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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Internet use of Polish adolescents with a particular focus on the gender differences in online activities and the excessive Internet use. Participants in the study were 240 public high school students living in the middle-sized Polish city (ages ranged from 15 to 19 years, 50% were females and 50% male). Excessive Internet use was assessed by the Polish version of the Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT). Information was also collected on demographic data and Internet usage patterns. There was no gender differences in the Internet experience – both male and female adolescents had been using the Internet from above 5 years, however boys spent significantly more time on surfing the Web than girls. Boys used the Internet more often than girls for entertainment purposes (playing online games and exposure to sexually explicit materials). Both adolescent girls and boys were using Internet for communication, however in different ways: girls preferred social networking and blogs, boys preferred forums, chat rooms and instant messaging. No gender difference was found in the total score of IAT. However among girls excessive Internet use was significantly associated with instant messaging, social networking and blogs. In the group of boys, problematic Internet use was associated with using online pornography, instant messaging and downloading files. Further research is needed to explore the prevalence, gender differences, risk and protective factors according to Internet addiction among Polish adolescents.