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Child participation in research preparation: Experience of deSHAME Croatia and deSHAME Serbia

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Abstract - Children by the Convention on the Rights of the Child have the right to express their opinion on all aspects of their life. The participation of children in research is in the focus of experts and policy makers. It implies the involvement of children in all phases of the research, from planning and preparation to the implementation, and finally interpretation and dissemination of the results. Children from Croatia (N = 12) and Serbia (N = 12) participated in the planning and preparation of the research as part of the deSHAME (international comparative research on sexual harassment and children online risks). The individual and group interviews with high school children (14-18 Years) were conducted with the main goal of improving the research instrument. Specific objectives were (1) supplementing the questionnaire (2) language check and comprehension (3) defining the time frame for questionnaire completion. This paper will present child contribution that resulted with final version of questionnaire used in a nationally representative, internationally comparative survey. Participation of children in early phases of research is important, especially in topics regarding modern technologies and it's extensive use, allowing more appropriate measurement of these phenomena.

Key words - child participation; research preparation; technology use; qualitative methodology; international comparative research.

I. INTRODUCTION

Children as research participants are in the focus of researchers since few decades. What has changed is the degree of children's involvement and the importance of their role in the research. According to Powell and Smith (2009) this is largely related to the change in society's perception of the concept of childhood that led to greater respect for children's opinion and understanding of their experiences. In order to be able to dwell in more detail on the above-mentioned topic, it is first necessary to answer the question of who is considered to be a child [1].

The term child, although often used in everyday speech, has a multidimensional meaning. For example, from a biological standpoint, the term child defines a human being from birth to adolescence. In family relations it means someone's son or daughter, regardless of their age. Regardless of the definition we adhere to, it is certain that children represent people whose rights and interests should be protected and promoted by society until they reach a satisfactory degree of maturity and independence. Usually this is determined by the legal age of majority, which in most countries implies 18 years of age [2]. EU points that the term minor should be used when referring to an individual in a more legal context [3].

In this paper the authors apply the definition of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the umbrella document governing the fundamental rights and freedoms of children, ratified by the Republic of Croatia in 1991. By the Convention a child is determined as a person under the age of 18, unless by the application of another law he/she reaches the age of majority sooner [4]. Children are active holders of their rights and they should have the opportunity to verbalize their opinion and to participate in various activities, including research on topics that concern them. On the other hand adults have an obligation to enable them to participate. This includes the willingness of the adult-researcher to share power and transfer the role of the children in the research from "children seen as consultants to a stage where they obtain a position of power" [5].

The participation of children in research is in the focus of experts and policy makers. Where children have been centrally involved in a research they can be more effectively involved in different kind of decision-making [23] [24]. EU additionally emphasizes that different states have different rules, regulations and guidelines regarding children's participation in research. However, this is sometimes reduced to the right of informed consent and consent of parents and other ethical issues [6].

This primarily refers to the process of recruiting children largely controlled by their parents, who even in situations where children give their consent to participate have a great influence on their decision. In other words, children's participation in research is limited to informed consent and consent of their parents. Child consent as well as informing the parents or their permission (depending on the age of a child and national legislation) are extremely important prerequisite for child's participation in research. But child consent is not burdened with the same informational and process requirements as information intended for parents preceding the permission. Adequate explanation depending their development stage is crucial for child's understanding of the research itself and their participation [7] [8] [23].

Accordingly, there are various institutions and organizations such as Ethics Committees, Ministries, schools, etc., responsible for child safety and assessing the appropriateness of conducting a particular research and its supplementing materials. Furthermore, various research topics are addressed by the mentioned institutions enhancing "sensitivity, represent a barrier when involving children in the research process". Another aggravating circumstance is the incapability to recognize the importance of the role of children as active participants. Namely, it was often the case that children's understanding of a particular phenomenon and their feedback on it was underestimated. Primarily this was due to the majority use of questionnaires that were too complex and incomprehensible for children. Therefore only the use of less structured instruments can achieve a better level of recognition of the importance of children in terms of "young experts" as quality sources of data about their own habits and behaviour [9]. In recent times, excluding the user perspective from research has become inconceivable, even when it comes to children and young people [10]. Namely, over time, there was a change in the paradigms, from those that viewed children as objects of the research to those that began to perceive them as active participants. When talking about the degree of children's participation in research children can participate in research in two ways [11]:

1. As "a source of knowledge" - as a subject/ participant in the study where the power is exclusively on the adult researcher

2. As "a producer of knowledge" – children is in the role of "co-researcher", where the power is shared between adult and children. Larsson et al (2018) identifies 2 types of children producers of knowledge:
   - children as "central collaborators" or "co-designers"- the child shares power with the adult researcher in various decisions (research design, instrument, methodology)
   - children as researchers - when children initiate the research or the research project started by adult, it involves children to an extent that can be characterized by equally sharing power and responsibility in all stages of the research [12]

Also, new topics that research has begun to address have given a significant impact on children's participation in research. In Croatia there are only few publications directed to the child participation in general and even less when it comes to children's participation in the research. The Office of croatian ombudsman for children conducted a research on the participation of children in educational institutions. Children state that they are rarely involved in discussing relevant topics because adults often perceive them as less competent. According to children's responses, participation in schools could be increased by creating an atmosphere of acceptance and freedom of expression in all aspects of life [13]. The European Cohort Development Project (ECDP) states that "involving children in the design and implementation of future research through direct consultation with children contributes to the respecting of the rights of children and ensures a certain level of cooperation of professionals and children in study [14].

Qualitative research is a complex task for researcher without clear methodological guidance that works in all the specific cases. Researcher is the one who must choose the approach and methods that best suit his research goals and data [15]. This is especially important in qualitative research with children. Involving children in research planning requires extra effort as well as extra responsibility for the researcher to protect the children involved. Especially important are the research in the field related to the use of modern technologies, given that children and young people are part of the population that is at the forefront of their use. The authors point out that children's participation in phases such as planning and preparing of the research that implies designing the initial research idea, helping to create survey questionnaires, defining appropriate research language, etc., can improve their skills and contribute to the creation of high-quality programs for the protection of children and youth [1].

However, it should be emphasized that the more active participation of children is largely based on the legal basis that ensured the realization of their rights within the research process [16]. For example, the already mentioned Convention on the Rights of the Child in Article 12 promotes the expression of children's own opinions and views, as well as their active participation in all activities related to them, and thus the research in which they participate [3]. In the accordance with the above, the comments and proposals of the Council of Europe further advocates and contributes to equalization of children's rights to protection, with freedom of expression and information as well as the right to participate. It is emphasized that children should be given a greater role in creating policies and programs concerning their rights in cyberspace. Attention is also focused on states obligation to allow children to freely express their views and opinions through various communication channels, which also includes their participation in scientific research [17]. Koller Trbović and Širanović (2017) state that children accept their own role in research and consider it significant so conclusion is that participation in research in all phases has a positive and empowering effect on children. The same authors state that children can, want and know how to participate in research and that it is necessary to portray

such participation and achieve far greater partnership between researchers and children from the very beginning in creating research design, which has so far been very poorly implemented in Croatia [18].

An extremely important aspect to look at when it comes to research is research ethics. The first edition of the Code of Ethics for children was launched in 2003 by Children Council of the Croatian government as the first complete document regulating the ethical aspects of research with children [19]. The revised edition of the Code of Ethics for Research on Children 2020, clearly sets out the basic principles and general and specific standards that researchers should follow when conducting research involving children. Primarily, the code is based on the fact that in research involving children there is always an asymmetry of power between researchers and respondents (children), in a way that the researcher is in a more dominant position. Accordingly, researcher should know how to adequately approach children so they could better understand the research context. Also, the importance of the child's parents/ guardians as relevant stakeholders in research is emphasized, as they are the ones responsible for protecting and promoting the well-beingand the rights of their children. Given that this Code also refers to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and equally defines the concept of the child as a person under the 18 years of age, it emphasizes the role of researchers to protect the child and ensure ethics at all stages of the research process. For example, research in which the respondent child is deprived of important information or is knowingly incompletely informed about its procedures and objectives, should not be conducted, except in exceptionally justified cases. Furthermore, it is very important that research design has to be approved by the Ethics Committee and other competent bodies, and that the researcher needs to receive informed consent from a child or his parents, bearing in mind that a child over 14 years of age can independently consent to participate in the research, but that parents should nevertheless be informed about the research conduction. On the other hand, when it comes to research that examines a particularly sensitive topic for a child, parental consent takes precedence over the child's consent regardless of his or her age.

If children experience unpleasant feelings during the research, such as fear or anxiety, or the topic of the research causes stress and discomfort, the Code of Ethics prescribes mandatory psychosocial support and providing information about places and ways of getting professional help. Finally, it is important to note that children who consent to participate can at any time withdraw from the research and also withdraw the information he or she has previously provided, thus retaining their right to freedom of choice and protection of their integrity. Also researcher should immediately stop the research if the immediate interventions for reducing the negative effects of research do not give results [20].

Participatory approach respects the children's perspective and points out that children can contribute at different levels. Children's participation in research should include the involvement in all phases of research. This encompasses all phases from the planning and preparation of research to the implementation of research and finally in the interpretation and dissemination of results. If children participate in the planning and preparation phase this may include providing the initial research idea, finding the right questions, but also actively participating in choosing and developing methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the measured phenomena and defining the language of the research.

The main goal testing of the final version of the questionnaire was to improve the research instrument by children's comments. Three specific objectives in the form of the research questions were:

(1) How can we improve and adapt the questionnaire?

(2) Is the questionnaire understandable?

(3) How long does it take to complete the questionnaire?

I. METHODOLOGY

The preparation of the questionnaire for wider application was from June to August 2021. Following the written consent of Childnet International, organization from UK (https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame) for the application of the questionnaire, a double blind translation was conducted. The research team reviewed the translated questionnaire in detail and agreed on the final version.

A. Participants

As the questionnaire is intended for high school students, In Croatia 12 children (1 male) aged 15-18 (average 16.5) participated in testing the questionnaire. In the Republic of Serbia, 12 children (4 males and 8 females) aged 15 to 18 (average 16) participated in the pilot study. The sample was critically intended. In both countries children from the general population and children at risk were included, which enabled holistic coverage in order to obtain as reliable information as possible. Furthermore, children from different backgrounds were included: from cities, from smaller surrounding places and from islands. Such a criterion approach was intended to include as many different children as possible, in order to obtain as much information as possible.

The Ethics Code for Research with Children (2020) was applied for the Croatian research, which included pre-informed parents and a signed statement of consent for the child. In Serbia research was conducted in the cooperation with high schools, parents were contacted first and they signed a statement of consent for their child to participate in the pilot study. Children in both countries were informed about the aim and purpose of data collection, it was emphasized that their participation is voluntary, that their comments are strictly confidential and that only the researcher has access to them. Also, in order to determine how long it takes to complete the questionnaire but also the comprehensibility of the questionnaire, it was important that children carefully read all the questions and answers and give an answer, but it was emphasized that their answers in the questionnaire were not the subject of this

qualitative research and how their responses would not be included in the responses of later quantitative research.

B. Procedure and data analysys

In Croatia two focus groups and five interviews were held with the challenges of organizing research according to the then current epidemiological measures. On the territory of the Republic of Serbia, all questionnaires were done as individual interviews.

The template for testing the questionnaire was the final version of the questionnaire (Croatian or Serbian). In order to answer the research questions, the child had the task to solve the questionnaire on his own and mark everything that was not understandable, everything where the questionnaire could be improved, but also all other remarks that could help the researchers.

The researcher measured the time it took to complete the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the child and the researcher went through all the marked questions together, where the children were encouraged to give their suggestions for improvement. The focus groups and interviews were not recorded, but the questionnaire served as a transcript on which children and researchers wrote comments related to the questions.

All collected transcripts were processed by the simple content analysis method.

The method of content analysis enabled the systematic overview of textual information by its frequencies in specific category. The results are expressed in the number of occurrences. A particular feature could have been classified into several classification categories within the criteria at the same time. Therefore, the categories do not have the total sum corresponding to the number of participants. Insight into the collected transcripts shows that the children had remarks at the level of words, questions and answers.

II. RESULTS

A. Improvement and adaptation of the questionnaire

In this research children provided useful feedback how the questionnaire can be improved and adapted for further implementation. The children which participated in co-creation of the questionnaire also being important cooperates in preparing and planning the wide national representative research were of high school age (14-18 years of age) and met the criterion of heterogeneity as they represented general population as well as risk groups (half-day stay, residential accommodation, users of counselling services). Also geographical criterion was used and children from urban and rural areas (cities, villages, islands) which attend various school programs (three-year and four-year) participated in these phase of the research. Analysis of possible improvements was conducted at 3 levels: at the level of individual words, questions and answers (Table 1).

At the word level, students noticed grammatical errors (eg: ST1 - *the word messenger is misspelled*) but also suggested some better solutions (ST2 - *maybe it's better to put "live"*

instead of "real life"; ST12- *Instead of too hard I would use the word stressful*). Questionnaire-level improvements were proposed 48 times through seven different codes. Based on their own online experience, students suggested expanding existing claims or adding new ones (ST12: "*It would be good to ask if you have ever written or read a story or text that has a detailed account of sexual intercourse and content..*"; : "*I would add more reasons: out of a need to feel superior; to get attention from the person they are harassing; to get attention from people in general"; to other people and would retaliate in the same way* "; ST11:" *I would add a statement: I would worry that he would think I was dramatizing and that it was nothing serious* "; ST12:" *I should add: I think that would upset me even more* ")

Also, students had comments on questions in the direction of minor modifications to clarify the question (ST11*:" I would add: I shared something on the Internet that I later regretted because it was inappropriate. I would add… because it was inappropriate because a person can share some other things and later regret them, without necessarily being inappropriate* "; ST12:" *it might be better to specify: content that is directly intended for you, because for example in the application Omegle is circulating livestream as someone stands naked and this content can be viewed by anyone, it is not intended or sent exclusively to the person who is watching, but it is shown to him in a number of other live streams* ").

TABLE 1. IMPROVEMENT AND ADAPTATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	CODE	N CRO	N SRB
WORD	formulate differently	4	2
	grammatical error	2	0
QUESTION	additional question/ new variable	5	4
	Adaptation of question (remove something or add something)	6	3
	split into two questions	2	1
	improve the meaning of the question	1	7
	replace the order of the questions	1	0
	Repetitive content in the questions	2	2
ANSWERS	additional answer/ new variable	6	2
	Adaptation of answers (remove something and add something)	3	1
	Adjust scale of offered answers	1	2

Significant comments of the students were promoting gender equality emphasizing that boys can be victims of online sexual harassment as well as girls (ST11- "*should be listed and adjusted for boys, not just girls because boys are exposed to more and more different comments regarding the look on social media by girls and that some comments certainly hurt them. There is a profile on social media*

where the trend is for girls to comment on guys who are recorded with music - first with a T-shirt then without (TIK-TOK video) and how girls leave different comments below the video "; ST11:" *Sexual expressions can also be addressed to boys* ") or Other improvements can be described as splitting the existing issue into two (ST1: "*maybe this would be a good idea to split this into two, because I don't know which part of the question to focus on, sharing photos or positive comments*"), improving the meaning of the question (ST1: "*I don't share my photos and I don't know what to answer here. If I answer" Never "it can mean that students share photos but don't get positive comments but also don't share their photos*"), replace the order of the questions (ST1: *perhaps it would be better to reverse the order of these two questions Have you ever been in a romantic relationship with someone? Are you currently in a romantic relationship with someone*? ") And Repetitive content in the questions (ST5*:" questions are ok, I just think that they should be repeated, that they have the same meaning* "; ST7:" *there is a lot of this and everything is the same for me* "ST3S: The questionnaire is too long and has a lot of repetition, it's a bit confusing).

Improvements in the level of answers are most often in the sense of adding answers that are not offered (ST1: "*It would be good to add an answer I do not want to answer because there are probably children who will not like this question*; ST12:" *I would add Pinterest and Patreon* "; *It would be good to include an answer that includes a simple pre-meeting call, not just a video* "; *that it is safe and close, for example, to people who can call or where they know me* "; ST11:" *I would add an answer, I stopped leaving the house* "; *such things do not happen* "). Students suggested better solutions to the answer by adding or removing one part of the answer (ST4: "*Maybe it would be better to put" Something else "instead of" bisexual* "; ST1 & ST2:" *Musical.ly "does not exist" "This is a network that was before Tik-Tok... as it is now called TikTok* ") or in the direction of adjusting the answer scale, to better suit the question asked (ST1:" *I would adjust this a bit* (op.a. think of the scale of answers offered). "*it would be better to" At least once a month "and instead of" every week "I would put" At least once a week* " ST1S *there are options once a day, and the next one is every hour, it would be better to say, for example, several times a day*).

B. Understanding the questionnaire

While reading the questionnaire, the students noticed words, terms or compounds that were not completely clear and understandable to them. It is interesting to note that the word "flirt" is the word that most participants (4 of them in Croatia) marked as unknown, which was not noticed in any other level of analysis or code level (ST1: "*I do not know what this means* "; ST2: " *I don't understand* "; ST4:" *What does this mean* "; ST12:" *I would replace flirting because I don't know anyone who uses that word, and I only know it from the novel*"). Other misunderstandings at the word level mainly relate to the research topic itself (ST1: "*what are sexual comments?* (After being explained) *Maybe bracket as an explanation*; ST1:"*I don't know what homophobic and transphobic language is; "ST1 : "What does sexual orientation mean?"*).

At the question level, it was noted that students were unsure of what the question was about and that they were not sure what to answer (ST2: "*I don't understand*. ST2: "*I don't understand what this is about. What am I worried about? Are you asking me here if I'm unsure?*; ST1*:" I don't understand what this is about? How can I secretly take other people's sexual photos? other people's sexual activities... or?* "; ST3:" *Does this mean in general photographs or inappropriate content?* "; ST1*: "This question is totally unclear to me. I get lost reading it. Maybe it would be better to put: If you experienced sexual harassment on social networks, what would be the reasons for not reporting it to the social network on which the harassment took place?* ; ST2S *it is not clear to me whether the claim no. 1 relates to abuse or not*.").

TABLE 2. UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	CODE	N CRO	N SRB
WORD	The term is unknown	8	2
QUESTION	the meaning of the question is unclear	6	2
	Consider sociodemographic variables irrelevant for the research	15	0
ANSWERS	additional clarification needed	2	1

These comments are important because a clearly asked question increases the credibility of the answer and thus a better analysis of the results.

Students were asked questions that we can combine as socio-economic, assessed as not relevant to the research question (ST6: "*Who do you live with*?"; ST6 and ST 7: "*How do you assess the financial capabilities of your family in relation to the families of your peers*"; ST6: "*Which the type of high school you attend* "; ST7:" *What grade point average did you finish last school year* "; ST5, ST6 and ST7:" *Educational status of mother and father* "; ST5, ST7:" *Do you have any physical or mental health problems that last longer? time* ST5, ST7: "*Are you a person with a disability*") but this suggestion were not implemented and was discussed with children why this level of data is important for the research.

C. Additional comments

Students had comments on the topic of the research itself presented as additional codes in Table 3.
The research topic encouraged students to share their own or someone else's experience of sexual harassment (ST3: "*a photo of a girl I know was shared*"; ST6: "*I received sexual messages and requests, but these people did not have any of my sexual blackmail materials, so I did not know what to answer the questions whether she would consider these people guilty, whether they should delete it, it makes no sense to report it because it has already been seen and published* ").
One of the students stated children distrusted in adults as those to whom they that most of the questions were realistic but stressed the children distrust for help if they

experience any of the behaviors *(but I would like to single out the questions that are unnecessary about me, and those are questions about teachers, because I think that few of us will ask for help from teachers for sexual abuse. Rather, we will seek advice or help from a best friend, sister, or someone in the family".* Also, they pointed out that teachers rarely initiate conversations about this topics (ST3- *Such topics are opened in the classroom with some professors who look at their work from the pedagogical side, and such are rare. These topics are more often raised by students.*). Students commented on the content of the constructs and their operationalization from their perspective (ST6:" *I think there are too many questions to whom I would like to address and whom I would not "; and how children feel and take them seriously* ")

TABLE 3. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

CODE	N CRO	N SRB
experiences with online sexual harassment	2	0
highlighted the problem of reporting and communicating with adults on the topic of online sexual harassment	6	0
Online sexual harassment as a consequences of a different sexual orientation	0	1

Students enhance importance of continuous work of adults with children on topics that are still taboo in society today, as online sexual harassment from child's early age. (ST12: "*adults should work more on their taboos and provide children with help and information already in primary school and pay more attention to their mental health and how children feel and take them seriously*").

Some of them strongly support the conduction of the research (ST11: "*I am glad that this kind of research will be conducted because there is too little discussion with children and young people about these topics, ST4SThe questionnaire is very useful and very detailed."*). Such comments on the research topic indicate that the implementation of the research itself can be a way of raising awareness and sensitizing to risky behaviors in children and young people. Therefore, it is important that the questions are professionally designed, that the respondents have additional professional psychological help or instructions that they can turn to if after the research if they need to talk to someone about their experience of witnessing or participating in online risky behaviour.

D. Duration of questionnaire completion

In response to the third research question, In Croatia it took students up to 46 minutes to determine if the questionnaire was suitable for completion in one class period. The average time to complete the questionnaire was 29.1 minutes. In Serbia students were filling the questionnaire up to 51 minutes, while the average time was 34.4 minutes.

It is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the researcher was on site with them one-on-one or in small group, and with an individualized approach and support, better results can be achieved, which should be taken into account when conducting research in the classroom. In research preparation phase we informed teachers that the pilot study with children indicated the different time required to complete the questionnaire. Given this result, it is proposed to inform about the research separately from the research itself, so that students who needed it have a full school hour to fill out the questionnaire. Introductory information is detailed and time consuming so in the preparation of the research it was required that the activities of informing the children precede the research itself, and that enough time be devoted to it so that the children would be able to make an informed decision on consent.

III. DISCUSSION

Children from Croatia (N = 12) and Serbia (N = 12) participated in the planning and preparation of the research as part of the DeSHAME research (second research wave of the international comparative research on sexual harassment and risky activities of children online). Participation of children in all steps of the research was an extremely important and this paper presents their active participation in the phase of designing the questionnaire in the second research wave. As Koller Trbović and Širanović (2017) identifies a lack of published paper and studies in our area focused on children's participation in research [18]. In both countries where deSHAME research was conducted, we wanted to enable children to participate in research from the planning and preparation phase, and it should be emphasized that these countries differ in their cultural and historical heritage and national approach to the phenomenon. The contribution of this paper is reflected in the detail presentation of the involvement of children in designing the questionnaire, taking into account local specifics. Namely, the first version of the questionnaire was developed in the first wave of research for 3 countries (UK, Denmark and Hungary) which conducted national research with child participation from the phase of research preparation, developing research methodology and preparing research materials [21]. The questionnaire was then revised in 2021 for the second research wave in Croatia and Serbia, and children and young people who participated in individual and group online consultations in this pilot study where our collaborators with important goal to finalize the questionnaire which preceded the quantitative, national a representative study on child sexual harassment online.

Children gave important insights in terminology, generational differences, gender equality and sexually minorities (particularly important for the research topic of online sexual harassment) and they highlighted the problem of reporting and communicating with adults on the topic of online sexual harassment to which, according to this note, the whole chapter in the questionnaire finalized for application in quantitative research will be focused on. In the pilot study, the children encouraged us to consider alternative adequate way to deliver comprehensive introduction at the beginning of the research, which we consider extremely important since

this is high school student population and they have the right to be informed in detail because they can understand it. Munro (2001) states that if information is not explained to children in an appropriate way it can have the opposite effect and make children feel as if they are unable to contribute [22]. On the other hand, the instruction given at the beginning of the research has a clear senzibilisation purpose and empowers young people to contact adults if they feel the need to.

Given that this is a sensitive topic and possible secondary traumatization for the research participants, these ethical aspects were treated with special attention by asking for parental consent for all children who participated in the pilot to the fact that someone stayed with children after the official act research and were informed about the possibilities of applying for and getting help if they want to talk to someone about this topic, especially in 2 cases when children shared personal experiences of witnessing such behavior. Powell and Smith (2009) state that "children's participation rights are particularly compromised when the potential child participants are considered vulnerable and the topic of the research is regarded as sensitive"[1]. This means more responsibility for the researcher, which includes responsibility for children's participation in all phases of the research, and even an active participatory approach must include all elements of risk minimization for those children who participate in research activities. This indicates that the power and responsibility shared by adult researchers and children mentioned by Larsson et al. (2018) does not include the exclusive responsibility of adult researchers to protect children from the possible negative consequences of participating in research with particularly sensitive topics. On the other hand, the impression is that this inclusion of children in the phase of preparation and planning of research had an empowering effect on the children who participated in it, which confirms the findings of Koller Trbović and Širanović (2017). In conclusion, it is important to share research experiences in the field of children's participation in research and to transparently present the steps of children's participation in certain research activities.

IV. STUDY LIMITATION

In the second deSHAME research wave, the questionnaire was adapted for conducting research in Croatia and Serbia. Since the questionnaire was taken from the deSHAME international project, most of the questions and scales were pre-defined. Children had the opportunity to add topics and questions, but it is possible that a detailed exploration of the questionnaire suggested the type of questions and topics included in the research. It would certainly be useful, in future researches, to examine how children define online sexual harassment and its manifestations without being familiar with the definition and variables as was the case here.

The limitation of the research is also reflected in specific research approaches in two countries where different qualitative methods of data collection (interviews and focus groups) were used, which led to unequal informativeness of the obtained data and thus prevented a more detailed comparison of the obtained results.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper brings several important innovations in the presentation of children's participation in the preparation of a national representative survey in Croatia and Serbia
1. Provides a detailed overview of all steps of children's involvement and the results of group and individual consultations with children and youth
2. Children and young people had the opportunity to co-design the questionnaire, and their inclusion contributed to a better understanding of the questionnaire for children for whom the questionnaire is intended, improving the questionnaire through additional questions, answers or additional explanations, and measured the time required quality preparation for conducting research.3. Children and young people have identified important topics of gender equality, sexual minorities and the possibility of reporting perpetrators of online sexual harassment, which further confirms that research in this area is relevant.
4. Children and young people in this research had role of significant contributions providing the better understanding as prerequisite for the researches on online sexual risky behaviors as well the online sexual harassment
5. Children and young people participated in the preparation of a national representative survey that will provide significant results in the field of online sexual harassment of children on the Internet and practical implications based on new findings aimed at increasing digital well-being and safety of children on the Internet.

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