Course Project

University Internship

Research Project

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS BEHAVIOR

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1 Abstract

This research project has the main objective to identify the influence of social networks on adolescent behavior.

To develop and shape, this project was based on several methods with which this research was made possible.

It has been designed a questionnaire for young people between ages 12-14. The participants were 35 from 4 different countries, mainly from Bulgaria.

With the information extracted from the answers of the survey were elaborated tables and statistical graphs.

 It was concluded that the majority of the adolescents dedicate a lot of time visiting social media.; additionally, this represents a distraction from their studies.

 In response to this project, a recommendation guide was developed so that young people use social networks consciously.

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2　Introduction

Social networks allow us to share information, create and interact with communities of similar interest. This is reflected in activities such as reading, games, friendship, love relationships, that directly involve an entire society, especially those who are between the ages of 12-14 years, causing problems in various aspects of their lives.

The "Impact of social media on adolescent behavior" needs to be studied because currently, adolescents use the social network without control and the unlimited access results in the loss of the ability to socialize, they can manifest mood changes, behavior changes, suffer diseases, and addictions due to the indiscriminate use of technology.

In the first part of my project, social networks are analyzed in a general way: definition, evolution, social networks, and their characteristics, description of the main networks, advantages, and disadvantages.

The second part of the project constitutes the most important part of the study where the information was collected, in detail from the survey carried out by adolescents between 12 and 14 years old.

2.1. Statement of the problem

The internet has firmly entered into our life, and now we can no longer imagine our existence without visiting it at least several times a week. Already every child not only knows how to use a computer but also has perfect command of the internet.

The main objective of the internet is communication in all areas, from advertising, interviews, articles, chats, emails, but data, documents, books, images, among others are also exchanged. Currently, the use of the internet and the different technological tools become a basic service for human interaction.

Social networks are a phenomenon thanks to the communication power that the internet enables, however the misuse of them can lead to addictions and make an impact on the academic performance of adolescents. For example, a young person may not pay attention to his homework and postpone it, this affects his average in question, and little by little the adolescent becomes more dependent on these networks, consumes too much time on their daily life, forgetting their homework, isolating themselves from their environment, influencing in their behavior with others.

It is unquestionable, that we live in a time of social change due to the influence of information and communication technologies. These technological tools have given us many advantages in terms of mobility, easy and up-to-date information, entertainment, social relationships, etc.

This power of social networks controls especially the adolescents, so that's why it is necessary to carry out a study of the impact caused on the behavior of young people aged 12 to 14 and design prevention strategies

2.2. Formulation of the problem

The problem is associated with the incorrect use and accessibility of social networks by adolescents between 12 and 14 years old.

Therefore, it is necessary to ask ourselves several questions to know what the impact of social networks means in adolescents' lives.

What are the factors that influence adolescents between 12-14 years old in their behaviour when they are using social networks?

What motivates adolescents aged 12 to 14 to create an account on a social network?

Is there a reliable degree of data privacy for teens ages 12-14 on social media?

2.3. Objectives

2.3.1. General objectives

- To analyze the impact of social media on the behavior of adolescents aged 12-14 years.

2.3.2. Specific objectives

- Identify the types of social networks most used by adolescents.
- Establish factors that can improve the use of social networks by adolescents.

2.4. Justification

At present, adolescents between 12 and 14 years old are very easily integrated into social networks due to their innocence and lack of experience. The majority of the young people at least have an account where the requirements to access one of these is just to fill out a form where users accept certain rules established by the network.

Social networks have been of great influence on our young people, resulting in the loss of the ability to socialize, as well as being victims of cyberbullying.

The present study, it is expected to establish the factors, causes, and consequences that affect the behavior of adolescents aged 12 to 14.

3 Methodological Framework

3.1 Methodology and Method

For this project, the quantitative technique(survey) will be used, to find out how many young people use social media on daily basis and how many young people have an account on the social network. Qualitative techniques will be used to know their behavior, what they think, how they are with their friends, how they feel, and if they had good or bad experiences after interacting on social media for hours.

3.2 Type of the research

Descriptive research will be carried out, also known as statistical research, describing the data, the impacts.

3.3 Plan to collect information

The literature review will the first stage of my project where the extracted information will be used to order the theoretical part of the work.

A survey will be conducted for adolescents from 12 to 14 years old.

This research from the obtained results intends to know:

- What are the factors that motivate adolescents to join social networks?
- Know the benefits and disadvantages of adolescents when interacting on social media.
- Is there some control so that adolescents can access a social network?

The purpose of the project is to observe the young people since they are the most vulnerable to being influenced by the massive use of social media. The research wants to show what is the impact of social media on adolescents´ behavior.

4 Theoretical framework

To arrive at some theoretical knowledge of the subject of my research it is necessary to know what the social networks are about, their characteristics, and the way they influence young people.

4.1 Social networks

Social networks are forms of social interaction, defined as a dynamic exchange between people, groups, and institutions. Usually, they have very specific operating conditions and they start with invitations sent by friends. To subscribe the user designs his "profile" with personal information invites other friends. They are frequently used by young people for the facility of instant communication that networks offer.

4.1.1 Characteristics of social media

Several authors highlight the characteristics of social media. The main characteristics are:

- The information is updated constantly and quickly.
- They are abundant, there are no limits on the volume of information that they offer to users of the Network.
- They collect and store information.
- Concept of virtual communities: It can be defined as public spaces where many people can meet and share the network, thanks to their tastes or their ways to use the network, regardless of where you come from.
- Creating profiles: Most social networks allow the creation of profiles where the user is shown to the others: That is, it allows to save and share the user data: email addresses, photographs, phone numbers, likes, hobbies, friends, even part of your personal and professional history.
- Interaction: It is the element that helps to develop social relationships, allowing users to express themselves and establish conversations.
- Cooperation: Most social networks help us to do things together.
- Real-time: It allows to maintain a continuous interaction between users in real-time.
- Respect: Most social networks respect identity, autonomy, and the styles and rhythms of user work.

4.1.2   Background of social networks

The term "social network" it has appeared long before the internet-in 1954, the concept of social networks was introduced by the American sociologist James Barnes.

The maintenance and creation of various social connections on the internet began with the birth of the Web itself- e-mail, teleconferences, opportunities for interactive communication, various chats. Initially, the purpose of all these communication tools was not so much communication as solving business issues and work tasks.

But the social and entertainment function of the internet quickly became one of the first roles. In 1994, the GeoCities network was launched -the prototype of modern social networks. Users of this network could create their site.

Then, from 1997 to 2001, the first wave of social networks was formed. In 1999, an American student programmer opened the Livejournal.com service. A fairly detailed profile could be created there. Soon, the service provided the ability to add contact(friends).

The second wave of the emergence of social networks occurred in 2001-2004.

In 2003, the MySpace network was created, the main users of which were rock bands. For independent musicians, the portal has become a kind of platform for self-presentation.

Since 2004, all kinds of internet communities have begun to use networking tools on their services.

Thus, social networks on the internet originated in the 80s and 90s centuries in America. The emergence and disappearance of social networks are determined by the interests of people and new opportunities.

4.1.3   Classification of social networks

Having in mind the dimension of the social networks, the first classification we could do is to distinguish between off-line o analog social networks, without the intermediation of an electronic device or system; online or digital social networks with electronics; and mixed social networks, a mixture of the 2 types of the two previous types.

4.1.3.1   Horizontal social networks

They don't have a defined theme they are aimed at a generic audience and focus on contacts. The users don't have any concrete purpose. Its main function is to relate people through the tools they offer, and they all share the same features: create a profile, share content and generate contact lists. Facebook, Google +, Badoo, MySpace, etc.

4.1.3.2   Vertical social networks

The vertical social networks could be divided:

- By subject: Professionals, Cultural, Hobbies, Social movements, Travels.
- By activity: Microblogging (like Twitter, Muugo, Plurk, etc.).
- By shared content: photos, Flickr, Pinterest, etc.
- Music: Examples of these social networks are Last.fm, Blip.fm, etc.
- Videos: YouTube, Dailymotion, etc.
- Documents: The greatest exponent Scribd.
- Presentations: The best known are SlideShare and Slideboom.
- News: Meneame, Digg, Friendfeed, etc.
- Reading: Anobii, Wattpad, Librarything, etc.

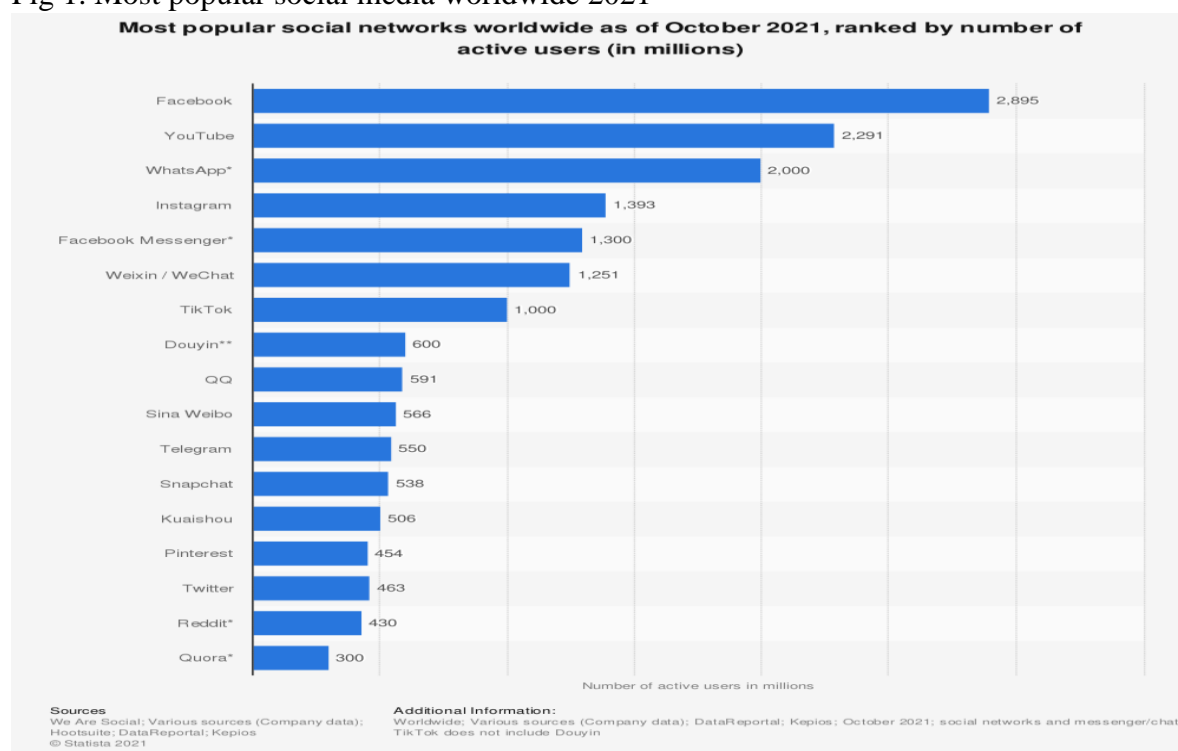In addition to these are networks for love affairs, professional social networks, communities of friends.

Social networks are certainly an economic and social engine. They also offer the traditional facilities of having a profile, uploading photos, sharing with friends, sending and receiving messages, chatting, playing online, etc. There are networks available for all tastes, ages, and interests.

4.1.4   Popular social networks

Because social networks become a more common form of communication, it is necessary to determine which one is it has a great number of active accounts that are leading the preference of users.

Bellow, it is presented a graph with the ranking of the most used social networks worldwide.

Fig 1. Most popular social media worldwide 2021

Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2021, ranked by number of active users (in millions)

Social Network	Active users (millions)
Facebook	2,895
YouTube	2,291
WhatsApp*	2,000
Instagram	1,393
Facebook Messenger*	1,300
Weixin / WeChat	1,251
TikTok	1,000
Douyin**	600
QQ	591
Sina Weibo	566
Telegram	550
Snapchat	538
Kuaishou	506
Pinterest	454
Twitter	463
Reddit*	430
Quora*	300

Number of active users in millions

Sources
We Are Social; Various sources (Company data);
Hootsuite; DataReportal; Kepios
© Statista 2021

Additional Information:
Worldwide; Various sources (Company data); DataReportal; Kepios; October 2021; social networks and messenger/chat a
TikTok does not include Douyin

In figure 1, it can be seen that Facebook leads in the graph.

Facebook

Facebook was born at Harvard in 2004. At the famous Ivy League university, it was published a catalog with the faces of the students who joined the campus and some information. Some of the students thought of transferring that same concept to the online search. The incredible success of the initiative soon crossed university boundaries. On the 15 of September Mark Zuckerberg founder and CEO, announced that Facebook has reached 300 million users.

Facebook was originally born for Harvard University students, but due to its popularity, this virtual platform spread to all corners of the world and became the most used by people regardless of age. As cell phone technology advanced, some of the most downloaded applications worldwide are Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Google applications to browse the internet.

Facebook is one of the most used both for teenagers as well as adults, this platform started with the basics, a tray of messages, option to upload photos. Messenger is a Facebook extension for instant messaging which is downloaded to complement the application for mobile devices in any type of operating system with constant updates for better performance.

YouTube

The second most used social media during 2021 is YouTube. This is a portal that allows users to upload and view videos. It is said that according to Hurley and Chen the idea for YouTube arose when they experienced difficulties while sharing videos taken during a party in San Francisco. This website has evolved like all applications and web pages at the beginning of its creation until giving greater user comfort when using the platform. YouTube is a very popular

platform and the preferable for users to watch videos with many topics of interest like tutorials that serve to do something, there are information videos, entertainment videos, etc.

WhatsApp

The app that has changed the world of communications. WhatsApp has earned the right to become a symbol of our society. "Write me on WhatsApp", "Send me your ubication on WhatsApp", "Send me some pictures on WhatsApp" are examples of the level of daily life it has reached.
WhatsApp is an instant messaging application through the internet that made users forget about text messages. This application started simply with text messages, voice memos, sent images, and with the updates from documents to calls and video calls include this application, for which it has become everyone`s favorite.

Instagram

It is the most popular photo and video app. This app can be used by teens and any person without age restriction. It is the platform through which photos and videos can be uploaded instantly. Most teens use apps like this to upload semi-nude or fully nude photos to gain popularity or followers to cover their lack of self-esteem.
The negative of most social networks is that they put down the self-confidence of young people, especially Instagram which is an app to upload photos and you only see girls with nice bodies and boys with muscles. For that reason, when adolescents see those photos they lose their self-confidence, entering into depression in many of the cases and this becomes a problem that can lead to tragic ends.

TikTok

TikTok is one of the trendy social networks nowadays, especially among young people. TikTok is a social network that comes from China and consists of creating short videos that go from 3 to 15 seconds or a maximum of 60 seconds. Part of its success is explained because is easy to use and you don't need to be an expert to make the videos. Anyone can make a video and that is very attractive for the young people who can easily create their videos and become influencers, having their moments of fame.

4.1.5 Advantages and disadvantages of using social networks

4.1.5.1 Advantages

- Connection with people from all over the world.
- They allow us to know alternative opinions.
- They offer a multitude of job opportunities.
- They allow you to meet with people with common interests.
- They are a great source of entertainment.

4.1.5.2 Disadvantages

- They can be very addictive.
- They have a great impact on our emotions.
- Scams and data theft.
- Give harmful opinions and attitudes.
- Censorship.

Undoubtedly, the ability of social media to connect with people from all over the world and the window they have opened to other realities have had a lot to do with its rapid expansion. Still, even though they may have positive and negative aspects, the truth is that many people (especially young people) can no longer understand the world without using social networks.

4.2 Computer threats

The use of antivirus software is a fundamental component to prevent malware from spreading. The antispam tools (Application or technological tool to erase spam) and firewall (a computer program that controls access from a computer to the network and from elements of the network to the computer, for security reasons) also allows optimizing the security of the system in the face of these risks.

Joining a social network implies giving away a series of personal data, which is done voluntarily, but not always consciously.

Among the main computer threats for young people on the internet are:

Cyberbullying is the harassment and threat of a child, or adolescent to another through the use of cell phones, computers, or tablets. It is the virtual version of physical bullying presented in various ways, from insults, teasing, threats, etc. Social media is served as a perfect medium to post compromising images or videos of the victim and leave offensive or

threatening comments. According to some studies, more than 40% of adolescents indicate that they have never permitted their friends to upload personal photos. A warring figure.

Grooming is another form of deliberate harassment in this case by an adult to a child to establish a relationship or emotional control over the minor. These behaviors begin online and in a second phase transcend the physical sphere through blackmail and intimidation of the victim. The phenomenon of grooming is a reality that has spread rapidly among us. The emergence of new technologies and massive access to the internet has allowed the proliferation of behaviors aimed at contacting minors to involve them in situations that threaten their compensation or sexual integrity.

Sexting comes from the acronym formed between sex and texting. Initially, as its name indicates, it was about sending messages with erotic content. Later, with the technological advancements, this has evolved towards the exchange of images and videos, becoming a common practice among adolescents.

Without a doubt, social networks are a valuable resource for internet users, there are a series of threats to which the user can be exposed while using them. For this reason, it is advisable not to underestimate computer criminals and for this, good use of technological tools must be made, having correct settings, as well as proper behavior during navigation.

4.3   Hypothesis

The factors that influence the behavior of adolescents 12 to 14 years are due to the lack of proper control over access, use, and time limits of social networks.

5   Analysis and Results

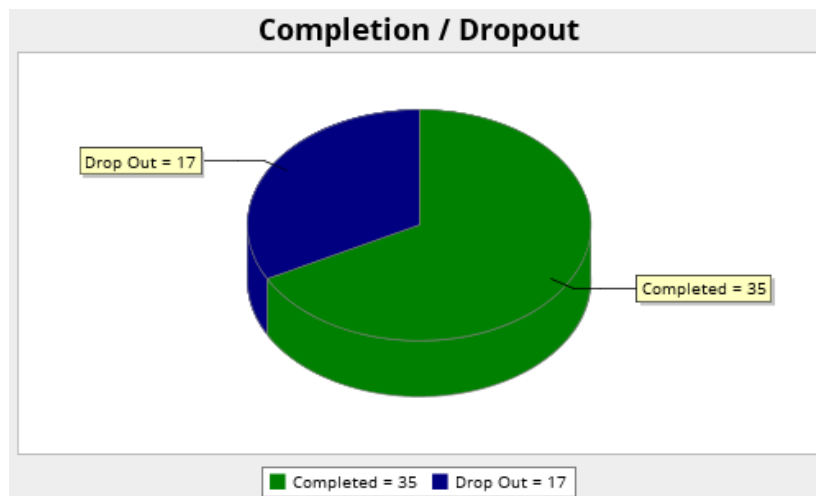**Figure 1.** Graphic of total survey respondents.

Table 1. Results of the total respondents of the survey.

Viewed	Started	Completed	Completion Rate	Drop Outs (After Starting)	Average Time to Complete Survey
112	52	35	67.31%	17	3 minutes

In figure 1, it can be seen that the survey was completed by 35 adolescents (between 12 and 14 years old).
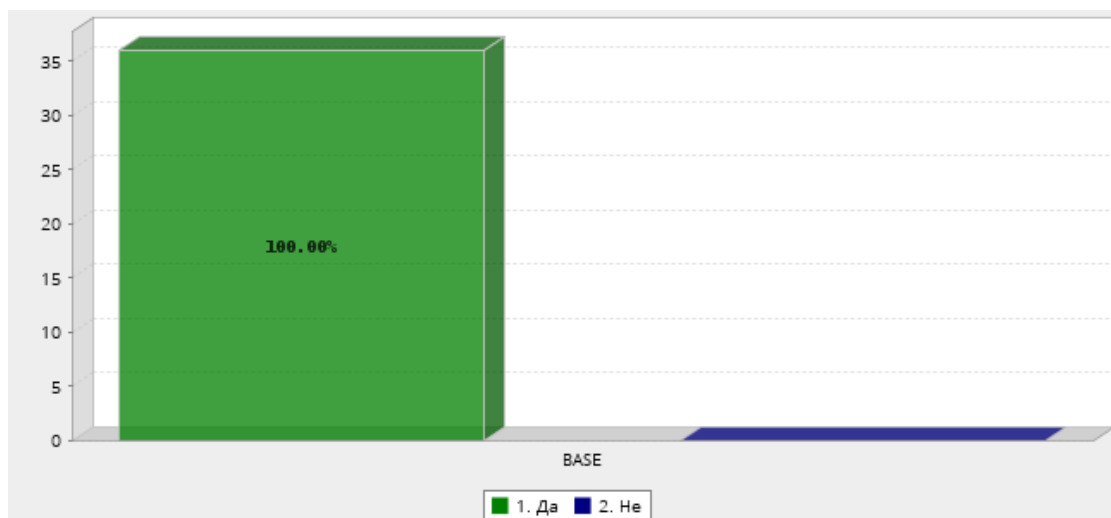
Q1. Do you use social media?

Figure 2. Graphic of the results of question 1.

Table 2. Results of question no 1.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	36	100.00%
2.	No	0	0.00%
	Total	36	100%

In figure 2, we can see that 100% of the surveyed adolescents are using social media and they are very familiar with them.

Q2. If "Yes", which one of these? (You can specify several).
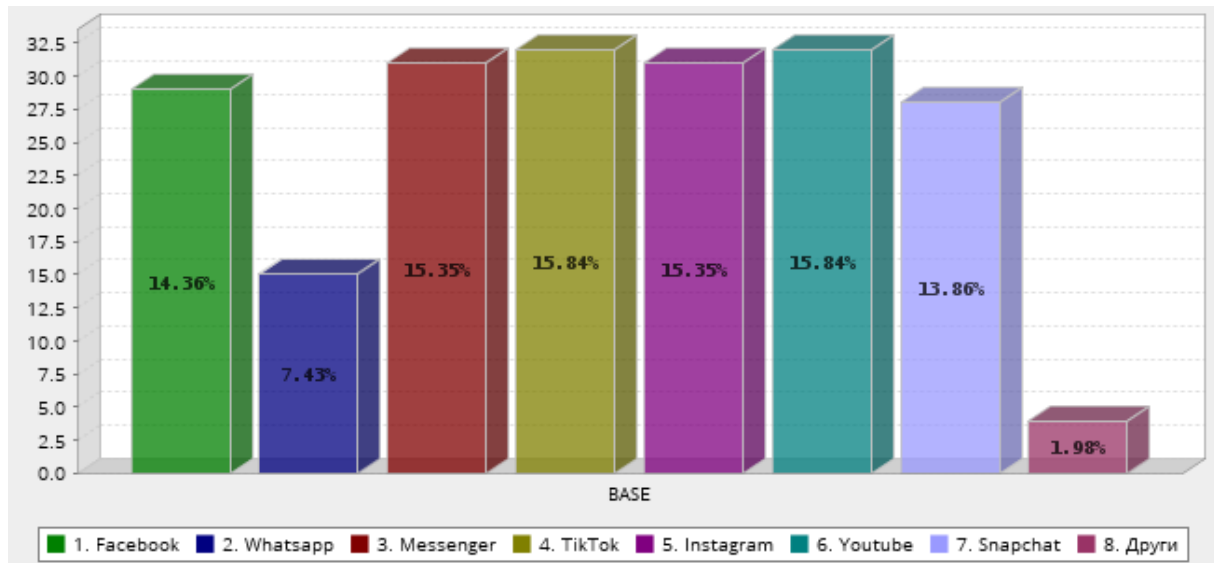
Figure 3. Graphic of the results of question no 2.

Table 3. Results of question no 2.

Answer	Count	Percent
Facebook	29	14.36%
WhatsApp	15	7.43%
Messenger	31	15.35%
TikTok	32	15.84%
Instagram	31	15.35%
YouTube	32	15.84%
Snapchat	28	13.86%
Others	4	1.98%
Total	202	100%

In the results of this question, as we can see in figure 3, the preferable top 2 social media from the adolescents are TikTok (15,84%) and YouTube (15,84%). And this can be explained that the young people in this age are mostly attracted by the videos of TikTokers and YouTubers. They also use in a very similar value Messenger (15,35%) and Instagram (15,35%). 14,36 % use Facebook; 13,86% use Snapchat; 7,43% use WhatsApp and 1,98% other social networks.

Q3. Purpose of use. (You can specify several).

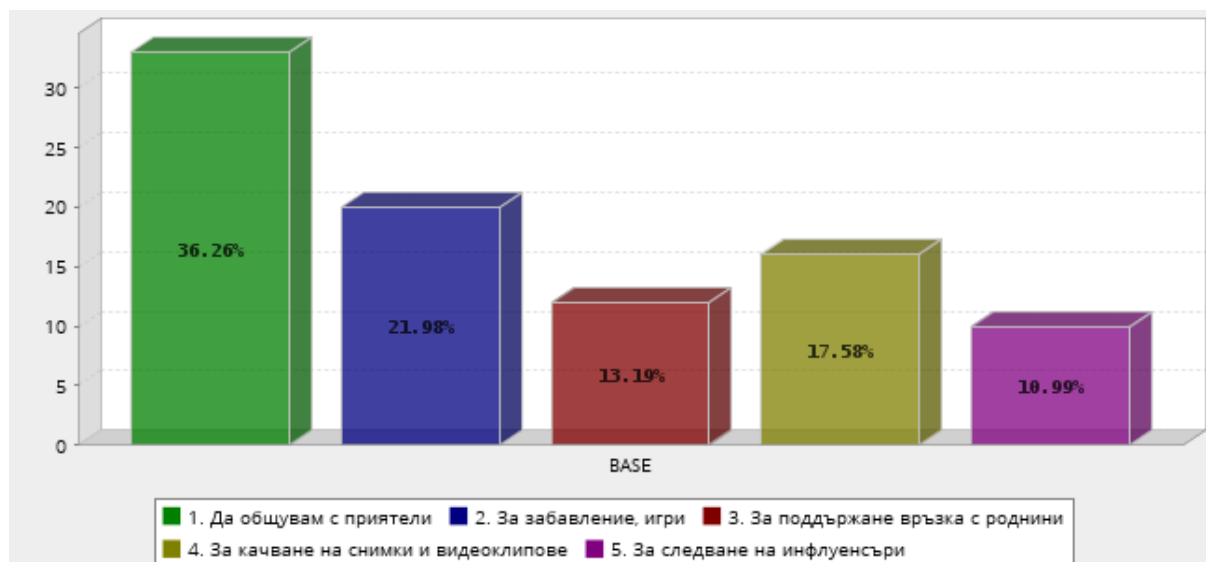Figure 4. Graphic of the results of question no 3.

Table 4. Results of question no 3.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Contact with friends	33	36.26%
2.	For fun, games	20	21.98%
3.	To keep in touch with relatives	12	13.19%
4.	To upload photos and videos	16	17.58%
5.	To follow influencers	10	10.99%
	Total	91	100%

In figure 4, it is observed that the main purpose of social media use is to connect with friends. 36,26% use social media to connect friends; 21,98% for fun and games; 17,58% to upload photos and videos; 13,19% to keep in touch with relatives; 10,99% to follow influencers. Friends are a great motivation for adolescents to be able to interact with each other. Furthermore, for the adolescents are more important the friendships than playing games.

Q4. What time do you enter social media?

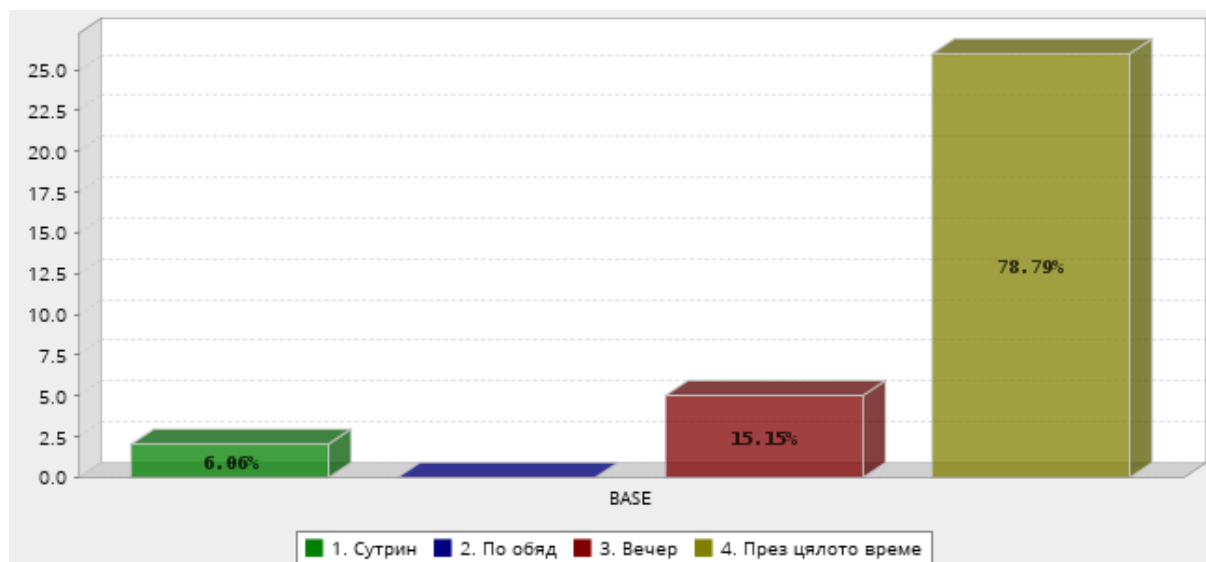Figure 5. Graphic of the results of question no 4.

Table 5. Results of question no 4.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	In the morning	2	6.06%
2.	At lunch	0	0.00%
3.	At night	5	15.15%
4.	All the time	26	78.79%
	Total	33	100%

The results from question 4, as we can see in figure 5, 78,79% indicate they connect to social media all the time; 15,15% connect at night and 6,06% in the morning. This shows that the adolescents spend a good part of their day on social media and they have no parental control to access them.

Q4. How much time do you spend on social media per day?

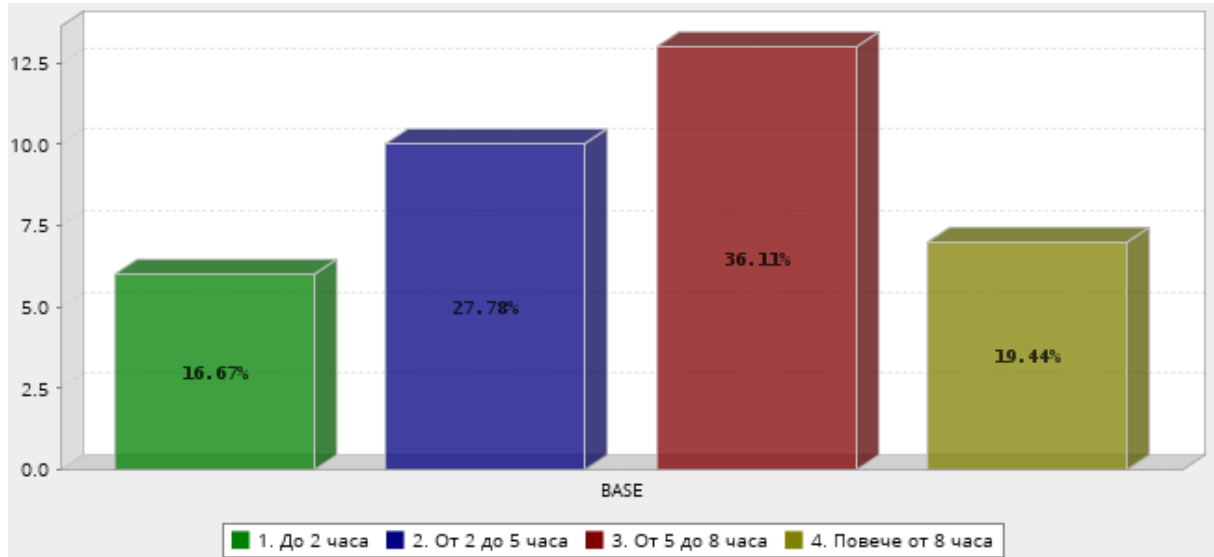Figure 5. Graphic of the results of question no 4.

Table 5. Results of question no 4.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Up to 2 hours	6	16.67%
2.	From 2 up to 5 hours	10	27.78%
3.	From 5 up to 8 hours	13	36.11%
4.	More than 8 hours	7	19.44%
	Total	36	100%

In figure 5, it can be seen that 36,11% indicated that they are connected to social media from 5 to 8 hours. 27,78% are connected to social media from 2 up to 5 hours; 19,44% are on social media more than 8 hours per day and only 16,67% are connected up to 2 hours. That represents more spent time on social media than they spend with their parents or teachers

Q5. Do you get up at night to enter social media?
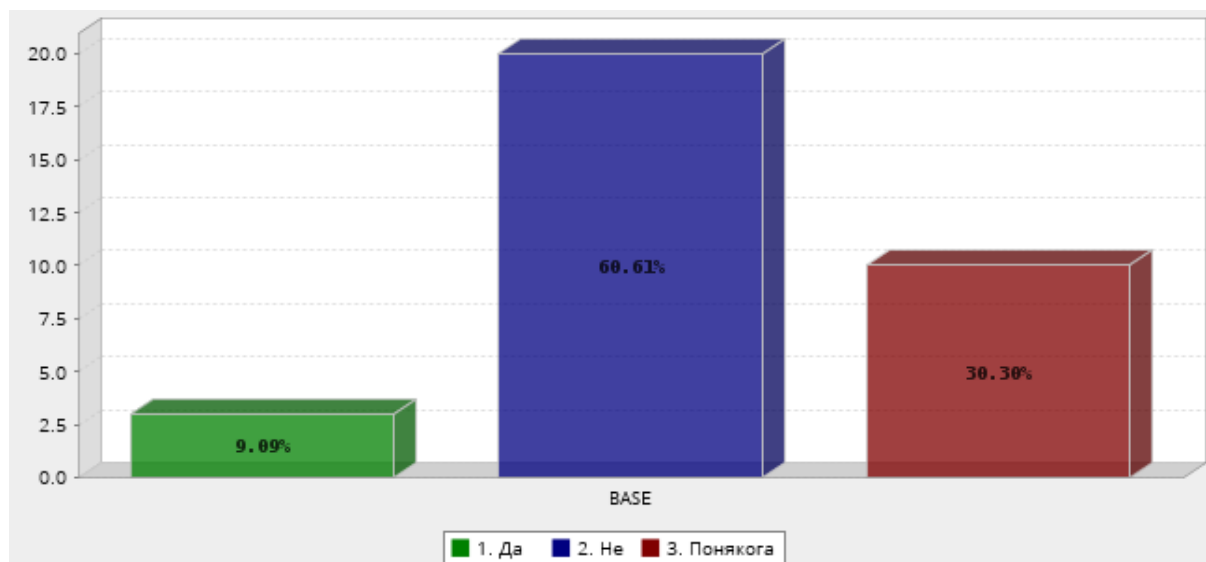
Figure 6. Graphics of results of question no 5.

Table 6. Results of question no 5.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	3	9.09%
2.	No	20	60.61%
3.	Sometimes	10	30.30%
	Total	33	100%

The results of question no 5, as demonstrated in figure 6, are relatively positive that most adolescents (60.61%) don't wake up at night to enter social networks. But still is a considerable percentage (30,30%) that shows us some addiction to social networks. And just 9,09% wake up at night.

Q6. Do you like TikTok?

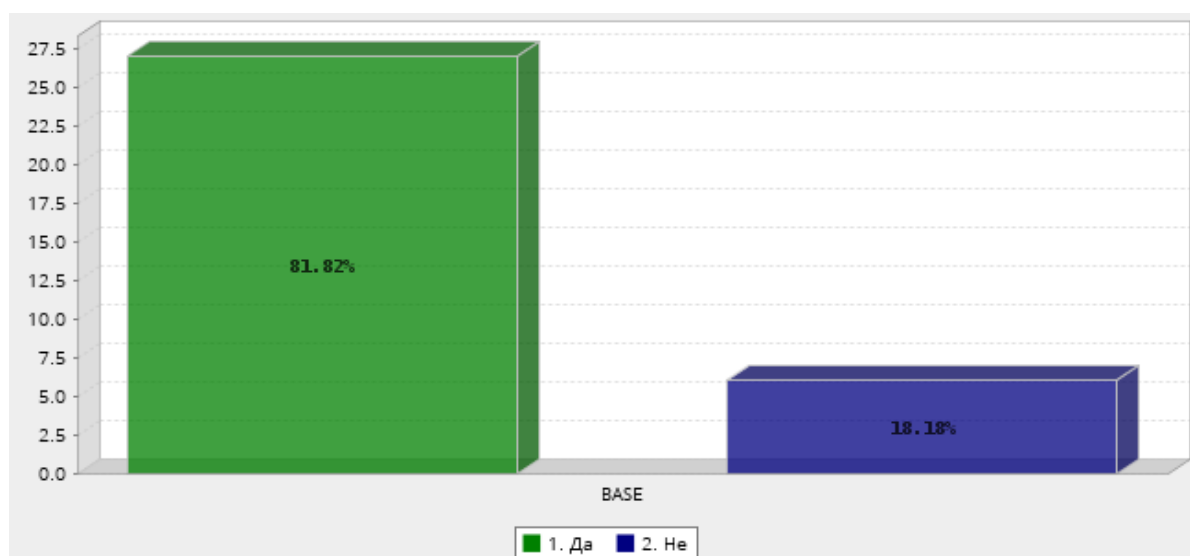Figure 7. Graphic results of question no 6.

Table 7. Results of question no 6.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	27	81.82%
2.	No	6	18.18%
	Total	33	100%

In figure 7, we can see that a big part of the adolescents (81,82%) like TikTok and are happy to be connected to this social media. 18,18% don`t like TikTok social media.

Q7. Do you share videos on TikTok?
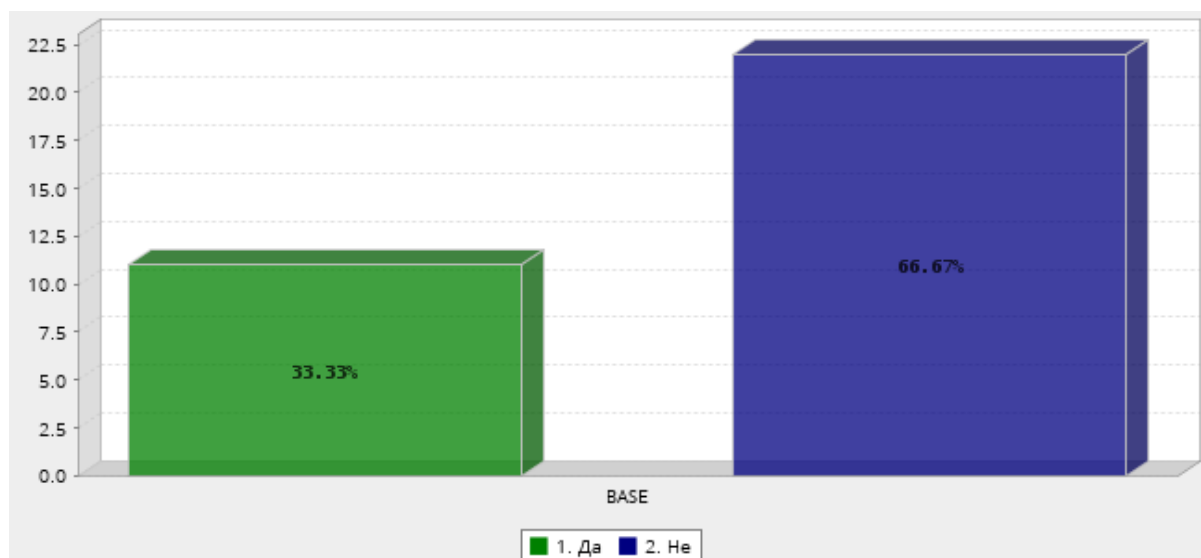
Figure 8. Graphic of results of question no 7.

Table 8. Results of question no 7.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	11	33.33%
2.	No	22	66.67%
	Total	33	100%

In figure 8, the results of question 7 show us that most adolescents don`t share videos on TikTok (66,67%), despite they like it; 33,33% shares videos on TikTok. The bigger percentage prefers to watch and follow TikTokers rather than share videos.

Q8. Would you buy something through social media?

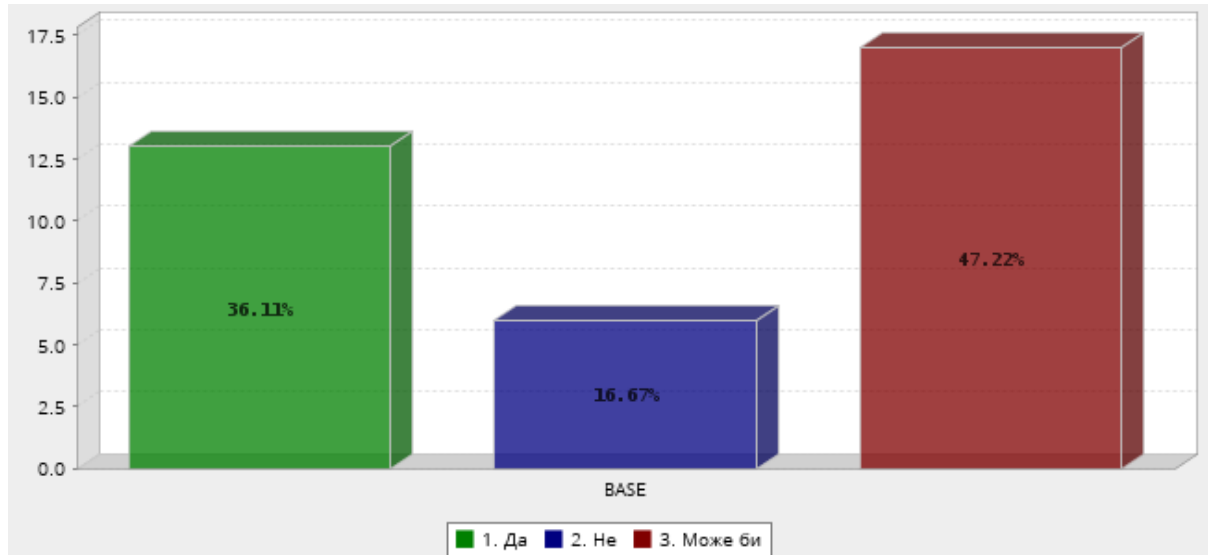Figure 9. Graphic of results of question no 8.

Table 9. Results of question no 8.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	13	36.11%
2.	No	6	16.67%
3.	Maybe	17	47.22%
	Total	36	100%

In figure 9, we can see that nearly half of the adolescents (47,22%) may buy something on social media; 36,11% would buy something on social media and 16,67% will not buy. This is because they may value the product recommendations of influencers or friends on social media.

Q9. Who can see your profile?
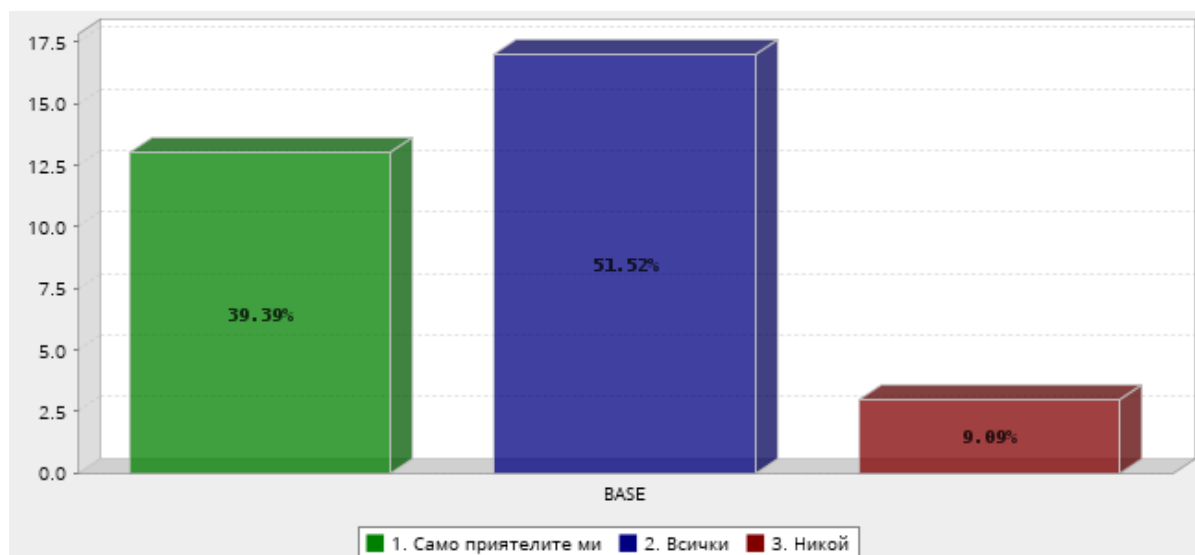
Figure 10. Graphic of results of question no 9.

Table 10. Results of question no 9.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Only my friends	13	39.39%
2.	Everyone	17	51.52%
3.	No one	3	9.09%
	Total	33	100%

In figure 10, more than half of the young people (51,52%) answered that everyone can see their profile; 39,39% that only friends can see their profile on social media, and 9,09% no one can see it. This means that the adolescents expose their data through social networks and that it could be used in their prejudice.

Q10. If your photo has a few likes do you get upset?
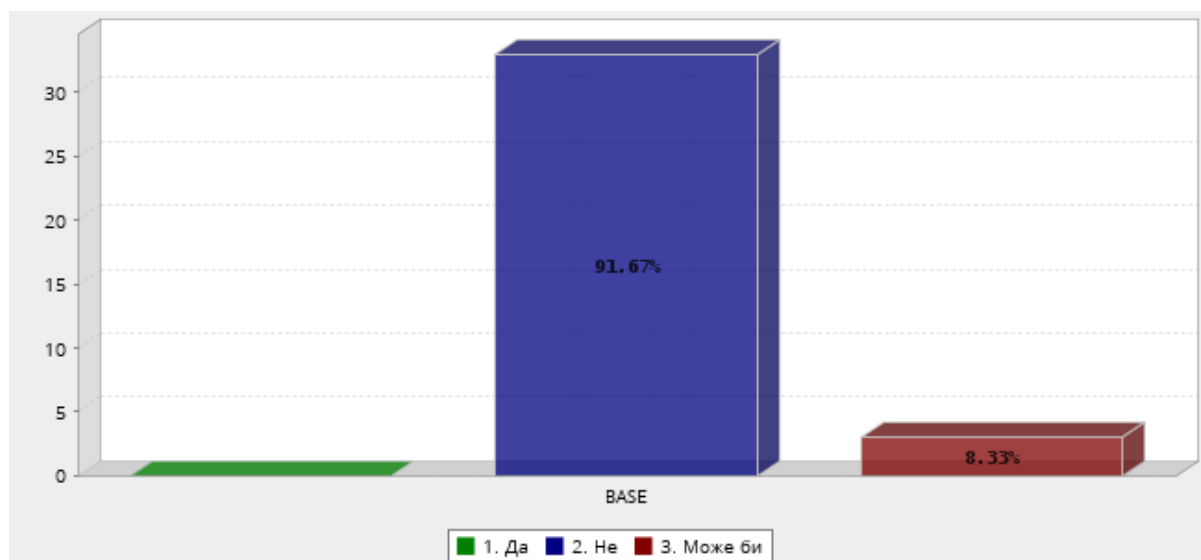
Figure 11. Graphic of results of question 10.

Table 11. Results of question 10.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Yes	0	0.00%
2.	No	33	91.67%
3.	Maybe	3	8.33%
	Total	36	100%

In the results of question no 10, as we see in figure 11, 91,67% of the young people have responded that they don`t care if they have likes on their photos, and 8,33% may be affected by that situation. This means that the self-esteem of our adolescents from the survey is not affected by the likes.

Q11. How long have you been registered on social media?
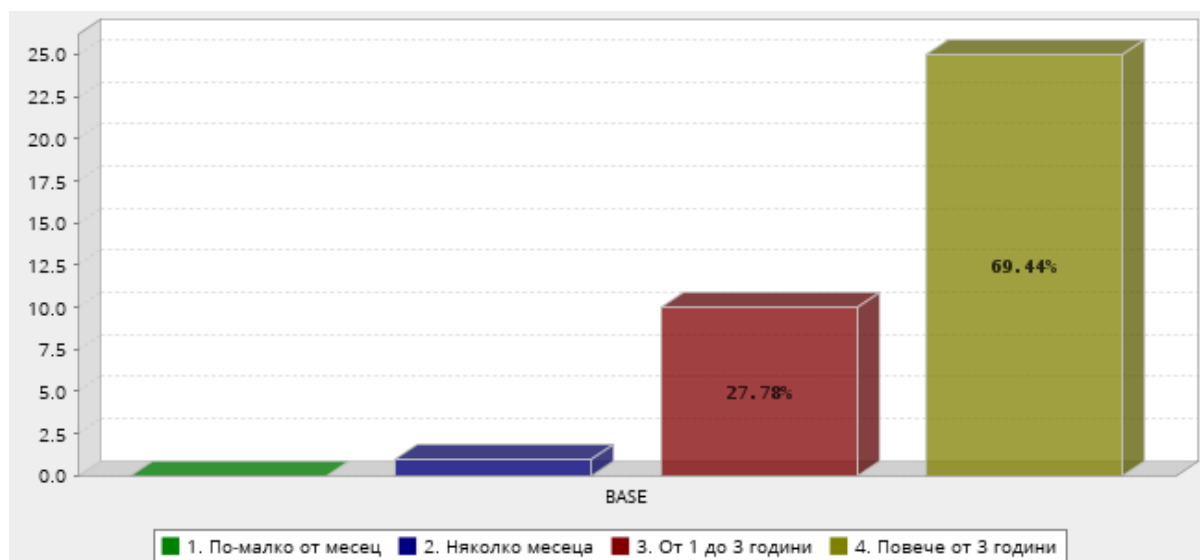
Figure 12. Graphic of results of question no 11.

Table 12. Results of question no 11.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	Less than a month	0	0.00%
2.	A few moths	1	2.78%
3.	From 1 up to 3 years	10	27.78%
4.	More than 3 years	25	69.44%
	Total	36	100%

The results from question no 11 in figure 12 demonstrate that 69,44% of our adolescents from the survey are registered on social media more than 3 years; 27,78% between 1 to 3 years; 2,78% a few months. That means that majority of them already had an account on social media when they have been 9 or 10 years old.

Q12. How important are social media for you?

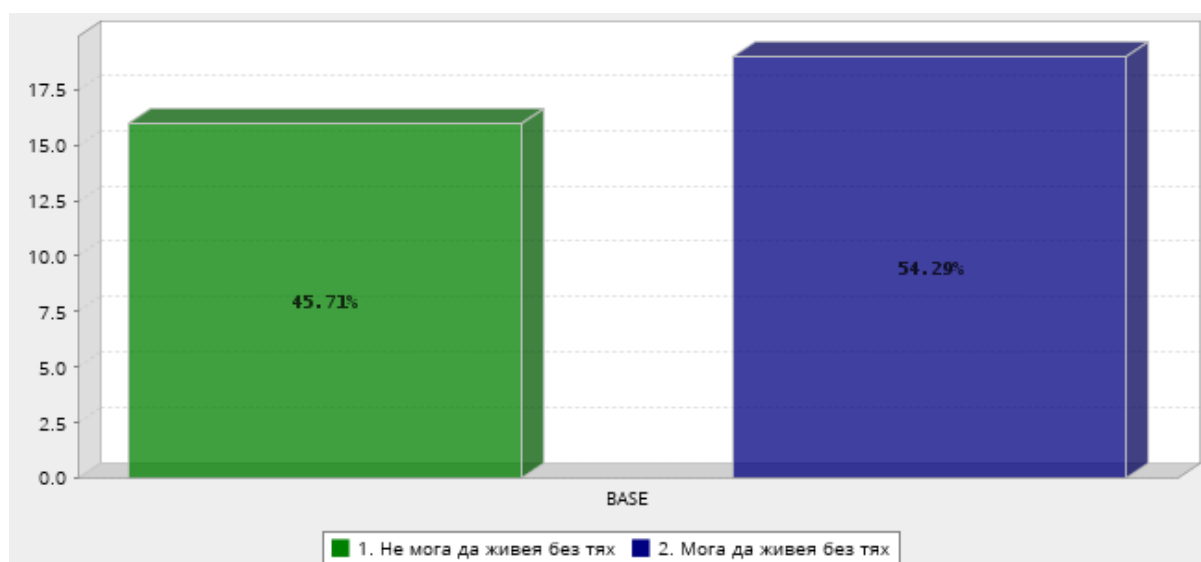Figure 13. Graphic of results of question no 12.

Table 13. Results of question no 12.

	Answer	Count	Percent
1.	I can`t live without them	16	45.71%
2.	I can live without them	19	54.29%
	Total	35	100%

Regarding the need to be connected to social media, in figure 13 we can observe that 54,29% can live without social media and 45,17% they can`t.

Verification of the hypothesis

According to the study carried out, the proposed hypothesis is accepted where it indicates that the factors which make an impact on the behavior of the examined adolescents are due to the lack of proper control on access, use, and time limits to social networks.

6 Conclusions

According to this study, it can be concluded that the majority of the adolescents aged 12 to 14 surveyed, have a social network account and are registered more than 3 years. The main social networks have a certain age restriction, they only allow users over 13 years old. This means that our adolescents have a low level of control and security. The social networks most used by the adolescents from the survey are YouTube and TikTok. Despite they like TikTok they don`t share that many videos on TikTok. The main motivation to integrate social media into their lives is to contact friends. 78,79% of the adolescents indicated that are connected to social media between 5 and 8 hours at any time of the day, this shows that there is no control over access and time limits to interact on social media and that is a big loss of time for young people. 47,33% of the adolescents may buy something through social media, it is the influencer who has a great impact on their purchasing decisions. More than 50% are with open profiles which makes them more vulnerable because they have an excess of confidence that leads them to accept the "friend" requests they receive. Social media has not altered the sleep hours for most adolescents. There is only a small margin among them that altered their sleep. The surveyed adolescents have high self-esteem and do not care about the "likes" of their publications.

In addition, for most of our adolescents, social networks are not the most important thing in their life.

The most negative effect that social networks can have, is the loss of time because they are a huge source of distraction.

Although not everything is negative, social networks with healthy use can improve our mental well-being, since thanks to them, we can get emotional support, build relationships, meet new friends, learn how to cook, experiment, dance, sing, etc. In short, these networks open up a world of possibilities

7 Recommendations

After doing this work, we can conclude that the group of adolescents surveyed is spending a big part of their time on social media, therefore it will be interesting to create activities and programs that promote the contact of the adolescents with the environment that surrounds them.

Adolescents must take advantage of the internet to inform themselves and download programs that help them to protect their data, for example, they can set privacy or search parameters in safe mode.

Pupils` lives are not only influenced by their friends or social networks, but also by the training they receive at home and school. For this reason, parents more than the teachers must first learn about everything that implies this phenomenon of the social network, be alert and advise adolescents so that they know how to choose well the sites they visit and how much time to spend visiting them.

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