

RISKY BEHAVIOUR OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article presents the results of an empirical research aimed at examining and analysing the presence of high school students' risky behaviour. The sample consisted of 137 high school students from the Republic of Serbia. A descriptive method was applied, and techniques a survey questionnaire technique that was constructed for this research. The obtained research results show that a large number of respondents consume cigarettes and alcohol, while they started going out to nightclubs already during elementary school. As the most common reason for consuming cigarettes, high school students cited the influence of their peers. More than half of high school students stated that alcohol is usually consumed once a week and on weekends, while a third of the respondents stated that they very often and often run away from classes. The analysed results lead us to the conclusion that risky behaviour is present among high school students and that it is necessary to pay more attention to this topic not only theoretically, but also practically through the unified action of the family, the school and the local community and a positive focus on overcoming the behavioural problems of this young population.

Keywords: behavioural problems, high school students, risky behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

High school age followed by adolescence carries with it a number of positive sides, but also numerous obstacles and risks that high school students face. Risky behaviour can be defined as „behaviour of a young person that increases the likelihood of a specific adverse outcome and that has potentially negative consequences for a person who manifests such behaviour, his environment and adversely affects the further psychosocial development of this young person, that is, it increases the likelihood of developing behavioural disorders” (Ricijaš, Krajcer and Bouillet, 2010: 46).

There are many factors that contribute to the development of various forms of risky behaviour, such as parenting styles in upbringing, inadequate educational model, peer group, mass media, poor quality, empty and unfilled space of leisure time and others.

Peer groups can be an important factor in developing students' risky behaviours. "It is important for adolescents to meet the need to belong to a certain peer group" (Đuranović, 2014: 121). Peer groups in adolescence become more important to the individual than the family and within these groups adolescents begin to meet the needs they previously met in the family (Ropuš-Pavel, 1999). Therefore, peer groups become relevant to adolescents and have strong relations with members of these groups.

Rot states that joint activities in adolescent groups are based primarily on entertainment and the use of leisure time, which is greatly influenced by the mass media. Through the mass media adolescents also have the opportunity to see how young people around the world spend their leisure time and by supporting each other, similar behaviours develop in this young population (Rot, 2003). We are witnessing that the mass media significantly affect student

behaviour. Inappropriate contents are often available to this young population, dangers and risks that prevail on social networks and the Internet, as well as computer games can have negative consequences on behaviour. Playing violent games, looking at inadequate content that does not suit their age, students can identify with these models and transfer such forms of behaviour into their daily lives. It is known that children and young people often learn by model and that the most important thing is that in the process of growing up and maturing in life they have an adequate personality from which they can learn. In addition to the family, educators and teachers are the actors who have the task of acting and educating by personal example.

The author Dmitrović (2009) states the following as destructive forms of youth behaviour: addictions, alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction, aggression, destructive gambling and computer games, as well as the harmful influence of the mass media (computers, telephones, the Internet and others). Therefore, excessive use of computer games and the influence of the media accompanied by inappropriate content can be a factor that leads to risky behaviour of the young population.

The period of adolescence is the period in which young people most often encounter cigarettes, alcohol and narcotics out of curiosity.

Research (Popić, Savić, Branković, 2014) entitled „Mental health of young people in Serbia” was conducted in 40 high schools in Serbia, on a sample of 1000 respondents. The results of this studious research show that a third of respondents consumed cigarettes on a monthly basis, while 13% of respondents actively consumed cigarettes. 78% of respondents consumed alcohol at least once last year, while 10% stated that they consumed marijuana at least once in the past year. Also, the results of the research (Malatestinić, Roviš, Mataija-Redžović, Dabo, Janković, 2008) show that most young people consume alcohol occasionally and several times during the month, as well as the fact that girls consume cigarettes more often, while boys consume alcoholic beverages more often. Research by Greblo and Šegregur (2010) shows that boys consume more cigarettes per day than girls and that they cite entertainment as reasons for using alcohol. The age at which young people most often stated that they started consuming cigarettes is fifteen years (Petrović, Zotović, 2010; Milosavljević, Radovanović, Kocić, Vasić and Milovanović, 2011). So, mostly young people in adolescence start consuming cigarettes, but still in the presence of many factors there are individual differences.

Research results (Uvodić-Đurić, Slugan, Baranašić, Oletić, Žižek, 2010) show that young people most often gather in cafes, that the age at which evening outings begin is getting lower and lower and that for high school students, alcohol consumption is the most common reason they cite for going out.

Based on the presented empirical research, we can conclude that a large number of high school students are exposed to the risks and dangers of cigarettes, alcohol and narcotics. The period of adolescence is very sensitive for personality development and in this period young people are very vulnerable and most susceptible to these influences.

Poor quality leisure time can be a danger factor for young people and a source of negative and unacceptable behaviour (Radojević, Jaredić, Minić, 2019). The task of the family and pedagogical workers is to plan and organize leisure activities with a positive approach and communication with them. If it is not filled with content followed by individual interests and abilities of the individual, students may look for some other non-adapted activities which can pose a danger and risk to their healthy psychophysical development (Milanović, 2020).

When we talk about the risky behaviour of high school students, it is inevitable to talk about peer violence, which is still present today. „The term of peer violence is used when there is disproportionate force, that is, when a student who is exposed to attacks defends himself with difficulty and is somewhat helpless in relation to the student who abuses him” (Jevtić, 2015: 58). The most common forms of violence include verbal, psychological, physical and

sexual violence (Milovanović, 2016). Certainly, it is necessary to approach the reduction of peer violence responsibly by applying modern procedures and methods. Activating students in creating a positive school atmosphere and reducing violent behaviour is of great importance, because students are more often than teachers present in these situations and aware of the frequency of violent behaviour (Marković, 2014).

With this article we want to examine and analyse the presence of risky behaviour in high school students, in order to make possible improvements and pay more attention to this problem, which is more and more present today.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research is to examine and analyse the presence of risky behaviour in high school students.

Based on the set goal the following research tasks also arise:

- Investigate whether high school students consume cigarettes and if they consume when they started consuming cigarettes.
- Examine the reasons why high school students started consuming cigarettes.
- Investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference in terms of alcohol consumption among high school students, depending on gender.
- Examine whether high school students consume narcotics.
- Examine whether high school students manifest some forms of risky behaviour at school.
- Examine whether high school students go out to nightclubs and if they go out when they start going out at night.
- Examine whether members of a group of high school students, consume cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics or manifest some form of violent behaviour.

Research methods and instruments

For the purposes of the research, a descriptive method was used - the survey technique. From non-parametric methods, the following were used: determination of basic statistical indicators (frequencies, percentages); χ^2 test, to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the variables.

The survey questionnaire for high school students was constructed as a special instrument for this empirical research. The questions are open and closed type. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first three questions relate to general sample data, while in the second part, there are questions related to the perception of high school students according to the presence of inappropriate behaviour.

Population and sample

The sample consists of 137 high school students from the territory of the Republic of Serbia, 54% (f=74) female and 46% (f=63) male. The research was conducted in October 2020.

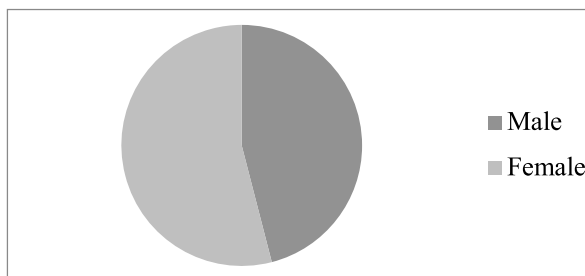


Chart 1. Sample structure by gender

High school students from all four grades of high school participated, 22.6% (f=31) of the first year of high school, 29.9% (f=41) of the second year, 20.4% (f=28) of the third year and 27% (f = 37) of the fourth year of high school.

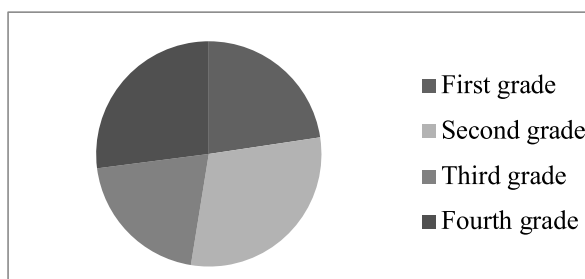


Chart 2. Sample structure by grades

Based on the questionnaire, data were obtained on the type of high school where 31.4% (f=43) of high school students attend grammar school, while 68.6% (f=94) attend vocational school.

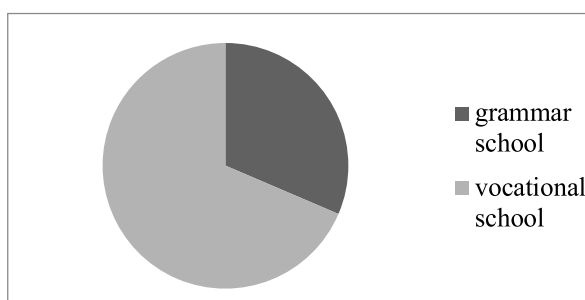


Chart 3. Sample structure by high schools

RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Guided by the set goal of the research to investigate and analyse the presence of inappropriate behaviour in high school students, the results of high school students' answers will be presented in further work.

The first research task was to investigate whether high school students consume cigarettes.

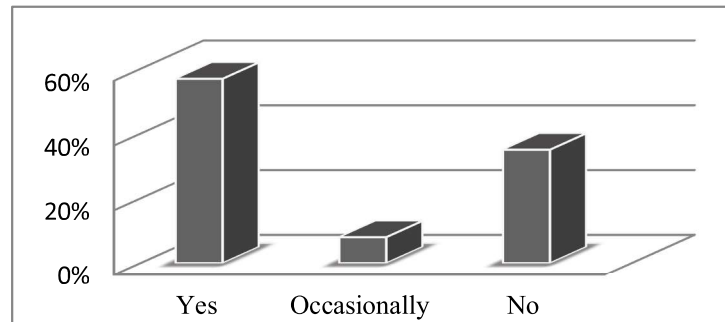


Chart 4. High school students' answers about cigarette consumption

Based on the responses of high school students shown in Chart 4, we can see that 56,9% (f=78) of high school students answered that they consume cigarettes, 8% (f=11) of high school students stated that they occasionally consume cigarettes, while 35% (f=48) of high school students answered that they do not consume cigarettes. Based on the analysed responses of high school students, it was found that more often male high school students stated that they consume cigarettes than female high school students. Research results (Milosavljević, et al., 2011) show that about 20,6% of high school students consume cigarettes and that they most often buy them out of pocket. Therefore, cigarette consumption among high school students is more and more present today and represents a serious educational and health problem.

If the high school students answered that they consume cigarettes, they needed to state when they started consuming cigarettes. The question was open-ended.

High school students who consume cigarettes continuously or occasionally, 23,4% of them (f=32) answered that they started consuming cigarettes during elementary school, while 41,6% (f=57) of high school students with cigarette consumption started during high school.

The next task was to examine the reasons why high school students consume cigarettes. The question was open-ended.

Table 1. Reasons why high school students consume cigarettes

	I saw it from family members	Peer influence	I wanted to try it and I liked it	Some other reasons	I don't consume cigarettes
f	18	44	21	6	48
%	13,1	32,1	15,3	4,4	35

Based on the results shown in Table 1, we can see that as many as 32,1% (f=44) answered that they consume cigarettes due to the influence of their peers, while 15,3% (f=21) of high school students wanted to try and they liked it, 13,1% (f=18) of high school students answered that they saw from family members, while 4,4% (f=6) answered that these were some other reasons, not wanting to write them specifically. Therefore, the role of peers in adolescence is extremely relevant and visible.

The next research task was to investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference in terms of alcohol consumption among high school students, depending on gender.

The chi-square indicates that the difference in response frequency is statistically significant ($\chi^2=15,352$; $df=2$; $p=0,00$) between male and female high school students, where 33,6% (f=46) answered yes, 39,4% of them (f=54) answered occasionally, while 27% (f=37) of high

school students answered that they do not consume alcohol. Based on the analysed responses, female high school students more often stated that they consume alcohol than male high school students. The opposite results were obtained by research (Milošević, Mirković, Đurić, Milošević, Ilić, 2014) where male respondents were more likely to report consuming alcohol than female respondents. Adolescents who consume cigarettes and alcohol are more exposed to an increased risk of personal, social, and delinquency problems (Hoffman, Welte & Barners, 2001).

The next question high school students were asked was how often they consume alcohol.

Table 2. Answers of high school students how often they consume alcohol

	Once a week	On the weekends	Several times a week	Once a month	I do not consume alcohol
f	30	36	13	21	37
%	21,9	26,3	9,5	15,3	27

Based on the results shown in Table 2, we can see that 21,9% (f=30) of high school students consume alcohol once a week, 26,3% (f=36) do this on weekends, 9,5% (f=13) of high school students consume alcohol several times a week, 15,3% (f=21) once a month, while 27% (f=37) of high school students do not consume alcohol. The results of the research (Matović, Žunić Pavlović, 2019) show that most young people in the previous year consumed alcohol once to three times a week or once or twice a month.

After being asked about cigarette and alcohol consumption, high school students were asked if they had tried narcotics. 10,2% (f=14) of high school students answered that they had tried narcotics, while 89,8% (f=123) of high school students answered that they had never tried narcotics. Then came the question, do they consume narcotics? The following answers were obtained: 2,2% (f=3) of high school students answered that they consume narcotics, 3,6% (f=5) of high school students answered doing so occasionally, while 94,2% (f=129) of high school students do not consume narcotics.

The next task was for high school students to answer on the Likert-type assessment scale how often they manifest certain forms of risky behaviour in school.

Table 3. Consent of high school students to the manifestation of risky behaviour in school

	Very often		Often		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
I run away from class.	22	16,1	21	15,3	49	35,8	28	20,4	17	12,4
I disturb teachers during the realization of the class.	9	6,6	-	-	8	5,8	27	19,7	93	67,9
I use violence to solve problems with my peers.	-	-	-	-	7	5,1	32	23,3	98	71,5
I swear, insult and threaten my peers.	-	-	2	1,5	-	-	28	20,5	107	78,1

Based on the results shown in Table 3, we can see that a third of high school students most often reported running away from classes, while lower agreement is represented in other claims. From the presented results, we conclude that about a third of high school students very often and often run away from classes. Considering the presence of manifestations of risky behaviour of high school students in school, we can see that apart from running away from classes, other forms of negative behaviour are not often present. The results of some of the

research (Reić-Ercegovac, 2016) concerning peer violence show that male students experience violence more often than female students and that verbal forms of negative behaviour are the most common. Also, the results of the research indicate that students with material status below the average experience violence more often, while children with material status above the average are perpetrators of violence (Sušac, Ajduković and Rimac, 2016).

The next task was to examine high school students if they go out to nightclubs and if they go out when they start going out at night. Based on the analysed answers, the results were obtained that 57,7% (f=79) of high school students go out to nightclubs, 30,7% (f=42) answered occasionally, while 11,7% (f=16) of high school students answered that they do not go out to nightclubs. If they replied that they were going out, it was necessary for them to state when they started going out at night. 13,9% (f=19) of high school students stated that they started going out at night at the end of the seventh grade of elementary school, 49,6% (f=68) of high school students started going out in the eighth grade of elementary school, 24,8% (f=34) of high school students went on night outs from high school. The obtained data are worrying, because more than half of the respondents went out at night in elementary school.

Guided by the importance of the influence of a peer group on the development of an individual, the next task was to examine whether members of a group of high school students consumed cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics, or manifested some form of aggressive behaviour. 29,2% (f=40) of high school students answered yes, 57,7% (f=79) occasionally do so, while 13,1% (f=18) answered no. High school students most often stated that members of their groups consumed cigarettes and alcohol more often, while they less often stated that they consumed narcotics and exhibited violent behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, an attempt was made to present and analyse the presence of risky behaviour among high school students, questioning high school students about the consumption of cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics, as well as the manifestation of violent behaviour.

The analysed research results show that more than half of the surveyed high school students consume cigarettes. As the most common reasons for consuming cigarettes, high school students cited the influence of peers, that they saw it from family members or that they wanted to try it and that they liked it. Female high school students were more likely to report consuming alcohol than male high school students. Eight high school students stated that they consumed narcotics, while fourteen of them tried some kind of narcotics. More than half of the high school students surveyed said they started going to nightclubs in elementary school, while in one third of the surveyed high school students, running away from school is a common activity. The analysed results show that members of the peer group of high school students often consume cigarettes and alcohol, while they less often consume narcotics and manifest violent behaviour.

The general conclusions of this research are that risky behaviour among high school students is often present, while cigarette and alcohol consumption is very common among high school students and that it is necessary to approach this problem from the pedagogical as well as from the psychological, sociological and medical aspect. In order to reduce the problem of risky behaviour, it is necessary to cooperate and unite the family, actors of educational institutions and the local community, through the organization of lectures, workshops, debates and other events and activities related to raising awareness of all forms of risky behaviour and overcoming them.

The limitations of this research are a relatively modest sample, which presented an obstacle to a more comprehensive view of risky behaviour among high school students.

Certainly, the topic can serve as a starting point for researchers for future research that would be aimed at finding ideas and solutions for overcoming risky behaviour of high school students and raising their awareness of how much negative consequences and problems it has on the development of young people.

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