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Light and Shadows of the Social Networks as a Tool for Socialization During Adolescence

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Light and Shadows of the Social Networks as a Tool for Socialization During Adolescence

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Abstract: During the period of adolescence, social relationships are fundamental, with peers playing a role of increasing importance. Today, it is possible to engage in these relationships in traditional ways, through face-to-face encounters, or using the social networks. Yet, the pervasiveness of these media may create certain social risks that are faced by the youth. This quantitative study attempts to analyze the social uses engaged in by adolescents through the social networks, and the potential consequences on their lives. To do so, a sample consisting of 850 Spanish students from compulsory secondary education was analyzed. The findings suggest that adolescents very frequently use the social networks as a tool of socialization. Therefore, the networks influence their academic education, well-being and friendships. This confirms the idea that adolescents engage in a frequent, but non-exclusive use of social networks for socialization.

Keywords: Social networks, adolescence, compulsory secondary education, socialization

Introduction

Recently, social networks have become a fundamental setting where adolescents can interact with one another (Marín-López et al., 2020). This generation of digital natives (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008) has grown up in technological environments and cannot conceive of communicating or interacting without them (Sánchez, Muñoz-Fernández & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015). This evolution has resulted in interactions between adolescents that are not only face-to-face, but also extend to virtual environments (online), and social networks have become part of the daily activity for this age group (Kerestes & Stulhofer, 2020). Precisely for this reason, this study offers an analysis of the uses of these networks by adolescents regarding socialization and the consequences on their lives.

Literature review

The socializing function of social networks on adolescents

Almost a decade ago, Antheunis, Schouten & Kraemer (2014) affirmed that social networks play a major role in the social lives of adolescents, given that they allow them to remain in close contact with their friends and peers at all times and places. Even earlier, Haddon (2006) and Boyd and Ellison (2007) confirmed that, for the past ten years, social interaction had been the main use of the social networks. In some cases, as shown by Drussell (2012), these networks are used for daily communication and conflict resolution. However, they may in fact cause conflicts in the family setting, given the reduced interpersonal communication resulting from their use (Chris, 2016). These conflicts are based on the distraction caused by the social networks and limited participation in interpersonal communication by adolescents during family encounters (Jie, Kay & Harmizi, 2020). On the other hand, communication with the family may be reinforced when it takes place through the social networks (O' Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). This situation, quite visible in today's society, suggests that individual socialization is being re-shaped as a result of the rise of the social networks (Orben & Dunbar, 2017).

These social tools offer numerous possibilities for interaction by their users, facilitating the sharing of daily events and experiences as desired by the adolescents. For this interaction to take place, adolescents chat or send messages, publish contents, meet people and make new friends, comment on events and watch what their contacts are up to by checking their profiles (Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), 2021). They also update their personal walls, exchange ideas and interact by leaving comments or likes on publications (Amichai-Hamburger & Hayat, 2017; Blight, Jagiello & Ruppel, 2015; O' Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Seo, Kim & Yang, 2016). According to the

previously cited researchers, all of these social uses of the networks may be classified into two types: uses associated with social support and distinct uses, the so-called “passive” ones. The former correspond mainly to the search for responses, comments and immediate feedback whereas the latter refer to checking profiles, playing videos that have been published, etc. but do not require interaction in response to these actions. In any case, all these actions facilitate contact between different individuals. Therefore, Alalwan et al. (2017) and Shiau, Dwivedi & Lai (2018) described the social networks as instruments to connect with other people. In certain social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, these interactions are not directed and are non-reciprocal since the social network user can read and view the publications of other people without interacting with them (Orben & Dunbar, 2017). Thus, they are passive consumers of the networks (Wise, Alhabash & Park, 2010). Orben and Dunbar (2017) suggested that this represents a major difference between communication in the social networks and face-to-face communication.

In addition to passive consumption, passive behaviors also take place in social networks. These behaviors are encouraged by specific circumstances such as a lack of time, or due to personal interest, leading to intentionally ignoring certain messages received over the social networks (Guo et al., 2020). Despite this perception, Peris, Maganto & Garaigordobil (2018) stated the need for adolescents to use the social networks to disconnect from issues concerning them, the academic field, personal conflicts, etc. In this regard, they demand fast responses, prioritizing immediacy. The need to dialogue, converse, exchange opinions, express oneself, share publications, and write messages and comments are all satisfied over the social networks, and they support the development of communication skills (Tartari, 2015), necessary for everyday life.

Interaction of communication modalities: face-to-face and/or over social networks

Several years ago, social relations were limited by the distinct contexts in which they took place. However, the arrival of the social networks regrouped all of these contexts into a single concept (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Thus, past generations established and maintained their relationships through face-to-face interactions, but with the technological advances of the present, online communication has complemented and invented a new type of interpersonal relationships (Gapsiso & Wilson, 2015). Within this setting, social networks have emerged, characterized by their omnipresence in everyday life (Alalwan et al., 2017; Shiau, Dwivedi & Lai 2017; Zhang et al., 2016) and with instant messaging transforming interpersonal communication (Jie, Kay & Harmizi, 2020).

Some researchers (Velarde, Bernete & Casas-Mas, 2019) have suggested that this type of virtual communication increases the number of individuals with whom contact is maintained, also offering more frequent interaction with them. Similarly, the social networks permit twenty-four-hour contact with others and faster responses, as if it was a face-to-face dialogue (Seo, Kim & Yang, 2016). Hill (2015) found that an excessive use of the social networks results in a reduction in face-to-face communication in adolescents, to the point that they recognize that they avoid it, preferring to communicate through these tools (Pollet, Dunbar & Roberts, 2011). Therefore, the desire to communicate in person is reduced as a result of the ease offered by the social networks (Gjylbegaj & Jararaa, 2018). Despite this, adolescents consider that social networks have a negative influence on them since they may provide false information, rumors and a blurred perception due to a lack of personal contact and an unreal image of others, etc. (Pew Research Center, 2018).

As for the offline social networks, that is, friendships outside of the virtual world, they satisfy the need to belong to a group and receive social support. However, these needs can also be satisfied by the social networks, avoiding physical barriers (Burke & Kraut, 2016). We should also add that in face-to-face interactions, non-verbal communication plays a major role, with gestures, facial expressions and eye contact being essential. Ultimately, body language, which is not often transmitted across screens (Nogales, 2010; Reich, 2017) except in the case of video calls or the publication of videos in which it can be spotted to a lesser extent, facilitates the transmission and receipt of the message in a much clearer manner than virtual communication (Drago, 2015).

Wellman and Gulia (2018) affirmed that the strong bonds formed with other people may be maintained (or not) through either of the two communication modalities (online or in person), although they recognized that virtual contact may not offer the nuances provided by face-to-face relations. Furthermore, these authors, along with Carrier et al. (2015), explained that the use of social networks for interaction does not result in a decline of face-to-face or “real life” interactions, although it may bring with it a reduced empathy in online communication. Along these lines, Sutcliffe, Binder & Dunbar (2018) and Vidales and Sádaba (2017) suggested that face-to-face interactions may be complemented by virtual contact carried out over the social networks.

On the other hand, the role of the social networks and how they may affect social relationships remains unclear (Orben & Dunbar, 2017) and diverse opinions exist. Baym et al. (2007) affirmed that this revolution created by the social networks in people’s real life, mainly youth, does not substitute offline, face-to-face, or traditional communication. Other researchers, such as Orben and Dunbar (2017), suggested that they play a complementary role

in social relations. This suggests that there is still much to delve into this topic since it is unknown whether or not offline or face-to-face contact is decreasing as a result of the increased contact via social networks, or if both modalities are positively associated. In other words, it is unclear whether or not social network relations substitute or complement traditional ones (Patulny & Seaman, 2016).

Method

This work uses a transversal, quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlational statistical design to measure the degree of intensity of the relationship between two variables (Hernández et al., 2014). In this regard, a questionnaire was administered, which is the most typical technique within the social sciences domain (Hueso & Cascant, 2012). This instrument, which is survey-like, provides information with maximum objectivity (Sáez-López, 2017).

Sample

The sample consists of adolescents studying compulsory secondary education at 13 schools in the province of Huesca (Spain). Participant selection was carried out via simple random sampling, with the school being considered as a unit. A total of 850 valid responses were attained. For a confidence level of 95%, the margin of error was 3.19. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the surveyed individuals.

As for the school year in which the participants were enrolled, around 20% of the adolescents were in each of the first two years of compulsory secondary education and approximately 30% of students were in the third and fourth year. Of these, 413 selected the option of male (48.6%) and 437 (51.4%) selected the option of female. Regarding age, the students were grouped into seven distinct categories (from 12 to 17 years of age), with a predominance of 15-year-olds (29.1%); 14-year-olds (23.3%) and 13-year-olds (21.9%). On the other hand, the age at which the surveyed population started to use the social networks ranged from 10 to 12 years old; therefore, this may be established as the age range during which the social networks are initially used.

Finally, as for the academic variables, almost half of the sample received an average grade of “good”, 86.8% of the sample did not fail any subject, and 7% failed two or three subjects. Satisfaction with their grades was measured using a Likert scale (0-10), indicating that 20.8% of the students gave the highest scores (9 or 10). Another 20% offered scores of 7 points and a score of less than 5 points was chosen by 15.5% of the adolescents.

Table 1. Sample characterization (N=850)

Variables	N	% of the sample
School year		
1 st -year compulsory secondary education	132	15.5
2 nd -year compulsory secondary education	202	23.8
3 rd -year compulsory secondary education	238	28.0
4 th -year compulsory secondary education	278	32.7
Gender		
Male	413	48.6
Female	437	51.4
Age		
12	89	10.5
13	186	21.9
14	198	23.3
15	247	29.1
16	109	12.8
17	21	2.5
Age at which social networks are initially used		
4-6	12	1.4
7-9	73	8.5
10-12	612	71.9
13-15	147	17.3
16	6	0.7

Instrument

Based on the reviewed literature and the data collection instruments used in previous studies of a similar nature (Gokdas & Kuzucu, 2019; Gupta & Bashir, 2018; Peris, Maganto & Garaigordobil, 2018; Sabater, Martínez & Santiago, 2017; Sahin, 2018), certain indicator blocks were selected to create an ad hoc questionnaire adapted to the proposed objectives of this work. As a result, an instrument was designed that used 40 indicators distributed across two differentiated question modules. In an initial section consisting of 7 indicators, participants were required to provide information related to their socio-demographic characteristics, and in a second part, 33 indicators were

included, divided into 3 categories. The first category is that of “User connectivity profile”, referring to the time spent connected to the social network and consisting of 3 indicators; the next category was called “Social use of the social networks”, in which a listing of 10 social uses was presented, and finally, the category of “Consequences” consisted of 20 indicators. Each item was measured using a Likert-like assessment scale with eleven potential responses (0-10), except for the socio-demographic information.

Research procedure and data analysis

After an extensive review of the available literature on the study topic, the indicator modules to be analyzed were defined. Based on an initial version of the instrument, an expert opinion was programmed and conducted by professionals of diverse disciplines and specialties: education, technology, psychology and educational research methods. These experts assessed the coherence, relevance, clarity and sufficiency of every questionnaire indicator to ensure understanding by the students. To guarantee that the language used was appropriate and, simultaneously, to assess the time needed to complete the questionnaire to avoid fatigue or discomfort, some adolescents from the same course year also tested the instrument. All of the suggestions provided, both by the experts and the students, were taken into account in order to improve the quality of the data collection instrument. Finally, the Research Ethics Committee of the Autonomous Community of Aragon was asked to assess this study and a favorable judgment was given.

During the fieldwork phase, initial contact was established via telephone call with each of the units (Compulsory Secondary Education schools) and, subsequently, they were sent an email to inform them in greater detail of the proposal. After carrying out an analysis or reflection, their participation was either confirmed or rejected. In the case in which the participation was accepted, they were provided with a web link to access the questionnaire. After the data collection, an analysis was performed using the SPSS statistics package, version 24.0, applying descriptive statistics (in terms of means and standard deviations) and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Results

The results of this study have been structured according to the analysis procedure sequence. It was initiated with the creation of a descriptive analysis of the distinct categories shown in Table 2. and 3. Then, a correlational analysis was performed on the distinct indicators corresponding to the study.

First, the user profile shows that the time devoted to the social networks by the adolescents appears to be considerable, considering the other obligations that a 12- to 16-year-old may have. These adolescents are students en-

rolled in compulsory secondary education (they are at school every day) and also have the typical daily routines of any person in order to meet their basic needs, such as eating and resting (recommended 8-9 hours daily). Therefore, the highest percentage of these adolescents connect between 2 and 3 hours on a daily basis (18.9% and 15.2%, respectively). In addition, almost 10% of the sample connects to the social networks for approximately 5 or 6 hours daily while 7.3% of the sample connects up to 10 hours daily, regardless of the day of the week considered. On Saturdays and Sundays, the adolescents tend to connect for 2, 3, 4, 5 and up to 10 hours daily, as was the case with 7.3% of the sampled youth.

As detailed in Table 2., the most predominant social uses of the social networks by compulsory secondary education students include getting together or meeting up with friends, keeping in touch with family and friends, checking their contacts' profiles, following influencers and participating in group calls. On the other hand, they did not tend to use social networks for dating or romantic connections (hook-ups). For this set of indicators, the very high standard deviation of approximately 3 points is noteworthy.

Table 2. Social use of the social networks

	Mean	SD
Sharing ideas, beliefs, exchanging opinions, etc.	4.34	3.304
Checking my friends' profiles.	4.95	3.311
Following influencers.	4.78	3.486
Getting to know new people and making friends.	4.14	3.526
Keep in touch with my family and friends.	7.15	2.921
Meeting up with friends.	7.16	3.016
Looking for hook-ups.	1.93	2.968
Finding old friends.	3.44	3.191
Uploading photos and/or videos.	3.91	3.331
Participating in group calls.	4.66	3.429

The use of the social networks may have consequences that influence the social environment of the adolescents and may (more or less directly) affect other areas of development, such as academic aspects. The most easily perceived consequences include feeling happy when using the social networks, so much that the participants confess to losing hours of sleep to stay connected to these networks. In addition, they consider the social networks to be a public display where they can share their lives with others, and they are concerned about their appearance in the publications. Similarly, these media

serve as a way of escaping the real world where adolescents develop stronger and more trustworthy relationships as compared to traditional modalities. They affirm that their satisfaction tends to be greater with the virtual contacts than with those from the “real life” and that they feel bad when they cannot be part of a group (in a specific social network) that interests them. However, lower scores are found, reflecting the fact that adolescents may lose friends or relationships due to their use of the social networks and their failure to attend social commitments to stay connected to these networks.

Table 3. Consequences

	Mean	SD
I use the social networks during my study hours.	2.64	3.030
Since I started using social networks, I spend less time studying.	2.59	3.025
My academic performance has worsened since I started using social networks.	1.92	2.759
Since I started using social networks, I get more distracted from my school work.	2.38	2.990
I am happy when I use the social networks	4.32	3.215
When using social networks, I get upset if I am interrupted.	1.79	2.742
A life without social networks would have no meaning to me.	1.92	2.812
I view the social networks as an escape from the real world.	2.79	3.225
I stop doing things or attending social commitments to use the social networks.	1.31	2.360
I have lost hours of sleep to stay connected to the social networks.	3.03	3.484
I am not aware of being hungry or thirsty when I am connected to the social networks.	1.33	2.552
I lose friends or relationships due to my use of the social networks.	1.04	2.170
My relationship with my family worsens due to my frequent use of the social networks	1.53	2.506
I prefer communicating via the social networks rather than face-to-face communication.	1.63	2.600
I prefer connecting to social networks rather than going out with friends.	1.20	2.321
I am concerned about what other people think about what I write and share.	1.75	2.693
I am concerned about my appearance on the networks.	2.80	3.318
Social networks allow me to establish strong, intense and more trustworthy relationships.	2.64	3.165
I feel more satisfied and happy with my virtual contacts.	2.11	3.080
I feel bad and sad when I cannot be part of a group that I would like to be in.	2.11	2.945

Then, a Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between each of the socio-demographic variables (gender, current age, age at which they started to use the social networks and current school year), and the social uses of the social networks and some of their consequences. Based on the results obtained, positive relationships were perceived between the female gender and checking friends' profiles, as well as uploading photos and/or videos leading to their concern for their appearance in these media. As for the age of the adolescents, a positive and significant relationship was established between some of the social uses of these media and making new friendships and the search for dates or hook-ups. At the same time, age correlates significantly and positively with some consequences, such as the use of social networks during study hours and the loss of hours of sleep. On the other hand, the age when the participants began using the social networks correlates negatively with any social use of these media and with some consequences, such as feeling happy when using these networks or the statement that their life would have no meaning without social networks. Despite this, the age of starting using the networks also correlates negatively with the indicator referring to the idea that the social networks permit the establishment of strong and intense relationships. The last of the socio-demographic variables, the current school year, correlates positively and significantly with the use of the social networks to seek dates or hook-ups, meet new people and find old friends. Consequently, there was also a positive association with the loss of friends or relationships due to the use of social networks.

Certain academic variables were also analyzed, such as average grade, failed subjects and satisfaction with grades. As for the average grade, significant negative correlations were established with certain social uses such as meeting people and making new friends or seeking hook-ups. If we study the failed subjects, significant negative relationships also exist with some of the social uses such as staying in contact with family and friends, meeting up with friends and checking their profiles. As for the consequences, less significant but positive correlations were found for losing friends due to use of the social networks and preferring to communicate through these media as opposed to face-to-face. The concern for one's appearance in these media was negatively associated with the average grade. Finally, regarding satisfaction with their grades, positive relationships were established with the act of staying in contact with family and friends and meeting up with them.

Taking into account the connectivity profile, correlations have been found between the two variables measuring the time spent by adolescents on the social networks with the indicators corresponding to the categories of social uses and consequences. No significant correlations were found with the distinct social uses studied in any of these cases. The time spent from

Monday to Friday is positively and significantly associated with some consequences, such as getting upset when someone interrupts them when using these media and with the statement that their life would have no meaning without social networks. This latter affirmation also represents the most significant positive association with the time spent using the social networks on Saturdays or Sundays.

Subsequently, correlations were made between the social uses and the distinct social consequences that may arise in the lives of the adolescents due to the use of social networks. Initially, the results reveal that positive and significant relationships exist between sharing ideas, beliefs or opinions and establishing strong, intense and more trustworthy relationships. The act of checking the profiles of friends correlates positively and significantly with the concern about one's appearance on the networks and the establishment of strong, intense and more trustworthy relationships. Following influencers is associated with being concerned about one's appearance. Furthermore, a positive and significant correlation is observed between meeting new people and making friends, and establishing strong, intense and trustworthy relationships over the social networks and feeling a greater satisfaction and happiness with one's virtual contacts. At the same time, meeting up with friends is positively associated with the concern about one's appearance in these media and establishing relationships that are valued as intense and more trustworthy. On the other hand, keeping in touch with family and friends correlates positively and significantly with the happiness experienced when using the social networks. This feeling of happiness of users in the social networks is repeated as a result of each of the previously mentioned uses and also of the publishing of photos and videos over the social media. Searching for hook-ups is positively related with the use of the social networks during study hours, with the strength and trustworthiness offered by the relationships in these media and with the loss of hours of sleep. In addition to all of these uses, finding old friends is associated with establishing strong, intense and more trustworthy relationships, and with an increased satisfaction with one's virtual contacts. Similarly, publishing photos and/or videos correlates positively and significantly with the concern about one's appearance in these networks. Moreover, publishing photos or videos during study time and during rest time lead to the loss of hours of sleep, all confirming the existing positive and significant correlation. There is also a positive and significant correlation between participating in group calls and the stronger and more trustworthy relationships established in these media, as well as the concern about one's appearance. Finally, there are clear positive and significant (although less intense) correlations between some social uses (checking profiles, making new friends, meeting up with friends, seeking hook-ups, finding old friends, uploading photos and videos and participating in group

calls) and the preference of adolescents to connect to the social networks instead of going out with their friends. Along these lines, it should be noted that no significant correlations exist between two social uses such as keeping in touch with family and friends and meeting up with friends and the failure to attend social events or commitments due to being connected to the social networks.

Discussion

Social networks have a major impact on interpersonal relationships during adolescence. Through the use of these tools, the search for peers, and gaining a sense of belonging and closeness are easily at hand (Valkenburg, Sumter & Peter, 2011). During adolescence, relations with peers are fundamental and they take on an increasingly important role (Antheunis, Schouten & Kraemer, 2014). This has been widely demonstrated in this study. In this research, the use of the social networks by the youth to keep in touch with family members and friends stands out, in addition to their use to meet up with their peers (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). However, the use of these networks to search for hook-ups or romantic dates is almost null, suggesting a positive association with age and school year and a negative association with the average grade. This is contrary to Hall (2014), who viewed the social networks as a place to find a partner.

As for the academic variables examined and the social functions of the social networks, it has been observed that an increase in friendships over the social networks and a concern for one’s appearance in them lead to a decrease in the average grade. This may suggest that the social uses of these networks are distractors for adolescents, thereby lowering their performance (Herlle & Astray-Caneda, 2012; Min, 2017). In contrast, but still within the academic setting, a negative association is detected between failed subjects and keeping in touch with family and friends, and even the organizing of a get-together through the social networks. This may suggest that compulsory secondary education students who use the social networks for these social purposes will have fewer failed subjects. A similar situation is reflected by data indicating that, the better the relationship with family members, friends and colleagues, or even the more face-to-face meetings engaged in, the more satisfied the individual will be with their grades. This coincides with researchers such as Samad, Nilashi & Ibrahim (2019) and Min (2017), who suggested that the interaction of adolescents with their peers offered social benefits that helped them to improve their well-being and academic performance.

Adolescents devote large amounts of their time to the use of the social networks, with some participants spending up to 10 hours daily. These re-

sults are in line with those from Gewerc, Fraga, & Rodés (2017), who suggested that the social networks are a major part of the activity of adolescents. As a result of the time spent on the social networks, they declared that they get upset when they are interrupted while using them or they state that their lives would have no meaning without these networks. Thus, they appear to be more satisfied with this life on the social networks as compared to their offline friendships (Giffords, 2009). Social networks bring happiness to the youth, as repeatedly evidenced both in this and other studies (Choi & Lim, 2016; Yang, Liu & Wei, 2016), to an extent that some adolescents share their daily lives over the social networks. Thus, their virtual friends (who make them feel so good) may know what they are doing at all times and can even give them feedback (Hayat, Lesser & Samuel-Azran, 2017). Regarding this virtual relationship, it should be noted that the adolescents do not publish any random photo or video, but rather, they attempt to present their best image to others. Most of the times, these images have been touched up since the participants have shown that they are concerned about their appearance on the networks (Krasnova et al., 2015). Despite the very positive feelings caused by the connection with others over the social networks, they prefer face-to-face meetings with their friends to remain connected to the networks. However, currently it is possible to affirm the adolescent socialization is moving towards less face-to-face and more virtual socialization (Leal, Boccio & Jackson, 2022). However, the responses from this study show that a loss of hours of sleep is one of the consequences resulting from the use of the social networks, coinciding with the suggestions of Young (1998) and Megías and Rodríguez (2018).

This study provides evidence that adolescents, through the social uses of these networks, perceive the relationships created through profile creation and comments, status updates, contact with friends and meetings with family and the uploading of photos or videos, etc. to be more solid and intense. They even find, as indicated by Nikšić & Smajović (2021), these online relationships to be more trustworthy than offline ones. As Blight, Jagiello & Ruppel (2015) and Seo, Kim & Yang (2016) suggested, this may be linked to the social support received in these previously-mentioned communicative exchanges.

Conclusions

The numerous possibilities offered by the social networks make them fundamental media in all aspects of the lives of adolescents (academic, social, etc.). Specifically, for this study, the following objectives were proposed: to determine why adolescents use the social networks in their most social aspects and the consequences on their lives. To do so, a posteriori examination

was carried out on the potential relationships between the social uses of the social networks and some of their consequences.

Adolescents are the main users of the social networks, devoting up to 10 hours daily to be connected, either on weekdays or weekends. In the same line as what Boccio, Leal & Jackson (2022) claim, at this time, participants of this study affirmed that they basically use them for social purposes, mainly to keep in constant touch with friends and family, to check their profiles, share opinions and ideas, and make new friendships. In addition, the social networks may be used to meet up with friends, suggesting that adolescents still want to engage in face-to-face relations with their peers. The organizing of meetings with friends is quite noteworthy since adolescents are more likely to use the social networks for these purposes than for any other. However, although they spent the majority of their time using these social networks and are very frequent users of these media, the relationship between the frequency of use of social networks and social relations remains unclear (Wang & Chen, 2020).

Despite the fact that adolescents have a very positive perception of the social networks and their virtual relationships (they qualify these virtual relationships as being strong and more trustworthy than traditional relationships, etc.), it is certain that they do not lose their face-to-face social contact for this reason. Figures on their preference for being connected to the social networks instead of going out are much lower, indicating that they continue to be interested in socializing in person, leaving behind the social networks at this time. Furthermore, it appears to indicate that they prefer not to give up their social commitments and when having the chance, they choose to go out leaving the virtual world behind. According to Díaz-López, Maquilón-Sánchez & Mirete-Ruiz (2020) and based on this information, the adolescents participating in this study would not engage in problematic uses of the social networks since otherwise, they would prefer to give up on these face-to-face commitments and remain connected to the networks. However, according to the criteria of other authors and the results of this study, adolescents do engage in problematic uses of the social networks since their use is related to certain consequences such as poorer academic performance (although in this study, a mixed vision was obtained in this regard), sleep alterations since the adolescents declared that they lose hours of sleep, experience irritability when their social network use is interrupted and the preference for virtual contacts over real-life social relations (Díaz-López, Maquilón-Sánchez & Mirete-Ruiz, 2020).

Therefore, this combination of the modality of social network communication and face-to-face interaction maintained by adolescents in their lives indicates that both forms of communication are compatible according to the students participating in this study. Both forms of socialization enrich the

social lives of the individuals, extending their friendships thanks to the accessibility of the social networks with which they overcome obstacles such as distance while serving as a way of escaping the real world at the same time. It is clear that, when used inappropriately, this ease may lead to difficulties in the socialization process.

It is noteworthy that adolescents are growing up in immediate society, and therefore they are accustomed to it (quick question-answer with any person and time), which is what social networks provide them, while this face-to-face socialization is a communication. slower, gradual and orderly (Gao, 2023). But Gao (2023) confirms that this type of socialization through social networks is accelerating the socialization of adolescents but also shortening it, it occurs with more intensity but more briefly. And it is important that the child enjoys at each stage of development what he or she should enjoy and be enriched by.

This work has a series of limitations that should be addressed. First, it has been developed based on the perceptions of adolescents. In other words, it has been carried out according to the views of the participants, presenting a great degree of subjectivity. A second limitation of the study is its geographic coverage since it has been carried out within the Autonomous Community of Aragon (Spain), more specifically, in the province of Huesca. Also, the purely quantitative nature of the study may be a limitation. Therefore, future studies should consider the possibility of complementing the information obtained in this work with other qualitative techniques such as discussion groups or interviews. This would avoid potential problems of desirability and honesty which may arise in the responses provided to the questionnaire.

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