Digital media and university political practices in the public sphere

Medios digitales y prácticas políticas universitarias en la esfera pública

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ABSTRACT

In a predominantly digital communicative context, the political practices of young university students are relevant for the vitality of public spheres and the consolidation of participatory democracy. The objective of this study was to learn how the use of digital media relates to the political talk and participation practices of university students. Using quota sampling, a survey was conducted among 435 undergraduate students residing in the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey, Mexico, during the second semester of 2020. Among these students with favorable access to digital media, positive correlations with small to moderate and statistically significant magnitudes were found between the various uses of digital media and their political practices. News use was moderately correlated with political talk, as was social use with politically motivated activities, and creative use with all forms of participation. Political talk mainly affected the relationship between participation and news use. These findings support the relevance of the active role of young people in their political socialization, as social interaction and content creation were more closely correlated with political participation than news consumption was, which was more beneficial to participation when articulated through political talk.

RESUMEN

En un contexto comunicativo predominantemente digital, las prácticas políticas de los jóvenes universitarios son de importancia para la vitalidad de las esferas públicas y la consolidación de la democracia participativa. El objetivo de este estudio fue conocer cómo se relaciona el uso de los medios digitales con las prácticas de conversación y participación políticas de los universitarios. Mediante un muestreo por cuotas, se realizó una encuesta a 435 estudiantes de nivel licenciatura residentes en la Zona Metropolitana de Monterrey, México, durante el segundo semestre de 2020. Entre estos estudiantes con acceso favorecedor a los medios digitales, se encontraron correlaciones positivas con magnitudes de pequeñas a moderadas y estadísticamente significativas entre los diversos usos de los medios digitales y sus prácticas políticas. El uso noticioso se correlacionó moderadamente con la conversación política, así como el uso social con las actividades políticamente motivadas, y el uso creativo con todas las formas de participación. La conversación política incidió principalmente en la relación entre la participación y el uso noticioso. Estos hallazgos respaldan la relevancia del papel activo de los jóvenes en su socialización política, pues la interacción social y la creación de contenidos se relacionaron más estrechamente con la participación política que el consumo de noticias, el cual fue más provechoso para la participación al articularse a través de la conversación política.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Digital media, political talk, political participation, public sphere, young people, university students.
Medios digitales, conversación política, participación política, esfera pública, jóvenes, estudiantes universitarios.

1. Introduction

Digital media are inescapable tools and spaces for current democratic processes, mainly among young people who have grown up under the digital paradigm and, in that context, have formed their notion of politics and their relationship with it (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ekström et al., 2014; Xenos et al., 2014). In this position are current university students, who are also considered an important group for the consolidation of participatory democracy (Barredo et al., 2018; De-la-Garza-Montemayor et al., 2019), since access to education implies better conditions for involvement in various public domains, such as the economical or cultural.

Through a quantitative approach using a survey, the objective of this research was to learn how the use of digital media relates to political talk and participation practices of university students in Monterrey's Metropolitan Area, the second most populated city in Mexico.

In the spectrum of their political orientations, the conversation and participation practices of young people are relevant to the vitality of public spheres (Dahlgren, 2011) in Habermas's (1991) rational, deliberative and structured sense, but also as spaces of expression of the social horizon of individual experiences (Negt & Kluge, 1993). These practices contribute to the generation of meaning about democracy in public spheres; they also transform it, and prevent its stagnation (Dahlgren, 2011) and, therefore, are indicators of its quality.

To aspire to participatory democracy, where participation extends to aspects of the decision-making process beyond voting (Wessels, 2018), and where young people benefit from the possibilities that digital media offer to take a broad and active role in public affairs, represents a challenge in the face of the global trend of political disaffection among new generations, characterized by the feeling of powerlessness, cynicism and lack of trust in the political process (Infante et al., 2019; Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018; Torcal & Montero, 2006).

Given this, conceptualizing the political participation of young people (Brady, 1998; Norris, 2002; Tilly, 2008) in a less rigid sense, oriented to the short term and their particular interests (Ohme, 2018), as "the activities of citizens that affect politics" (Van-Deth, 2016: 1), contributes to its exploration in a predominantly digital communicative context. For that purpose, it is assumed that young people's everyday communicative experiences in the digital sphere affect their political socialization process, and thus, the form their political practices take, including their conversation (Muñiz et al., 2018; Ping-Yu & Won-Oh, 2018; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018) and participation habits (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018; Neundorf & Smets, 2017; Xenos et al., 2014).

1.1. The digital paradigm as context in the political socialization of young people

Today's young university students belong to a generation that grew up immersed in a "new" communication paradigm, one constituted on digital media as its backbone, and hence the relevance of analyzing their impact on their political socialization process, that is, on the acquisition of the political culture that surrounds them (Greenberg, 2009). Understood as a range of media that encode and decode information in binary language, supported by electronic devices generally connected to the Internet (Wessels, 2018), digital media have resulted in new forms of communication and interaction. Characterized by the immediacy, variety and the amount of information they provide, these media challenge traditional informative practices.

In digital environments, young people are not passive consumers of content; they select, create and distribute it with relative ease, leaving trail of information (Sparviero, 2019) that simultaneously determines their experience. These media have brought about virtual socialization networks, where identities are negotiated on a daily basis and from an early age (Patra, 2018).

As agents of political socialization, digital media are not only gaining ground in the dissemination of information and in the establishment of agendas, but have also opened up alternative spaces for deliberation and participation. The particular conditions of the university population make it of interest in this field of research, as it has been found that a higher level of education and a younger age are related to a more advantageous use of the Internet and digital media (Van-Deursen et al., 2014).

1.2. Digital media access and use

The potential of these media for the activation of young citizens is initially conditioned by the physical access to technology, which is a basic factor in the relationship young people establish with it (Martínez-Domínguez, 2018; Tirado-Morueta et al., 2017). The process of appropriation of digital media begins precisely by accessing them. Van-Dijk (2017) explains access as successive phases that culminate in increased participation in various social domains, including the political domain. These phases start from motivational and physical access, referring to people's inclination to use technology, and to the spaces and devices available to them, respectively.

Beyond access, the approach to digital media use must include the variety of user practices, a complex task in the current media ecosystem. Ekström et al. (2014) identify four key factors that distinguish uses in digital spaces in order to analyze them independently but interrelated with each other. The resulting categories include: 1) News use, which refers to activities related to accessing news online; 2) Social use, focused on activities on socio-digital networks; 3) Creative use, related to content production; and 4) Game use, mainly the habits around social interaction. The authors point out the relevance of each of these aspects in the public orientations of young people but indicate that game use is the least related to civic involvement, which is why it was not addressed in the empirical part of this study.

1.3. Political domain: Conversation, participation and their interaction

Part of the discussion on political practices in the digital sphere has focused on how young people take advantage of technological tools, increasing their participation and giving visibility to discourses that were hardly included in pre-digital media. The literature has reported positive consequences of the use of digital media and social networks on deliberation (Dzisha, 2018; Hampton et al., 2017), political talk (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018), and online and offline participation (Ahmad et al., 2019; Carbonai & Zilio, 2017; De-la-Garza-Montemayor et al., 2019; Macafee, 2018; Xenos et al., 2014). Moreover, these spaces have been the cradle of cyberactivism, and an information ecosystem as an oppositional public space that has empowered social movements during the last decades (Sierra-Caballero, 2018). However, to analyze the impact of digital media on political practices solely based on their facilitating aspects is only part of this complex field of research, since the increase in the possibilities of participation in these media does not necessarily correspond to the rise of participation in general, the quality of civic practices (Wessels, 2018), or the configuration of a democratic virtual environment (Dahlgren, 2018). Phenomena that contribute to misinformation and polarization of public opinion are becoming increasingly evident, such as an informative environment infested with fake news (Molina et al., 2021), or the effect of socio-digital networks as echo chambers that contribute to reinforce people's already established perspectives and opinions (Guo et al., 2020), and even to amplify extremist discourses (Torregrosa et al., 2020).

Without taking an excessively positive stance, it can be recognized that with the possibilities that digital media have made available to institutions and individuals, the political domain is in constant transformation. This study approaches it from the political practices of young university students, including two articulated aspects: the daily conversation about politics and political participation. By political talk we mean an informal communicative practice not circumscribed to media consumption (Muñiz et al., 2018) that, "if not always deliberative, is nevertheless a crucial part of the full deliberative democratic system" (Mansbridge, 1999: 211). Political talk is a practice of interest, because, in combination with various technological resources, it can contribute to the participatory repertoires of citizens (Peña-Serret, 2018; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018).

Regarding political participation, Van-Deth's (2014) proposal, later revisited by Ohme (2018), is structured around the distance between the individual and political processes. Van-Deth (2014) explains participation as a multidimensional concept related to people's understanding of the political system, the place in which citizens position themselves, and the relationship they establish with power, which is manifested in different types of involvement. Van-Deth's (2014) political participation model consists of four types of activity, according to where the action is directed: 1) Voting behavior (PPI); 2) Participation directed to the political system (PPII), which includes the activities of people who, without being part of the government, are clearly directed at it or its members; 3) Participation at the community level (PPIII), which

refers to the activities carried out by members of the community to improve it, but without directing them to any government entity; and 4) Politically motivated activities (PPIV) that do not involve action directed at the government or the community, but rather the expression of a politically charged message.

Based on the relevant literature and the study objective, the following research questions were formulated: 1) How do young university students access and use digital media?; 2) What is the relationship between digital media use and the practices of political talk and participation among young university students?; and 3) How do political talk habits impact the relationship between digital media use and political participation?

2. Methodology

The study was conducted with a quantitative approach, through the application of a survey to undergraduate students residing in Monterrey's Metropolitan Area, who make up a population of 210.516 students (Gobierno del Estado de Nuevo León, 2020). After a pilot phase to refine the accuracy, clarity and exhaustiveness of the instrument, a final questionnaire was formed (Maltos-Tamez et al., 2021). It was structured in three sections: one related to the access and use of digital media, another one about various aspects of the political culture of the students, including political talk and participation practices, and a final one to obtain demographic information.

The survey was conducted during three weeks of the second semester of 2020, through the SurveyMonkey online platform. The invitation to participate in the study was distributed through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and shared by email and WhatsApp with teachers from different institutions, requesting participation from their students. Additionally, students were encouraged to participate and complete the instrument by the raffle of gift cards.

2.1. Sample composition

A non-probabilistic quota sample of 435 participants was identified. Data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic posed limitations on the design of the study, since the application of the instrument on an online platform and through an open call prevented the random selection of participants. However, through quota sampling, by reproducing the characteristics of the study population, it is intended "to approximate the results that would be obtained with probabilistic samples" (Romero & Bologna, 2013: 288). In this way, a gender quota similar to that of the population of undergraduate students in Nuevo Leon was assigned (Gobierno del Estado de Nuevo León, 2020), so that 212 women (48.7%) and 223 men were included (51.3%). The age of the participants ranged between 16 and 24 years, with a mean of 20 years.

The distribution of the sample according to the type of institution of the participants was contrasted with the distribution of undergraduate students in the state (Secretaría de Educación Pública, s.f.). 61.6% (N=268) of the participants belonged to the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (vs. 47.7%), 20.9% (N=91) were students from large and medium-sized universities (vs. 12.1%), and 17.5% (N=76), from small or micro universities (vs. 29.3%)[1]. In addition, the distribution of the sample was compared to a measurement of the socioeconomic stratum of the participants according to their Urban Geostatistical Area of residence (AGEB) with the distribution of that same measure in the general population of the Monterrey Metropolitan Area [2]. The sample consisted of 5.3% (N=23) participants in the low stratum (vs. 14%), 24.8% (N=108) in the lower-middle (vs. 30.2%), 25.7% (N=112) in the middle (vs. 25.8%), 21.1% (N=92) in the upper-middle (vs. 16.1%), and 23% (N=100) in the high stratum (vs. 14%). These verifications provided certainty about the representativeness of the sample. Regarding the socioeconomic stratum, a distribution with less representation of the low and lower-middle levels was observed, but it is considered reasonable to find a lower number of university students in these strata compared to the general population, since those would be the sectors with less possibility of accessing university education.

2.2. Measurement of variables

Regarding access, participants were asked about Internet connection services available to them, the devices they use, and the time they spend on online activities according to Van-Dijk's (2017) approach. The use of digital media was addressed through the typology of Ekström et al. (2014), including news,

social and creative use. News use was measured using an item regarding the frequency in which students consult news on digital media on a Likert-type scale from zero (never) to four (every or almost every day). They were asked about which media they use to check the news, on a ranking scale from zero (not used) to 10 (the most used). Social use was measured using an additive index made up of seven items (Cronbach's alpha=0,775) about activities in socio-digital networks, answered on a Likert-type frequency scale from zero (never) to four (every or almost every day). They were asked about the most frequently used socio-digital platforms on the same scale. Regarding creative use, an additive index of seven items (Cronbach's alpha=0,744) related to the creation and publication of content in digital media was used. These were answered on a Likert-type frequency scale from zero (never) to four (once or several times a week).

The political talk variable was measured by an additive index of five items (Cronbach's alpha=0,769) that questioned how common it is for students to engage in different situations of dialogue about politics, both online and in person. These items were answered on a Likert-type scale from zero (not at all common) to four (very common).

Finally, political participation was measured through individual additive indices for each type of participation according to the Van-Deth (2014) model, using a Spanish-translated version with minor adaptations of the items developed by Ohme (2018): seven items for participation directed to the political system (PPII) (Cronbach's alpha=0,769), seven more for participation at the community-level (PPIII) (Cronbach's alpha=0,815), and six for politically motivated activities (PPIV) (Cronbach's alpha=0,788). The items asked the students about the frequency with which they had carried out activities related to each type of participation in the three immediate previous years, and they were answered on a Likert-type scale from zero (never) to four (more than 10 times). Additionally, an item on voting behavior (PPI) was included. In all cases, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the sets of items that made up the variables was greater than 0,75, indicating acceptable reliability for the indices employed.

3. Results of the analysis

The results obtained after the statistical analysis, which included quantification of variables at a descriptive level and the bivariate analysis of the indices of use and practices through Pearson's correlation coefficient, are detailed below. Going back to the research questions, in first instance, the characteristics of digital media access and use by the students were included, followed by the sections that explore the relationships of digital media use with political talk and participation among university students, as well as the incidence of political talk over these relationships.

3.1. Digital media access level and use

Access to digital media in this population is quite widespread. Almost all the respondents (98.9%, N=430) have Internet service at home, and just over half (56.8%, N=247) use the Internet through a mobile data service.

Students have an average of three electronic devices with Internet access. The most used are smartphones (91.3%, N=397), followed by laptops (78.4%, N=341), smart TVs (36.1%, N=157), desktop computers (25.1%, N=109), and video game consoles (24.1%, N=105). These youths spend an average of 12 hours a day on online activities. More than half of them (54%, N=235) indicated being connected to the Internet 12 or more hours a day.

Regarding news use, it was found that about three-quarters of students (71.8%, N=312) check news about politics in digital media at least once a week. The mean news use index was 2,39 (SD=1.20). The media that students use mainly to inform themselves are the news feed[3] of their social networks (M=7.03, SD=3.35), social network profiles of news media (M=6.23, SD=3.51), news media websites (M=5.94, SD=3.75), television (M=5.59, SD=4.20) and citizen journalism social networks (M=4.57, SD=3,56). The least used media were radio, printed newspaper, other people on instant messaging services, and subscriptions to RSS services (M≤2,17).

On the other hand, the social use index registered a mean of 1,63 (SD=0.67). The most frequently used socio-digital networks were WhatsApp[4] (M=3.93, SD=0.31), Facebook (M=3.53, SD=0.96),

YouTube (*M*=3.34, SD=0.95), Instagram (*M*=3.34, SD=1.14), Twitter (*M*=1.88, SD=1.67) and TikTok (*M*=1.47, SD=1.6). Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Tumblr were platforms used to a lesser extent (M≤1.00). Regarding creative use, the index obtained a mean of 0,53 (SD=0.62), finding that the most frequent content creation activities among students were publishing photographs, drawings, or artistic or expressive manifestations; and publishing opinion texts or videos (25.8% and 19.3% of the respondents carry out these activities at least once a month, respectively). Reviewing products, movies, books, etc.; making podcasts or streaming; making their own memes; uploading blog entries; and making video tutorials were less frequent activities (11.9%, 10.3%, 9.9%, 7.2% and 7% of the students do them at least once a month, respectively).

3.2. The relationship between digital media use and political talk and participation among university students

Data analysis showed that three-fourths of the respondents (74.5%, N=324) reported low and very low frequencies of conversation about politics. The political talk index had a mean of 1.17 (SD=0.78), with in-person dialogue being more common (*M*=1.76, SD=1.03) than online (*M*=0.79, SD=0.77).

Regarding political participation, the data on voting behavior (PPI) indicated that 74% (N=173) of students of legal age at the time (N=234) voted in the July 2018 elections. The index obtained for overall participation place it at levels close to the lower limit (*M*=0.45, SD=0.49). Table 1 shows the indices obtained for each type of participation, as well as the activities that make them up in order from highest to lowest frequency according to their average score. As can be seen, the indices for system-directed participation (PPII) and politically motivated activities (PPIV) are very similar (*M*=0.47 and *M*=0.48, respectively); participation at the community level obtained a lower index (*M*=0.41).

Table 1. Student's political participation practices		
	Mean	**SD**
PPII: Participation directed to the system	0.47	0.55
Sign an online petition on a political or social issue	1.20	1.28
Invite other people or disseminate information to participate in a demonstration, strike or protest	0.70	1.12
Participate in a demonstration, strike or protest	0.35	0.68
Contact a politician via email or social media	0.32	0.74
Sign a paper petition on a political or social issue	0.34	0.72
Contact or visit a politician in person	0.20	0.60
Donate money to a political organization	0.16	0.50
PPIII: Participation at the community level	0.41	0.54
Volunteer in a local organization	0.63	0.99
Participate in cultural events to support projects in your community	0.58	0.88
Support fundraising projects for the care of your community	0.44	0.80
Collect money to support projects in your community	0.38	0.74
Maintain public facilities in your local area	0.35	0.74
Participate in meetings about your local area	0.33	0.69
Make street art in your community	0.13	0.55
PPIV: Politically motivated activities	0.48	0.63
Share social media posts about political or social issues	1.09	1.26
Express your opinion in social media posts about a political or social issue	0.85	1.20
Buy or boycott any product for political, ethical or environmental reasons	0.36	0.87
Wear badges, accessories, or clothing with a political message	0.21	0.65
Change your information or profile image on social networks for a social issue	0.28	0.70
Create a group in a social network to discuss or support a political cause	0.12	0.47

Note. N=435. The items were translated into Spanish and adapted from the original version developed by Ohme (2018).

According to Pearson's coefficient (Table 2), the social and creative uses of digital media showed positive and statistically significant correlations, but of small magnitude [5] with the political talk index. The correlation with this index was slightly stronger, reaching a moderate magnitude, in the case of news use. In addition, positive correlations of small magnitude were found between the various uses of digital media, and each type of political participation. Only in the cases of the relationship between social use and politically motivated activities (PPIV), and between creative use and all types of participation correlations of magnitude were observed.

Table 2. Correlations between digital media use, political talk and political participation among students					
		Political talk	Participation II	Participation III	Participation IV
News use	r	0.302**	0.146**	0.144**	0.198**
	p	0.000	0.002	0.003	0.000
Social use	r	0.232**	0.291**	0.146**	0.343**
	p	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000
Creative use	r	0.226**	0.325**	0.350**	0.299**
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Note. N=435 **, The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

3.3. Impact of political talk on the detected correlations

Finally, we examined whether political talk could influence the relationship between the use of digital media and the political participation of young people. We found that when controlling for its effect (Table 3), the correlations between news use and political participation did not reach the established value of statistical significance ($p \leq 0.01$), while most of the correlations between social and creative use and the different forms of participation were reduced in magnitude, but maintained the level of statistical significance. The exception was the correlation between social use and political participation at the community level (PPIII), which can surely be explained by the very nature of this type of participation.

Table 3. Partial correlations between digital media use and political participation among students controlling for the effect of political talk				
		Participation II	Participation III	Participation IV
News use	r	0.023	0.049	0.065
	p	0.627	0.311	0.177
Social use	r	0.220**	0.075	0.272**
	p	0.000	0.118	0.000
Creative use	r	0.261**	0.299**	0.223**
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000

Note. N=435 **, The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

4. Discussion and conclusions

Among the most relevant results of the study is the identification of positive and statistically significant correlations between digital media use and political practices of university students. News use was moderately correlated with political talk, as well as social use with politically motivated activities, and creative use with all forms of participation. Political talk mainly influenced the relationship between news use and participation.

Although it is beyond the scope of the study, it is important to contextualize these results in light of the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has modified the conditions of access and use of digital media among young people, who have had to carry out their academic activities and social interactions through the Internet. Now, given these conditions, the level of access to digital media among university students was favorable, as shown by the results where almost all of them have Internet service at home. We could then raise additional questions about why participation in the political domain is at low levels even in a population with these access characteristics (Van-Dijk, 2017), in view that the participation and conversation indices were close to the lower limit on the scale used.

These results are taken with the limitation that this study measured levels of participation, not its quality. Without going as far as that claim, when comparing participation indices, we find that system-directed participation (PPII) and politically motivated activities (PPIV) are more frequent among students than participation at the community level (PPIII), which could be explained by the time demands of the activities or by the stage of life in which the students find themselves.

This leads to reflect on the role of universities as facilitators of opportunities for participation, that is, on whether student's political socialization process as they pass through university entails a greater possibility that digital media use is helpful for political participation. Cruz-Sánchez and Garay-Cruz (2019) suggest that participatory culture in the classroom results from academic-administrative management both in learning platforms and in socio-digital networks; and they emphasize the role of teachers in creating conditions for participation. Research on the political practices of university students cannot ignore the

intersection with participatory practices that are generated in educational settings as essential spaces for socialization at this stage of life.

On the other hand, the presence of moderate correlations between social and creative uses with political talk and almost all types of participation support assumptions about the positive relationship of digital media use with these political practices (Ahmad et al., 2019; Carbonai & Zilio, 2017; De-la-Garza-Montemayor et al., 2019; Macafee, 2018; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018; Xenos et al., 2014;). It also stresses the importance of the active role of young people in their political socialization process (Amnå et al., 2009; Ohme, 2018), and in the shaping of digital spheres as spaces open to the collective expression of their experiences (Negt & Kluge, 1993), finding that the practices of interaction and creation are more closely related to political participation than the consumption of news content, a rather passive use.

The literature has already pointed out the important relationship between news consumption and political talk (Martínez-Villarreal et al., 2019; Muñiz et al., 2018; Ping-Yu & Won-Oh, 2018; Saldierna et al., 2017; Xenos et al., 2014); however, in this study, the strength of this relationship is not transferred to the field of participation, where the observed correlations were weaker compared to other use indices. Given this, the idea of political talk as a communicative practice that could alter the political participation of young people (Peña-Serret, 2018; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018) is considered, rather than as an end or a deliberative exercise in itself. The results suggest that there is an incidence of political talk on the relationship between digital media use and political participation, especially in the case of news use. Van-Deursen et al. (2014) indicate that the opportunities generated by media access cannot compensate for the lack of civic interest. The authors propose that the potential actually lies in the additional possibilities of expression that media offer to those who already have interest in the political arena. Political talk acts as an articulation between news consumption in digital media and political participation.

This approach to university students and the ways in which they use digital media and get involved in the political domain, suggests the relevance of social interaction and content creation in their civic activation, and that of conversation as a link between news consumption and their political participation. Future comparative approaches could contribute to contrasting this population with populations of other characteristics, even more so to the extent that it is possible to perform probabilistic sampling exercises. The contributions of the study are valuable for continuous research focused on university students, and for the orientation of institutional strategies on digital literacies and political participation. It is also necessary to continue inquiring on this matter through a qualitative research approach that deepens and qualifies the identified relationships while exploring the trajectories of use and appropriation of digital media that promote political activation among university students.

Author Contribution

Idea, A.L.M.T.; Literature review (state of the art), A.L.M.T., O.M.M.V.; Methodology, A.L.M.T. F.J.M.G., O.M.M.V.; Data analysis, A.L.M.T.; Results, A.L.M.T., F.J.M.G., O.M.M.V.; Discussion and conclusions, A.L.M.T., F.J.M.G., O.M.M.V.; Writing (original draft), A.L.M.T.; Final Revisions, A.L.M.T., F.J.M.G., O.M.M.V.; Project design and sponsorship, A.L.M.T., O.M.M.V.

Notes

[1] The classification corresponds to the size of the enrollment of the institutions. The Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León is the only one in the "mega" category, with more than 50 thousand students. The "large" category includes institutions with enrollments of more than 10,000 students, and the "medium" category of more than 5,000. Together, these correspond to Tecnológico de Monterrey, Universidad de Monterrey, Universidad del Valle de México, Universidad Metropolitana de Monterrey, Universidad Regiomontana, and Universidad Tec Milenio. The "small" category includes institutions with fewer than 5,000 students.

[2] Participants provided their neighborhood and municipality of residence to identify their Urban Geostatistical Area (AGEB). Each of these areas was placed on an average socioeconomic level scale of five levels (low, lower-middle, middle, upper-middle, and high). The measurement was made according to six criteria: 1) Homes where at least one person aged 25 or more has higher education; 2) Homes with more than 2.5 occupants per bedroom; 3) Population entitled to health services; 4) Employed population aged 12 years or over; 5) Homes that have a car or truck; and 6) Homes that have Internet; this measurement was developed based on the methodology of the Asociación Mexicana de Inteligencia de Mercado y Opinión (2017), and the information available in the Inventario Nacional de Vivienda 2016 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Historia, s.f.).

[3] News feed refers to the section of socio-digital networks that shows information updates to the user.

[4] WhatsApp was included despite not being properly a social network due to its relevance as a social interaction tool and its functionality for the dissemination of content.

[5]Interpretations of effect size follow the Cohen convention (Salkind, 2007) used in behavioral sciences, according to which the coefficients for Pearson correlations are considered "small" when they reach a magnitude of 0.1, "moderate", from 0.3, and "large", from 0.5.

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