TO BE ON FACEBOOK OR NOT TO BE: SLOVAK YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

ZU SEIN, ODER NICHT ZU SEIN BEI FACEBOOK: SLOWAKISCHE JU-GENDLICHE UND IHR NUTZEN DER SOZIALEN NETZWERKE

Pavel Izrael

Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Ružomberok Slovakia

Abstract

This paper offers findings based on analysis of data drawn from a 2015 survey of 286 children and adolescents in Slovakia. This study investigates what the patterns of use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are among Slovak children and adolescents. The results demonstrate that SNSs are popular among young people, and that even children younger than 13 have SNS profiles, and mainly access the Internet at home. They tend to spend more time using SNSs at weekends than on school days. The majority of parents do not apply restrictions in relation to Internet and SNSs use. The study aims to determine what factors predict the use of SNSs. Factors such as sex, age, time spent on the Internet, viewing SNSs as a freer place, and experience with cyberbullying were taken into consideration.

Abstract

Die vorliegende Studie bietet die Ergebnisse der Datenanalyse aus dem Jahr 2015. Im Rahmen der Studie wurde eine fragebogenbasierte Befragung bei 286 Kindern und Adoleszenten aus der Slowakei durgeführt. Autor der Studie erforscht das Nutzen von sozialen Netzwerken unter slowakischen Kindern und Adoleszenten. In Ergebnissen wird die Hypothese bestätigt, dass die jungen Menschen Vorliebe für soziale Netzwerke haben. Zu denen gehören auch die Kinder, die unter dreizehn Jahre sind und sie haben ein eigenes Profil in sozialen Netzwerken. Die Studie ist zum Schluss gekommen, dass die jungen Menschen vor allem zu Hause den Internetanschluss nutzen und sie verbringen im Internet mehr Zeit am Wochenende als unter der Woche. Die Mehrheit der Eltern setzt ihren Kindern keine Limitierungen bei der Nutzung vom Internet. Genauso ist es auch mit dem Gebrauch sozialer Netzwerke. Eins der Ziele der Studie war, es festzustellen, von welchen Faktoren die Nutzung sozialer Netzwerke determiniert ist. Unter analysierten Faktoren waren: das Geschlecht, die verbrachte Zeit im Internet, die Wahrnehmung sozialer Netzwerke als einen Raum mit grösser Freiheit und die Erfahrungen mit Cybermobbing.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Web 2.0 has changed the way children, young people and adults use the Internet. A consumer-like approach has not faded away but media literacy experts now tend to describe the new generation of internet users as prosumers: those who not only consume but also produce media content /**1**/. Internet users can now watch a movie and then write a review on the internet; they can post comments on products on e-shops´ websites and upload videos on YouTube; they can design their own website or create an account for blogging. These are just a few activities that people can do thanks to the features of the Web 2.0. What has also changed over years is the way that the young generation access the internet. The findings from a 2010 European survey indicate that 49% of 9-16 year olds use the internet in their bedroom or in another private room at home. The internet has become a private phenomenon, at least private from parents, although shared with peers. This shift in use is similar to the change of television viewing patterns from a couple of years before, and, it can be extended to a wider range of media. This can be referred to as a process of privatization of media use which is one form of the individualization process /**2**/. This process is currently facilitated by the accessibility of technological devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Children from families with a medium and higher socio-economic status (SES) tend to use smartphones more often than children from low SES households /**3**/. This is probably related to the fact that smartphone ownership is determined by socio-economic status, where smartphone ownership is a majority proposition among higher-income earners /**4**/. A phenomenon that has gained high popularity among the young generation is social networking. Social networking sites (SNS) represent a set of Web 2.0 tools that are centred around interaction and sharing various types of content with others /**5**/. Even though some „digital immigrants", as Prensky /**6**/ calls those who were not born into the digital world, may consider the internet environment as the opposite of real life , in fact, it is complex, virtual, social and physical world that children and adolescents participate in and co-construct /**7**/. As media are embedded in people´s everyday lives, young people approach social networks as natural platforms for their social life. They communicate, look for information and entertainment, share content with others, they use them for self-presentation. It is not just that social networks are an extension of the physical world, they are part of it. For young people there is no clear-cut border between the digital and non-digital world. These two worlds blend and thus form a new reality in which young people sail through during a sensitive developmental stage called adolescence. In the past few years social networking sites have become a phenomenon that engages literally billions of Internet users. Data from September 2015 show there were 1.01 billion daily active users of Facebook which, together with Twitter, belong to the top ten sites on the web, where the average daily visitors and pageviews over the past month are analysed /**8**/. According to the EU Kids Online project findings, 60% of 9-16 year olds go online every day and 59% have a social networking profile. The research also found that 26% of children aged 9-10, and 49% of 11-12 year olds have their own social networking profile /**9**/. This fact may raise some concerns, since for example Facebook requires users to be over 13. Apparently, younger children find the networking site so attractive that they are willing to submit false information about their age when creating their profile. However it needs to be said that since 2010 SNS use has dropped in younger children, which may be due to awareness campaigns, but the percentage of children aged 11+ visiting a social networking site on a daily basis has increased from 44% to 59% /**10**/. When the Internet and SNSs use of children and adolescents is studied, parents as primary care-givers must be taken into consideration. Parental mediation of Internet use may take various forms, and in contrast with the traditional concept of television mediation with an instructive, restrictive strategy and co-viewing /**11**/, there are other strategies implemented by parents, like monitoring, supervision and co-use, and variations of restrictive mediation /**12**/. Given the lack of research on adolescents and their SNS use in a Slovakian context, the first research question is as follows.

RQ1: What are the patterns of SNSs use among Slovak children and adolescents?

Theoretical background
2.1 Adolescents and their motives for SNSs use

Adolescence is a period during which a person experiences dramatic changes which may alter the individual´s perception of the world /**13**/. Another important concept during adolescence is self-esteem, for which interaction with other people is

fundamental and plays a vital role /**14**/, and identity development. Self-esteem refers to how people value themselves, and identity is about how people define and perceive themselves. Identity building does not take place in isolation as others participate in its construction /**15**/. The attention an individual receives from others as well as acceptance and respect he/she experiences plays a role in self-esteem development /**16**/. Given the fact that SNSs have become very important venues for communicating and socializing, they constitute a rich source of stimuli related to identity building. Folding and unfolding of the self on SNS is a dynamic process of engaging with oneself and interacting with others /**17**/. Some studies have shown that adolescents with lower self-esteem prefer computer-mediated social interactions with others more than those with higher self-esteem /**18**/, /**19**/ and that adolescents perceive these others as important for enhancing their self-esteem and well-being /**20**/, while another study proved the contrary: adolescents with higher self-esteem are more likely to use SNS frequently in order to maintain their face-to-face social relationships /**21**/. Other studies show that the more often young people use the Internet to escape their worries and problems, the more time they spend on SNSs /**22**/. Gratification of one´s personal and social needs is what accounts for the massive appeal of SNSs among young users /**23**/. Within the theoretical framework of uses and gratification approach, Baek et al. /**24**/ suggest that there are different types of needs and people use SNS for a variety of motives: expressive motives referring to activities carried out in order to express oneself; instrumental motives related to practical everyday activities (e.g. to search for information, book accommodation, etc.), and entertaining motives (e.g. to enjoy online content).

Motivation for adolescent SNS use, however, cannot be reduced to just intentional or unintentional self-esteem development and fulfilling one´s personal or social needs. The social identity theory posits that a significant part of the self-concept lies in one´s membership in social groups /**25**/. Adolescents who perceive frequent SNS use as normative among their peers have stronger intentions to use SNS frequently themselves, and this group norm provides a more comprehensive explanation of social influence in predicting behavioural intention than a subjective norm. In other words, young people are influenced more by and approve of what they perceive their peers are doing, rather than what they perceive parents and teachers think they should be doing /**26/.**

RQ 2: *What are the factors related to people´s social interactions via SNSs?*

2.2. Opportunities

Children and young people may use the internet for various reasons and their activities vary by age, with children climbing up an imaginary ladder of opportunities over time, from such simple activities as gaming and searching for information, to a more creative and participatory use of the internet /**27**/. Some general online opportunities can also be applied to social networking sites and some opportunities are unique to a specific type of SNS. Basic opportunities offered by SNS are those relating to sociability and self-expression. Young people use SNS in order to maintain their existing relationships (face-to-face or online ones) or to look for new friends. SNSs also allow for having larger circles of friends from different countries which enables young people to get to know other cultures and have a richer experience from this interaction. In comparison with face-to-face communication, online communication enhances the controllability of self-presentation and self-disclosure; young people feel freer than in face-to-face communication, which provides them with the opportunity to deal with the social obstacles that they may encounter in offline communication /**28**/.

SNSs enable users to interact with others in situations where face-to-face interaction is not possible (e.g. long distance, late hours). Young people can stand by each other in difficult times, can be supportive, empathetic. Although this support may be of a practical nature, 29% of children reported they were also helped by their peers when something bothered them /**29**/.

Through expanded networks of friends, young people can access more information than ever before. For young adults an SNS can become a source of news, thus helping them engage with the broader world. Pew Research Centre and Knight Foundation find that more Americans of all ages use Twitter and Facebook to consume news about events and issues outside the realm of friends and family /**30**/. Social networking sites may facilitate the social engagement of users and help them to develop active citizenship. An SNS can be used for organising events, promoting petitions or organising groups focused on various issues of social life. However, an SNS will not make young people get

politically engaged, but offer those who are politically active a possibility to seek out others who are similar or, at least, to share and promote ideas and opinions /**31**/. Social networking sites can provide a platform for developing debating and discussion skills in a local, national or international context. Young people learn how to function successfully in a community and develop their social competence through interacting with others.

Young people not only consume media content via SNSs, but they take an active part by uploading, modifying or creating content. This is an opportunity for expressing and enhancing one´s creativity and collaborative competence.

2.3 Risks

The more often young people use the internet, the more benefits they can gain from their online activities, yet, at the same time, the more risks they encounter. The EU Kids Online project showed that some online activities are difficult to categorise as simply beneficial or harmful as it much depends on both the child and context /**32**/. For example, meeting a stranger online may be an opportunity to make a new friend, but there is a risk of coming across a user with a false identity.

One particular risk relating to the Internet is extensive use which, according to Young /**33**/, can result in problems such as depression, loneliness, low self-esteem and anxiety. Excessive use of SNSs may lead to less time spent doing other activities. Data show that 34% of European children acknowledge that they spend less time with friends, family; they devote less time to schoolwork than they think they should, because the spend so much time on SNSs. The difference between countries is smaller than in 2010 as excessive use rises across Europe /**34**/. Excessive use of SNSs may thus displace other activities.

During adolescence sexual identity is still being formed and young people have to adapt to a changing body and to new demands of maturing sexuality. Thus they get more active in sexual talks, and these talks now take place on the Internet too. As mentioned earlier a significant number of children under 13 have profiles on Facebook, which puts them at risk of being contacted with sexual messages by older users who are deceived by the incorrect age on a user´s profile. Recent research has found that receiving sexual messages, especially via SNSs, is reported more often by smartphone and tablet users /**35**/.

A survey among European children showed that by 2013 cyberbullying (12%) had become more common than face-to-face bullying (9%), and that most cyberbullying occurs on SNSs /**36**/. Another risk relating to SNSs is when young people do not protect their privacy and/or display personal information or share content that in the future can be used against them. Various types of privacy misuses might have different consequences depending on individual personality factors and context /**37**/.

RQ 3: What are the risks experienced by young people using SNSs?

Sample

The data were drawn from a survey conducted at primary and secondary schools in one city and one town in the Poprad district. The survey targeted children and teenagers in the 11- to 17-year old age bracket. The schools and relevant classes were selected randomly. Altogether 286 children (N = 286) completed questionnaires at schools in the presence of a trained survey administrator. The number of children from primary schools was 161 and there were 125 respondents from secondary schools. However, for analyses only data from 275 participants were used as 11 participants responded that they did not have an SNS profile. The questionnaire was administered in January 2015. Female participants were overrepresented (65%) due to the fact that one of the selected schools was a business academy type of school known for a higher percentage of female students. The average age in the sample was almost 14 years (M = 13.85).

Methods
SNSs use

Media use is usually approached through two components: usage type and the amount of time spent /**38**/. Put another way, usage type refers to qualitative aspects of media use, while amount of time stands for the quantitative ones. In this study, a number of various items were used to describe SNS use among the studied sample. The questions were focused on types of social networking sites as well the frequency of their use, privacy setting and activities conducted via SNSs.

As children´s internet use may be mediated by parents, in this study there were two items used to identify whether parents set any rules or restricted time for SNS use (1 item for each).

Motives for SNSs use

As there is variety of motives leading to media use, and it is likely that the same implies for SNS use, in

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this study several concepts were applied. Drawing from the core attribute of social networking sites, which is social interaction, the questionnaire included four items related to: communication with friends, finding information about friends, sharing, searching for friends. SNSs also provide many opportunities for entertainment, thus one item targeted this aspect, specifically playing games and watching videos. For each item, the respondents indicated their response on a 5-point scale ranged from seldom (coded as 1) to very often (coded as 5).

The concept of SNSs as freer, controllable, safer settings and platforms for relaxation was measured using 5 items: *It is easier to express my worries on SNSs.*, *It is easier to communicate with friends via SNSs than face-to-face.*, *It is easier to get attention and appreciation on SNSs.*, *Spending time on SNSs is a way to forget my worries.*, *Spending time on SNSs is a form of relaxation.* For each item, the respondents indicated their response on a 4-point scale ranged from strongly disagree (coded as 1) to strongly agree (coded as 4). A new variable was counted out of these 5 items (range 5-20, M = 10.41, SD = 3.7, α = 0.77).

Risks associated with SNSs use

Children are concerned about a wide range of online risks, but in this study only some are addressed.

Experience with cyberbullying was measured with 3 items: *Have you ever experiences that ... (1) someone sent you messages or posted comments more times that hurt your feelings, (2) someone threatened you on the Internet, (3) someone on the Internet has posted or forwarded information, pictures and comments that hurt your feelings?.* A new variable was counted out of these 3 items (range 0-3, M = 0.52, SD = 0.88, α = 0.68).

Meeting new contacts online was assessed with 3 items: *Are there people whom you do not know personally among your online friends? Have you ever arranged a meeting with a person you only know from a virtual world?* If there was a positive answer to the second question, than a question asking whether it happened once or more times followed. Excessive use of SNSs was measured with 2 items adapted from the Internet Addiction Test developed by Kimberly Young (Centre for Internet Addiction): *How often do you find that you stay on SNSs longer than you intended? How often do you neglect household chores or homework because of time spent on SNSs?* Another two items were: *How often do you stay logged into SNSs while studying for school? How often do you stop other activities to check what is new on SNSs while*

doing something else? Respondents answered the questions on a four-point scale that ranged from never (coded as 1) to often (coded as 4).

Results

Research question 1 asked what the patterns of SNSs use among Slovak children and adolescents are. Later in the study the term "young people" will be used when referring to all participants. When comparisons between some age groups are made the term children (aged 11 to 12) and adolescents (aged 13 and over) will be used. To answer this question, analyses of multiple items were conducted. The data show that a majority of young people (93%) access the Internet most often at home, compared to 2% who access it at school and 5% at public WIFI spots. Smartphone is used for Internet access by 28% of young people. As for the frequency of the Internet use, a majority (72%) access it on a daily basis. The amount of time spend using the Internet is higher during weekends (less than 3 hours a day – 52%; more than 3 hours a day – 48%) compared to weekdays (less than 3 hours a day – 67%; more than 3 hours a day – 33%).

Out of 93 children aged 11 and 12 years in the studied sample, 80% have a Facebook profile, which is significantly more than 49% of 11-12 year olds in Europe who have their social networking profile /**39**/. The data also show that young people tend to have profiles on more than one social networking site. Nevertheless, Facebook is the most prevalent SNS (92%), followed by Pokec[6] (33%), Twitter (18%) and Instagram (13%). As for the frequency of the SNSs use, majority (68%) access it on daily basis which is more than 48 per cent – the finding from Net Children Go Mobile research /**40**/. The amount of time spent using the SNS is higher during weekends (less than 3 hours a day – 64%; more than 3 hours a day – 36%) compared to weekdays (less than 3 hours a day – 76%; more than 3 hours a day – 24%. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Time spent using Internet and SNSs (day average)

Frequency Activity (%)	Less than 1 hour	1 – 3 hours	3 – 5 hours	5 and more hour

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[6] Pokec is a Slovak social networking site established in 1999 and mainly used for chat.

				s
Internet on weekdays	27	40	23	10
Internet at week-ends	11	41	28	20
SNSs on week-days	34	41	19	6
SNSs at week-ends	21	42	22	15

When protecting privacy was addressed, 90 per cent indicated that they are able to adjust privacy settings on SNS, 65 per cent have their profile in "friends" mode, 20 per cent have their profiles set as public, and 15 per cent have it in "friends of friends" mode.

The data show that most parents do not set any rules in relation to using SNSs (69%); as well, they do not restrict the time for using SNSs (78%). To identify possible differences among young people based on their age, crosstabulation was conducted which proved significant differences between the groups with chi-square statistic of 21.497 with 6 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.001. (See Table 2)

Table 2. Restrictive mediation of SNSs use (*Do your parents set any rules for using SNSs?*)

Children´s Age	Yes %	No %
11 - 12	45	55
13 - 14	34	66
15 - 17	19	81
Total	31	69
N = 275		
Pearson chi-square = 21.497 p<0.01		

To confirm the differences bivariate correlation was conducted giving Spearman´s rho coefficient of -0.222 (p<0.01) showing that the older the young people are the less restrictions for using SNSs they get from parents.

Research question 2 asked what the factors related to using SNSs are. When motives for using SNSs were analyzed, the most prevalent motive was friends (62%). The affordances offered by SNSs are considered an important reason for 33 per cent of young people. Only 22 per cent of respondents state that the reason for having SNS profiles is the fact that it is commonplace.

As far as the purpose of using a SNS is concerned, 64% very often use the SNSs for communication with friends. Young people also marked the "very often" option for other purposes, but the percentage was significantly lower: information about friends (13%), sharing (15%), entertainment (18%) and searching for friends (10%).

Among activities that young people do on SNSs, chat comes first, when 74 per cent stated that they do it often and most often, followed by sharing content (18%), posting comments and making own posts (both 17%). Interestingly, 34 per cent often visit SNSs without any serious purpose. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Frequency of activities on SNSs

Frequency Activity (%)	never	rarely	sometimes	Often and very often
chat	8	4	14	74
Posting com-ments	11	39	33	17
Own posts	20	39	24	17
sharing	22	31	30	18

To identify the factors related to SNSs use, a series of correlation analyses and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were employed. The time spent using SNSs on weekdays correlates with the time spent using SNSs at weekends (r = 0.75, p < 0.01), the time spent on the Internet on weekdays (r = 0.70, p < 0.01) as well as at weekends (r = 0.56, p < 0.01) experience with cyberbullying (r = 0.20, p < 0.01), and perceiving SNSs as a place where young people can relax and present themselves more freely (r = 0.27, p < 0.01). The time spent using SNSs at weekends correlates with the time spent on the Internet at weekends (r = 0.65, p < 0.01) as well as on weekdays (r = 0.58, p < 0.01), experience with cyberbullying (r = 0.20, p < 0.01), and perceiving SNSs as a place where young people can relax and present themselves more freely (r = 0.28, p < 0.01).

To identify the factors that affect young people´s SNS use, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were employed, separately for using SNSs on weekdays and at weekends. Two sociodemographic factors (age and sex) and time spent using the internet were included in the first block. A variable of SNSs as a place where young people can relax

and present themselves more freely, experience with cyberbullying and communication as a purpose for using SNSs were entered in the second block. For SNSs use on weekdays, the first block (age, sex, time spent using the internet on weekdays) accounted for 53 per cent of the variance F (3,270) = 102.31; and the second block (SNSs as a place where young people can relax and present themselves more freely, experience with cyberbullying and communication as purpose for using SNS) added 2 per cent to the variance F (3,267) = 54.86. For SNSs use at weekends, the first block (age, sex, time spent using the internet at weekends) accounted for 44 per cent of the variance F (3,270) = 69.86; and the second block (SNSs as a place where young people can relax and present themselves more freely, experience with cyberbullying and communication as purpose for using SNS) added 3 per cent to the variance F (3,267) = 38.74. Both models were statistically significant (p < 0.01). (See Table 4)

Table 4. Determinants of SNSs use (Regression analysis output)

Predictor	SNSs on weekdays Beta	SNSs use at weekends Beta
Sex[a]	0.16**	0.15**
age	-0.003	0.06
Amount of time spent using Internet (weekends)	Not included	0.59**
Amount of time spent using Internet (weekdays)	0.65**	Not included
SNS as a freer place	0.12**	0.14**
Cyberbullying experience	0.05	0.089
SNSs communication purpose	0.06	0.03
R² adjusted	0.55**	0.45**

Note N = 274, [a] 1 = male, 2 = female. **p < 0 .01, *p < 0.05.

The results show that SNSs use on weekdays as well as at weekends increases with the time spent using the internet. Another result is that the more young people view SNSs as a place for relaxation

and where they can express themselves more freely, the more time they spend using them. Sex also affects SNSs use implying that girls tend to spend more time on SNSs than boys.

For SNSs use at weekends, experience with cyberbullying was marginally significant (p = 0.056) implying that those who have more experience with cyberbullying spend more time on SNSs.

The third research question was related to risks associated with SNSs use. Rather a high number of young people in the sample (54%) stated that among their SNSs friends are people whom they do not know personally. More than one fifth of the sample (22%) arranged a meeting with a person whom they know only from a virtual world. For one half of them it happened just once, for the other half it was several times. With regard to cyberbullying, the data show that 23 per cent of young people have been sent messages or read comments that hurt their feelings; 15 per cent have been threatened by someone on the internet and 14 per cent had the experience that someone posted or forwarded information, pictures and comments that hurt their feelings. As for excessive use of SNSs, the results show that 34 per cent of young people never and 15 per cent often neglect their household chores or homework because of SNSs activities. Almost one third of the sample often spends more time on SNSs than intended. The importance of SNSs for young people is proved by the result showing that 27 per cent often stop other activities to check what is new on SNSs. (see Table 5)

Table 5. Risk experienced

	%
Meeting strangers	
SNSs friends not known personally	54
Meeting online contacts (not known personally offline)	22
Cyberbullying	
Being sent messages that hurt feelings	23
Being threatened online	15
Experience with someone posting, forwarding information, pictures and comments that hurt feelings	14
Excessive use of SNSs	
Often neglecting household chores and homework because of SNS	15
Often more time on SNSs than intended	30
Often interrupting other activities because of SNS	27

Discussion

The primary goal of the research presented in this paper was to identify patterns of SNSs use among young people (11 to 17) in Slovakia. Although the sample does not fit the criteria for a representative sample of the whole population, the character of the sample and results have the potential to shed some light on how Slovak youth use SNSs. The results show that home is still the main location for accessing the Internet and that young people use it on a daily basis, which corresponds with the data collected in 2010 in Slovakia /**41**/ and on a European level /**42**/. The high percentage (80%) of 11-12 year-olds having Facebook profile will need to be addressed in future research with a more representative sample. Anyway, this finding shows teenagers under 13 also find SNSs attractive despite age restrictions. The prevalence of Facebook users confirms its higher popularity compared to Twitter, which may be due to the fact that Facebook offers young people more functions than Twitter, e.g. support for games and applications, instant messaging, users are not limited by a 140-character limit for posts.

The fact that young Slovak people visit SNSs on a daily basis and over one third spend more than three hours a day using SNSs shows that social networking sites have become an inevitable and important part of their lives. In relation to this, it is quite surprising that a majority of parents, based on children´s responses, do not set any rules for SNSs use nor do they restrict the time for using SNSs. Only one third of parents set some rules and more than one fifth of parents restrict the time for using SNSs. However, this finding, to some extent, corresponds with previous Slovak research showing that 38% parents apply restrictive mediation of the Internet /**43**/. Despite the fact that only restrictive mediation was addressed in this research, this rather passive approach of parents may be caused by inadequate media education awareness. Further research will need to address other types of parental mediation of the Internet. The finding that older children get less restrictions contradicts the finding that the setting of limits on a child´s online behaviour in a general way is particularly more prevalent for older children /**44**/ but these researchers focused on younger children. Fewer restrictions in adolescence can be explained partly by a trend of more liberal parenting during adolescence /**45**/ and the fact that in adolescence, children are granted more autonomy /**46**/. The finding that the most important reason for having a SNSs profile is the fact that

their friends have such a profile may imply two things. First, young people are motivated to use SNSs because it is a place where they friends are, and thus having a SNSs profile enables them to get connected with their friends. This explanation is supported by the finding that communication with friends is the most prevalent purpose for SNSs use as well as the finding that chat is the most frequent activity. Second, some type of social peer pressure may play a role as standards, rules and behaviour models set by peers have a large impact on many aspects of young people´s lives. In addition, more than one third often visit SNSs without any serious purpose. This pattern of use is enabled by everyday use of the Internet and the availability of SNSs. Moreover, it may indicate that young people often reach for SNSs in an "automatic" manner without specific reasons, and only later on might opt for some specific activities on SNSs.

Regarding the predictors of SNSs use, the socio-demographic factor of sex proved to be important, implying that girls are more prone to spend more time using SNSs. This corresponds with findings from previous research /**47**/, /**48**/. The most important predictor of SNSs use is the time spent on the Internet. The relationship between these two is obvious and confirms that using SNSs is one of the core activities carried out by young people online. Another significant predictor is viewing SNSs as a place where one can relax, express one's feeling and share worries more easily. This can be explained in that online communication, in comparison to face-to-face communication, offers more controllability of self-representation and self-disclosure. This is particularly important for adolescents who may use SNSs as venues for intrapersonal benefits in the form of affirming self-worth and self-integrity /**49**/. One could expect that those who have experienced some forms of cyberbullying will spend less time using SNSs. This research shows that experience with cyberbullying increases the time spent using SNSs at weekends but not on weekdays. It´s predicting strength is low, but the finding raises some questions. Why does it work only for weekend use of SNS and not for working days? Can young people with negative online experience (cyberbullying) incline to use SNSs more often because they still consider them as a setting where they feel freer, relaxed and more comfortable sharing their feelings with others? These questions will need to be addressed in future research. As far as cyberbullying is concerned, this research found that one fifth of the young people in

the sample had this negative experience. The number is higher than the figures across Europe, but it may be due to a rather general wording of one question in the research presented. When asked more specifically, e.g. about knowing that some posted or forwarded information, pictures and comments which had hurt their feelings, a smaller number of young people (similar to other findings from Europe) stated that they have had such experiences. Despite all the benefits young people can receive from SNSs, the most common way of being cyberbullied is on SNSs /**50**/. Furthermore, another risk is excessive use of SNS. Young people respond that they neglect their household chores and homework because of SNS activities and often spend more time on SNSs than intended and are liable to interrupt other activities in order to check what is new on SNSs. Besides proving the importance of SNSs in young people´s lives, this shows that in addition to practical skills of using SNSs, other competences are necessary – those related to regulation of one´s behaviour in terms of responsibility and self-accountability.

Despite offering interesting and new findings on Slovakian youth´s SNSs use, this study has several limitations. First, the data collected are of a cross-sectional nature and the sample is not representative in more aspects, e.g. girls were overrepresented. Second, a social desirability bias might have played a role in young people´s responses. Despite the significant variance explained by the model in the regression analysis, there must be other factors that determine SNSs use among teenagers and adolescents. Other items that could be added to further research are questions addressing attachment style of young people /**51**/, self-esteem /**52**/ and mood management /**53**/.

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