Maltese Parents’ Awareness and Management of Risks their Children Face Online

# Details

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Digital Parenting: The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age

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## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Wellbeing
* Risks and harms
* Online safety and policy regulation

## Sample

Study 1: 26 parents of children aged between 8 and 16
Study 2: distribution of questionnaire to 2000 children and parents

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

# Abstract

Parenting children in the digital age involves the challenge of achieving the delicate balance
between supervising children’s online behaviour and allowing them online independence. It can be even more pronounced in an insular culture based on Catholic values. This challenge is discussed in the view of the results of two studies, a qualitative study using focus groups with parents (n=26) and a survey questionnaire carried out to children aged 8 to 15 years and their parents (n=1,324). Results showed that there was a gap between what children do online and what their parents know about these practices. Parents have no clear-cut strategies to prevent risks. They use both enabling and restrictive mediation strategies, but the constant changes in technology mean that they have to adopt a “trial and error” approach to parenting.

# Outcome

"While children’s responses seem to indicate that most of them are aware of what
could go wrong, the discrepancy between child and parent responses shows that parents
are even more cautious." (Farrugia Lauri, 2018; p. 139).
There was a substantial difference between the children’s compared to their parents to the question asking them the amount of time the child spent online. "It was clear that most parents (65%) underestimated how much time their children spent online." (Farrugia Lauri, 2018; p. 141). "There were also discrepancies between what parents allowed their children to do online and what the children claimed they did... the greatest differences were observed in the areas of chatting, video calling, watching videos and doing schoolwork." (Farrugia Lauri, 2018; p. 141).
Parents employ either an enabling (eg. teaching children the concept of right and wrong) or restrictive (eg. limiting the time children spend online) approach to managing risk.
More than half of the parents explain why some websites are harmful and how the internet can be used safely. More than half of the parents (66%) kept track of the websites their child visited. "Parents who used restrictive mediation could only apply certain strategies at home and only when the children were young. Once children started growing up, parents’ control diminished greatly and some realised that enabling mediation strategies were better." (Farrugia Lauri, 2018; p. 144).