

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND GAMING AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NOVI SAD

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Background: The prevalence of internet use is constantly increasing, necessitating a continuous assessment of its problematic use and factors influencing it. This disorder is particularly relevant in adolescents and young adults who use the internet more than other age groups. The objective of our study was to determine the factors influencing the duration of social media use and online gaming.

Objectives and Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of first-grade high school students in Novi Sad. The analysis included 876 respondents, of whom 477 were females (54%). The research instrument used was the European School Project on Alcohol and other Drugs questionnaire from 2019, which was completed online.

Results: On weekdays, students mostly spent 2-3 hours on social media (31.4%), while on weekends, they spent six or more hours (29.1%), in both cases significantly more girls ($p<0.001$). Students who played games during the week mostly did so for half an hour or less, and on weekends for 2 to 3 hours, significantly more boys ($p<0.001$). Young people who consumed alcohol in the last 30 days significantly more often used social media longer during the day ($p<0.001$), as did those who skipped classes more frequently ($p=0.003$). Current smokers are also significantly more likely to use social media for six or more hours on weekdays and weekends ($p<0.001$ and $p=0.005$). Respondents who played video games “almost every day” gambled significantly more often in the last 12 months ($p=0.016$) compared to those who did not play video games “almost every day”. Parents of respondents who played video games “almost every day” are more often highly educated.

Conclusions: Research increasingly recognizes the need for implementing preventive programs to prevent excessive internet use among young people in our environment. Recognizing different patterns of internet use and factors influencing them can improve the adaptation of prevention programs to various target groups.

Keywords: Risk Factors; Adolescent; Internet Use