



<https://doi.org/10.16926/eat.2024.13.07>

Agnieszka KOLEK

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5405-1722>

The Maria Grzegorzewska University

e-mail: akolek@aps.edu.pl

Sylwia GALANCIAK

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9850-3954>

The Maria Grzegorzewska University

e-mail: sgalanciak@aps.edu.pl

## Problematic use of the Internet and young adults' mental health

---

**How to cite [jak cytować]:** Kolek, A., & Galanciak, S. (2024). Problematic use of the Internet and young adults' mental health. *Edukacyjna Analiza Transakcyjna*, 13, 133–147.

---

### Abstract

The article is an attempt to present the phenomenon of problematic Internet use in the context of its potential links with other mental health issues. The objective of the presented pilot study was to check whether there is any link between the feeling of being addicted to the Internet and the occurrence of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms in young adults. 117 students from three universities took part in the study which used the authors' questionnaire and a shortened version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21). The study revealed an alarmingly high level of depression, anxiety and stress in the group of respondents as well as a correlation between it and one's declaration of being addicted to the Internet.

**Keywords:** problematic use of the Internet, behavioural addictions, mental health, depression, student.

### Introduction

The conceptualisation of the phenomenon of addiction to the Internet, both in theoretical and research terms, is significantly difficult. This is influenced by

both galloping technological changes and progressing adaptation (not always constructive) of children, adolescents and young adults to certain phenomena of the virtual world. Subsequent generations function not only in the reality of the Internet and smartphones, but in the situation of dynamically developing solutions based on artificial intelligence algorithms. Both gratification and negative consequences of this technological-psychological combination, existing in the life of a person not prepared for it, are currently difficult to estimate, and its future shape and consequences hard to predict. However, the correlations between e-activities and multifaceted health consequences occurring in web users are becoming more and more visible, which makes them a more frequent subject of various studies, not only in the area of pedagogy and psychology, but also medical and health sciences. With the concomitant increase in emotional and identity problems of adolescents and young adults, the addiction to the virtual world further exacerbates the mental health crisis in this age group.

This article tackles the phenomenon of problematic use of the Internet by young adults in the light of their mental health. The studies presented in the text aimed at determining the relationship between the feeling of being addicted to the Internet and the occurrence of depression, anxiety and stress in people that are about to enter adulthood with the experience of a generation growing up in the world of digital media. The survey, including the group of pedagogy, psychology and medicine students from three Warsaw universities, revealed an alarmingly high level of the feeling of depression, anxiety and stress in the group of respondents as well as the existence of a relationship between it and one's declaration of being addicted to the Internet.

## **Diagnosis of addiction to the Internet**

An addiction can be diagnosed in a situation when an individual's behaviour linked with it and their actions cause damage or harm to themselves or those around them, while this behaviour continues despite this negative impact. An increasing pace of life and the need to look for continuous gratification while avoiding difficult emotional states is deeply linked with the whole pleasure and escape system, which can be manifested by one's immersion in cyberspace and making use of new technologies (Woronowicz, 2021, p.12). Thus, addiction to the Internet can be defined as the wrong way of participating in cyberspace, which can lead to disturbances of mental functions and behavioural disorders. The addiction is also manifested by difficulties pertaining to tolerance understood as the need of longer and longer Internet use in order to attain the sense of satisfaction and/ or a marked decrease in the sense of satisfaction despite being online for the same period of time (Woronowicz, 2001, p. 192).

The problem of cyber-addiction has become so serious that the guidelines concerning it are being systematically detailed. For example, a new version of the International Classification of Diseases ICD-11 introduces a new category concerning *disorders caused by addictive behaviours*, i.e. *Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD)*. This new clinical unit, similarly to the sub-category *non-substance related disorders* introduced earlier in the American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), understood as the one encompassing various mental disorders, where one of the factors is the loss of control (constant or recurring) over the intensity of one's action or performance of certain activities in spite of the feeling of loss or other negative consequences (Wojtczak et al., 2023, p. 2).

For a long time, problematic use of computer games (especially online) has been one of the most important and serious educational and health issues concerning the use of new technologies. Thus, it invariably attracts special attention from researchers. In the diagnostic context, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), in the fifth version of its classification of mental diseases, distinguishes the following symptoms of the disorder concerning online gaming: excessive preoccupation with playing; the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms such as irritability or anxiety; increasing tolerance; failed attempts to control playing; the loss of previous and alternative interests to gaming; constant and intrusive engagement in gaming despite its negative consequences; manipulation and deception of loved ones, teachers or therapists as far as time devoted to gaming is concerned; gaming as a manifestation of an attempt at a remedial mechanism, the occurrence of the risk of losing an important, close relationship or other psycho-social consequences. In order to diagnose the aforesaid disorder, there must be the occurrence of at least five abovementioned symptoms lasting no shorter than 12 months (Grajewski and Dragan, 2021, p. 78).

Based on the analysis of professional literature, one can distinguish three trends in the area of social-psychological determinants of Internet addiction. The first trend is psychodynamic, assuming the link between childhood traumas, personality traits and a tendency to become addicted to the Internet. The other tendency is behavioural concerning the reinforcement theory, which points to the fact that the Internet offers immediate gratification, good entertainment, the feeling of escape from real life problems, and an opportunity to develop close or even intimate relations with others. The last trend is connected with biomedical concepts which explain addiction as the deficiency of chemical substances in the brain, neurotransmitters that regulate its activity (Siudem, 2013, p. 173).

From the perspective of neuroscience, the particular vulnerability of children and adolescents to addiction derives from the immaturity of their central nervous system (CNS) structures. During the adolescent transition period, the brain is undergoing rapid maturation processes which last until the age of 25.

The dopaminergic system responsible for motivational systems may create a neurobiological base of abnormal behaviours such as addictions or compulsions. Other brain structures such as the prefrontal cortex or the amygdale responsible for integrating emotions and information processing are immature too (Radochońska and Radochoński, 2012, p. 18). Due to neurological need for stimulation, children and adolescents as well as young adults may choose stimuli providing high activation and stimulation with little effort. Such a condition is fulfilled by, among all, computer games, online games, telephone games or console ones, e.g. the RPG (Role-Playing Game, creating a character and his identity) and FPS (First-person Shooter, in which the player takes on the role of a character using several types of weapons, most often firearms), strategic, skill, logical, simulation, fantasy, and adventure games.

As the author of one of the first standardised tools for diagnosing cyber-addiction (the Internet Addiction Test), Kimberly S. Young states, compulsive use of the Internet includes four components: excessive use linked with neglecting one's basic biological and emotional-social needs; the feeling of withdrawal, including the feeling of anger, irritation, tension in a situation when one cannot have access to the Internet; increasing tolerance concerning more and more time spent online; negative consequences and losses regarding education, work, social relations. What is more, addicted persons manifest a destructive relapse cycle accompanied by inner dialogues and defence mechanisms such as rationalization, feeling of shame and regret due to time lost online, taking up abstinence followed by a relapse (Young, 2017, p. 44).

There are three basic models exploring the etiology of addictions in the context of developmental changes in adolescents and young adults. These models seem adequate not only in relation to addictions to psychoactive substances, but also in the context of behavioural addictions. These are:

- overload model, which is caused by stress triggered by the very changes and challenges of a given developmental period; in this case the virtual world is treated as an escape from duties and tasks typical for the real world;
- mismatch model, where the biggest focus is put on interactions taking place between a young person and their environment; when such needs are not met by the family, educational, or school environment, frustration grows, which leads to the occurrence of psychopathological symptoms in a person's behavior;
- model of increased heterogeneity, which regards the effectiveness of dealing with stressful situations by choosing constructive or non-constructive reactions; in such circumstances, adolescents may prefer e.g. virtual, not real-life relations, in this way satisfying their need of peer relations and quitting school (Radochońska and Radochoński, 2012, p. 25).

Addiction to the Internet proceeds in a few stages, the first one being fascination with the Internet, its potential and resources. An individual at that stage is not overly engaged in the virtual world and does not suffer from consequences of their addiction (losses). At the second stage of the addiction (hazardous use), the individual loses their ability to control and is subject to more and more frequent impulses of using the cyber space. The third stage has negative consequences deriving from lack of control of one's needs and behaviours. At that stage, the individual experiences deterioration in functioning in important spheres of life for an extended period of time (Kaliszewska, 2007, p. 82).

The subject matter of Internet addiction, initially focused on game addiction, nowadays covers a wider and more varied group of phenomena. Together with technological progress and future which is harder to predict, it should be assumed that both classifications and new definitions of cyber-addiction will be subject to further detailing. New e-addictions that have been described recently encompass the following:

- FoMo (Fear of Missing out) – addiction concerning fear of missing out on information or being omitted;
- Nomophobia (No Mobile Phone Phobia) – addiction concerning fear of separation from one's phone ; this type of fear (phobia) is becoming more and more frequent and gaining momentum every year. In Poland alone, 13% of people manifest the strongest and 52.6% moderate severity of nomophobia (Czerski, 2022 p. 137);
- Doomscrolling – understood as an addictive search for negative information; such behaviours are originally linked with the feeling of fear, anxiety and tension; although at the beginning, the Internet user tries to explore a given subject matter in order to calm down and avoid emotions difficult to accommodate, as a result they fall into a trap of obsessive and compulsive pursuit of a given activity, for example, checking the news about disasters, war sentiments or post-pandemic effects. This type of addiction was linked with passive and habitual use of social media, anxiety and poor self-control (Sharma et al., 2022, p. 1);
- cyberchondria – a compulsive tendency to worry about the state of one's health linked with simultaneous search for medical information on this subject on the Internet; concern for one's health is manifested by obsessive doubts and compulsive search for knowledge in order to diagnose one's ailments or ease tension and uncertainty (Woronowicz, 2021, p.132).

There is no doubt that the Internet, including social media, plays a very important role in psycho-social functioning of adolescents and young adults, and using digital technologies has become a universal and indispensable activity. Already before the pandemic, the percentage of school-age children using the net approached 100%, which was reflected by social surveys exploring the activity

of this age group on the Internet. The questions whether the respondents use the net have practically disappeared from questionnaires as the number of people answering them negatively oscillates below the statistical error limit. In the survey *Problematic Use of the Internet by Adolescents (Problematiczne użytkowanie Internetu przez młodzież)* conducted by Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę Foundation in 2019, 97.1% of adolescents stated that they use the Internet via their smartphones (Makaruk et al., 2019, p. 21). The question is not any longer “if” but “how long” young users stay online. The average amount of time teens use the Internet is steadily increasing. According to the survey *Teens 3.0 (Nastolatki 3.0)* conducted in 2023, on schooldays it equaled 5 hours and 36 minutes, whereas at weekend sit was 6 hours and 16 minutes (Lange et al., 2023). For many children exposure to the screen already begins before the age of two, and having reached adolescence, most teens are already completely immersed in the world of mobile devices. Early, abnormal relationships based on, e.g. cyber-victimisation in social media, may constitute potential risk factors regarding the occurrence of mental issues (Nesi, 2020, pp. 116-117). Today’s young adults partially belong to the end of generation Y, and partially to generation Z, which means they grew up in an already digitalized world (Barhate, Drani, 2022), which has become their primary operating environment, offering endless development and communication possibilities, but at the same time being full of temptation, traps and hazards not always easy to identify. Related experiences and habits from the period of childhood and adolescence may have an impact on one’s functioning in the years to come. A particularly worrying phenomenon today is a very high and growing number of children, adolescents and young adults with mental health problems (cf. Sitnik-Warchulska et al., 2019).

## **Mental health of adolescents and young adults**

Among the most frequently mentioned issues in the area of mental health experienced by young adults are mood disorders (depressive disorders) as well as anxiety and stress disorders linked with them. These disorders often develop during one’s childhood and adolescence, and addiction to the Internet may constitute a prodromal or moderating factor in the context of the disease.

Among depressive disorders, i.e. unipolar affective disorders, one can mention serious mood disorders, including major depression and recurring depressive disorders. It should be emphasised that emotions difficult to handle such as sadness, discouragement, lack of hope and pessimism concern the majority of people and reaching a certain level of intensity they usually disappear on their own after a few days or weeks. Thus, a short depressive episode is usually aimed at adapting to a given stressful situation. However, when symptoms persist and

get more and more serious, a diagnosis for depression should be considered (Butcher et al., 2020, p. 277).

The development of depressive disorders is affected by biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors. Among theories concerning depression predictors in professional literature, these are the dominating ones:

- biological theories pertaining to the influence of somatic diseases and medicaments on how the organism functions,
- genetic theories – about 42% of people manifest susceptibility to major depression,
- neurochemical theories, including the monoamine theory of depression (depression understood as the result of a significant decrease in the number of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine in certain receptor areas of the brain),
- depression as a result of abnormalities in the hormonal and immune systems, especially in the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis and the hypothalamus - pituitary - thyroid gland axis (Butcher et al., 2020, p. 287).

Analysing organic causes of depression, it is worth quoting studies with the use of non-invasive methods of brain examination. Neuroimaging results indicate that cognitive abnormalities typical for depression are linked with the dysfunction of specific brain structures. Focusing on negative thoughts and gloomy visions is correlated with decreased activity of the upper parietal lobe, as well as ventral-lateral and dorso-lateral prefrontal cortex. What is more, the brain of a person with depression finds it much easier, comparing to a healthy person, to recall negative content. Moreover, overactivity of the brain's functional network, e.g. amygdala and hippocampus, is responsible for tunnel thinking and the growth of obsessive, negative thoughts in a given person (Golonka et al., 2024, p. 678).

## Research overview

The research on Internet addiction has already been conducted for several decades and recently, since the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, publications pertaining to the subject matter of behavioural addictions in pedagogical, psychological and medical literature have been even more frequent.

Lozano-Blasco and others (2022) conducted the meta-analysis of studies, describing the results regarding Internet addiction among young adults. The meta-analysis included 30 studies from Europe, Asia, America and Oceania, encompassing the total sample of 21 378 people. The conclusions from the studies overview show that Internet addiction is becoming a bigger and bigger problem in most countries, and that it is linked with young adults experiencing interpersonal difficulties, depression and anxiety resulting in a more frequent occurrence of disorders and mental issues (Lozano-Blasco et al., 2022, p. 6).

Diotaiuti, Mancone and others (2022) conducted the research pertaining to inadequate Internet use in a group of 481 students. In the whole group, 38% of the respondents were diagnosed as addicted persons, whereas 37.7% displayed behaviours linked with excessive Internet use. Moreover, the analysis conducted regarded the relationship between Internet addiction and the trait of impulsiveness as well as the occurrence of co-addiction in the subjects, while both variables turned out to be predictors in the formation of addiction (Diotaiuti, 2022, p. 1).

Further research concerning the relationship between depression and anxiety disorder symptoms, and problematic use of smartphones by young adults was conducted by Elhai, Yang and others (2020). The research sample included 1034 Chinese BA students. The main objective of the research was to determine the relationship between the level of anxiety intensity as far as access to information and FOMO were concerned, and the occurrence of anxiety-depression disorders and an increase in the phenomenon of problematic smartphone use (PSU). The research results show a significant correlation between the aforesaid features and the occurrence of FOMO, which constituted a mediation variable between the anxiety level and intensified smartphone addiction (Elhai et al., 2020).

Wojtkowska, Hewiak and Gąsiorowska (2023) proposed a research project concerning a correlation between an educational aspect, including the parent-child relationship, and Internet addiction in children. 936 students (aged 7 to 14) qualified for the project, including 51.6% girls and 46.3% boys and 19 students (2.2%) who defined their sex as other. The strongest predictors of addiction risk in schoolchildren turned out to be their manifested level of anger and the child-mother attachment style. An abnormal relationship with a child's parent conditioned increased manifestations of depression, a higher level of anxiety and sleep issues, which were linked with excessive use of e-media. The quality of relations with a child's mother directly determined the child's self-regulation ability at the emotional level and the feeling of its agency, which was also significantly linked with the child's tendency to abuse the Internet. What is more, adults who abused social media created a less safe relation with their child, which itself intensified the risk of Internet abuse by the child (Wojtkowska et al., 2023, p. 59).

## **Research purpose and focus**

Literature review on Internet addiction and mental health disorders in young adults shows the complexity of the problem. Therefore, the subject matter of this research is situated in an interdisciplinary context, both psycho-pedagogical and clinical.



The aim of the pilot study was to determine the relationship between the subjective feeling of being addicted to the Internet and the occurrence of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms in young adults. The cognitive objective was to broaden scientific knowledge on the relationship between Internet addiction and mental health of young adults. Having determined the main research problem, the following questions were posed: Do young adults declaring their subjective feeling of being addicted to the Internet manifest depression symptoms at the same time? Is there any relationship between the subjective feeling of being addicted to the Internet and the feeling of anxiety and stress in young adults? In the course of formulating working hypotheses, it was assumed that the answer to both questions was positive.

## Research organisation

The research included 117 students from three Warsaw universities (The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Maria Skłodowska-Curie Warsaw Higher School, the Warsaw Medical Academy). One of them is a state establishment, the other two are private schools. The students of the following departments were recruited: Pedagogy (full-time and part-time studies), Psychology (full-time and part-time studies) and Medicine (full-time studies). The sample included definitely more women ( $n=100$ ) constituting 85.5% of the respondents, while male respondents ( $n=17$ ) constituted 14.5%. The majority of the students were young adults aged 19-29 ( $n=97$ ), i.e. 82.9% of the group, where people over 30 years of age constituted in total ( $n=20$ ), i.e. 17.1% of the respondents. Among the respondents, there were ( $n=52$ ) 44.4% of them still living with their parents, while ( $n=65$ ) 55.6% of them have already moved out. 60,7% ( $n=71$ ) of the respondents declared being in a relationship.

The tools used for the research were the authors' own questionnaire concerning the subjective evaluation of one's addiction to the Internet and a shortened version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) by P. F. Lovibond and S.H. Lovibond, in its Polish adaptation and pre-standardisation by Makara-Studzińska et al. (2024). The research was conducted in May 2024, in the form of an anonymous electronic questionnaire. IBM SPSS Statistics programme, version 29, was used for statistical analyses.

## Research results and discussion

The distribution of the DASS-21 results in scales of depression, anxiety and stress among the respondents points to high scores on clinical scales. In

order to distinguish three sub-scales of the tool, variables depicting anxiety, depression and stress levels of the subjects were created sequentially, according to the key.

The table below presents the distribution of depression levels in the researched group in the DASS 21 test.

Table 1.  
*Depression levels measured by the DASS 21 questionnaire*

Level of depression	Frequency	Percentage of valid ones
Within normal range	39	33.3%
Average	17	14.5%
Moderate	25	21.4%
High	17	14.5%
Very high	19	16.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: own research

The levels of depression on the depression scale in the sample group were as follows: within normal range 33.3%, average 14.5%, moderate 21.4%, high 14.5%, and very high 16.2%.

The next table presents the distribution of anxiety levels in the sample group in the DASS 21 test.

Table 2.  
*Anxiety levels measured by the DASS 21 questionnaire*

Level of anxiety	Frequency	Percentage of valid ones
Within normal range	40	34.2%
Average	4	3.4%
Moderate	25	21.4%
High	10	8.5%
Very high	38	32.5%
<b>Total of valid ones</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: own research

The levels of anxiety on the anxiety scale in the sample group were as follows: within normal range 34.2%, average 3.4%, moderate 21.4%, high 8.5%, and very high 32.5%.

The table below present the distribution of stress levels in the sample group in the DASS 21 test.

Table 3.  
Stress levels measured by the DASS 21 questionnaire

Level of stress	Frequency	Percentage of valid ones
Within normal range	38	32.5%
Average	10	8.5%
Moderate	21	17.9%
High	26	22.1%
Very high	22	18.8%
<b>Total of valid ones</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: own research

The levels of stress on the stress sub-scale in the sample group were as follows: within normal range 32.5%, average 8.5%, moderate 17.9%, high 22.1%, and very high 18.8%.

Table 4 presents the distribution of the answers concerning the subjective feeling of being addicted to the Internet.

Table 4.  
The distribution of answers to the question: "Do you think you are addicted to the Internet? (e.g. scrolling through web pages, social media, shorts on YouTube, etc.)?"

Answer	Frequency	Percentage of valid ones
Yes	67	57.3%
No	21	26.5%
I don't know	19	16.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: own research

Answering the question concerning the subjective feeling of being addicted to the Internet, 57.3% of the respondents defined themselves as Internet addicted persons, 26.5% of the students stated that the issue of Internet addiction does not concern them, while 16.2% of the respondent had no opinion on the subject matter.

Within the framework of results analysis, the correlations of variables regarding the declaration of Internet addiction and the levels of depression, anxiety and fear were also studied. The results are presented in Table 5.

The correlation analysis was performed in pairs for the variables relating to the cafeteria of own questions and depression, anxiety and stress levels.

The analysis results indicated statistically significant positive relationships between the feeling of depression, anxiety and stress and one's declaration of their addiction to the Internet in the researched group. Thus, Internet addiction

entails high levels of stress:  $r=0.451$   $p\leq 0.001$ ; depression:  $r=0.432$   $p\leq 0.001$ , and anxiety:  $r=0.406$   $p\leq 0.001$ .

Table 5.

*Correlations between variables related to the declaration of Internet addiction and levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Calculated with the use of Pearson's correlation coefficient*

Question	Level of anxiety	Level of depression	Level of stress
Do you think you are addicted to the Internet (e.g. scrolling through web pages, social media, shorts on YouTube, etc.)?	$r=0.406$ $p\leq 0.001$	$r=0.432$ $p\leq 0.001$	$r=0.451$ $p\leq 0.001$

Calculated with the use of Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Source: own research

Summarising, as for the DASS 21 test determining the state of depression, anxiety and stress, 30.7% of the students researched manifest a high and very high level of depression, 41% of them manifest a high and very high level of anxiety, and 40.9% of them manifest a high and very high level of stress. Moreover, the subjective feeling of Internet addiction is correlated to a high level of depression.

These conclusions point to an alarming phenomenon, namely the intensification of depression symptoms in students. In the last years, other researchers presented similar results (Karmolińska-Jagodzick, 2019, p. 160). Certainly, an average or moderate level of anxiety and stress is in some way incorporated in students' educational and interpersonal activity, nevertheless, a high or very high level of anxiety and stress may herald the onset of a depressive episode or co-occur with it. Comparing the results obtained with the research of 2005, when a high level of anxiety was manifested by 41.3% of students, and a high level of depression was manifested by only 15.5% of students (Marek et al., 2005, p. 217), the increased change in the level of depression in students (by almost 100%), with unchanged levels of anxiety should be particularly noted. The state of mental health of young adults as a group that begins operating in the context of their own choices (e.g. relationships, taking up professional activity, deciding on starting a family) should receive special institutional and non-institutional attention.

Similar research results regarding the relationship between depressive states and the feeling of being addicted to the Internet are presented by Kuss and Griffiths (2011, after: Modrzyński, 2021) or Lin et al. (2016, after: Modrzyński, 2021). People using social media portals such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram for more than two hours per day are more likely to have mental health problems. Statistically, these users are characterized by lack of satisfaction with

their own life, a high level of anxiety and depressive moods. The research conducted among adolescents points to the fact that the more time a young person spends in e-media, the more often they suffer from classical depression symptoms and mood disorders (Modrzyński, 2021, pp. 104-105).

## Conclusions

For pedagogical practice it is vital for students to be aware of the behavioural addiction problem. Although over half of them declare that they are in the addiction mechanism, but being aware of the problem (self-diagnosis, self-criticism) constitutes a starting point to seek professional help, for example, in the area of addiction psychotherapy.

The above studies should be considered as pilot studies. Due to the feminization of the group, further studies should verify in what way depression indicators are linked to Internet addiction in men. What is more, in further studies, it is worth introducing a standardized test diagnosing Internet addiction, going beyond the declaration of one's subjective feeling of being addicted (I am/ I am not addicted to the Internet).

The findings so far lead to a disturbing statement regarding not only the alarming rise in depression statistics among young adults, but also the correlation between this rise and addiction to the virtual world. Despite implementing new reforms focusing on mental health improvement and various media campaigns on depression prophylaxis, only a joint position of the pedagogical, psychological and medical communities will make it possible to develop holistic support interventions for the new young generation.

## References

- Barhate, B. & Dirani, K. M. (2022), Career aspirations of generation Z: a systematic literature review, *European Journal of Training and Development*, 46(1/2), pp. 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-07-2020-0124>.
- Butcher, J. N., Hooley, J. M., & Mineka, S. (2020). *Psychologia zaburzeń DSM-5*. Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Czerski, W. M. (2022). Piętno technologii – nomofobia i FoMO jako przykłady lęków współczesnej młodzieży. *Kultura – Społeczeństwo – Edukacja*, 2(22). <https://doi.org/10.14746/kse.2022.22.06>.
- Diotaiuti, P., Mancone, S., Corrado, S., De Risio, A., Cavicchiolo, E., Girelli, L., & Chirico, A. (2022). Internet addiction in young adults: The role of impulsivity and codependency. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 13, 893861. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.893861>.

- Elhai, J. D., Yang, H., Fang, J., Bai, X., & Hall, B. J. (2020). Depression and anxiety symptoms are related to problematic smartphone use severity in Chinese young adults: Fear of missing out as a mediator. *Addictive Behaviors, 101*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.04.020>.
- Golonka, K., Piątek, E., & Stach, R. (2024). Kierunki badań i rozwój teorii poznawczej depresji. *Psychiatria Polska, 58*(4), 669–680. <https://doi.org/10.12740/PP/OnlineFirst/161676>.
- Grajewski, P., & Dragan, M. (2021). Badanie walidacyjne polskiej wersji kwestionariusza Zaburzenie Grania w Internecie-20 (Internet Gaming Disorder-20, IGD-20). *Psychiatria Polska, 55*(6), 1275–1292. <https://doi.org/10.12740/PP/125656>.
- Kaliszewska, K. (2007). *Nadmierne używanie Internetu*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Karmolińska-Jagodzik, E. (2019). Zaburzenia depresyjne wśród studentek i studentów w Polsce. *Studia Edukacyjne, 55*, 139–162. <https://doi.org/10.14746/se.2019.55.9>.
- Lange, R., Wrońska, A., Ładna, A., Kamiński, K., Błażej, M., & Jankiewicz, A. (2023). *Nastolatki 3.0. Raport z ogólnopolskiego badania uczniów i rodziców*. NASK-PIB.
- Lozano-Blasco, R., Quilez Robres, A., & Soto Sanchez, A. (2022). Internet addiction in young adults: A meta-analysis and systematic review. *Computers in Human Behavior, 130*, 107201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107201>.
- Makara-Studzińska, M., Załuski, M., Adamczyk, K., & Tyburski, E. (2024). Polska wersja Skali Depresji Lęku i Stresu (DASS-42) – adaptacja i normalizacja. *Psychiatria Polska, 58*(1), 63–78. <https://doi.org/10.12740/PP/OnlineFirst/153064>.
- Makaruk, K., Włodarczyk, J., & Skoneczna, P. (2019). *Problematyczne używanie internetu przez młodzież. Raport z badań*. Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę.
- Marek, K., Białoń, P., Wichowicz, H., Melloch, H., & Nitka-Siemieńska, A. (2005). Przesiewowa ocena rozpowszechnienia objawów depresyjnych i lękowych wśród studentów Akademii Medycznej w Gdańsku. *Psychiatria, 2*(4), 217–224.
- Modrzyński, R. (2021). *Nowe uzależnienia młodego pokolenia. Od przyjemności do przymusu*. Difin.
- Nesi, J. (2020). The impact of social media on youth mental health: Challenges and opportunities. *NC Med, 81*(2), 116–121. <https://doi.org/10.18043/ncm.81.2.116>.
- Radochońska, A., & Radochoński, M. (2012). Rozwój uzależnienia od substancji psychoaktywnych z perspektywy cyklu życia. In Z. B. Gaś (Ed.), *Człowiek w obliczu zniewolenia* (pp. 45–63). Lublin.
- Sharma, B., Lee, S. S., & Johnson, B. K. (2022). The dark at the end of the tunnel: Doomscrolling on social media newsfeeds. *Technology, Mind, and Behavior, 3*(1), Article e2022. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000059>.

- Sitnik-Warchulska, K., Izydorczyk, B., & Lipowska, M. (2019). Wyzwania klinicznej diagnostyki psychologicznej dzieci i młodzieży: Rekomendacje konsultantów w dziedzinie psychologii klinicznej. *Psychiatria i Psychologia Kliniczna*, 19(1), 54–62. <https://doi.org/10.15557/PIPK.2019.0008>.
- Siudem, A. (2013). Osobowościowe uwarunkowania uzależnienia od Internetu wśród młodzieży. In M. Sitarczyk (Ed.), *Rodzina w mediach. Media w rodzinie* (pp. 139–161). Difin.
- Wojtczak, M., Walenda, A., & Kucharska, K. (2023). Zmiany struktury mózgu u osób z zaburzeniem używania gier komputerowych: Przegląd badań neuroobrazowania. *Psychiatria Polska*, 322, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.12740/PP/OnlineFirst/167394>.
- Wojtkowska, A., Hewiak, E., & Gąsiorowska, A. (2023). *Nadużywanie mediów elektronicznych przez dzieci i młodzież: Badanie rozpowszechnienia problemu, jego determinantów i nowej interwencji profilaktycznej redukującej skalę problemu*. Fundacja Badań Społecznych.
- Woronowicz, B. T. (2021). *Zachowania, które mogą zranić. O uzależnieniach behawioralnych i nie tylko*. Media Rodzina.
- Woronowicz, B. T. (2001). *Bez tajemnic o uzależnieniach i ich leczeniu*. Wydawnictwo Instytutu Psychiatrii i Neurologii.
- Young, K. S., & Nabucco de Abreau, C. (2017). *Uzależnienie od Internetu. Profilaktyka, diagnoza, terapia*. Fundacja Dolce Vita.

## Problematic use of the Internet and mental health of young adults

### Streszczenie

Artykuł stanowi próbę przybliżenia zjawiska problematycznego używania Internetu w kontekście jego ewentualnych powiązań z innymi problemami zdrowia psychicznego. Celem zaprezentowanych badań pilotażowych było sprawdzenie, czy istnieje związek pomiędzy poczuciem bycia uzależnionym od Internetu a występowaniem objawów depresji, lęku i stresu u młodych dorosłych. W badaniu, w którym udział wzięło 117 studentów z 3 uczelni, wykorzystano autorski kwestionariusz oraz skróconą wersję Skali Depresji, Lęku i Stresu (DASS-21). Badanie wskazało na niepokojąco wysoki poziom poczucia depresji, lęku i stresu w grupie respondentów, a także na istnienie związku pomiędzy nim a deklaracją uzależnienia od Internetu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** problematyczne używanie Internetu, uzależnienia behawioralne, zdrowie psychiczne, depresja, student.