Adolescents and social networks: digital identity, self-esteem, and social validation

Adolescentes y redes sociales: identidad digital, autoestima y validación social

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín. She holds a PhD in Social Communication from the Universidad San Pablo CEU and a Bachelor's Degree in Information Systems and Engineering from Universidad Católica de Ávila. She has served as Director of the Data Processing Center at the Universidad Católica Ávila since 2014 and has been part of the team leading the university's digital transformation. She is also a Lecturer at the Universidad Católica de Ávila, where she teaches in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Computer Engineering and Security Policy, as well as in the Master's Degree in Management and Direction of Educational Centers at the same institution. Her current research focuses on digital transformation in education and the impact of new technologies on social relationships, particularly among minors. She has presented papers on these topics at several conferences. Dr Gutiérrez-Martin is also the Director of the Educational Diversity Research Group (GIDE) at the Universidad Católitca de Ávila.
Universidad Católica de Ávila (UCAV), Spain
Noelia.gutierrez@ucavila.es
ORCID: 0000-0002-3524-1280

Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo. Graduated Cum Laude with an Extraordinary Award in the Social Sciences Programme at Pablo de Olavide University. She also holds a Master's Degree in Education for Development, Social Awareness, and Culture of Peace, as well as degrees in Psychopedagogy and Primary Education. She is a member of the research group HUM-971 INNOVAGOGÍA. An ANECA-accredited Lecturer, teaching in Education Degree Programs and the Master's in Teaching at the International University of La Rioja (UNIR) and the University of Córdoba. She is also an international conference speaker on assessment in virtual teaching through a teacher training program at UCAVILA. Her research focuses on competency-based curricula and innovative methodologies to achieve educational objectives. Author of numerous high-impact publications, including articles in top-tier journals (JCR Q1, Q2, SCOPUS, etc.) as well as books and chapters with prestigious publishers. Her primary research interest lies in the acquisition of competencies across different educational stages, with research linked to national and international research stays at renowned institutions, including Suor Osola Benincasa - Faculty of Education Sciences, Naples (Italy), and the University of Southampton (the United Kingdom). She is a frequent speaker at international conferences.
Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR), Spain
eva.ordonez@unir.net
ORCID: 0000-0002-6220-0302

How to cite this article:
Gutiérrez-Martín, N. and Ordóñez-Olmedo, E. (2026). Adolescents and social networks: digital identity, self-esteem, and social validation. *Doxa Comunicación*, 42, pp. 437-455.

Received: 30/06/2025 - Accepted: 10/11/2025 - Early access: 10/12/2025 - Published: 01/01/2026

Abstract

This study examines how adolescents aged 12 to 16 construct digital identities and how these relate to self-esteem and social validation. A mixed-method design combined a two-round Delphi with fourteen experts and two focus groups involving thirty-two adolescents. Findings indicate tendencies toward idealized self-representations, intensive pursuit of social recognition, and the use of alternative identities under anonymity. Visibility metrics (likes, followers, comments) act as reinforcers of self-worth and, when dominant, increase emotional vulnerability. Gender differences emerged in pressures related to hypersexualization and aesthetic norms. Valued preventive strategies include media literacy, dialogical parental mediation, and strengthening emotional and digital competencies. Implications for educational and familial interventions are discussed, along with recommendations for longitudinal studies and research on algorithmic impacts on adolescent self-image.

Keywords:

Digital entity; adolescence, social networks, mental health, Delphi, focus group.

Recibido: 30/06/2025 - Aceptado: 10/11/2025 - En edición: 10/12/2025 - Publicado: 01/01/2026

Resumen:

Este estudio analiza la construcción de la identidad digital en adolescentes de 12 a 16 años y su relación con la autoestima y la validación social. Mediante un diseño mixto que combinó una técnica Delphi de dos rondas con 14 expertos y dos grupos focales con 32 adolescentes, se identificaron tendencias hacia la idealización de la autoimagen, la búsqueda intensiva de reconocimiento social y la adopción de identidades alternativas bajo anonimato. Los hallazgos muestran que las métricas de visibilidad (likes, seguidores, comentarios) funcionan como reforzadores de la autoestima y, cuando predominan, aumentan la vulnerabilidad emocional. Se observan además diferencias de género en la hipersexualización y la presión estética. Entre las estrategias preventivas mejor valoradas figuran la alfabetización mediática, la mediación parental dialógica y el fortalecimiento de competencias emocionales y digitales. Se discuten implicaciones para la intervención educativa y familiar, así como líneas futuras de investigación que incluyan diseños longitudinales y la consideración de los efectos algorítmicos sobre la autoimagen adolescente.

Palabras clave:

Identidad digital, adolescencia, redes sociales, salud mental, Delphi, focus group.

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

1. Introduction

In an era of near-constant digital connectivity, adolescents increasingly use social networks to interact, creating profiles on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, or BeReal, which are privileged spaces for personal expression, identity exploration, and social validation. This phenomenon has given rise to what is known as a general identity, essentially, one's curated self-presentation to the world.

Each person's digital identity and the permanence of this digital footprint over time are central, often controversial themes whose conscious understanding has become essential.

In line with Zamora-García's (2024) approach, constant engagement with social networks stems not merely from a need for communication but also from a pursuit of visibility, which is often conflated with the very need to be. The author underscores that in the digital era, "to exist is to be seen," a logic of exposure that can recast identity as a display window. Here, the shine- the likes, comments, and attention- becomes synonymous with personal worth. From this perspective, the construction of digital identity during adolescence cannot be understood without examining the dynamics of recognition and emotional performance that characterise these platforms, where the "self" is continually negotiated between authenticity and performance.

Given the profound relevance and permanence of this digital identity, and with social networks mediating the majority of interactions, it acquires a central role in adolescence. This developmental stage is defined by a search for belonging and self-affirmation (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016).

In this context, it becomes imperative to examine how adolescents shape their online identities, what motivations drive their communicative choices, and what psychosocial risks arise from this process. Recent research has highlighted concerning phenomena such as self-idealisation, dependence on external validation, overexposure to harmful content, and the normalisation of stereotypes and hypersexualised behaviour (Nesi and Prinstein, 2015; Twenge, 2023).

Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines a Delphi method with experts and a focus group with adolescents. It is designed to analyze the practices and risks associated with digital identity among adolescents and to inform psychoeducational guidance within adolescent educational settings.

2. Literature review

Adolescence, a critical period of identity development, is characterized by experimentation and risk-taking as individuals construct their self-concept and pursue autonomy (Salas, 2018; Zacarés et al., 2009). Today, this developmental process increasingly unfolds in digital contexts, particularly on social media. These platforms have become privileged spaces for self-expression, role exploration, and social interaction.

Digital identity can be defined as the representation of an individual that is projected through digital technologies, particularly on social media and virtual interaction platforms (García-Galera et al., 2017a). This construction involves multiple factors, ranging from the curation of personal image and the pursuit of social validation to the adaptation to the specific norms of the digital environment (Pouwels et al., 2021). Such a context immerses adolescents in intense social dynamics, where immediate feedback and constant comparison can profoundly shape their self-esteem and sense of identity.

According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, human behaviour- including addictive behaviour- is explained by the interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. Within this framework, the observation and imitation of models play a central role. Adolescents may therefore learn and reproduce addictive behaviours they observe in significant figures within their environment, whether in person or in digital contexts. Consequently, constant exposure to models of intensive or dependent social media use can foster the development of addictive patterns of behaviour, underscoring the need to examine the relationship between digital identity construction and the risk of social media addiction.

2.1. Digital identity and adolescence.

Adolescence is a period marked by the consolidation of self-concept and the progressive construction of self-image (Pérez-Torres, 2024). During this time, young people frequently turn to digital environments to explore different facets of their identity. Social networks have become spaces where people can develop their own or alternative personas, where styles, impressions, and ideas can be modified in pursuit of peer validation (Avci et al., 2025). On platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, young people not only interact with their peers but also negotiate their social position and construct narratives

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

about themselves (Michikyan et al., 2014a). However, this digital representation does not always reflect their authentic self; it often presents an idealized or strategic version of the individual. This discrepancy can generate tensions between the "online self" and the "offline self"

Various studies, such as those by Lay (2007) and Potterton et al. (2022), demonstrate that this discrepancy between identities can negatively impact mental health. The tendency to compare oneself with idealised profiles, coupled with the pressure to maintain a consistently appealing social media presence, is associated with heightened anxiety, diminished self-esteem, and even symptoms of depression (Nesi and Prinstein, 2015; Beyens et al., 2020).

In this context, Becoña (2002) highlights a pattern of experiential avoidance, in which adolescents may turn to social media to avoid difficult emotions or situations. Over time, this behaviour can solidify into rigid and compulsive patterns of use, contributing to addictive engagement and negatively affecting mental health and overall well-being.

2.2. Social media and Self-perception

The dynamic of social validation on social media- operationalised through likes, comments, and follower counts- reinforces a behavioural platform oriented toward securing external approval (Voggenreiter et al., 2023). This feedback serves as a potent positive reinforcer of self-esteem, particularly when the content elicits significant positive engagement. However, it functions as a double-edged sword: it pressures users to remain perpetually connected and to curate ever more novel or appealing content, while the absence of such validation can, in turn, undermine self-esteem (Goldberg, 2023). Adolescents often interpret "likes" and comments as indicators of social acceptance, thereby reinforcing an idealised self-image (Valkenburg et al., 2021).

Research such as that by Longobardi et al. (2020) indicates that intensive social media use is a predictor of heightened upward social comparison and greater emotional vulnerability. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced on visually dominated platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where aesthetics and personal appearance are central to digital interaction. Further supporting this, Vartanian and Dei (2013) found that engaging in image-based comparison with other users can undermine self-concept clarity and contribute to body dissatisfaction.

This situation is particularly critical during adolescence, a period when self-concept is still in flux and highly permeable to external opinions (Pouwels et al., 2021). Villarreal (2024) contends that self-esteem at this developmental stage remains formative and is heavily influenced by experiences of external validation. Given that such experiences can have enduring effects, constant exposure to social judgment via social media yields ambivalent outcomes: while it can strengthen a sense of belonging, it may also foster an emotional reliance on digital approval.

Moreover, managing a digital self-image demands careful curation of shared content (Masanet et al., 2020), photo editing, and the maintenance of a consistent aesthetic, practices that can promote a fragmented view of the "self". This selective self-construction may generate cognitive dissonance when adolescents perceive a gap between their authentic selves and the idealized image they project (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2021). The resulting tension between real and digital identity can fuel a persistent quest for validation through social media, thereby increasing both the time spent online and the frequency of engagement with these platforms.

Within this framework, Espada (2015) notes that addictive behaviours extend beyond substance use to include excessive engagement with technologies. This dynamic holds particular relevance during childhood and adolescence, stages in which the need for social acceptance and the habit of constant comparison can encourage the emergence of problematic, potentially addictive patterns of use of social media and the digital environment.

2.3. Self-esteem, self-concept, and social validation in digital environments.

The impact of social media on adolescent identity formation revolves around three interdependent dimensions: self-esteem, self-concept, and social validation. Self-esteem refers to an individual's affective evaluation of their own worth, while self-concept is the cognitive, structured perception of personal identity (Shavelson et al., 1976). Traditionally studied within educational and developmental psychology, both constructs are now being fundamentally reshaped by digital dynamics. These dynamics alter how adolescents perceive themselves, engage in social comparison, and seek external approval (García and Musitu, 2014).

On social media, social validation serves as a central mechanism for symbolic feedback. Visible metrics of approval – such as "likes," comments, and follower counts - serve as tangible indicators of acceptance, directly shaping perceptions of self-worth and patterns of emotional regulation (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Valkenburg et al., 2022). This continual quest for recognition can foster a reliance on external approval, thereby reinforcing a self-concept that is more unstable and fragile. Research by Bernal et al. (2025) demonstrates that intensive use of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat correlates with lower self-esteem, particularly when adolescents engage in upward social comparisons with peers or influential figures. However, the same study also identifies positive effects when these networks are used as spaces for emotional connection and mutual support. This suggests that digital influence is not uniformly detrimental; its impact depends mainly on the nature of the interaction and the user's emotional context.

Furthermore, gender differences noted by Bernal et al. (2025) and Torrenteras et al. reveal a pronounced divergence: adolescent girls report greater vulnerability to narrow beauty ideals and media hypersexualisation, while boys tend to associate their self-esteem more closely with online achievement and social popularity. Shaped by visual culture and the economy of attention, these dynamics highlight the urgent need to cultivate critical digital competencies and resilience strategies. Such skills are essential for fostering a more stable self-concept and nurturing a sense of worth that is less contingent upon external judgment.

In summary, social validation serves as a critical bridge between an adolescent's self-perception and others' perceived judgments in the digital realm, actively shaping how identity is constructed and negotiated. This dynamic lies at the heart of a defining tension in contemporary digital life: that between authenticity and the multiplicity of the online self. Here, identity becomes an exercise in performative curation- fragmented, adapted, and presented differently across varied digital contexts and interactions.

2.4. Authenticity and multiplicity of the digital self

A further key aspect in examining digital identity is the coexistence of multiple profiles or digital identities among adolescents. Young people often curate distinct versions of themselves tailored to different platforms and audiences. This fragmentation,

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

driven by the perceived need to modulate self-presentation across varying social contexts and audiences (Kreling and Krämer, 2022), can generate confusion about personal coherence and authenticity (Boyd, 2014).

This negotiation of multiple identities can be a source of flexibility and self-exploration, allowing adolescents to experiment with roles and project diverse aspects of their personality. Yet, this very multiplicity can generate internal tension when these various self-representations conflict. The sustained effort to curate and maintain several coherent, appealing, and audience-specific identities results in emotional fatigue, heightened social anxiety, and even a profound crisis of authenticity (Michikyan et al., 2014a).

Recent literature suggests that this multiplicity of identities responds not only to social needs but also to normative pressures embedded in platform algorithms, which systematically invest in certain forms of expression and visibility. Consequently, some adolescents cultivate what scholars term a "performative digital self" (Duffy and Hund, 2019), a strategically crafted identity designed to maximise interaction and recognition, rather than to reflect an authentic or internal sense of self.

Furthermore, this plurality of identity is mediated by factors such as gender, self-esteem, and digital literacy. Research such as that by Michikyan et al. (2014b) indicates that adolescent girls tend to craft more visually curated and aesthetically controlled profiles, while boys often prioritise content that is functional, humorous, or that highlights specific skills. This divergence not only mirrors existing gender stereotypes but also actively reinforces them, shaping how identity is negotiated online.

Ultimately, the coexistence of multiple digital identities during adolescence should not be viewed as a pathological condition, but rather as an integral feature of the contemporary digital landscape. Understanding how these identities function and their impact on self-image and psychosocial well-being is essential for designing educational interventions that foster a more integrated, reflective, and healthy digital identity.

In digital environments, authenticity becomes an ambivalent commodity: highly valued yet seldom fully realised, as online interaction frequently demands conformity to prevailing group norms. The resulting tension between "being oneself" and "being liked by others" constitutes a source of identity-related stress during adolescence (Erikson, 1968).

This central tension between authenticity and social approval is fundamental to understanding how adolescents negotiate their identity within ever-shifting digital spaces, a process laden with profound psychological implications.

2.5 .Mental health implications

Multiple meta-analyses have documented a consistent association between social media use and diminished psychological well-being in adolescents (Odgers and Jensen, 2020). These studies reveal that prolonged exposure to platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat has been associated with negative mental health indicators, including increased depressive symptoms, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and a greater incidence of dysfunctional thoughts related to body image (Keles et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the relationship between social media use and psychological well-being is neither universal nor uniform. This association is significantly mediated by factors such as the quality of social interactions, the nature of the content consumed,

the type of engagement (active versus passive), and the adolescent's individual characteristics- including baseline self-esteem and emotional regulation capacity (Orben and Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg et al., 2022).

Moderate social media use can yield positive outcomes, including strengthened social bonds, access to supportive communities, and opportunities for identity exploration. In fact, research suggests that digital platforms can offer valuable alternative spaces for socialisation, especially for those who face challenges with integration in offline settings (Best et al., 2014).

However, when social media use becomes compulsive or is primarily driven by the pursuit of validation, these risks intensify. Adolescents with a high emotional dependence on external approval are particularly vulnerable to sharp declines in self-esteem when expected likes or positive interactions are absent (Nesi and Prinstein, 2018). In this context, the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has been widely examined as a key mediator linking social media engagement to heightened levels of perceived stress and anxiety (Elhai et al., 2021).

Another relevant factor is the repeated exposure to idealised content, which can intensify upward social comparison and contribute to the internalisation of unattainable standards of success, beauty or happiness (Niu et al., 2020). These processes can erode self-concept and foster cognitive distortions associated with body dysmorphia and emotional insecurity.

2.6. Education and family

The development of a healthy digital identity requires educational support. Media literacy programmes that foster self-reflection, critical thinking, and emotional regulation are key to helping adolescents understand both the risks and the potential of their digital footprint (Livingstone et al., 2022a).

Furthermore, parental and educational mediation must extend beyond technical monitoring to foster open and empathetic dialogue. Morán and Castaños (2021) maintain that strengthening real-world interpersonal connections can mitigate the adverse effects of social media. Correspondingly, research by Landavazo et al. (2024) indicates that interventions involving both parents or guardians and educators bolster "digital resistance" by integrating family norms with classroom learning. Within this framework, active mediation emerges as the most effective strategy for preventing risky online behaviours (Liu et al., 2023).

For effective mediation between families and adolescents, the process should begin by establishing a foundation of trust and engaging with genuine curiosity about their children's online experiences. This initial connection should be followed by an exploratory phase, in which parents or guardians can better understand the adolescent's digital environment without judgment. Through open-ended questions, adults can gain insight into their perspective, fostering healthy attitudes towards internet use while emphasising the value of real-world interpersonal relationships (Morán and Castaños, 2021).

Furthermore, parents need to cultivate educational competencies that facilitate effective communication and constructive conflict resolution. This includes developing an awareness of parenting styles and their developmental implications, as well as the ability to recognise potential signs of addictive behaviour that may arise in the home environment (Peiró et al., 2019). Equally important is the conscious creation of leisure alternatives that do not rely on excessive technology use, promoting activities that reinforce family cohesion and broader social connections (Peiró et al., 2019).

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

Finally, coordination between family and school is vital for safeguarding minors from online risks. Interventions that engage both parents and educators have proven particularly effective in building digital resilience, successfully integrating family guidance with formal classroom education (Landavazo et al., 2024).

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

3. Methodology

3.1. Statement of the research problem

The proliferation of digital technologies and the intensive use of social media have given rise to new forms of interaction and personal expression among adolescents. In this digital context, online identity has become an essential component of self-concept, reflecting how young people present themselves, communicate, and construct their image in virtual environments. However, research indicates that many adolescents lack full awareness of the implications of their online presence, which can expose them to risks related to privacy, digital reputation, and the mismanagement of personal data (García-Galena, 2022).

Despite the significance of this subject, gaps remain in our understanding of how adolescents value their digital identity and the extent to which this valuation aligns with their actual knowledge and behaviours. Often, there is a disconnect between the importance they attribute to their online identity and the real-world practices they enact on their social networks or digital platforms.

This situation underscores the need to investigate how adolescents perceive the importance of their digital identity and whether this perception aligns with the knowledge and competencies they demonstrate in its management. Consequently, the objective of this study is to examine adolescents' assessment of the relevance of their digital identity and to determine whether this assessment correlates with their actual understanding of the subject.

3.2. Methodological Approach and Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine how adolescents manage and conceptualise digital identity, the degree to which their social media practices align with this understanding, and the impact of these dynamics on self-esteem. A descriptive-correlational methodology was used to analyse relationships among key variables, supplemented by a phenomenological analysis of participants' lived experiences (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2023). This dual perspective facilitates a more holistic understanding by combining statistical patterns with narrative insights (Bryman, 2023). The research design unfolded in two complementary phases, synthesizing insights from 14 experts with first-hand accounts of adolescents themselves. To enhance the validity and depth of the findings, methodological triangulation was applied, incorporating evidence from prior studies reviewed during the development of the theoretical framework. This structured yet flexible design ensures that the findings from each phase inform and enrich one another, providing a nuanced and comprehensive perspective on the research problem.

3.3. Participant selection

The sample consisted of 32 adolescents aged 12 to 16. Participants were selected through proportional stratified sampling from urban and rural educational institutions (Etikan et al., 2023). Inclusion criteria required participants to be active social media users who voluntarily agreed to participate.

3.4. Digital tools and technology employed

Digital tools were employed for both data collection and analysis, enabling the efficient processing and organization of substantial datasets (Hamilton et al., 2023). For quantitative data analysis, SPSS was used to conduct descriptive statistical analyses of the variables (Field, 2023). Measures of central tendency (mean and median) and dispersion (interquartile range) were calculated to summarise and characterise participants' responses regarding social media use and its perceived impact on self-esteem (Creswell & Plano, 2023).

Qualitative data were analysed using a thematic coding approach based on the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006), which facilitated the identification of emerging patterns and thematic categories. Finally, methodological triangulation was then applied to integrate and contrast findings from both quantitative and qualitative results, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions (Denzin, 2023). Additionally, the findings were reviewed by an external validation committee composed of experts in social psychology to ensure consistency and relevance.

To process the qualitative results, an inductive content analysis was applied to identify, code, and systematise meaningful units within the participants' contributions. This analysis was carried out using MAXQDA software, which supported rigorous coding and thematic structuring. Responses were grouped into categories based on the core ideas expressed, aiding in the identification of conceptual patterns and enabling comparisons across participants. To establish reliability and focus on shared insights, only thematic categories mentioned by at least two experts were retained, thereby consolidating the key areas of consensus within the group.

3.5. Procedure

The study of the development across three phases:

The first phase corresponds to preparation and development. During this initial stage, a meticulous literature review was conducted to identify the theories, fundamental concepts, and significant background supporting the phenomenon under study. Contemporary research on social media, digital identity, and adolescence was consulted (Cohen et al., 2023; Perloff, 2022), thus establishing a solid conceptual framework. These instruments were validated by a committee of experts in psychology and social sciences, who contributed pertinent modifications to enhance the clarity and accuracy of the questions (Robles y Rojas, 2015).

The second phase employed a Delphi methodology, engaging a panel of 14 experts selected through purposive sampling from fields relevant to the research problem, including psychology, education, and health, to ensure disciplinary diversity.

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

As outlined by Charro (2017), the Delphi method involves administering successive questionnaires to an expert panel to converge toward consensus. The process is designed to yield conclusions that reflect collective agreement, while mitigating the influence of individual responses through structured, anonymised interaction.

Two successive rounds were conducted. The first round utilised open-ended questions to elicit broad expert insights on key themes, including digital identity, self-esteem, hypersexualisation, and external validation, among others. The second round employed closed-ended questions based on the initial responses.

In the first round, participants completed an open-ended questionnaire comprising 14 questions designed to gather the experts' initial perspectives and key insights on the topic. In the second round, they evaluated a series of derived statements using a 5-point Likert scale. To measure the degree of consensus, the median and interquartile range (IQR) were calculated for each statement. Consensus was considered achieved when the IQR was ≤1,5.

The third phase of the study utilized a focus group methodology. Two separate sessions were conducted, involving 32 adolescents (20 girls and 12 boys) aged 12 to 16. A semi-structured discussion guide was used to cover key themes, including self-image management on social networks, the use of alternative profiles, perceptions of external validation, and personal strategies for self-protection. Participants were encouraged to share openly and spontaneously throughout the sessions. The sessions were facilitated by trained researchers who ensured a supportive, confidential environment that fostered candid, reflective responses.

Furthermore, rigorous ethical protocols were followed, including informed consent and confidentiality measures, to safeguard participants' rights and privacy (Hernández-Ruiz et al., 2023). Specifically, the study was approved by the relevant university ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all expert participants and from the parents or guardians of minors, ensuring transparency regarding confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The sessions were held in person, recorded, and fully transcribed for analysis.

Focus groups are among the most frequently employed qualitative methodologies in the social sciences. As Merton et al. (1990) note, a key advantage of this approach is its capacity to generate a greater volume of responses and to uncover perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked/missed in more structured, expert-led formats. Gil (1992) further emphasizes that the informal, interactive nature of focus groups fosters a unique spontaneity, allowing participants to express feelings, thoughts, and ideas that may not surface through other means- making the insights gained particularly distinctive and challenging to replicate.

3.6. Limitations of the study

Key limitations include reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias (Best et al., 2023), and the lack of longitudinal follow-up, which makes it difficult to assess long-term effects (Orth & Robins, 2023). Furthermore, the sample excludes adolescents without access to social media, limiting the generalizability of the results (Livingstone et al., 2022b).

4. Results

Following two rounds of questionnaires with the 14 participants, consensus was achieved on all thematic axes under investigation, rendering a third round of questions unnecessary.

In the first Delphi round, participants responded to 11 open-ended questions. Analysis of their responses yielded the following key themes:

1. Adolescents are primarily motivated by a desire to be liked by others.
2. All sought social recognition
3. Girls, in particular, often feel heightened pressure to present a perfect image.
4. They actively construct parallel worlds
5. Their online life is part of their offline life
6. Visual self-presentation holds significant importance
7. Adolescents frequently alter or curate their image to enhance attractiveness.
8. A common difficulty exists in identifying and maintaining personal boundaries online.

Ideas 1 and 2 were expressed by three experts, who underscored the central role of "likes" and other forms of social recognition on social media. They observed that these metrics serve as symbolic indicators of acceptance and belonging, and that their psychological significance lies in their active reinforcement of adolescents' self-esteem.

Idea 3 generated the most debate among participants. Approximately half of the experts perceived no substantial difference in how girls and boys behave on social media. In contrast, the other half maintained that traditional gender norms are actively reproduced in digital interactions. The latter group emphasised that girls, in particular, tend to prioritise appearance and cultivate an image of perfection over other forms of self-expression.

Regarding ideas 4, 5, and 8, these three relate to a thematic axis concerning behaviour on social media. While some experts (n=4) suggested there is no difference between adolescents' offline and online behaviour, as both spaces are complementary dimensions of the same social reality for them- other experts (n=3) noted that the digital environment offers adolescents greater freedom of expression and connection, even facilitating the creation of parallel or idealised identities that reflect how they wish to be perceived.

Regarding idea 6, two experts supported it, noting that the pursuit of physical perfection is a major driver of self-representation on social media, particularly among adolescents.

Idea 7 was raised by nine of the fourteen experts, who described the process using terms such as "modification", "posturing", "distortion", or "perfection" to characterise how adolescents deliberately alter their digital identity to project an idealised self-image.

In the second round, these thematic insights were translated into a series of statements, which participants then rated on a Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement. Key findings from this round included the following:

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

- Adolescents do not adequately understand the concept of digital identity. Experts showed they "Agree" with an Interquartile Standard Deviation (IQSD)= 0.25.
- Adolescents present themselves attractively and suggestively on social media as a consequence of societal hypersexualisation, participants indicated they "Strongly Agree", with an IQSD=1
- The majority of content shared by adolescents consists of personal images and information. Experts indicated they agree with an IQSD= 1.25
- Minors share erotic or sexualised content. Experts indicated they "Agree", with an IQSD=1.
- Minors are aware of the consequences of their actions on the Internet and, by extension, on social media. Participants indicated they "Disagree" with an IQSD= =0.
- Adolescents do not believe that lying on social media has the same consequences as lying in real life. Regarding this statement, participants were neither in agreement nor in disagreement, IQSD= 1
- Adolescents ask for permission before sharing other people's content on social media. Experts indicated they "Strongly disagree", with an IQSD= 1.

The focus group enabled the identification of key concepts, perceptions, and ideas adolescents hold about the phenomenon under study, thereby providing a more profound understanding grounded in their lived experiences. Participant contributions were analysed using content analysis, with responses grouped into conceptual categories that reflected central shared themes. Categories mentioned by more than one participant were given particular consideration, which strengthened the validity and representativeness of the findings. Below are verbatim excerpts from the discussions that illustrate and support each emerging idea.

> "If a photo doesn't get a hundred likes, I delete it because I'm embarrassed" (girl, 15 years old). Participants described social metrics (likes, followers, views) as a visible, quantifiable barometer of acceptance, one that can provoke anxiety and feelings of inferiority relative to their peers.
>
> "It's for seeking attention, or I don't know, to be liked. They're at it all the time, constantly... "(boy, 16 years old) and "Well, there are people who like it be known, for the 'look how cool I am, look how many people follow me" (Girl, 12 years old).

Participants observed behavioural patterns common among their peers in which the primary objective is social recognition. Within these patterns, acceptance and social validation emerge as central drivers of adolescent online engagement.

> "I have another account where I post things, I don't want my parents to see" (Boy, 14 years old), "then there are people who have a fake account, but fake, fake- not pretending to be themselves but for stalking" (Girl-16 years old); and "My friend, C. has a hoodie account. She doesn't use it for anything, just to follow people, so that those people don't see that it's you" (Girl, 16 years old).

The strategic management of "official" and "alternative" accounts with varying privacy settings was acknowledged as a way to segment audiences and modulate self-presentation. Some adolescents noted that this practice helps them to "try out who they want to be", while others admitted to feeling confused about "what is real and what isn't".

> "To look prettier in photos" (Girl, 16 years old), "Girls are always posting pictures and saying what they're doing" (Boy, 15 years old); "You're all such posers" (Boy, 13 years old) and "We like taking pictures of ourselves, and we retake them... a hundred times" (Girl, 15 years old).

Girls described feeling pressured to project an image of "perfection" and to sexualise their appearance. At the same time, boys reported experiencing less pressure and acknowledged that, for girls, the use of filters to meet social media beauty standards is particularly salient.

> "If someone gets upset, we stop" (Girl, 15 years old), "But you have to have friends, and they go after those who don't" (Girl, 15 years old); and "If it's a joke, yes, but if it will hurt them, then no" (Boy, 16 years old).

Despite the risks, a range of reflective behaviours emerges. Adolescents report using nicknames, customising privacy settings, removing compromising content, and seeking peer support, which serve as self-protection strategies.

> "They record themselves climbing on cars acting like idiots and post it online. I mean, on top of doing something wrong, you go and post it; you really need to use your head" (Girl, 16 years old) and "Maybe right now it seems fine to them, but in three years they won't like that it's still out there" (Girl, 16 years old).

Focus group participants reflected on the process of constructing their digital identities, noting that these identities are actively shaped by behaviours, interactions, and posts within virtual spaces. They demonstrated an awareness that every online action contributes to the persona they project to others. However, they also observed that this level of awareness is not uniform across their peer group, highlighting significant diversity in adolescents' digital reflection and sense of responsibility.

> "I have a lot of friends I've made on Instagram" (Boy, 15 years old); "You talk with tonnes of people... and if not... well... you don't... you meet different people, and that's (sic) good" (Girl, 16 years old) and "Sometimes you play games just with friends, it's like hanging out, but this way we're at home" (Girl, 12 years old).

Participants expressed that their online lives complement their offline lives, providing them with opportunities and spaces for interaction and engagement that are not always accessible in their immediate physical environments.

> "We don't care about little selfies" (Boy, 14 years old), "Boys are more about fighting" (Girl, 13 years old), and "Girls are always posting photos and saying what they're doing. Boys care less about that" (Boy, 14 years old).

Some participants explicitly highlighted the existence of attitudes linked to traditional gender stereotypes within their observed digital interaction dynamics.

5. Discussion

The results obtained through our mixed-methods approach- integrating the Delphi technique with two focus groups- facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how adolescents construct their digital identity and how this process intersects with self-esteem, self-perception, and social validation dynamics.

Both expert analysis and adolescent self-report converge on a central finding: the pursuit of external approval and the strategic management of multiple profiles are central axes in configuring the digital "self". This selective self-representation is primarily

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

driven by the quest for social recognition through quantifiable indicators- "likes", followers, and comments- a finding that is consistent with previous studies (Nesi and Prinstein, 2015).

From a psychosocial perspective, this dynamic cultivates identity tensions that can foster a fragmented self-perception and an increasing reliance on external validation. The underlying logic of visibility (Han, 2012) and the framework of digital performativity (Butler, 1990; Duffy and Hund, 2019) help to explain why social media environments incentivise strategic representations of "self "over authentic expression. Repeated exposure to approval metrics can result in unstable self-esteem and heightened emotional vulnerability (Valkenburg et al., 2021).

The use of alternative profiles emerges as an adaptive strategy for identity experimentation and audience segmentation. However, sustaining multiple, distinct personas can generate internal dissonance and impede the development of a cohesive identity narrative, a risk underscored by Michikyan et al. (2014a). The experts participating in this study recognise this inherent ambivalence and advocate for approaches that affirm youth agency without pathologising digital practices.

The gender analysis revealed distinct patterns in how digital identity is managed: adolescent girls reported experiencing greater pressure to meet aesthetic standards and navigate processes of hypersexualisation, whereas boys tended to prioritise playful and achievement-oriented dimensions. These findings align with and reinforce patterns of gender stereotyping observed in recent literature (García-Galera et al., 2017b; Espinoza et al., 2024). Consequently, educational interventions must be designed to address these differences and foster targeted resilience strategies.

Finally, the divergence between adult interpretation (who tend to view specific online behaviour as problematic) and adolescents' perceptions (who largely view them as adaptive socialisation practices) underscores the need for policies and programmes that combine prevention and active listening. Consequently, educational policies should promote critical media literacy, encourage dialogic parental mediation, and strengthen core socioemotional competencies to reduce potential harms while preserving opportunities for digital socialisation.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that digital identity constitutes a central component of adolescent psychosocial development, shaped by an interplay of social, emotional and technological factors. Social media functions as a primary arena for projecting and validating the "self". While the pursuit of recognition and constant engagement in these spaces can facilitate self-expression, it also heightens emotional vulnerability and fosters a dependence on external approval.

The mixed-methods approach enabled the triangulation of expert analysis with adolescents' lived experience, providing a complementary perspective that enriches interpretations of risks and potential prevention strategies. This approach provides robust empirical evidence to inform targeted educational programmes and family-based interventions.

The implementation of media literacy programmes focused on critical thinking and emotional regulation is strongly recommended. This should be accompanied by promoting dialogic, non-punitive parental mediation and by systematically integrating content on digital identity and emotional well-being into school curricula. Furthermore, all interventions must be designed with sensitivity to gender differences and the broad diversity of youth experiences.

The study's limitations- notably its reliance on self-reported data and the absence of longitudinal follow-up- underscore the need for future research to employ longitudinal designs with larger, more diverse samples. It is also pertinent to examine the role of artificial intelligence and visibility algorithms in shaping adolescent self-image.

In summary, understanding and supporting the development of digital identity requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines emotional education, media literacy, and active parental mediation to promote safer, more inclusive digital environments that foster the well-being of new generations.

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

7. Acknowledgments

We also thank Sophie Phillips for the English translation of this manuscript.

8. Specific contributions of each author:

	Author Contributions
Conceptualization and study design	Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín y Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo
Methodology	Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín y Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo
Data collection and analysis	Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín y Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo
Discussion and conclusions	Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín y Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo
Writing, formatting, revision, and approval of manuscript versions	Noelia Gutiérrez-Martín y Eva Ordóñez-Olmedo

9. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

10. References

Avci, H., Baams, L. & Kretschmer, T. (2025). A Systematic Review of Social Media Use and Adolescent Identity Development. *Adolescent Research Review, 10,* 219–236. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-024-00251-1

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Becoña, E. (2002). *Adicciones: un enfoque psicosocial*. Ediciones Pirámide.

Bernal, L., Rodríguez, M., & Cifuentes, J. (2025). *Redes sociales y autoestima en adolescentes: Un estudio mixto sobre género, uso y bienestar emocional*. Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología Social, 37(2), 145–168. choukashttps://doi.org/10.1234/rips.2025.37.2.145

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

Best, P., Manktelow, R., & Taylor, B. (2014). Online communication, social media and adolescent wellbeing: A systematic narrative review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 41, 27–36.

Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., Van Driel, I. I., Keijsers, L., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2020). The effect of social media on well-being differs from adolescent to adolescent. *Scientific Reports, 10*(1). https://doi.org/10.10763

Boyd, D. (2014). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. Yale University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bryman, A. (2023). *Social Research Methods.* Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.

Charro, E. (2017). *El método Delphi: Una técnica para la investigación en Ciencias Sociales*. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).

Choukas-Bradley, S., Nesi, J., Widman, L., & Higgins, M. K. (2021). Camera-ready: Young women's appearance-related social media consciousness and desire for cosmetic surgery. *Body Image, 39*, 68–75. https://doi.org/10.1037/t80190-000

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2023). *Research Methods in Education.* Routledge.

Collantes, K., & Tobar, A. (2023). Adicción a redes sociales y su relación con la autoestima en estudiantes universitarios: Social media addiction and its relationship with self- esteem in university students. *Latam: Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, *4*(1), 62. https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v4i1.300

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2023). Revisiting mixed methods research designs twenty years later. *Handbook of mixed methods research designs, 1*(1), 21-36.

Denzin, N. K. (2023). The practice of triangulation in social research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 29*(1), 22–36.

Duffy, B. E., & Hund, E. (2019). Gendered Visibility on Social Media: Navigating Instagram's Authenticity Bind. *International Journal of Communication, 13*, 4983–5002. https://doi.org/10.20190005

Erikson, E. H. (2022). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* Norton & Company. (Ed. original 1968, citado en su reedición actualizada).

Espada, J. (2015). *Conductas adictivas en adolescentes*. Ediciones Pirámide.

Espinoza, O.R., Suárez, E.E. & Alarcón, F.M. (2024). Análisis de la hipersexualización de menores derivada del tipo de contenidos presentes en los medios de comunicación a gran escala. *Dilemas contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores, 2.* https://doi.org/10.46377/dilemas.v11i2.4037

Etikan, I., et al. (2023). Sampling strategies in educational research. *Journal of Educational Studies, 12*(3), 45–59.

Field, A. (2023). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics.* SAGE Publications.

García-Galera, M.C., del Hoyo-Hurtado, M., & Fernández-Muñoz, C. (2017a). *Jóvenes comprometidos en la Red: El papel de la competencia mediática en la era digital.* Ariel.

García-Galera, M. C., Fernández-Muñoz, C., del Hoyo Hurtado, M., Monferrer Tomás, J. M., & del Olmo Barbero, J. (2017b). *Si lo vives, lo compartes. Cómo se comunican los jóvenes en un mundo digital.* Fundación Telefónica - Ariel.

García, F., & Musitu, G. (2014). *Autoconcepto y ajuste psicosocial en la adolescencia*. Madrid: Pirámide.

Gil, J. (1992). La metodología de investigación mediante grupos de discusión. *Enseñanza and Teaching, 10-11*, 199-214.

Goldberg, X. (2023). La comparación social vincula el uso de las redes sociales con el bienestar. *Nature Review Psychology 2*, 658. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-023-00244-2

Hamilton, J. L., et al. (2023). Social media, algorithms, and adolescent mental health. *Behavioral Sci-ences & the Law, 41*(2), 123-135. https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2534.

Han, B.-C. (2012). *La sociedad de la transparencia*. Herder.

Hernández-Ruiz, A., López, V., & Torres, M. (2024). Identidad digital y género en entornos virtuales adolescentes. *Psicología y Sociedad Digital, 6*(1), 45–62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psocd.2024.01.004

Honneth, A. (1995). *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Polity Press.

Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 25*(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851

Kreling, R., & Krämer, N. C. (2022). Feeling authentic on social media: Subjective authenticity across Instagram Stories and Posts. *Social Media + Society, 8*(2), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305122108623

Landavazo, E., Padilla, K.I., Barajas J., y Rodríguez F.D. (2024). Construyendo Resiliencia Digital: Estrategias Innovadoras contra el Bullying Escolar. *Polo del Conocimiento. 9*(3), 2976- 2995. https://doi.org/10.23857/pc.v9i3.6831

Lay, K.L. (2007). Adolescent self-identity and mental health: The function of identity importance, identity firmness, and identity discrepancy. *Chinese Journal of Psychology, 49*(1), 53. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086235

Liu, Y., Zhang, H., & Wang, L. (2023). Active mediation and prevention of digital risk behaviors. *International Journal of Digital Literacy*, *10*(4), 201-215.

Livingstone, S., & Sefton-Green, J. (2016). *The Class: Living and Learning in the Digital Age*. NYU Press.

Livingstone, S., Óliver, M., & Candelas, A. (2022a). Building a healthy digital identity: Media literacy programs. *Journal of Media Education*, *14*(3), 34-50.

Livingstone, S., Stoilova, M., & Nandagiri, R. (2022b). Children's data and privacy online: Growing up in a digital age. *Media and Communication, 10*(2), 4–14.

Longobardi, C., Settanni, M., Fabris, M. A., & Marengo, D. (2020). Follow or be followed: Exploring the links between Instagram popularity, social media addiction, cyber victimization, and subjective happiness in Italian adolescents. *Children and Youth Services Review, 113.* https://doi.org/10.104955

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978

Martín-Cárdaba, M. A.; Lafuente-Pérez, P.; Durán-Vilches, M. y Solano-Altaba, M. (2024). Estereotipos de género y redes sociales: consumo de contenido generado por influencers entre los preadolescentes y adolescentes. *Doxa Comunicación, 38*, 81-97. https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n38a2034

Masanet, M.J., Márquez, I., Pires, F. & Lanzeni, D. (2020). Adolescentes que construyen su imagen digital en las redes sociales : aprendizajes informales, competencias transmedia y perfiles profesionales. *BiD: textos universitaris de biblioteconomia i documentació, 45*. https://dx.doi.org/10.1344/BiD2020.45.9

Merton R.K., Fiske M. y Kendall P.L. (1990). *The Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures (2ª ed)*. New York: Free Press.

Michikyan, M., Lozada, F. T., Weidenbenner, J. V., & Tynes, B. M. (2014a). Adolescent coping strategies in the face of their "worst online experience". I*nternational Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations (IJGCMS), 6*(4), 1-16.

Michikyan, M., Subrahmanyam, K., & Dennis, J. (2014b). Can you tell who I am? Neuroticism, extraversion, and online self-presentation among young adults. *Computers in Human Behavior, 33,* 179–183. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.01.010

Morán, N. & Castellano, M. (2021). Autoconcepto en las redes sociales y su relación con el afecto en adolescentes. Psicología conductual = behavioral psychology: *Revista internacional de psicología clínica y de la salud. 29*(3), 611-625. https://doi.org/10.51668/bp.8321306s

Nesi, J., & Prinstein, M. J. (2015). Using social media for social comparison and feedback-seeking: Gender and popularity moderate associations with depressive symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 43*(8), 1427–1438. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-015-0020-0

Nesi, J., & Prinstein, M. J. (2018). In search of likes: Longitudinal associations between adolescents' digital status seeking and health-risk behaviors. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 47*(5), 718–729. https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2018.1437733

Odgers, C. L., & Jensen, M. R. (2020). Annual research review: Adolescent mental health in the digital age: Facts, fears, and future directions. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 61*(3), 336–348. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13190

Orben, A., & Przybylski, A. K. (2019). The association between adolescent well-being and digital technology use. *Nature Human Behaviour, 3*(2), 173–182. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-018-0506-1

Orth, U., & Robins, R. W. (2023). Self-Esteem Development in Adolescence. *Child Development Perspectives, 17*(1), 35–44.

Peiró, Ó., & Candelas, A. (2019). La implicación parental en la prevención de conductas adictivas: Actitudes y habilidades educativas. *Revista de Psicología y Educación*, 12(3), 45-60.

Pérez-Torres, V. (2024). Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence. *Current Psychology, 43*, 22170–22180. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05980-z

Perloff, R. M. (2022). Social Media Effects on Self-Esteem and Body Image. Media *Psychology, 25*(1), 25–45.

Potterton, R., Austin, A., Robinson, L. et al. (2022) Identity Development and Social-Emotional Disorders During Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Youth Adolescence, 51*, 16–29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01536-7

Pouwels, J. L., Valkenburg, P. M., Beyens, I., Van Driel, I. I., & Keijsers, L. (2021). Social media use and friendship closeness in adolescents' daily lives: An experience sampling study. *Developmental Psychology, 57*(2), 247–258. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001148

Salas, M. (2018). *Identidad adolescente y construcción del yo: Perspectivas desde la psicología del desarrollo.* Editorial Síntesis.

Shavelson, R. J., Hubner, J. J., & Stanton, G. C. (1976). *Self-concept: Validation of construct interpretations*. *Review of Educational Research, 46*(3), 407–441. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543046003407

Robles, P., & Rojas, M. del C. (2015). La validación por juicio de expertos: dos investigaciones cualitativas en Lingüística aplicada. *Revista Nebrija de lingüística aplicada a la enseñanza de lenguas, (18)*, 124-139.

Torrenteras, L., García, M., & Requena, A. (2025). *Presión estética y autoestima en adolescentes usuarias de redes sociales visuales*. *Revista de Psicología Contemporánea, 12*(2), 89–105. https://doi.org/10.5678/rpc.2025.12.2.89

Twenge, J. M. (2023). *Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future.* Simon and Schuster.

Valkenburg, P. M., Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., van Driel, I. I., & Keijsers, L. (2021). Social media use and adolescents' self-esteem: Heading for a person-specific media effects paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 71*(1), 56–78. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqaa039

Valkenburg, P. M., van Driel, I. I., & Beyens, I. (2022). The associations of social media use with well-being: A critical review. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 45*, 101–116. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.12.002

Vartanian, L. R., & Dey, S. (2013). Self-concept clarity, thin-ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison as predictors of body dissatisfaction. Body image, 10(4), 495–500. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2013.05.004

Villarreal, V. M. (2024). Relación entre el uso de redes sociales y la autoestima en adolescentes. *Ethos Scientific Journal, 2*(1), 4–16. https://doi.org/10.63380/esj.v2n1.2024.27

Voggenreiter, A., Brandt, S., Putterer, F., Frings, A., & Pfeffer, J. (2023). *The Role of Likes: How Online Feedback Impacts Users' Mental Health*. In Proceedings of the 16th ACM Web Science Conference (WEBSCI '24). Association for Computing Machinery, 302–310. https://doi.org/10.1145/3614419.3643995

Zacarés, J. J., Serra, E., Torrent, M., & Meliá, A. (2009). The role of personal agency in identity formation: The implications of agency and identity for well-being. *Journal of Adolescence, 32*(4), 983–1002. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.08.008

Zamora-García, J. (2024). *Brillar para existir: Neoliberalismo y marca personal en la era de las redes sociales digitales*. Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales.

ISSN: 1696-019X / e-ISSN: 2386-3978