, 16% expressed doubts about their preparedness.

Information needs and interest in school support

Most parents reported learning about internet safety through informal means—online articles, discussions with other parents, or educational websites. When asked where they would like to receive more support, the most common answers were: the school, reputable websites, and direct conversations with their children.

A significant majority (about 75%) said they would welcome an open forum at their child's school to discuss parenting and online safety topics. This shows clear interest in school-led initiatives and greater coordination between families and educational institutions.

Concluding observations

The parent responses reveal a cohort that is digitally literate and engaged, yet still navigating how best to support their children's growing independence online. Most children in this sample received their own smartphone early and actively participate in social media. Parents frequently discuss safety and responsible use, though they often trust children to manage their own digital lives with only occasional checks.

There is a strong interest in more structured support—particularly through school-based forums and guidance. While most parents feel moderately capable, they also recognize that the online environment is changing quickly, and that collaborative strategies involving schools, families, and

digital education resources are essential for keeping children safe and supported in a complex digital world.

3.3. Teachers - grouping and overview of the collected data

Demographic overview

The teacher sample included 35 respondents. The majority (about 71%) were women, with around one-quarter identifying as men, and a small number choosing not to disclose their gender. Ages ranged widely, with birth years spanning from the 1960s to the late 1990s. Most teachers had substantial experience in education: on average, they had worked in schools for 15–18 years, with a few having over 30 years of teaching experience.

Two-thirds of participants were class (homeroom) teachers, which typically means closer contact with students and more responsibility for class-wide well-being. Additionally, about 60% of respondents were parents themselves, giving them dual perspectives as educators and caregivers.

Digital habits and access

Teachers reported strong access to digital tools. Nearly all said they had full or frequent internet access, and the majority used smartphones and laptops daily for professional and personal purposes. Tablet use was minimal, and gaming consoles were nearly unused. Television and smart TVs were used occasionally, often for accessing educational content or streaming media.

Daily internet use varied, but most teachers spent at least 2–4 hours online. This included both work-related tasks and personal browsing. A few reported being online for significantly longer, particularly those involved in digital communication, school administration, or remote education tasks.

Social media usage

Teachers' social media behavior reflected their professional roles and generational habits. WhatsApp and YouTube were the most commonly used platforms—each by more than 80% of respondents. Facebook was also widely used (about 70%), while Instagram, Pinterest, and Spotify had more modest followings. TikTok, Twitter, and Snapchat were rarely used, underscoring the generational gap between teachers and students in platform preferences.

Only one or two teachers reported not using social media at all, confirming that most are at least moderately engaged in the digital sphere.

Interactions with students around digital topics

Teachers were asked how often they engaged with 11–13-year-old students about online life, internet safety, and digital behavior. Most respondents said they at least occasionally encourage students to explore educational opportunities online. About half regularly remind students about safe internet use and how to recognize risky behavior.

Many also said they had discussed what to do when students encounter harmful or upsetting content online—although these conversations were often informal or prompted by specific incidents. Only a few reported systematically sitting with students during online activities, which is consistent with this age group's growing independence and the structure of school environments.

Student disclosures and digital concerns

When asked whether students ever approached them with digital problems, most teachers said this happened “sometimes.” Students had shared concerns about group chats, exposure to inappropriate content, or discomfort about something seen or said online. However, very few teachers reported that such disclosures occurred “often.” Most said that while children might be willing to talk, they often hesitated or delayed reporting unless the issue directly impacted their school life.

Teachers noted that students sometimes preferred speaking with them rather than parents, particularly when they feared punishment or emotional overreaction at home. In these cases, teachers aimed to respond calmly and constructively. Still, many acknowledged that they might not know about problems unless students explicitly brought them up.

School strategies and support systems

About two-thirds of respondents reported that their schools had clear rules about digital device use, and the same proportion said their school had policies for promoting safe internet use. Some schools were reported to have structured prevention programs, class sessions on digital behavior, and access to counseling staff or prevention methodologists.

However, satisfaction with school-level support varied. Roughly a third of teachers rated their school’s approach to online safety as “very good,” another third found it “adequate,” and a smaller portion said support was lacking. Several teachers commented on the need for more time, training, and institutional resources to deal with emerging digital challenges effectively.

Evolving concerns and teacher needs

Teachers acknowledged that students’ digital behavior had shifted over time. Many noted a growing awareness of privacy and consent among children, alongside increasing attraction to influencer culture and social validation. While students seemed to understand basic rules (e.g., not sharing personal photos without permission), they were also drawn to risky trends and online fame.

Teachers responded by adapting on the fly, often relying on peer support among colleagues and learning directly from their students. Some said they felt confident responding to new issues, while others expressed a need for more systematic professional development and support from external experts.

Concluding observations

The teacher responses reflect a group of professionals who are digitally literate, experienced, and engaged with students’ online experiences—though often in an informal or reactive capacity. They regularly promote digital safety and responsible use, especially during classroom discussions or when incidents arise. Many feel that students trust them and are more likely to speak with them than with parents in certain situations.

Still, teachers often work without formal structures or resources for managing online safety. They express interest in stronger prevention systems, more cross-staff collaboration, and better integration of digital education into school policies. As online risks continue to evolve, teachers are calling for more time, training, and institutional recognition of the growing complexity of students’ digital lives.

3.4. Comparisons across the target groups

Device usage and internet access

Preadolescents overwhelmingly reported owning a smartphone, with over 90% stating they used it daily for internet access. Other devices, such as laptops, tablets, and gaming consoles, were used far less frequently and with greater variation.Among parents, nearly all reported having full internet access at their convenience. About 70% described their access as "always," and another 25% as "often." Like their children, parents relied primarily on smartphones for daily online activities. Many also reported using laptops or desktop computers, though not always on a daily basis.

Teachers similarly reported high levels of digital access. About 95% said they had internet access either "always" or "often." Daily use of both smartphones and computers was common, with usage rates around 80–90%. However, tablets remained largely underused, with fewer than 15% using them daily.

Across all three groups, smartphones were the most consistently used device for internet access. Teachers relied more heavily on computers due to professional demands. Preadolescents and parents also ranked smartphones highest but showed more variability in laptop or desktop usage.

Time spent online

Most preadolescents reported spending 2 to 4 hours online during school days. However, a notable portion said they spent more than 5 hours online. On weekends, screen time often increased significantly, with many children reporting 4 to 7 hours of use and some even exceeding 7 hours.

Parents also reported considerable daily screen time. One-third to one-half of respondents said they spent 2 to 4 hours online on weekdays. While internet use tended to increase slightly on weekends, the change was not as dramatic as among children. Parents frequently cited a mix of professional and personal reasons for their internet use.

Teachers similarly reported spending 2 to 4 hours online per day, particularly during the week for lesson planning, communication, and administrative tasks. On weekends, usage patterns varied, with some teachers reducing their screen time due to fewer work-related demands.

Overall, all three groups demonstrated high levels of daily digital engagement. Children tended to have more pronounced increases in usage on weekends. In contrast, adult use remained steady, reflecting a balance between professional obligations and personal routines.

Social media platform use

Among children, WhatsApp and YouTube were the most widely used platforms, each with over 90% usage. TikTok and Instagram also had strong followings, with about 60% and 67% respectively. Roughly half of preadolescents used Snapchat, while only 26% used Facebook. Reddit and other niche platforms had minimal reach.

Parents showed different patterns. WhatsApp and Facebook were the dominant platforms, used by over 85% of respondents. YouTube was also popular (around 65%), while Instagram and Spotify were used moderately. TikTok and Snapchat had very low usage among parents, reflecting the generational divide in platform preferences.

Teachers reported a similar pattern. YouTube and WhatsApp were again the most commonly used, each used by 80–90% of respondents. Facebook remained prominent, while Instagram and Spotify saw moderate engagement. TikTok was virtually unused among teachers, and Twitter, Snapchat, and Reddit were rarely mentioned.

These trends show strong overlap in the use of WhatsApp and YouTube across all groups. However, TikTok and Instagram were clearly favored by children, while Facebook was more prominent among adults. Snapchat use was limited to younger users, and niche platforms remained uncommon in all groups.

Experiences with negative or distressing online content

Roughly 17% of children reported encountering something online that upset or disturbed them in the past year, with an additional 13% preferring not to answer. When such incidents occurred, most children dealt with them independently or confided in friends or siblings. Only a small number reported seeking help from parents or teachers, and very few turned to formal channels such as school staff or police.

Around 25–30% of parents stated that their child had faced a negative online experience in the past year. This slightly higher number may reflect differences in how the question was interpreted or which incidents were shared with parents. Most families handled these situations privately, without escalation to schools or external agencies unless the issue was severe.

Teachers typically became involved when online incidents affected classroom dynamics or were reported directly by students. While only a minority of teachers reported frequent exposure to digital problems like cyberbullying, most were involved in prevention efforts or quick mediations when problems emerged within the school context.

Across the three groups, children rarely escalated mild digital problems, and parents often responded cautiously without involving outside help. Teachers became involved only when the problem intersected with the classroom environment. While severe or frequent distress was not common, roughly one-fifth of participants across groups acknowledged some level of online negativity.

Parental or adult oversight of online activity

Among preadolescents, parental rules and device-level controls were common but inconsistently applied. About one-third of children expressed a desire for less parental involvement in their online lives. Roughly half were satisfied with the current level of oversight, and only a small minority wanted more involvement.

Parents frequently reported setting rules or discussing internet safety with their children. However, the depth and consistency of this monitoring varied significantly. Some relied on open trust, while others used tools like content filters, time limits, or GPS tracking. Many parents acknowledged the difficulty of balancing children's independence with protective oversight.

Teachers, by contrast, did not have direct control over students' personal digital use. Instead, they addressed broader issues of digital behavior through lessons on etiquette, třídnické hodiny (homeroom discussions), and school-wide prevention initiatives. When serious problems arose, teachers coordinated with parents and prevention specialists to ensure appropriate responses.

This comparison highlights the tension between children's desire for autonomy and adults' instincts to monitor and protect. Parents play the most active role in direct oversight, while teachers support digital well-being through structured educational and preventive efforts.

Key takeaways and observations

Smartphones are the dominant device across all groups. Preadolescents show the highest rates of daily phone use, though parents and teachers also rely on them heavily.

Online time is substantial for everyone. Children often exceed adult usage on weekends, while adults balance online time with professional and family duties.

Social media preferences reveal a generational divide. YouTube and WhatsApp are universally used, while TikTok and Instagram are primarily favored by children. Facebook remains more popular among adults.

Negative experiences online are acknowledged by all groups, though children tend to downplay or manage them informally. Parents and teachers respond cautiously and escalate only when necessary.

Oversight and boundaries vary. Children often resist parental control, parents seek balance between safety and freedom, and teachers focus on fostering responsible digital behavior through structured guidance rather than daily supervision.

Despite differing roles and responsibilities, all three groups share an awareness of the opportunities and risks associated with online life. Parents emphasize safety, teachers aim to promote responsible behavior, and children seek connection and autonomy. Common ground lies in maintaining open dialogue, building trust, and ensuring that young people feel supported—without feeling constantly monitored.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Preadolescents

Key quantitative findings

The vast majority of children surveyed reported owning their own smartphone, with approximately 87% using it daily to access the internet. The most frequently used platforms were YouTube (92%) and WhatsApp (93%), followed by TikTok and Instagram, which were used by around 60–67% of respondents. On weekdays, children typically spent 2 to 4 hours online, with usage increasing to 4 to 7 or more hours on weekends.

Around 17% of children reported encountering something online that upset or disturbed them in the past year, while an additional 13% preferred not to answer the question. Most children said they handled these situations on their own or with help from peers or siblings. Only a small number sought help from adults, and formal reporting was rare unless the problem was serious.

Parental oversight varied widely. One-third of children expressed a desire for less parental involvement in their online lives, while about half were satisfied with the current level. A small minority wanted more oversight. Reactions to monitoring ranged from feelings of protection to feeling distrusted or embarrassed.

Key qualitative findings

Children expressed a strong desire for independence and preferred to manage online challenges themselves or with the support of friends and siblings. Many feared that adults would overreact or respond with lectures. Although they demonstrated a basic understanding of online safety—such as not sharing personal information or blocking suspicious users—some children still engaged in riskier behaviors, such as sharing fake details or not reporting threats.

Tension between children and parents was a recurring theme. Young people often felt frustrated by what they perceived as excessive parental checking or emotionally charged responses. They valued calm, empathetic guidance over control. Teachers were not seen as primary figures in resolving personal online problems unless the issue directly affected classroom dynamics or involved school-related chat groups.

Implications for the educational program (children)

The program should aim to empower children by providing them with practical self-help strategies. Modules should teach them how to respond to online negativity, use reporting and blocking tools effectively, and manage emotional reactions. Teaching children how to initiate respectful conversations with trusted adults, without fear of being lectured, is also essential. Peer-to-peer support structures such as “digital buddies” or facilitated group discussions can further strengthen their sense of agency. Practical exercises and roleplays should be included to build confidence in navigating online threats and knowing when and how to seek adult support.

4.2. Parents

Key quantitative findings

Most parents reported having unrestricted internet access and were active users, with smartphones being their most commonly used device. WhatsApp and Facebook were their most frequently used platforms. Oversight strategies varied significantly: while some parents relied on apps, screen-time limits, or device checks, others placed more trust in their children's ability to self-regulate. Around 25–30% reported that their child had experienced something upsetting online in the past year, which was typically handled privately within the family.

Key qualitative findings

Parents expressed strong concerns about their children's safety online, particularly regarding cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content. At the same time, they often felt unsure about how strict to be, especially in the absence of clear guidance from schools. Many reported struggling to find a balance between protection and trust. While they wanted to stay involved, they were aware that constant supervision could lead to resistance or conflict.

There was widespread interest in greater collaboration with schools. Many parents indicated that they would appreciate shared activities, such as workshops, joint lessons, or materials designed to promote digital literacy and emotional well-being.

Implications for the educational program (children and families)

The educational program should include components designed specifically for families. These could take the form of workshops or short sessions that help parents set healthy digital boundaries and engage in open communication with their children. It is important to promote consistent and transparent monitoring strategies so that children understand expectations and consequences. Parents should be supported in moving away from reactive approaches—such as scolding or strict bans—toward proactive, trust-based dialogue. Resources shared by schools should be aligned with what children are learning in class to ensure a consistent message is being delivered at home.

4.3. Teachers

Key quantitative findings

Almost all teachers had daily access to the internet and used digital devices frequently in both their personal and professional lives. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook were widely used. Teachers often integrated digital tools into their classrooms (e.g., Google Classroom), but their role in monitoring students' personal online lives was limited. When incidents such as online bullying or class-related group chat conflicts arose, teachers tended to respond as part of a coordinated team that included counselors or prevention specialists.

Key qualitative findings

Teachers described their roles as largely preventive and educational. Many schools had systems in place for *třídnické hodiny* (homeroom sessions) and prevention programs to address digital behavior. When serious incidents occurred, teachers relied on collaboration with school psychologists, external specialists, or even local police.

Although some students confided in teachers more readily than in parents, this usually occurred only when the issue affected school life. Teachers highlighted the continued impact of COVID-19 on students' social-emotional development and the increasing influence of influencer culture, which complicates prevention efforts.

Implications for the educational program (children and schools)

The program should strengthen existing prevention initiatives by offering teachers structured, scenario-based lessons on topics like online conflict resolution, respectful communication, and emotional resilience. Continuous professional development should be provided to help teachers stay informed about evolving platforms and online risks. Schools should also facilitate better coordination between educators and families, for example, through joint digital safety events or parent–teacher meetings focused on internet use. This alignment can ensure that children receive consistent guidance across both home and school environments.

4.4. Overall implications for the educational model and program

The findings across all groups point to a clear need for an educational model that balances autonomy with guidance. Children consistently expressed a desire to handle online experiences independently, but they still require support structures that respect this independence. The program should promote practical strategies for responding to online problems while encouraging respectful communication between children and adults.

A key focus must be placed on building safe, open channels of communication. Children are unlikely to share concerns if they anticipate being blamed or punished. Teaching both children and adults how to engage in calm, non-judgmental conversations is essential to surfacing hidden problems before they escalate.

The school–home connection should be reinforced by offering unified resources and clear guidelines for online safety. This includes setting realistic rules, suggesting time limits, and teaching parents how to check in with their children without overstepping boundaries. Materials for families should complement what students are learning in school to ensure coherence.

Interactive learning should be central to the model. Children, parents, and teachers alike would benefit from scenario-based training that simulates real-world situations such as harassment, oversharing, or receiving suspicious messages. This allows all groups to practice responses and develop confidence in handling online challenges.

Finally, the program must remain adaptable. The digital environment is constantly evolving, with new platforms and risks emerging regularly. Ongoing updates and feedback loops are necessary to keep content relevant and effective. Team-based approaches—such as prevention teams involving teachers, parents, and student representatives—can help ensure that the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders are addressed in a coordinated way.

FIELD RESEARCH

This report is part of the Erasmus+ project ASAP – *A Systemic APproach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education*.

It presents key findings from field research conducted in Czech Republic with students, parents, teachers, and school leaders. The study explores the challenges of digital life in early adolescence and the educational needs of all involved.

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