



## The risks associated with the use of social media by Generation Z

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**Abstract.** *The development of social media has had a significant impact on society and Generation Z has been directly affected by the new modern means of communication. In addition to the positive implications, there are a wide range of risks to which users are exposed on the Internet. Direct social interactions, physical activities, time spent with friends in nature are alternatives to limit the time spent online. Through informative campaigns, appropriate laws and collaboration between educational agents young people can develop the skills they need to cope with risky situations. Thus, the positive effects of the online environment should be maximized to contribute to personal development. The methodology of the research was characterized by the method of focus groups, and the group that was studied was made up of 13 young people. The main results highlight the existing risks for the active users of social networks, such as: addiction, narcissism, destruction of interpersonal relationships, exposure to immorality, etc.*

**Keywords:** social networks, risks, Generation Z.

### Introduction

Life is becoming highly digitized with the monopoly of the Internet (Taplin, 2019). In the past virtual reality was more of a science fiction topic, but today technology is widely available worldwide. Now, human-to-human connections have reached a new stage, that of multidimensional communication, and interactions in the online environment overlap with those in the real world and have even achieved supremacy. The communication paradigm is changing, and individuals are becoming interested in the online environment.

We are living in a society where daily social networking has become normalized among the young. At the beginning of 2023, according to the Digital Consumption Report for Romania, 67.3% of the Romanian population uses social media platforms, while 88.9% of the total population has access to the internet. Digitalization has been successfully adopted: in the first months of 2023, 145.4% of the total population were actively connected via their mobile phones, which means almost 30 million connections made via mobile devices (Kemp, 2023). Online life is no longer a novelty and blocking access to virtual communication is a real challenge for the younger generation.

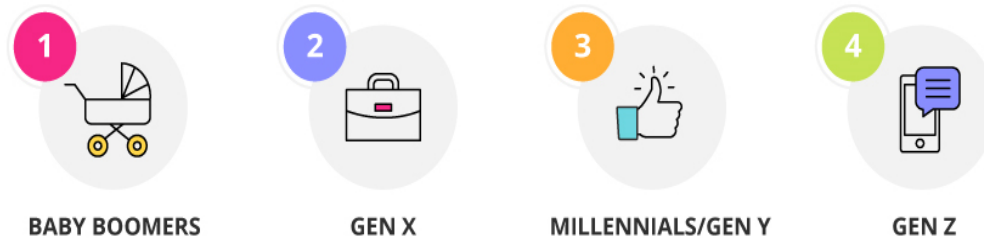
With the emergence of different social networks, several areas of interest of the population have been covered. Some are focused on specific areas of activity, others on the development of sentimental relationships or the sharing of common interests - music, travel, gastronomy, etc. (Casadei et al., 2016). Through the variety of domains addressed, social networks represent, in a sense, the agora, the public square in ancient Greek cities where the main institutions were located and where public meetings were held.

Albert Einstein, the scientist who promoted the theory of relativity, drew attention to a new perspective a few decades ago, recalling that the question that remains to be answered is whether technological progress leads us to abandon social interaction in favor of comfort (Ulmanu, 2011). The stage of development where technology overpowers humanity is what the scientist feared. Time has shown that the great physicist was right. With the development of virtual social networks, the younger generation has become more comfortable and less interested in real social interaction.

The development of technology has been a factor in the facilitation of some activities, but it has also had an impact on the behavior of users (Tasente, 2014). Considering the current social context and the multiple and very attractive technological offers, young people are the most exposed to this phenomenon. The effects of digitalization are linked to the new structure of families, with busy parents spending little time with their children. Intergenerational interaction is reduced to general issues, which has contributed to the proximity of children to technology. Furthermore, the lack of information from an educational point of view about the risks involved is a factor in the development of the partnership between young people and the virtual world.

Social media platforms have had an impact on a number of areas, not least the commercial sector. There has been a change in consumer behavior and a general attempt on the part of producers to adapt to the new conditions. Young people have been the first to reorient themselves towards the new possibility of purchase of certain products. Visual storytelling has emerged as a strategy to engage people in virtual spaces, as there is a continuous flow of content on any social media platform (Walter et al., 2014).

The emergence of social networks, regardless of habitat, has changed individuals' perspectives on life, according to some studies. More precisely, a transition from a rural to an urban landscape occurs in the context of connections, as there is a continuity between offline and online spaces (Venkatraman, 2017). Participants in social networks are able to engage in discussions through the sending of video or audio messages, even if the recipient is located in a different part of the world. Generation Z, also known as the iGeneration, Centennials or Digital Natives, refers to people born between 1995 and 2012, according to the Innovation Report by Samsung. At present, 32% of the world population belongs to Generation Z, making it the most represented category in the world, and in Romania there are about 2.26 million people from Generation Z between the ages of 13 and 23 (Seol, 2020). Therefore, globalization and technologization have had an impact on them from the moment of their first contact with the world and have shaped their vision of life (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** - Division of generations based on a symbol specific to that period

*Source: GetSmarter, 2020*

Members of Generation Z are true digital natives, accustomed to using devices such as smartphones and tablets from an early age. They had access to the internet, followed YouTube posts and are the first to grow up with social media. Members of this generation relate to computers the way boomers relate to television (Tapscott, 2011).

Gen Z is interested in physical health but is also sensitive to environmental issues such as global warming and ecology. It also promotes projects to improve civil society and civil rights. With the help of technology, members of this generation are committed to changing the way people work and live in the 21st century (Hackl, 2020).

Compared to previous generations, Generation Z, although they value autonomy and independence, prefer to be part of specific groups on social networks (Snow, 2020). Learning becomes autonomous, the internet is the main source of information, avoiding asking for help from other people. Individuals from this generation are multitasking, using several devices at the same time, which leads to a decrease in their level of concentration.

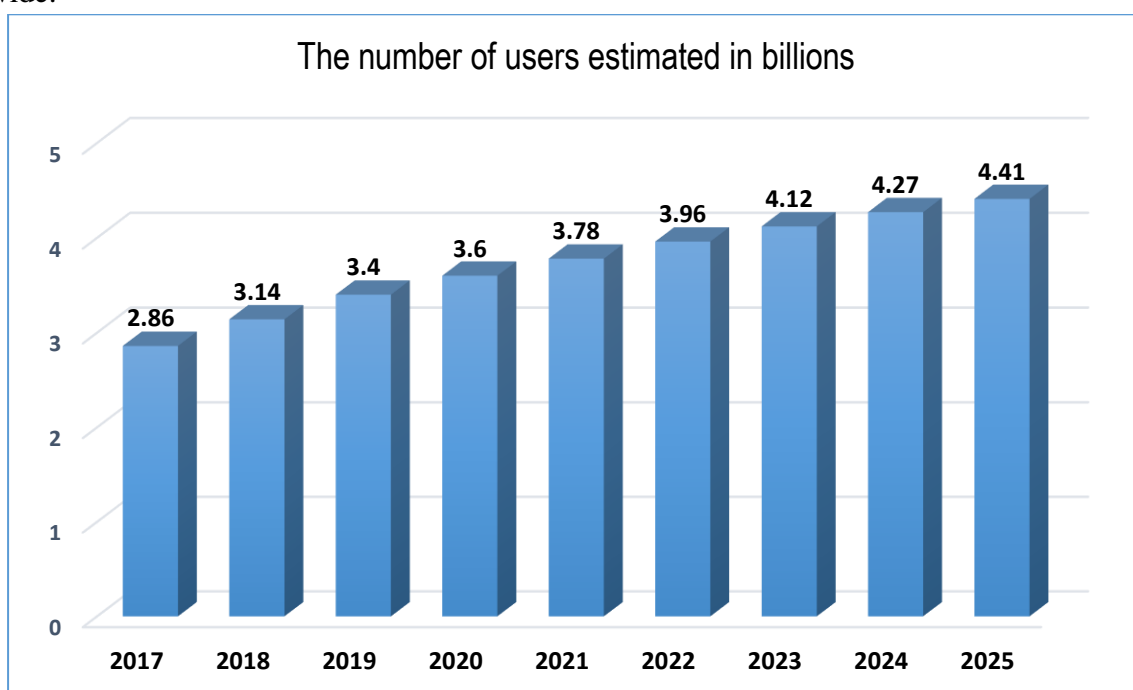
Generation Z as a whole is defined by technology, flexibility, openness to innovation, a new cultural influence (originality, authenticity, inventiveness, celebrity) and contradictions. Their profile is deeply divided between pride and a sense of belonging, but they are inevitably linked by remarkable similarities (Seol, 2020). Generation Z is highly competent in the field of technology, able to adopt new discoveries and ambitious in terms of professional development. The members of this generation are natural entrepreneurs, able to be involved in several activities at the same time. Their weaknesses include total dependence on technology, cynicism about everyday life and realism that destroys idealistic perspectives (Harber, 2011).

Theories on how to promote your ideas on the internet have evolved immensely and will continue to do so as social media evolves. At the same time, any information or news that would normally take days or weeks to reach the other side of the world can be disseminated in seconds. The ability to communicate around the world has never been more accessible than in today's society. Despite the differences from traditional conversation due to the reduced level of sensory involvement and feedback (Sălcudeanu et al., 2009), the new way of communicating is appealing to as many people as possible around the world.

Globally, the number of users has increased by 920 million since 2017, a jump of 32.2% in just five years. The average annual growth rate over this period is 7.2%. Looking ahead, while the number of social media users continues to grow, the index is expected to increase. The average annual growth rate from 2022 to 2025 is predicted to be 3.9% (Figure 2).

The reality is that social media will continue to be a part of consumers' daily lives, with smartphones and mobile devices being the main driving force. Social media statistics currently show that more than nine out of ten (91%) social media users use mobile devices to access social media.

Such statistics show the growing trend and dependency of consumers on social media, indicating a concrete opportunity for social media marketing for e-commerce companies worldwide.



**Figure 2** - Social Media users on the global scale between 2017-2025

*Source: The study carried out by the Statista agency and published on the Oberlo platform*

Social networks are widespread and the number of people with access to at least one modern communication network is constantly increasing, reaching billions of users worldwide. Social networks are classified according to the type and nature of content created by users, as follows: photography, music, films, videos; online games; interaction between social media platforms.

Professor Jose van Dijck (Balaban et al., 2021) divides social media into four categories, as follows:

- Social networking platforms (PRS) - promote interpersonal communication, group communication, and facilitate communication with a wide audience. Connection between individuals based on shared cultural and geographical spaces leads to personal connections between users (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.);
- User-generated content (UGC) - supports creativity, cultural activity and encourages content sharing (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Wikipedia, etc.);
- commerce and marketing (SCM) sites – track the exchange or sale of products (e.g., Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, etc.);
- Gaming and entertainment sites (SGD) - promoting popular games (e.g., Twitch).

The number of social networks is very large and covers all areas of user interest, especially the desire to stay in touch with friends (Copăceanu, 2020). With the help of a social network, an individual can not only comment on and share the content posted by other people, but also post content to be commented on and rated by other users. Within a social network, content is created exclusively by users, which leads to diversity and novelty.

The following research questions were addressed in the study How do members of Generation Z relate to social networking? What are the main reasons why young people are connected to new technological tools? What are the risks perceived by students in relation to new communication tools?

### *Research methodology*

#### **The purpose of the research**

The research aimed to identify how the use of social networks by Generation Z has shaped the behavior, values, and everyday practices of teenagers.

#### **Research premise**

Generation Z's long exposure to new means of communication is having a negative impact on young people's behavior and everyday practices. Users benefit from certain advantages but are also exposed to certain risks that they need to be aware of.

#### **Research method and population under study**

The research method used was qualitative focus group research, and the tool used was the focus group interview guide for students with the following questions What are the vulnerabilities and risks for people active in the online environment in terms of interpersonal interactions and well-being? How would life be without social media? Do you consider yourself to be addicted to social media? Explain your answer! How do you react when you don't have access to virtual activities? What do you prefer to do in your free time - sports, music, leisure, something else?

The population studied for the focus group was represented by 13 students. The selection criteria used to select the young people were the following: a) the respondents must

be young people enrolled in high school courses within the educational units, with current attendance; b) the age of the students must be between 15 and 19 years; c) the respondents must be available to participate in the study.

In terms of area of origin, the percentage of respondents from urban areas (57.93%) was much higher than that from rural areas (42.07%). The respondents were predominantly female (60%) and male (40%). Girls are more willing to make themselves vulnerable and pay attention to details, a fact proven in other studies where the report was similar: Facebook's pitfalls, (Runcan, 2016); Popular culture and identity (Mitan, 2019). According to a study conducted by Dixon (2022), the Snapchat network has more female users than male users, who make up approximately 54% of the platform's audience.

### **Data analysis and interpretation - Results of analysis**

Regarding the negative effects of using social networks, respondents stated that online socializing leads to addiction, develops a narcissistic spirit, demotivates real interactions and exposes the user to immoral images. Young people also expressed concern about the security of personal information and about people who hide their identity online.

The impact of social networks on mental health can be analyzed from three main perspectives, according to some studies: (1) - emotional instability and anxiety; (2) - online harassment; (3) - addiction (Copăceanu, 2020). The results are limited and some consequences will be discovered in the analyses published in the following years. Nocturnal use, self-esteem, emotional involvement are directions that have their importance in the complexity of the study of social networks.

In these conditions, children and adolescents have different behavioral manifestations in certain aspects: the accentuation of verbal and physical aggression, the inability to manage the time spent online, the reduction of time spent with the family, the reduction of time dedicated to physical activities, the interest and performance in school activities, the early onset of sexual life, the reduced self-control, the reduced capacity for personal interaction, the reduced empathy and the reduced quality of life (Marinescu et al., 2020). All of these characteristics are red flags for those directly involved, but also for those around them.

The online environment is fraught with risk, and overuse fosters an attitude of indifference to the dangers that exist. Many inappropriate products are promoted in the virtual space, especially for the young generation (Chapoton, 2020). The emergence of spammy comments, the bombardment of irrelevant content by both real people and bots, is becoming commonplace. The implications young generation's bullying (a form of aggressive behavior in which someone deliberately and repeatedly causes injury or discomfort to others), but also the danger created by cyber-stalkers and determined by the facilitation of platforms to share users' locations, must be considered carefully. The lack of a security system to ensure confidentiality affects the ability to keep private information only on the personal social media account.

Studies show that physical activity is beneficial for adolescent brain health, both for cognitive development (e.g., academic performance, memory) and for reducing symptoms of



depression (CDC Healthy School, 2018). Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence may also be important for promoting lifelong health and well-being and for preventing risk factors for several health conditions, such as heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Therefore, physical activity can help limit time spent on social networks, but it is also a good physical and mental therapy.

**Table 2.** Life without social networks would be like...

<b>POSITIVE STATEMENTS</b>	<b>NEGATIVE STATEMENTS</b>	<b>BOTH PERSPECTIVES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quieter life</li> <li>• spiritual peace</li> <li>• A grandparent's life, full of loneliness but full of meaning!</li> <li>• stress-free day</li> <li>• A walk in the park</li> <li>• Our parents' childhood, i.e., much better</li> <li>• A period of peace after a war</li> <li>• It would be much nicer, and I think we would be happier.</li> <li>• A breath of air, a release</li> <li>• A medicine for the human psyche.</li> <li>• a dream</li> <li>• It would be better because there would be less competition, malice, and misunderstanding.</li> <li>• like riding a bike, quite hard at first, but once you get used to it, very nice and easy.</li> <li>• the rose without thorns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food without salt</li> <li>• Living in the forest, alone with no one</li> <li>• Fish out of the water</li> <li>• sandwich without ham</li> <li>• Tap with no water, mineral water without acid</li> <li>• A book without content</li> <li>• Cake without raisins</li> <li>• incomplete life</li> <li>• Life in the forest, alone with no one</li> <li>• life without friends</li> <li>• Life without newspapers and television</li> <li>• Pancakes without Nutella</li> <li>• Bicycle without pedals</li> <li>• A burger without chips</li> <li>• A tree without bark</li> <li>• An ocean without fish</li> <li>• A car in the machine age</li> <li>• A lamp without a bulb</li> <li>• A world where people would forget how to socialize.</li> <li>• like summer without ice</li> <li>• a day without sun</li> <li>• a car without an engine</li> <li>• Football without a ball</li> <li>• Catastrophe, impossible to imagine.</li> <li>• A car without air conditioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grey color</li> <li>• Prisons without bars</li> <li>• Boredom and reading</li> <li>• Riding a bike without a basket to put your grandmother's food in</li> <li>• a quiet and slightly boring life</li> <li>• A jungle without animals, still beautiful, but not as interesting.</li> <li>• The quiet but sometimes disturbing life of a baby</li> <li>• polenta without cream, i.e., the existence of networks is not mandatory, but it gives a more pleasant taste</li> </ul>

*Source: Generated by the author*

In the year 2021, three major networks - Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram - suffered a general outage lasting several hours, causing panic among users. According to Down detector, an online platform that provides users with real-time information on the status of various websites and services, it was the biggest outage the company has ever seen, with 10.6 million outages reported. Services went down at 9 p.m. and were restored at 3 a.m. (Lawler et al., 2021). Initially, everyone assumed it was a network problem and everyone tried to reconnect to the internet. The situation that arose illustrates the importance of social networking in today's society.

**Table 3.** Positive and negative aspects highlighted by respondents about social networks.

POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's a good thing, as long as they don't make you communicate only in the virtual environment. It's good to be balanced and only use them to keep in touch with your loved ones.</li> <li>• They are useful but need to be used with care and moderation.</li> <li>• They also have advantages and disadvantages, but whatever we can say, they have become a necessity these days.</li> <li>• They are a good place to communicate and relax, but they shouldn't take up too much of our time, as many people spend most of their time on them.</li> <li>• I think social networking sites are important, you can meet new people, communicate with others and learn interesting/useful information.</li> <li>• They are dangerous for children under 12.</li> <li>• There are many things I have discovered through them.</li> <li>• Many people need compliments, and most people on social media give them compliments and encouragement, which boosts their</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal information is very accessible to everyone!</li> <li>• They have damaged the face-to-face communication skills in young people.</li> <li>• Together with the mass media, they misinform a lot.</li> <li>• They are useless.</li> <li>• The use of social networks at a young age influences the behavior of individuals and their perception of reality.</li> <li>• They are the most accessible medium for manipulating people's information and perceptions.</li> <li>• Forces people to conform to unjustified standards.</li> <li>• People portray the positive parts of their lives on social media, nothing is real.</li> <li>• Social networks allow you to spread information quickly.</li> <li>• That there is a danger of life revolving around this digital world and that excessive use of it should be curtailed in order not to affect mental health.</li> <li>• They are creations of the devil.</li> <li>• We can use them, but in a normal way, and I believe that personal life should remain private and not be exposed on social networks.</li> <li>• Social networks are a platform for all</li> </ul>

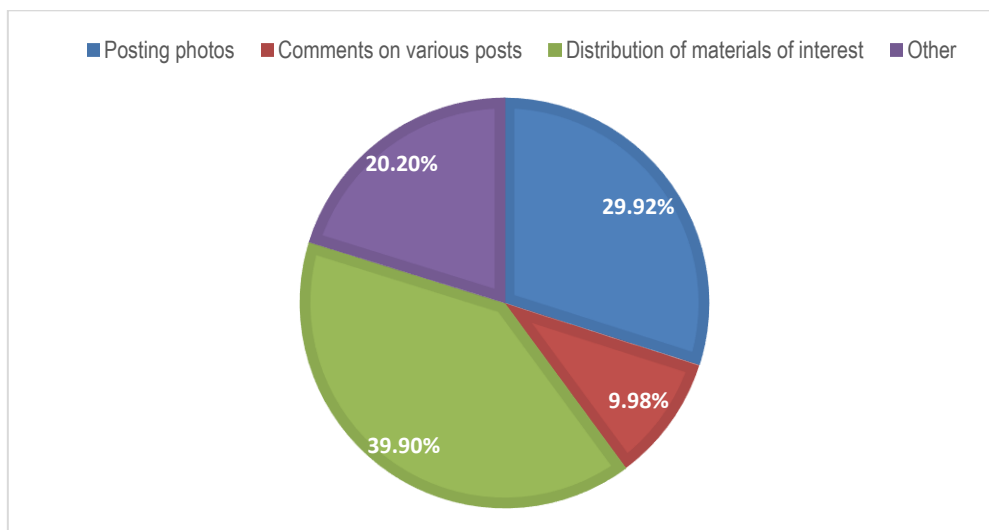


POSITIVE ASPECTS	NEGATIVE ASPECTS
<p>self-esteem. This is how people learn to love each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps us talk to people at a distance.</li> <li>• Social media helps to inspire and motivate you to pursue your passions.</li> <li>• It helps with development.</li> <li>• It makes our lives easier.</li> <li>• Useful information for school.</li> <li>• It is useful and can be used. for good and charitable purposes, but they can also be used in bad ways, such as using the networks to look at certain people (popular) and admire them all day long (career, success, body).</li> <li>• They are good and useful if used intelligently.</li> <li>• Birthdays, music.</li> </ul>	<p>kinds of people to hide behind. Not everything that happens in the online world is true. If and only if used responsibly, they are useful and beneficial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is addictive and even if it's not good, you can't control yourself. I think we should all make a change, look up from our phones and look at the world around us, nature, life. I think we waste our time instead of enjoying life more. I'm not saying social media isn't good, but not too good.</li> <li>• Socializing through social media is not really socializing.</li> <li>• It enables sexting.</li> <li>• It lowers our self-esteem and confidence and can make some people anxious.</li> <li>• In excess, they are harmful and a waste of time.</li> <li>• - It destroys your creativity and memory.</li> </ul>

*Source: Generated by the author*

The following research questions were used in the study How do members of Generation Z relate to social networking? What are the main reasons why young people are connected to new technological means? What are the risks perceived by students in relation to new communication tools?

For Generation Z, technology is normal, ambition is a strategic virtue, passion is a motivating factor and religious interest is very low. According to White (2017), Generation Z is defined by the following five key factors: (1) recessionary - growing up in a post 9/11 world; (2) Wi-Fi enabled; (3) multiracial; (4) sexually fluid; and (5) post-Christian.

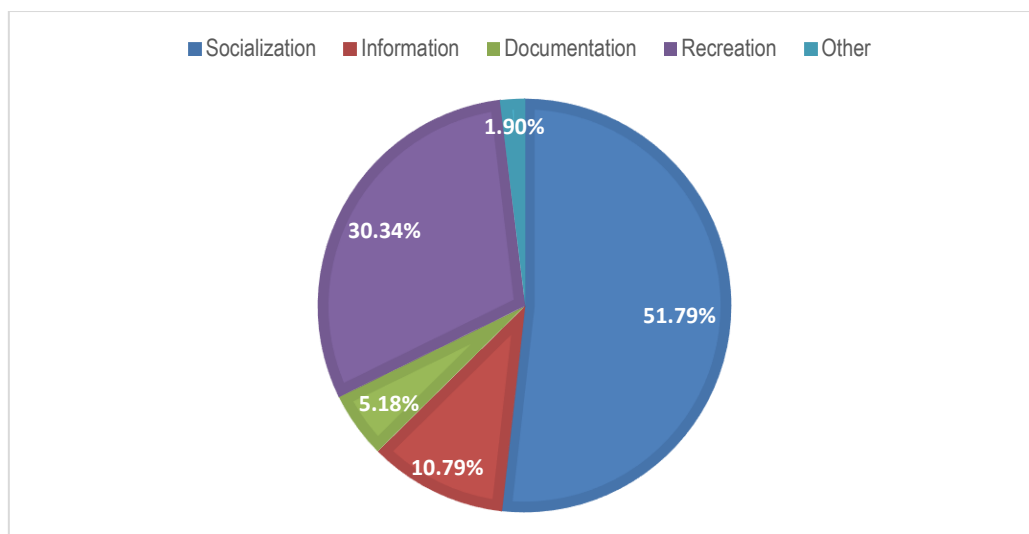


**Figure 4 - Preferred social media activity (%)**

*Source: Generated by the author*

As far as the preferred activity on social networks is concerned, most of the subjects stated that they prefer to share material of general interest (39.9%). This is followed by posting photos (29.92%), commenting on different posts (9.98%) and 20.2% of students found themselves in another activity (Figure 4).

The study Why people use social networking sites identified 11 reasons why young people are interested in accessing new virtual technologies (Brandtzaeg, 2009). The first reason was to communicate with other people (31%), then to keep in touch with friends (21%), while the third reason was general socializing (14%).

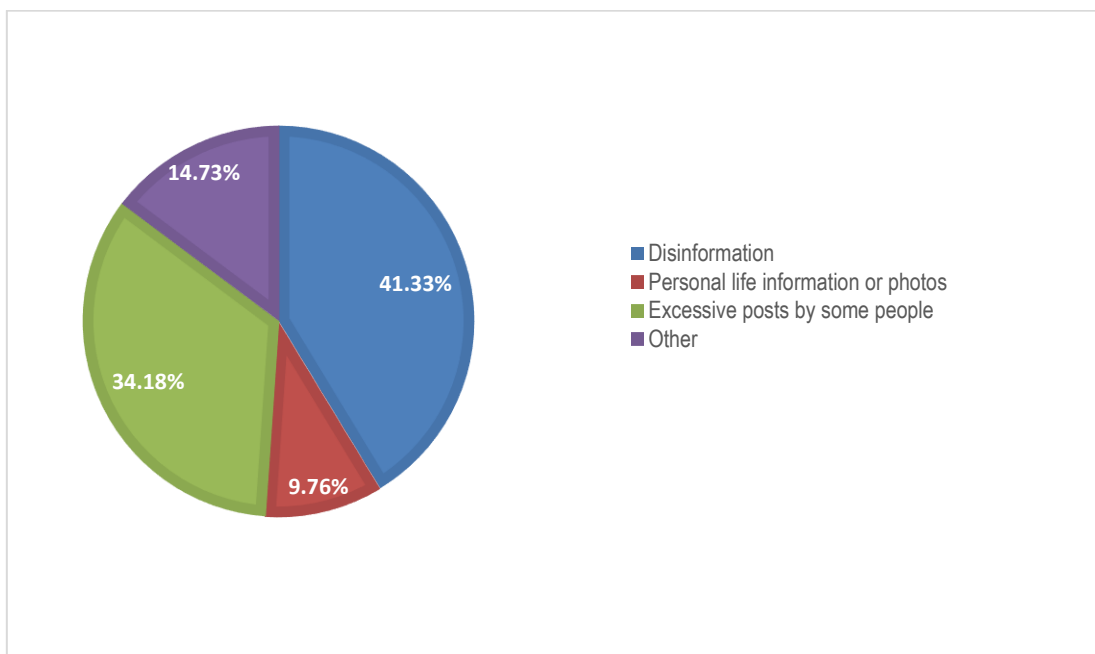


**Figure 5 - Main reason for using social networks (%)**

*Source: Generated by the author*

Socialization (51.79%), followed by recreation (30.34%) and information (10.79%) are the reasons why young people spend a lot of time in the virtual environment. A smaller percentage is in favor of documentation (5.18%), and the other reason option was selected by 1.9% of respondents (Figure 5).

According to the study by Fatemeh Aliverdi et al. (2022), social networks create a sense of belonging and social identity. However, in the long term, it affects mental health and quality of life, especially for young people. The aforementioned research identified the predictive role of social networks and emotional relationships on the Internet on students' mental health and quality of life.



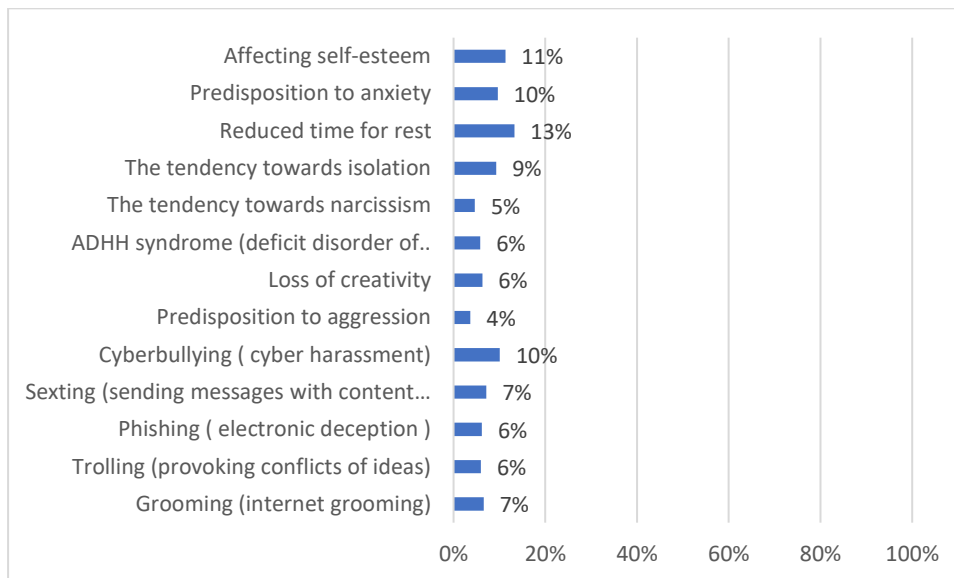
**Figure 6-** Inappropriate aspects of social networks (%)

*Source: Generated by the author*

When asked what they don't like about social networks, most people said misinformation (41.33%), followed by excessive posts by some people (34.18%). In addition, 9.76% did not like the information or photos from their personal life and 14.73% preferred to choose another option (Figure 6).

Health misinformation was most prevalent in studies related to smoking products and medicines, reaching up to 87% (Suarez-Lledo et al., 2021). Misinformation about the benefits of vaccines was also very common (43%), and misinformation about diet or arguments in favor of eating disorders was moderate (36%) compared with the above topics. Disease-focused studies (i.e., non-communicable diseases and pandemics) also reported moderate rates of misinformation (40%), particularly for cancer. Finally, the lowest levels of health

misinformation were related to medical treatments (30%). Thus, the main negative aspects reported by respondents are also confirmed by the study mentioned above.



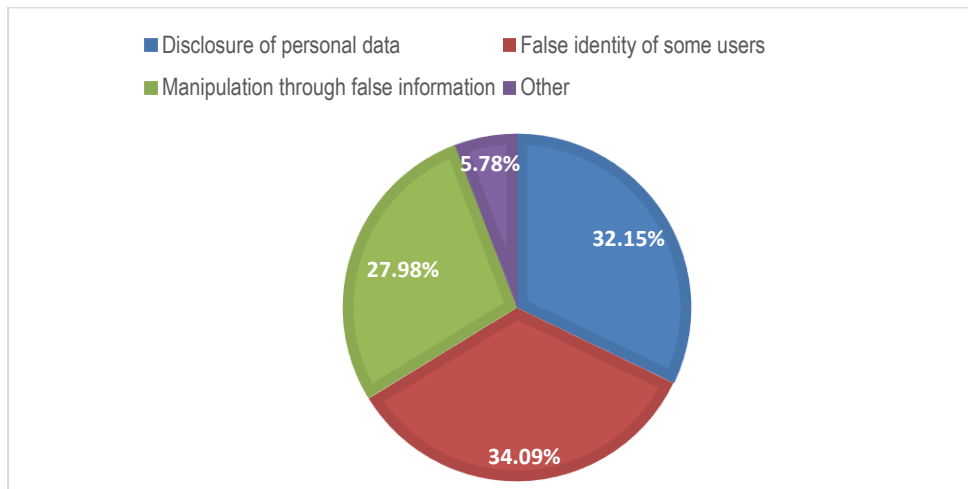
**Figure 7 - Risks of using social networks (%)**

*Source: Generated by the author*

Regarding the risks for users of social networks (Figure 7), the respondents gave the following answers according to the following fears, indicated by percentages: damage to self-esteem (11.34%), predisposition to anxiety (9.63%), reduced time for rest (13.28%), tendency to isolation (9.32%), tendency towards narcissism (4.66%), ADHD syndrome (attention deficit disorder, 5.82%), loss of creativity (6.28%), aggression (3.68%), cyberbullying (10.1%), sexting (sending sexually explicit messages, 7.15%), phishing (6.18%), trolling (causing conflicts of ideas, 5.98%), grooming (internet grooming, 6.58%).

And other studies point to the many risks faced by people active in the online environment. In particular, social media can affect young people's self-concept and interpersonal relationships through social comparison and negative interactions, including cyberbullying. In addition, the content of social networks in some cases unintentionally influences self-harm and even suicide among young people (Abi-Jaoude, 2020).

Researchers at the University of Technology Sydney identified 46 specific harmful effects of social media use. These include physical harm, mental health problems, impact on work or school productivity, and security or privacy issues (Anderer, 2021). Some of the most common negative effects included psychological damage such as jealousy, loneliness, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

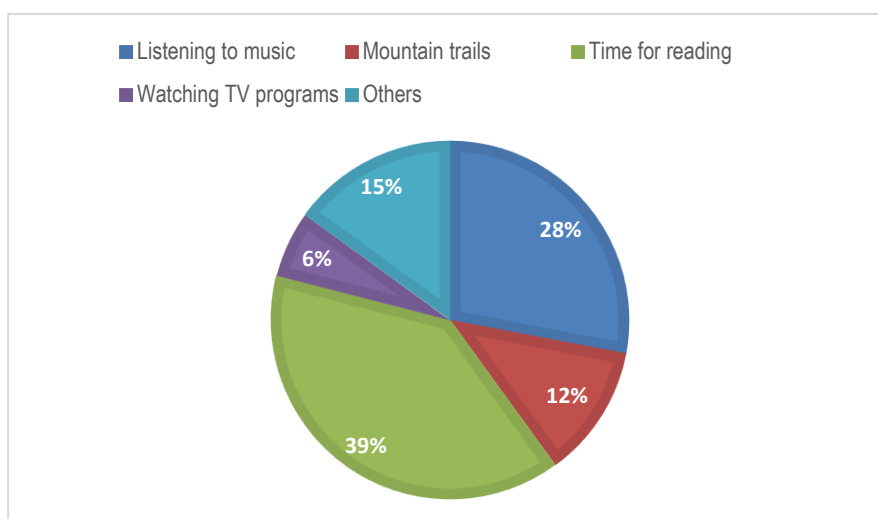


**Figure 8** - Vulnerable aspects of social networks (%)

*Source: Generated by the author*

Regarding the weaknesses of social networks, the respondents indicated that the false identity of some users (34.09%) and the disclosure of personal data (32.15%) are the greatest dangers. This is followed by manipulation through false information (27.98%), and in the category of other vulnerabilities, the percentage is 5.78% (Figure 8).

According to a recent study by Viasat Savings, almost 50% of respondents keep their social media accounts private, while the other half choose to be public and open (Wachtor, 2020). It also found that 71% of respondents took the time to check advanced privacy settings when joining a social media platform.



**Figure 9** - Useful activities proposed by the subjects to counteract the time spent on social networks (%)

*Source: Generated by the author*



In terms of activities that should be included in the program, most respondents said that reading was worth considering (39%). This was followed by music (28%), hiking (12%) and watching TV programs (6%). For the option 'other activities', 15% of the students stated that they preferred something different from what was suggested in the questionnaire (Figure 9).

Some research shows that there are many disadvantages to young people spending a lot of time online. For example, a third of US teenagers have not read a book for pleasure in at least a year, according to a new survey by the American Psychological Association (Twenge et al., 2019). Research suggests that the virtual environment continues to dominate among teens. Teenagers' use of traditional media such as books, magazines, and television has declined, while the time spent texting, scrolling through social media, and using other forms of digital media continues to increase each year.

Apart from its usefulness, the study is limited by the small number of respondents and by reporting only on the negative aspects of social networking. In addition, the responses of the people involved in the research are subjective from a point of view, as each person views the impact of the online environment according to their personal activities. In the future, there may be an analysis that tracks the influence of social media on Generation Z according to interactions with parents, teachers, and friends. The rapid development of technology means that new studies are needed to cover all the effects of modern means of communication.

### **Conclusions**

The young generation is the one most exposed to the new technologies, and therefore we are living a remarkable paradox: in today's society, children need to immerse their hands in what is real; in an age of communication at the speed of light, it is crucial for little ones to have the time to develop their inner selves (Monke, 2006). The danger of the emergence of a community where everything is done easily and quickly, but with desolate, sad, lonely, and sick people (Baciu, 2019) is not far away.

In the context of a society dependent on social media, young people, and not only young people, must avoid anything that may affect their mental health and emotional balance. Academic performance, relationships with parents and friends, daily mood are all linked to time spent online. Success is the result of regular exercise combined with a lot of responsibility and self-control. Man, machine, and computer should not be placed in different camps. It is important to establish who decides on the change of perspective (Katzner, 2018). To understand society, the role and responsibility of each person depends largely on the use of modern information tools (Lynch, 2016).

Spending a long time in the online environment also has certain negative consequences. Sooner or later, users will be affected by virtual overexposure, with the main areas of a person's life being infected. Identity, intimacy, relationships, and imagination have been affected by the development of new technological means (Al Falahi, 2010).

The impact on the user therefore affects the relationship with oneself, but also with others. The spectrum includes various mental and psychiatric symptoms (Baciu, 2019). Neglect of sleep, food, personal hygiene, tendency to social withdrawal, tolerance to reprimands, anxiety are just some of the results that appear. Technology addiction has the same basic elements as any other type of addiction, namely the habitual use of reward and pleasure circuits.

To avoid digital dementia, it is necessary to incorporate some simple activities into the daily routine, such as: eating well, exercising, making time for meditation, engaging in charitable activities, smiling, walking in nature. And everything is possible through the activation of free will and through genuine humility, far from the madness of egoism, the illusion of virtual escape and the passion of uncontrolled use (Baconschi, 2015).

Reality shows that we live in a society in which the question "Is it right?" has lost its relevance, being erased by the option "Does it work? A period of reflection on the use of the new means of communication and an understanding of the actual and potential pathological effects will help to discover the dominant paradigm in society. We all have the privilege to choose our own path, to have social media as a friend or as our permanent master. Being a free person or a prisoner depends on the activation of free will and in the field of new technologies.

For all the benefits of access to the Internet, prolonged use can have a negative impact on values, habits and, ultimately, lifestyles. Through information campaigns, appropriate legislation, and cooperation between educational factors, it is possible to develop the necessary skills for young people to face risky situations. In this way, the positive effects of the online environment that contribute to personal development must be maximized. Generation Z has the necessary potential to be useful to society, but the involvement of those from previous generations is also needed.

The harmful consequences of excessive use of social networks can be prevented through close cooperation between decision-makers in each country (e.g., government, parliament, etc.). There is also a need for families, schools, and society to take concrete action within their own spheres of influence. Suggesting and setting limits would help the younger generation to grow up in a healthy developmental environment and benefit from a special education where discipline and affection have their place.

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