

RISK OF ADDICTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA UTILIZATION AMONG YOUTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA

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Background: It is estimated that there are around five billion users of social networks in the world, and among the students' usage of this media of communication is increasing. The goal of the research is: to assess the patterns and frequency of use of social networks among the student population, as well as the risk of addiction to their use.

Methods and Objectives: The research was conducted as a cross-sectional study at the Pan-European University »Apeiron« in Banja Luka. For the purposes of the research, a questionnaire was designed, posted on the website and bulletin boards of all faculties, and students (559 of them) voluntarily and anonymously filled out the questionnaire during spring 2023. Risk of addiction was assessed by Bergen scale. Descriptive statistics and statistic of differences between variables (chi square test) were used.

Results: The most frequently used social networks are Instagram (84.1%) and Facebook (39.5%). Students used this media mostly 1-2 times a day during normal daily activities (45.1%) and in their free time (73.3%). Half of the students estimate that they have no problem with the use of social networks. The largest percentage of students (95.3%) has a low risk of addiction and 4.7% a medium-high risk of addiction from the use of social networks, without significant differences according to the socio-demographic (sex: $p=0,564$, age: $p=0,188$, place of living: $p=0,193$) and socio-economic characteristics of the students (study programme: $p=0,981$, success during studies: $p=0,544$, financial status: $p=0,749$).

Conclusions: A low risk of addiction to social networks is present in more than 95% of students in Banja Luka, while a medium-high risk is present in less than 5% of students. Students evaluate good mental and emotional health. There is need for using social media as a health education tools among students.

Keywords: social media, students, utilization, health risks, addiction