Abstract

Background: TikTok has become the leading platform for sharing and watching short videos. Its rapidly growing popularity has raised concerns among experts, particularly due to the amount of time users spend on the platform and its addictive potential. Generation Z currently makes up 72% of active users. Despite the sharp increase in its user base, there are few studies that describe and explain users' behavior on TikTok and its possible negative effects.

Aim: The aim of the research was to describe the patterns of TikTok use among young adults (18-24 years) from Generation Z. Secondary objectives included exploring the relationship between levels of addiction potential and self-regulation and individual patterns of use, as well as determining whether and how users attempt to regulate their behavior on the platform.

Methods: The research employed a qualitative design based on semi-structured interviews with 13 respondents aged 18-24 years, supplemented by screening questionnaires to measure risk of addiction (BSMAS) and self-regulation skills (ScSRQ-CZ). The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the method of Thematic Analysis.

Results: This study shows that TikTok is firmly integrated into users' daily lives, serving not only as a source of entertainment but also as a tool for regulating emotions, filling leisure time, and, in some cases, interfering with sleep patterns and academic responsibilities. The study also confirmed TikTok's high addictive potential and highlighted the psychological risks associated with its heavy use. Specific strategies for regulating use showed variable effectiveness and were not clearly dependent on the overall level of self-regulation.

Conclusion: The study provides valuable insight into the individual experiences of users and highlights the importance of the context of use, which is often overlooked in quantitative surveys. The ability to reflect on and purposefully regulate one's own patterns of use emerges as a key protective factor against risky use. The findings of this study can serve as a basis for future research as well as for the development of preventive and educational interventions aimed at promoting a healthier relationship with digital technologies.

Keywords: TikTok, patterns of use, social media addiction, self-regulation, Generation Z