SHORT COMMUNICATION

Communication synergy in social networks as an interactive aspect for the development of early childhood education in educational institutions in Riohacha, La Guajira

Sinergia comunicacional en las redes sociales como aspecto interactivo para el desarrollo de la educación infantil en instituciones educativas de Riohacha, La Guajira

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the communicative synergy on social media as an interactive aspect in the development of early childhood education. Its objective is to analyze the communicative correlation on social media and its effects on cyberbullying, sexting, grooming, vamping, among others. Additionally, it seeks to determine the conditions of social media use by school-aged children, as well as the advantages they provide in terms of message exchange with other familiar children, friends, and relatives, known adults, friends, and family members. It also aims to identify the disadvantages of social media for school-aged children, particularly regarding the risks of exchanging messages about sex and love with unknown children and adults, and describes how these disadvantages can negatively impact their emotional and physical well-being, as well as their social isolation.

Keywords: Social Networks; Internet; Risks; Family; Education; Students.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación analiza la sinergia comunicacional en las redes sociales como un aspecto interactivo en el desarrollo de la educación infantil. Su objetivo es examinar la correlación comunicativa en las redes sociales y sus efectos en el ciberbullying, el sexting, el grooming, el vamping, entre otros. Además, busca determinar las condiciones de uso de las redes sociales por parte de los niños en edad escolar, así como las ventajas que estas les brindan en términos de intercambio de mensajes con otros niños conocidos, amigos y familiares, adultos conocidos, amigos y familiares. También se enfoca en identificar las desventajas de las redes sociales para los niños escolares, especialmente en lo que respecta a los riesgos de intercambiar mensajes sobre temas de sexo y amor con niños y adultos desconocidos, y describe cómo estas desventajas pueden afectar negativamente su estado emocional, físico y su aislamiento social.

Palabras claves: Redes Sociales; Internet; Riesgos; Familia; Educación; Estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

    The increasing concern among parents and teachers regarding the use and abuse of social media by children

in Colombia and around the world is a topic that calls for attention and action.[1] This phenomenon has been accentuated by rapid digitization and the potential exposure of children to abuses by adults and relatives.[2,3,4]

Given the context of the pandemic in 2020, a survey method through phone calls was used to collect data, as children were not attending schools by mandate of the Colombian Ministry of Health.[5,6]

The interest in this topic is undeniable, given the prevalence of social media and information and communication technologies today. Sociologists, educators, psychologists, and other professionals have expressed their concern about the expansion of applications and the multiple opportunities children have to access sites that could be harmful to their upbringing and development.[7,8]

Social networks, with their wide coverage and capacity for social and psychological penetration in Colombia and around the world, have become a tool of great importance.[9,10] The immediacy of information encourages citizen participation, especially of children and young people, which raises questions such as: How can social networks influence the process of socialization and learning of children and young people?

In response to these concerns, the government and its competent bodies are seeking to control media and social networks through the creation of alternative means, legal norms, and awareness policies. It is vital that parents, guardians, and educators are alert and supervise the use that their children or students make of social networks to prevent their excessive and inappropriate use.[11,12,13]

This study seeks to understand children's perception of the use of social media. The objective is to clarify doubts about their behavior in relation to topics such as love or sex messages exchanged with unknown adults or with their peers of the same age.

This work intends to provide useful information for educational institutions to take as a reference when establishing policies or actions aimed at protecting childhood and youth.

METHODS

This research was conducted based on the positivist paradigm, at the descriptive level and of a cross-sectional type. Similarly, this research was developed according to the prevalence design. Instruments: Surveys with single-selection closed questions and multiple-selection were used. Dichotomous and polyatomic questions were taken into account. For the validity of the measurement instruments, these were evaluated and endorsed by experts and scientists from the University of La Guajira, and another university.

Content validity was taken into account, but construct validity and criterion validity were added, even if they were not necessary as the instrument was well defined by the content validity.[14] For this, the concepts recorded in books, magazines and research mentioned in the bibliography of this research were taken into account (content validity); some teachers were consulted about terms and meanings used in the use of social networks for child communication (construct validity); other experts were consulted (expert validity) on the topic who gave their favorable judgment to the constructed instruments despite this, once satisfied with the results, a comparison with other similar instruments was made without it being necessary (criterion validity).[14]

In the reliability test of the survey, a Pearson correlation coefficient r of 0,8 was obtained. The test was carried out with a test and re-test trial on two children from the schools of Riohacha.

The population of students in Riohacha is approximately 44000 projected, from which a sample of 120 children aged 7 to 12 was chosen, distributed in the ages of 7 to 8, 9 to 10, and 11 to 12, with random sampling, with a margin of error of 8 % and a confidence level of 92 %.

Two variables were used: a) characterization variable: communication strategies; b) Variables of interest: use of social networks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The characterization of the sample of children included in the study is shown in table 1 and 2.

Table 1. Ages of children using social networks in Riohacha		
Ages	N	%
7 a 8	70	58
9 a 10	40	33
11 a 12	10	8
Total	120	100

At the time of the pandemic, the children chosen for this study were 7 to 8 years old (58 %), 9 to 10 years old (33 %) and 10 to 12 years old (8 %).

Table 2. Sex of children using social networks in Riohacha		
Gender	N	%
Male	70	58
Female	50	42
Total	120	100

The majority of the children offered in the study were boys (58 %).

Conditions of children's environments
A) Devices used by school children in Riohacha
A large number of children in Riohacha use cell phones to access social networks, with a significant percentage of 50 %. In contrast, the use of laptops and desktop computers is less common, with only 10 % and 25 % respectively. It is worrying that, in the midst of the pandemic, 8 % of these children do not have access to any technological device for their studies (table 3).

Table 3. Devices available to children for social networking in Riohacha		
Devices	N	%
Tablet	8	7
Smartphone or cell phone	60	50
Laptop computer	12	10
Desktop computer	30	25
I have no electronic devices	10	8
Total	120	100

Table 4. Internet availability of children using social networks in Riohacha		
Internet availability	N	%
Internet is available at my home	30	25
I buy data recharge	73	61
I borrow	10	8
I go to places where they rent internet equipment	7	6
Total	120	100

Children in Riohacha mostly use social networks; they also buy data recharge (61 %), borrow devices (8 %), go to places where they rent internet equipment (6 %). Some have internet at home (25 %) (table 4).

B) Social networks most used by schoolchildren in Riohacha

Table 5. Social networks most used by children in Riohacha		
Most used social networks	N	%
WhatsApp	62	35
Facebook	37	21
Twitter	0	0
YouTube	67	38
E-mail	8	5
Interactive games	1	1

Other	0	0
None	0	0
Total	175	100

The social networks most used by children in Riohacha are YouTube (38 %),WhatsApp (35 %), Facebook (21 %), email (5 %) and interactive games (1 %) (table 5).

Table 6. Day in which children in Riohacha use social networks		
Day	N	%
Morning	44	37
Afternoon	44	37
Evening	22	18
Early morning	10	8
Total	120	100

Children in Riohacha most frequently use social networks in the mornings (37 %) and afternoons (37 %), but they also use them at night (18 %) and in the early morning (8 %) (table 6).

Table 7. Time spent by children on social networks		
Time spent on social networks	N	%
1 to 2 hours per day	21	18
From 2 to 3 hours per day	50	42
3 to 4 hours daily	49	41
Total	120	100

Children in Riohacha mostly use social networks for 3 to 4 hours per day (41 %) (table 7).

Consequences of the use of social networks by school children in Riohacha
A) Physical and psychological conditions of school children due to the use of social networks

Table 8. How children end up after long hours on social networks		
How children end up after using social networks	N	%
Happy	54	45
Tired	51	43
Late night	7	6
Stressed	1	1
With dark circles under their eyes	7	6
Total	120	100

The children in Riohacha enjoy (45 %) social networks, but are tired (43 %); few children are stressed (1 %) by using social networks; others have dark circles under their eyes (6 %) (table 8).

The children in Riohacha are negatively affected in their academic performance (38 %), present a lot of social isolation (27 %), feel fear (16 %), visual fatigue (13 %) or brain fatigue (5 %) due to the use of social networks (table 9).

Table 9. Type of affectation of children by the use of social networks in Riohacha

Options	N	%
Academic performance	46	38
Social isolation	32	27
Fears	19	16
Depression	0	0
Visual fatigue	15	13
Brain fatigue	6	5
In all of the above	0	0
Not at all	2	2
Total	120	100

Table 10. Innovations in social networks that children like

Options	N	%
Interactive games	99	85
Teaching	18	15
Sex and love	0	0
Total	117	100

Most of the children in Riohacha like the innovations of social networks in terms of interactive games (85 %) and few children like them for teaching (15 %). No children like the innovations of social networks in terms of sex or love (table 10).

Table 11. Benefits of social networks, according to the children of Riohacha

Options	N	%
Apply knowledge	54	43
Allows to ratify friendship	18	14
News exchange	11	9
Task exchange	9	7
Rest	9	7
Fun	17	13
Cheerful mood	8	6
Total	126	100

Children in Riohacha feel that social networks benefit them as they exchange knowledge (43 %) with them, they reaffirm friendship (14 %), exchange news (9 %), and tasks (7 %) as well as provide them with fun (13 %), joy (6 %) and rest (7 %) (table 11).

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted adopted a positivist and descriptive approach, with a cross-sectional prevalence design. Data collection was carried out through telephone surveys directed at 120 children from the previously mentioned educational institutions. Several important conclusions were derived from this study:

Firstly, it was found that the use of social networks negatively affects the academic performance of children in Riohacha. Additionally, these children tend to experience a high degree of social isolation, as well as manifestations of fear, visual fatigue, and brain fatigue related to the use of these platforms.

In terms of duration, it was observed that children in Riohacha tend to spend between 3 to 4 hours daily on

social networks. However, it is worth noting that they do not use these platforms to exchange sexual or love messages with unknown adults.

With regard to the reception of messages, photos, or videos of loving or sexual content, the majority of children in Riohacha indicated that they have not received this type of communication. Among those who did receive them, the predominant response was to delete these messages, block the contacts involved, or forward these communications.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

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