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**ONLINE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING OF THE PREGNANT TEENAGER**

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**Abstract:** *Over 27000 teenage births are registered in Romania annually, ranking our country on the second place in Europe after Great Britain, and the number of births in the case of teenagers under 15 years has increased up to 25% after the year 1990. From this point of view statistics shows that the situation becomes critical and urgent measures of rising of educational influences are required.*

*This phenomenon is caused by the decrease of pubertal age on national level together with the failure of sexual education in school and family. In our opinion, the solution of these problems comes from technology.*

*The article aims to provide a model of good practices describing a site that offers online counseling to the teenagers, concerning educational topics such as sexual health. We suggest a way of online counseling just to encourage teenagers to express their fears by protecting their identity.*

*The site we are about to present offers teenagers accurate information concerning human sexuality, sexual transmission diseases, but also offers a forum location.*

*This way we can see what their frequent questions are and they can receive qualified answers as soon as possible. Online environment is considered to be much more accessible to young generation and the presentation of a psychological counseling model is welcome/useful. E-learning solution for teenagers' sexual education that we suggest comes to parents and teachers' assistance not only by the information offered but also by testing the problems they rise.*

*This way we hope that we will reduce school abandonment, we will prevent teenagers' premature births and medical problems and we will lower extremely high social costs taking into consideration that teenagers' babies will be probably socially assisted/helped by the Romanian government.*

**Key words:** *teenager, pregnancy, abortion, birth*

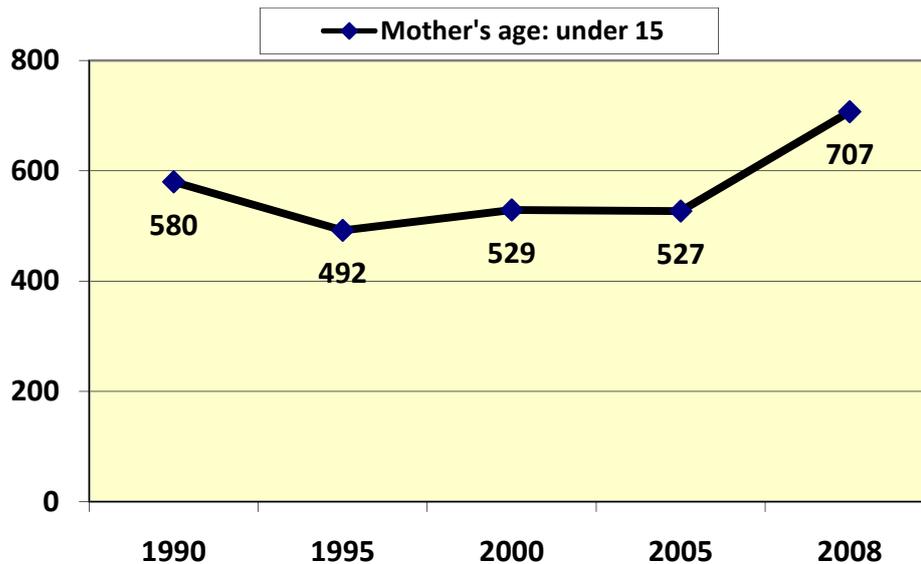
## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Certainly technology can improve the quality of learning not only in the exact sciences' field, but also in the humanities area, namely in students' counselling.

Effective education aims not only at informative education but mainly at the formative one. Thus, implementing the curricular area of Counselling and Guidance focuses mainly on building harmonious personalities able to exploit the information acquired in school to the society we live in and develop it.

Unfortunately, reality puts us in front of a hard truth: Romania ranks second in Europe after the GB in terms of teen births, with 27,000 births per year and the third after GB and France in terms of abortion, at the same age group. It is shocking that after 1990 the number of minors up to 15 years old, who gave birth, increased by 25% and the trend is increasing, although there are contraceptive solutions on the market and abortions are allowed. These facts reveal school's and family's failure in terms of sexual health education.

Most of these teenage mothers abandon both school and the children they gave birth to most of the time by accident and the social costs of these minors are significant for the Romanian State. These children start life from the second place, being unwanted and affectively deficient, closing the cycle when, in their turn, walk in their parents' footsteps.



**Figure 1.** Frequency of births to minors under 15 years old

Source: National Statistics Committee.

In this context we ask the question: What is to be done, considering that these teenagers are pupils? How can school help? How can we prevent and timely detect such situations? Can technology help us, in the curricular area of Counselling and Guidance, develop students' self-knowledge, their ability to communicate, to manage emotions and to improve quality of life? We try to answer these questions by appealing to the technological means by which to probe the private lives of young people, in order to give them the support they need.

## II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research goal is the early detection of adolescent girls in high school in the state of pregnancy in order to provide specialized counselling support in due time, using modern technological means.

### *General objective*

A. Identifying pregnant teenagers using modern communication technology.

### *Specific objectives:*

1. Identifying areas of interest in the sexuality field
2. Creating an online platform where teens express turmoil
3. Finding out the reason why teenagers choose not to protect themselves during sexual intercourse.

The research is an exploratory one and it took place in February this year in the National Economic College "Andrei Barseanu", in Brasov.

*Teaching methods and means:* heuristic conversation, focus group, textbook, activity cards, online platform.

The research started with the selection of students for the focus group. The selection was done randomly, aiming at a balance between girls and boys in terms of numbers. Twelve students, from the tenth and eleventh form attended, 7 girls and 5 boys, for a 90 minutes video recorded session.

After the transcription of the interventions, we did a horizontal analysis (on questions) of the informational material and then a vertical one (on subjects). The content analysis revealed three areas of interest for the pupils: pregnancy, contraception and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

The qualitative processing of the results revealed a paradox that may explain the high number of teenage pregnancies: the contradiction between the awareness of the effects of unprotected sex and their choice to continue in the same manner, along with the risks involved. Pupils motivate

this option by the fact that satisfaction felt without a condom is far superior to that with a condom. The students also know, in theory, other methods of contraception but they prefer to live the moment and not to diminish its charm. We also found that girls attending the focus group were more responsible than the boys but they often give in to boys' pleas for fear of losing their boyfriends, probably because of a low self-esteem.

In the desire to give a quantitative expression to this research, we resorted to counting concepts repeating in the focus group and we found that "suffering" occurred in 75% of teenagers' interventions and the idea of "feeling the moment" in 65%.

We then turned to preparing interventions in the learning process through the leverages of technology. We created the educational platform called "Teen Club", with three areas of interest discovered after the focus group, to which we added the topics "miscellanea" and "sexual education courses".

SUBIECTE	RĂSPUNSURI	VIZUALIZĂRI	ULTIMUL MESAJ
Ora de educatie pentru sanatate sexuala de Psiholog » Lun Ian 30, 2012 2:28 pm	64	284	de maria » Lun Feb 20, 2012 12:10 am
DIVERSE de admin » Mar Feb 07, 2012 6:41 pm	104	272	de Aaaa » Dum Feb 19, 2012 9:41 pm
SARCINA de admin » Mar Feb 07, 2012 6:34 pm	18	106	de admin » Mar Feb 14, 2012 7:59 pm
CONTRACEPTIA de admin » Mar Feb 07, 2012 6:33 pm	20	74	de admin » Mar Feb 14, 2012 7:55 pm
Relatii sexuale de utilizator10 » Lun Feb 06, 2012 2:12 pm	25	121	de admin » Mar Feb 14, 2012 7:49 pm
sexual de Tic-Tac » Lun Feb 06, 2012 1:10 pm	6	98	de Roxana » Mar Feb 14, 2012 12:11 pm
sex de ioana » Lun Feb 06, 2012 2:12 pm	2	69	de eucris » Mar Feb 14, 2012 12:05 pm
BTS (boli cu transmitere sexuala) de admin » Mar Feb 07, 2012 6:30 pm	9	81	de Vizitator » Lun Feb 13, 2012 2:05 pm

**Figure 2.** The topics created on the platform after identifying the issues of concern revealed by the focus group

We then held sexual health education classes in the curricular area of Counselling and Guidance, engaging the following topics:

*Topics:*

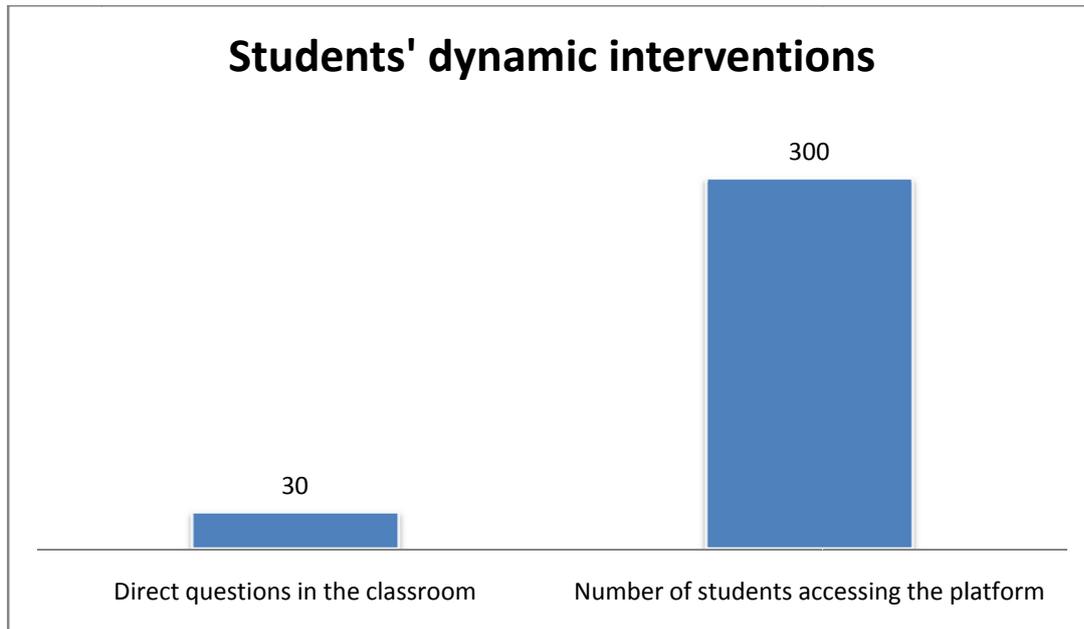
- the specific of the girls - boys relationship in teenagers
- anatomic and physiologic conceptual boundaries: menarche, menstruation, the cervix, hymen, defloration, sexual experience, masturbation
- contraception
- the risks of unprotected sex: STDs, pregnancy
- miscellaneous: intimate hygiene items, gynaecological examination

This course was attended by 149 pupils from 5 forms. The activity took place in February, with classes of 30 students each.

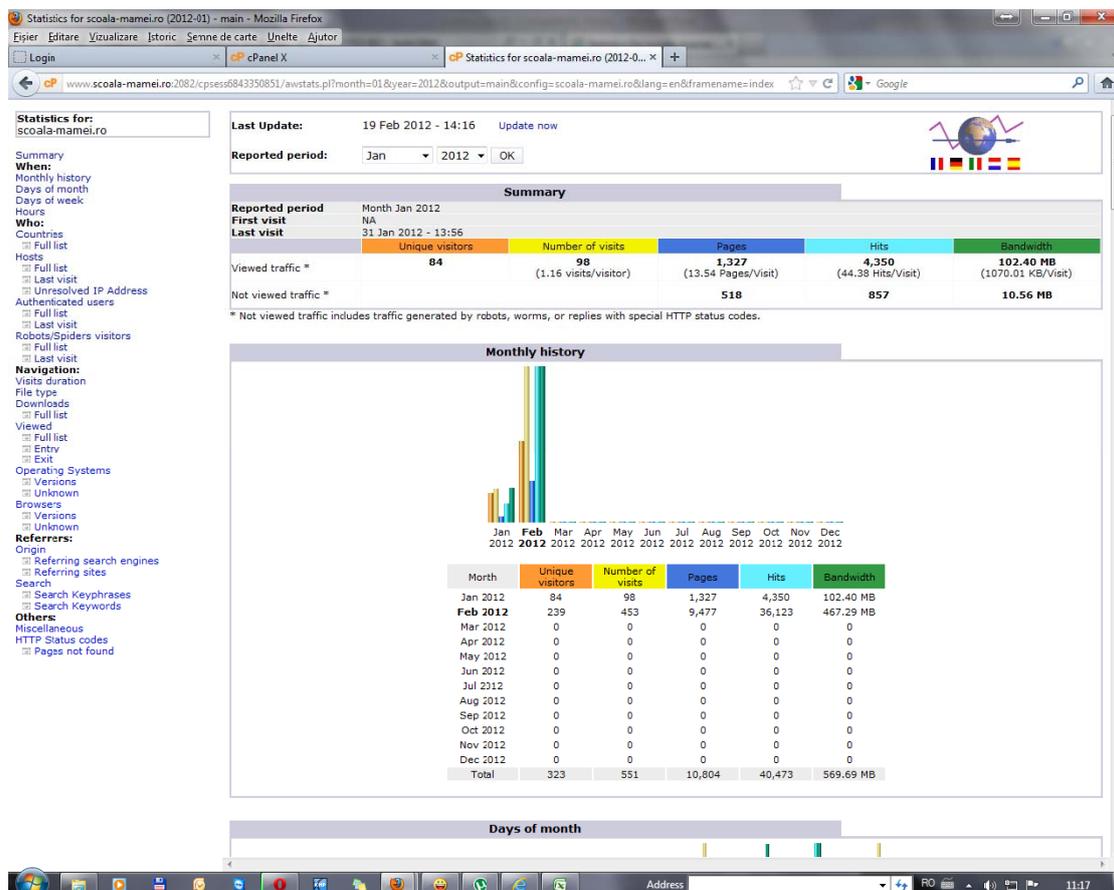
Teenagers could ask questions at any time of the programme. After class, students had access to the online platform, Teen Club, and they were able to ask their own questions about this topic in conditions of privacy, declining their identity, using a nickname. The information technology made online counselling possible, a counselling superior both in terms of increasing students' confidence in their privacy and the ease and convenience of accessing this service. Pupils prefer this form of communication because they are very familiar with social networks, communicating thus since childhood.

It was found that students have accessed the platform 10 times more than by direct questions in the classroom, which demonstrates that the use of technology can improve learning.

The situation is illustrated in the chart below:



**Figure 3.** Comparison of the frequency of students' direct interventions and that of the technology mediated ones



**Figure 4.** Comparison of traffic data before and after the intervention classes (January-February 2012)

The qualitative analysis revealed that the questions on the platform had a higher degree of privacy than those from the classroom, and after this action, three early pregnancies were discovered in high school girls, our aim being thus achieved and the intervention could be done in due time.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

The present study proves that the call for leverages of technology in the learning process can solve what the classical method fails to.

Because sexual education in Romania is still a taboo subject and surveying adolescents' intimate aspects is difficult to approach, appealing to the technology in general and to the information technology in particular is the solution for Romania's future descent in the sad charts of Europe concerning the failure of sexual health education revealed by the high number of births and abortions among young women.

Thus we demonstrated that educational intervention in the curricular area of Counselling and Guidance, mediated by technology by using an online platform, facilitates counselling adolescent pupils.

Thus there are achieved both the prevention of pregnancy situations by informing and educating pupils, by offering counselling and the intervention in on the edge situations of pregnancy.

We believe that the present study has achieved its goal through this process of technological intervention, teenage pregnancies being revealed in due time, with the possibility of timely intervention.

We also consider that posting informative materials on the platform, on the topic of sexuality, will cause teenagers to realize the consequences of unprotected sex.

We think that the instructive-educational process can be optimized by appealing to technology because it is the language of the young generation and the key to success in interacting with them.

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