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# FOCUS GROUP ON PUBLIC AWARENESS ON INTERNET ADDICTION DISORDER (IAD)

## ROMANIA COUNTRY REPORT



Centrum Wspierania  
Edukacji  
i Przedsiębiorczości



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## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1.1. Participant Selection

**Kindly describe the process of selecting participants for your focus group. Briefly describe which criteria were used to identify target participants and any actions take in order to elicit their participation:**

*The participants were selected so that they represented both adult trainers and psychologists that have worked with disadvantaged groups' members and people with fewer opportunities. They were selected either from experts network that ADES has developed along the time, or from the recommendations received from ADES members, experts and partners.*

### 1.2. Focus Group Event

**Kindly provide some general information for the following items related to the focus group event:**

Partner Organising the Event:	<i>ADES</i>
Contact Person Responsible for the Event:	<i>Anca Socolovschi</i>
Date of the Focus Group Event:	<i>April 17, 2023</i>
Approximate Length of the Discussion	<i>3 hours</i>
Brief description of the setting (face-to-face/online/hybrid):	<i>Online</i>

### 1.3. Participant Profile

Summarise important details from the participant profile in this section by providing the following demographic information:	
Number of Participants:	8
Age (Mean):	45
Gender:	7 females, 1 male
Participants' Levels of Education:	Master and PhD
Occupations of Participants:	Trainers/ educators of adults, psychologists
Years of Experience of Participants (Mean):	15
Size of Participants' Class (Mean):	15
Types of Learners Participants are responsible for:	Adults and educators of adults
List of Organisations represented by Participants:	NGOs, Companies, Universities

### 1.4. Desk Research

Please include any material encountered when conducting desk research that was particularly relied on to inform participants, utilised to elicit responses during the focus group, or which can help provide additional insight to the results and the development of the survival kit:

Every individual possesses distinct characteristics and personal inclinations that make them stand out, with some finding the digital world appealing, while others may not be fond of it. Differentiating passion from addiction is essential, as spending an extended period on a particular activity can create confusion between the two terms. Passion is a reflection of a person's authentic self, a natural inclination that instils in them happiness, serenity, a

*relaxing aura and creativity, stamina and healthiness. Passions have the unique ability to evoke a sense of vitality, excitement, receptiveness, assurance, and brilliance within us.*

*Addiction, unlike relaxation, is a compelling desire that leaves no room for free choice. It gives an illusion of calmness but in reality, it's suffocating and uncontrollable. Quitting addiction, even if it means risking important relationships, is challenging due to impulsive reactions that continuously pull one back. Excessive dependencies deplete vitality, essential requirements are overlooked, and consequently, confidence in oneself, peers, and existence declines gradually.*

*By using their devices, whether connected to the Internet or not, individuals experience a sense of gratification in the form of "rewards" such as receiving a thumbs up on Facebook, receiving a message from a friend, or progressing to a higher level in a game. This results in a perception of positive reinforcement by the brain. These "incentives" provide the individual with a feeling of satisfaction and contentment. The mind links the feeling of satisfaction with device usage, leading the individual to crave its pleasurable effects repeatedly. The inability to regulate the usage of enjoyable devices results in obsessive tendencies and ultimately dependency.*

*It is difficult to envisage a life in 2022 where the Internet is not an integral part. The United Nations has also demanded worldwide availability of the Internet by 2030. Internet usage and availability in Romania are on the rise, resulting in an upward trend in the amount of time we spend online. A significant majority of Romanians, amounting to two-thirds, utilize social media, predominantly on their Android-powered mobile devices.*

*At the start of 2022, according to the National Institute of Statistics, 8 out of 10 Romanian families have access to the Internet. Specifically, 82.1% of families had access to the Internet in 2022. Urban regions have a considerably higher internet connectivity rate with approximately 89% of households being connected, in contrast to rural regions where only 73% of households are connected. 2021 and 2022, there was a 3.0 percent surge in Romania's Internet user base.*

*89.7% of 16-74-year-olds have used the internet at least once in 2022, with 95.4% accessing the internet in the past three months. Among current users, in December 2022, 69.2% use the Internet several times a day, and 21.1% once a day or almost every day.*

*Changes in social gatherings and general trends could affect the extent of Internet usage, indicating that the real figures for Internet users may surpass the ones that have been made public.*

<https://www.neuroaxis.ro/cat-de-periculoasa-este-dependenta-de-internet/> - How dangerous is IAD (RO)

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/internet-addiction>

<https://www.addictioncenter.com/drugs/internet-addiction/>

<https://www.caron.org/addiction-101/process-addictions/internet-addiction>

<https://www.mhanational.org/risky-business-internet-addiction>

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624249/EPRS\\_STU\(2019\)624249\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624249/EPRS_STU(2019)624249_EN.pdf)

<https://stories.thriveglobal.ro/tot-ce-trebuie-sa-stii-despre-mindfulness/> *Everything you need to know about mindfulness (RO)*

<https://www.aimgroup.ro/spiritualitate/5-motive-pentru-care-constientizarea-de-sine-este-importanta/> *5 Reasons why self-awareness is important (RO)*

<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/aproape-6-milioane-de-romani-traiesc-cu-o-boala-psihiica-medic-sunt-oameni-care-nu-accepta-desi-recunosc-simptomele-2329717> *almost 6 million Romanians live with a psychic illness (RO)*

	Not at all	Not really	Maybe	Do not know	A little	A lot	Very much
	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD)					1	3	4
IAD prevention techniques		1			4	2	1
Mindfulness		1			1	3	3
Methods of Focus					1	3	4
Self-Awareness					1	2	5

## 2. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### 2.1. Topic 1: Mindfulness

Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.	
Summarised responses for Reaction	<p><i>The level of satisfaction of the interviewees on the public's level of knowledge for all methods vary 0% to 20% (for mindfulness). It seems that Mindfulness is a bit more used for day-to-day life, but not to "treat" the Internet addiction (IA), because IA awareness is almost 0.</i></p> <p><i>There are some materials, videos, books, but they are related to day-to-day life and are not specific for IAD.</i></p> <p><i>Some easy to read and in simple terms materials, specific for IAD (to make a specific connection to IAD) would be very valuable.</i></p>
Summarised responses for Learning	<p><i>Even if they are a bit more materials, trainings, videos about mindfulness, they are not related directly to IAD. So, more focused on IAD mindfulness materials would be beneficial.</i></p>
Summarised responses for Behaviour	<p><i>"When you do not consider you have an illness, you do not go to a doctor".</i></p> <p><i>If people would be more aware of the IAD problems and use mindfulness for combating them, they would be more aware of the body-mind connection, they would manage better the time spent on gadgets, they would use usefully and functionally the Internet (not only for games), they would have a more balanced attitude, quality in their actions, clarity, self-esteem, they would be more focused on specific</i></p>

	<i>objectives, they would be more aware how much and from where to find information.</i>
Summarised responses for Results	<p><i>The knowledge of using mindfulness is still very low, even if some people have found out about it and learned about it.</i></p> <p><i>There are a lot of limiting beliefs about self-searching in our balkanism culture. Sometimes this aspect is ridiculed. The social system distanced us from ourselves, instead of bringing us closer.</i></p> <p><i>The proximity environment hinders or facilitates the practice of mindfulness.</i></p> <p><i>Also, the belief "I am over 50 (too old), what's the use of acquiring new knowledge and practice?"</i></p>
Generalised overall viewpoint	<i>Even if people are more aware of Mindfulness benefits than of other self-development techniques, there is almost no awareness of the connection between practicing Mindfulness and managing IAD. There is a high need of concrete and focused Mindfulness materials for managing IAD.</i>

## 2.2. Topic 2: Other Methods of Focus

**Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.**

Summarised responses for Reaction	<p><i>Other methods of focus are even less learned or practiced than Mindfulness. People are not aware of them and they are used only by specialists (psychologists, psychotherapists).</i></p> <p><i>Methods like outdoor activities (walking in the parks/ woods, biking, playing with pets), social activities are consciously and regularly practiced by less than 30% of people. Less percentage make the connection between these activities and means of focusing or managing IAD.</i></p>
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Summarised responses for Learning	<i>Almost none info or materials are offered to the public. The public is not involved in learning these methods. No connections are made to IAD.</i>
Summarised responses for Behaviour	<i>As it is not consciously and regularly applied, there cannot be observed any behavioural changes. Only very few persons know how identify their possible addictions and to detach themselves of these temptations and disruptions.  If practiced, it would increase the capacity of detaching from the environment “noises” and of focusing on the important topics.</i>
Summarised responses for Results	<i>“We do not have a life-style due to education or our culture.”  The imposition of technology, the takeover of life by the internet, the evolution of the society that can also mean the involution of humans, the fact that the emphasis is not on health, but only on impressing of internet users are hindering the acquisition of knowledge and practice of this method.</i>
Generalised overall viewpoint	<i>There is a big need of materials regarding this method and for increasing the public awareness.</i>

### 2.3. Topic 3: Self-Awareness & Reliable Assessment of the Situation

**Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.**

Summarised responses for Reaction	<i>Very little known. Actually it is even avoided because people think of others not to think of themselves.</i>
Summarised responses for Learning	<i>Being a very little-known method, it is not possible to measure the level of satisfaction in general and in particular in relation to IAD. There is a need for public awareness about this method and the long-term benefits of using this method.</i>

Summarised responses for Behaviour	<i>People who'd use this method will be much more receptive to the way the body transmits certain signals and will be able to regulate certain states and behaviours much better and prevent behaviours like IAD.</i>
Summarised responses for Results	<i>Changes happen over time. Even if there is a trigger moment, the process takes time and takes place on different levels. Education, culture, environment, social cluster might hinder or facilitate acquiring knowledge and practicing this methods.</i>
Generalised overall viewpoint	<i>It is worth creating materials regarding these methods and making the connection with IAD.</i>

## 2.4. Topic 4: IAD Prevention Among Adults

<b>Please provide below a detailed but concise analysis of the topics discussed, providing insight on the responses received and overall attitudes collected.</b>	
Summarised responses for Reaction	<p><i>IAD awareness is almost 0.</i></p> <p><i>If any knowledge regarding IA is present, only the effects are "treated", not the causes. Very few persons acknowledge they have a problem with IA and even fewer do something for that.</i></p> <p><i>The persons over 45 y.o. are less "endangered" by IA then the younger generations because the second category grew up with Internet.</i></p> <p><i>It is very important to create materials and spread the information regarding IAD and IAD prevention among adults.</i></p>
Summarised responses for Learning	<i>Very few understand the concept and less are doing something about that.</i>
Summarised responses for Behaviour	<i>The information provided to the public so far is very irrelevant and therefore would be very useful.</i>

	<i>People would develop the capacity to understand the risks of IA and understand and practice ways to protect from IAD.</i>
Summarised responses for Results	<i>The life contexts are both hindering and facilitating IAD prevention: the group of friends (all are doing the same, you cannot swim against the current because you are marginalized), the models provided by the society (family, friends, fellows, and mass-media).</i>
Generalised overall viewpoint	<i>Five to six million Romanians (about 1/4) live with mental illnesses. Most suffer from depression, about two million, but also hundreds of thousands of people living with thought disorders. The part of getting out of the shame, out of the stigma is still very pressing. There are people who do not accept, although they recognize the symptoms, most people who experience such problems "don't accept that they might receive a psychiatric label or a diagnosis of mental illness". We should go to the education area. Our attitude to disorders is obscure.</i>

## 2.5. Conclusion

**Summarise the findings of your focus group by providing a brief overview of the collected responses, together with the overall attitude or viewpoints of the group taken in response to the topics discussed:**

*The introduction of the Internet has brought about tremendous progress to mankind, revolutionizing our conduct, profession, education, and social connections. As technology continues to progress, our inclination to spend an increased amount of time on the internet rises. Addiction stemming from the usage of the Internet requires identical attention as with other forms of addiction, such as alcohol or drugs. When an individual experiences an overwhelming urge to spend excessive time on the internet, to the extent that it interferes with their personal relationships, job or well-being, (s)he can be diagnosed with Internet*

*addiction. According to statistics, over 210 million individuals across the globe are grappling with addiction to the Internet and social media platforms.*

*The group agreed that very few things were done for helping people to identify and deal with IAD. There is a great need for materials regarding this topic. The materials should be very easy to understand and use.*

**Draw conclusions based on the insight produced by the focus group. Conclusions should reflect the overall consensus of the participant group's opinions:**

*As technology has progressed, our primary use for smartphones has become browsing social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Regrettably, overusing them leads to a decrease in face-to-face interactions, and promotes the fabrication of an ideal and deceptive online persona - where we can portray ourselves as we wish to be. Furthermore, the increasing trend towards Social Media addiction is recognized worldwide and it is a tacitly (not at the decision making levels) recognized phenomenon in RO. Rules regarding the use of Internet are rarely imposed in RO in institutions and even in families.*

*All participants emphasized that Albert Einstein's quote, "I Fear the Day Technology Will Surpass Human Interaction", is most actual than ever and that IADliber materials will be of great support to their work.*

## 2.6. Recommendations

**Within this section, offer any recommendations that derive from the findings and conclusions drawn within the previous section. Recommendations should be derived solely from the findings of the focus group, not from the desk research referenced in section 2.4:**

*Develop materials for increasing the awareness and for dealing with IAD, but make sure that they are very easy to use and adapted to the target group. The materials developed within the project can be a very good approach in relation to IAD, but they should also increase the level of awareness and make people to understand that learning and short practicing the IADliber methods are not a "pill" that we take, but a process that must be gone through over time.*