

Abstract

Background: Social networks are a phenomenon of today's time. Current scientific research is devoted to the possible effects of using social networks. One of the serious impacts is the effect on self-perception and the negative consequences resulting from it, such as anxiety about appearance, comparison, dissatisfaction with one's body. This can become one of the factors in the development of eating disorders, or negatively influence their course.

Aims: The aim of the research was to describe the patterns of social media use among young adults with eating disorders attending the Anabell Center. Another goal of the research was to focus on possible excessive use of social networks and addiction to them. The research also aimed to explore interactions between social media use and eating disorders.

Sample: The sample was selected through intentional purposive sampling across institutions. Clients from the Anabell Center aged 20-35 years were contacted in the spring of 2022 via email request. Nineteen interested women responded and all were included in the study.

Methods: A qualitative type of research was chosen. Two methods were chosen for data collection. The questionnaire included data on eating disorders and health status, the Social Media Addiction Scale diagnostic tool, and sociodemographic data. The second method was a semi-structured interview. Interview data were analyzed using grounded theory.

Results: Respondents encountered social networks in early adolescence. They have become a regular part of their lives. The following were identified as the most common reasons for using social networks: the need to connect with loved ones, a source of information, a source of entertainment. Addiction was not confirmed for the majority of respondents, but the addiction criteria salience and mood change proved to be significant. Respondents achieved higher scores in them. Negative effects of social media use on eating disorders have been identified. Especially due to comparison with the presented ideal of beauty, searching for tips on losing weight and exercising.

Conclusion: Social networks can have negative effects on the development and course of eating disorders. It is necessary to focus comprehensively on the prevention of possible risks of social networks. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the possible comorbidity of eating disorders and excessive use of social networks for appropriate targeting of treatment interventions.

Keywords: eating disorders, internet, social networking, behavioural addiction, beauty ideal, self-image