

OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY

Cristóbal Fernández Muñoz,
Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

REVIEWED BY

Francisco Manuel Morales Rodríguez,
University of Granada, Spain
Alla Polyagina,
Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny
Novgorod, Russia

*CORRESPONDENCE

José Palacios Ramírez
✉ j.palacios@umh.es

RECEIVED 26 September 2025

REVISED 30 October 2025

ACCEPTED 05 November 2025

PUBLISHED 21 November 2025

CITATION

Palacios Ramírez J, Rodes García J and
Nogués Pedregal AM (2025) 'Control is up to
me': youth narratives on the problematic use
of ICTs.

Front. Hum. Dyn. 7:1713744.

doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2025.1713744

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Palacios Ramírez, Rodes García and
Nogués Pedregal. This is an open-access
article distributed under the terms of the
[Creative Commons Attribution License](#)
(CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction
in other forums is permitted, provided the
original author(s) and the copyright owner(s)
are credited and that the original publication
in this journal is cited, in accordance with
accepted academic practice. No use,
distribution or reproduction is permitted
which does not comply with these terms.

'Control is up to me': youth narratives on the problematic use of ICTs

José Palacios Ramírez^{1*}, Joaquín Rodes García² and
Antonio M. Nogués Pedregal¹

¹Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Miguel Hernández University, Elche, Spain,

²Department of Education, Catholic University of Murcia, Murcia, Spain

Introduction: Scientists and social planners have stressed that the use of ICTs by young people may result in risky and addictive behaviours. Research on this topic tends to correlate psychological variables and time use metrics from a clinical perspective. This paper suggests a sociocultural approach to deepen the understanding of the problematic ICT use, as perceived by young people.

Methods: Combination of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with young people living in a Spanish city was used to study the point of view of youth.

Results: Results point to the problematic use of ICTs as part of youth culture in a digitalised society. Informants are consciously aware of negative effects of ICTs on their own day to day life. It is observed that their narratives are structured by an addiction terminology, while society is depicted as digitalised and the use of ICTs as innate among younger generations.

Discussion: Moreover, this study suggests that young people are more inclined towards self-management of digital risks, as the narratives collected focus mostly on individual responsibility and self-learning. These findings help to expand empirical evidence on individuals' management of digital risk while calling into question stereotyped views of youth, either as digital natives or addicts. The conclusion is that a community-based approach is needed to address problematic ICT use.

KEYWORDS

information and communication technologies, problematic use, digitalisation, youth culture, narratives

1 Sociocultural approach to youth problematic use of ICTs

Opportunities and risks in youth internet use haven been well established in the last decades (Guan and Subrahmanyam, 2009). Studies have provided important information on risk behaviours, including cyber bullying (Mishna et al., 2009), interaction with online strangers (Cernikova et al., 2018), internet gaming disorder (Yoon et al., 2024) or grooming (Wood and Wheatcroft, 2020), among others. From a literature review, internet use among adolescents is seen through different categories such as Compulsive internet use, Internet addiction, Online game addiction or Pathological video game use (Anderson et al., 2017). The term 'problematic use' is used to highlight the negative effects of the internet without pathologising youth behaviour (Kiss et al., 2020). Addiction is defined as a dysfunctional craving related to psychosocial and functional impairments (Kuss and Pontes, 2018).

Broadly speaking, there is the perception that excessive ICT use can impact individuals in the form of depressive moods, anxiety, loneliness or low self-esteem. As a result, an approach has been promoted to measure the detrimental use of ICTs aims to discover the associated

variables. More specifically, scientists point to personality characteristics (Guglielmucci et al., 2017), psychological problems (Méndez et al., 2020), drugs and alcohol consumption (Muñoz-Miralles et al., 2016), or level of parental control (Gómez et al., 2017). From a socio-demographic perspective, younger males with lower levels of education and poorer academic results are the most vulnerable group (Gjoneska et al., 2022).

While ICTs are considered to shape youth lifestyles (Palacios et al., 2020), social and cultural explanations are lacking (Ryding and Kaye, 2018). Beyond time use metrics and related psychological factors, addressing problematic ICT use in the light of the sociocultural theory on risk provides a framework for deeper understanding. Following Lupton, risk cannot be isolated from its context (Lupton, 1999). It is socially defined, and it also has a social function. More recently, attention has focused on how digitisation intersects with risk representations and practices in the so-called digital risk society (Lupton, 2016). Addiction, cyberbullying, less developed social skills or health problems are linked to digital technology as mediator and generator of risk.

Risk-society theorists focus on the fact that trust in science and technology has been lost in contemporary society (Beck, 1992). Modern institutions are seen as risk producers, and therefore modernity is described in terms of scientific risks and technological hazards (Beck et al., 1994). One parameter of the so-called risk society is the reflexive orientation to risk. Not only the proliferation of risk definitions, but also interpretations and understandings (Ekberg, 2007). Individualisation in reflexive modernity entails that individuals have lost the security provided by tradition and are thus forced to choose their identity, social networks and lifestyles (Giddens, 1999). Consequently, in contemporary society risk is defined in terms of a consequence of freedom and choice. This emphasis on individuals' practices and perceptions is shared by theorists interested in governance in contemporary neoliberalism. This consist of discourses and expert knowledges that draw attention to individual responsibility in managing risk as a form of self-discipline and control of individuals (Rose, 1999). According to this dominant view, risky behaviours among the youth are analysed in terms of individuals' responses to the need to develop their own identity on the path to adulthood. Le Breton states that excessive focus on an activity, for instance, internet use, would provide stability when uncertainty affects identity and social relationships (Le Breton, 2015).

Douglas and Wildavsky stress that perception of risk and risk acceptance are collective constructs (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982), according to social organisation and its shared values and beliefs on which people base their judgements. So social groups are willing to accept or avoid specific risks, highlighting some of them while ignore others. This leads to a culture of risk that changes according to the social position of individuals. This point of view leads to a constructionist approach to risk (Douglas, 1985) that highlights specific processes involved in the perception of risk as well as specific contexts for data collection. In this connection, risk cultures deal with reflexive communities, shared symbols and values (Lash, 2000). More specifically, Sutton suggests considering digital harm and addiction as a social phenomenon to focus, beyond a clinical point of view, on how digital uses interact with the values of social groups and how these uses can be perceived to be harmful (Sutton, 2020).

2 Youth perceptions towards ICTs

Over the years, the debate on the impact of ICTs has centred on two major standpoints (Giddens and Sutton, 2010). The positive one is focused on terms such as democracy or people's empowerment as a result of guaranteed access to information (McLuhan and Powers, 1992; Morozov, 2013). Essentially, the use of the internet is seen as explanatory of people's life satisfaction (Castells, 2024). While digital literacy is understood as a tool that empowers people and is linked to overall well-being (Foster et al., 2024; Machackova et al., 2024). The negative one highlights that ICTs have a dark side (Townsend, 2017) leading up to weaker community ties and more fragmented identities while the everyday life of individuals is increasingly monitored (Han, 2021). With regard to young people, there is a technological determinism summarised as new possibilities versus superficiality and lack of authenticity, both of which are linked to the new media (Buckingham, 2013). Vickery stresses that the prevalence of 'harm-driven expectations' results in the perception of youth as passive victims in their engagement with technology (Vickery, 2017). At the other end, terms such as digital natives (Prensky, 2001) or network generation (Tapscott, 2008) present young people as speakers of digital languages and successfully connected to others worldwide.

Within youth studies, literature focuses on ICTs to explain their culture (Feixa et al., 2016). Having grown up in a digital culture (Tapscott, 2008), they are said to share a significant cultural framework, defined by virtual time/simultaneity, mobility across social identities and spaces and the network as a social structure for socialisation (Feixa, 2014). In fact, there is a well established body of literature that analyses youth perceptions. Broadly speaking, research shows that young people share an ambivalent discourse when assessing the role played by ICTs in society and in their daily life. Their narratives mix both positive and negative views. In this vein, discourses of freedom and of necessity have been observed (Calderón Gómez, 2021). Youth online attitudes are defined as complex, in terms of a constant controversy between balancing opportunity and risk (Gaspard, 2020).

With regard to youth perceptions, issues covered by scientists range from cyber bullying (Mishna et al., 2009), weight control behaviours (Park and Lee, 2017), or technology-based communication with parents (Racz et al., 2017) to self-assessment of digital skills and gaming (Aranda Juárez et al., 2020). According to the existing literature, there are several factors that explain youth attitudes towards online risks. Risk is mostly defined in terms of their inability to control their online time (Torrijos-Fincias et al., 2021). At the same time, young people report that people are not aware of the effects of digital addiction because being constantly connected through digital devices is a social norm (Turner et al., 2021). In this sense, young people consider online risk as a routine part of their Internet activities (Bryce and Fraser, 2013). Consequently, adolescents generally tend to deal with online risks and negative experiences without consulting anybody (Vandoninck et al., 2010).

Research centres focused on youth and adolescence have observed that younger interviewees and males show the lowest concern levels about online risks (Megías, 2024). Current research points to age as a variable to understand how risk is perceived and managed, as older informants are more likely to protect their privacy and select the people with whom they interact (Torrijos-Fincias et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been observed that problematic behaviours on the

Internet are influenced by the perceptions and practices of their peers (Baumgartner et al., 2011). When gender differences are considered as factors explaining risky online behaviour, research findings highlight that family factors are more closely associated with girls' behaviour, whereas boys are more influenced by the subjective norms of their peers (Sasson and Mesch, 2016). Furthermore, it is concluded that parental mediation in the use of ICTs is a protective factor against risky online behaviour among adolescents (Gervilla-García et al., 2023). As evidence, youth risk perceptions and risk-taking are related to parental mediation practices (Dedkova and Mýlek, 2023). More specifically, it has been observed that parental attitudes differ according to digital divide variables such as age, education and place of residence (Álvarez et al., 2013).

Threats and psychological distress related to being connected to the Internet are salient themes in qualitative studies that show young people critically reflecting on their ICT use. Feelings of addiction have been reported in group discussions with young people, especially if social media use or technological possibilities are treated (Adorjan and Ricciardelli, 2021). In this field of research, smartphones are easily mentioned as addictive (Mostyn Sullivan et al., 2024). Although informants acknowledge that ICT use has a negative effect on their lives, they go so far as to compare a world without the internet to the apocalypse (Özparlak et al., 2023).

3 Sources and methodology

The empirical data is drawn from a research project carried out between 2019 and 2022 that focuses on young people's use of ICTs from a social and cultural point of view. Quantitative and qualitative methods were both used. A total of 431 questionnaires were distributed and only individuals aged between 15 and 29 years were included in the study. This age criterion conforms to international definitions and current research on youth (Xi, 2016). The survey fieldwork was conducted in Murcia, the capital city of a south-eastern Spanish region during the COVID-19 pandemic. Informants were approached on the street and encouraged to complete a self-administered questionnaire supervised by an interviewer. The choice of this strategy in the context of the pandemic resulted in a low response rate and a lengthy fieldwork (from December 2020 to February 2021). The freedom of movement and the gathering of groups in public spaces were both restricted. The sampling process was adapted to the distribution of the target group according to the Padrón Municipal de Habitantes (Local Population Register) and was completed when the initial quota by sex/age/ neighbourhood of residence were covered. Another sampling criterion was that the sample should not exceed the quota for foreign residents and the unemployed. In general, the sampling was adjusted to fit the quotas. However, the quotas for some small rural areas were not fully met (19 cases in total). One in 10 questionnaires collected by each interviewer were supervised by telephone. As a result of a review process, 20 questionnaires were rejected. The questionnaire was structured in three blocks: (1) Questions on the use of ICTs. (2) The Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS), selected as it has been recognised by academics and applied in different forms and languages to measure the problematic use of the Internet (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2019). (3) Socio-demographic questions. In order to ensure data comparability, some questionnaire items were based on studies carried out by

Spanish research centres, such as the Reina Sofía Centre for Adolescence and Youth, the Observatory for Drugs and Drug Addiction or the Sociological Research Centre. The sociodemographic profile of the informants is outlined in Table 1.

The quantitative analysis carried out in this study focuses on those items that explore the perception of respondents of ICT use and how they manage their use when they perceive it as detrimental. Moreover, the sample has been classified according to the scores collected to the CIUS scale (Table 2). This scale consists of 14 items on a 5-point Likert scale, from (0) Never to (4) Very often (producing a final score ranging

TABLE 1 Socio-demographic profile of the informants.

	N
Gender (N = 431)	
Male	222
Female	209
Age (N = 429)	
15–19	145
20–24	142
25–29	142
Study centre (N = 299)	
Private	49
Public	224
Private (state funded)	17
Do not know/ Do not answer	9
Type of job (N = 158)	
Full-time job	70
Part-time job	88
Current activity (N = 429)	
Mainly working	117
Mainly studying	274
Unemployed	38
People living in the same household (N = 428)	
I live on my own	21
I live with my partner	54
I live with my parents and family members	317
I share a flat	36
Highest educational level attained (N = 429)	
Primary education	133
Secondary education	203
Higher education	91
Do not know/ Do not answer	2
Income of the household (N = 429)	
Low income level	131
Middle income level	86
High income level	139
Do not know/ Do not answer	73

Authors' elaboration.

TABLE 2 CIUS scores of the respondents.

	N
CIUS scoring (N = 411)	
Low risk	208
Medium risk	155
High risk	48
Mean value	19.6
Standard Deviation	11.3
Median	18
Mode	14

Authors' elaboration.

from 0 to 56). It has been reported good stability across different samples and high internal consistency of the instrument (Meerkerk et al., 2009). The CIUS asks respondents whether they can control their Internet use and how it affects their mood and daily activities. According to youth surveys conducted by the Spanish National Plan on Drugs, a risk of compulsive use of the Internet is observed when participants score 28 points or higher. Instead of using a dichotomic category, three main groups were established according to the scores obtained. In line with other researchers that analysed CIUS results in several categories, this strategy aims to distinguish extreme groups (high/low score informants) within the sample. Díaz and Gómez-Torres (2019) use the following distribution to assess problematic internet use among secondary school students (Low Risk: CIUS<19, Risk: CIUS >18 AND <28, High Risk: CIUS = or > 28, and Very High Risk: IDQ = 0 > 5). Yong et al. (2017) establish three categories: 0–18; 19–37; 38–56. In this study, the high-risk group is composed by the interviewees who scored more than 34 (this value is the median from 28 and the highest score obtained, 54). The medium-risk group includes individuals scoring between 19 and 34. Finally, the low-risk group is composed of informants scoring between 0 and 18. A high level of response to the 14 CIUS scale items was collected within the sample under study (99–100% of cases). Table 2 shows the CIUS scores of the respondents while Table 3 shows the profile of the CIUS groups by gender and age.

At the end of the questionnaire respondents were asked to participate in the interview phase of the research. Even though nearly one quarter of respondents wrote down their contact information, the rate of volunteers was low. This could be due to several reasons, such as lack of remuneration, the post-pandemic context, or the time elapsed since the fieldwork. As a result of this process, 15 of the 24 interviews were obtained, and the rest of the sample was contacted by a snowball procedure with the interviewees. A call was also made via social media. The last group also completed the questionnaire. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and some interviews were conducted by videoconference at the request of the interviewees. The in-depth interviews were mainly concerned with the informants' everyday use of ICTs and their perceptions of ICTs and their own use. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the UCAM Ethics Committee (approval number CE072204). All the participants gave their informed consent to participate in the research. Table 4 describes the sample interviewed.

A thematic analysis was performed to identify recurring patterns of meaning across the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006), using a step-by-step process involving transcription, coding and conceptualisation

TABLE 3 Profile of the CIUS groups by gender and age.

	Low risk	Medium	High risk	Total
Gender				
Row %				
Male	49.3	39.3	11.4	211
Female	52.0	36.0	12.0	200
Age				
Row %				
15–19	35.5	44.0	20.6	141
20–24	49.6	42.1	8.3	133
25–29	67.6	26.5	5.9	136

Authors' elaboration.

(Naeem et al., 2023). The qualitative data were analysed using the MaxQDA software (version 4.01.2022). The analysis was structured as follows: exploration, text coding and relativisation (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Strauss, 1987). The coding system is the result of the joint work of the authors of this study (Kuckartz, 2014) and began in the form of broad content codes when a small sample of interviews was analysed. Codes such as self-regulation practices and perceptions towards ICTs proved to be of fundamental importance to the research. The former includes 56 coded fragments collected from 24 interviews (100% of the sample). The latter sums 58 coded fragments collected from 23 interviews (95.8% of the sample). In the narratives about the everyday use of ICTs, self-regulation strategies emerge as a significant code. The informants were mainly concerned about the use of smartphones and described experiences and feelings of abuse when they are online. The code 'perception of ICTs' has a cross-cutting nature, as the informants can reflect either on the design of ICTs and their impact on people's lives. The topics raised by the informants were addiction to ICTs, social media, personal feelings while online, conflicts between online and offline life, and social practices. Other significant codes initially established were overuse practices (63 coded fragments from 20 interviews, 83.3% of the sample), social media (54 coded fragments from 19 interviews, 79.2% of the sample) or the individual's perceptions of intensive use (52 coded fragments from 10 interviews, 41.7% of the sample).

Although the analysis was mainly deductive, some inductive codes emerged as a result of the word-level analysis. These codes allowed to assess the relationship between categories and improve the conceptual framework. The word cloud tool was used as an exploratory strategy to identify research keywords in the informants' discourse. Some inductive codes emerged during the analysis process. The word cloud tool was used as a first step to find keywords in the discourse of the informants. The word 'smartphone' (606) is followed by others such as 'social media' (216), 'Instagram' (184), 'technologies' (124), 'WhatsApp' (102), 'Internet' (90), 'problem' (81), 'YouTube' (80), 'TikTok' (61), and 'addiction' (57). These findings led to new codes that deepen the understanding of the perceptions and practices of respondents. By using the Maxdictio tool, a dictionary of related terms ('mobile', 'mobile phone', 'telephone') was created to generate the code 'smartphone'. This is by far the code with the highest number of coded fragments (311), including fragments from the 24 interviews analysed. Moreover, this code has a significant coincidence with the codes of 'overuse

TABLE 4 Participants in the research interview.

Code	Gender	Age	CIUS	Household	Activity
EC24 Julia	Female	25	High	Sharing	Studying
EC23 Verónica	Female	25	Low	On his/her own	Studying/working
EC22 Rafa	Male	28	Low	On his/her own	Working
EC21 Jordi	Male	23	Medium	Living with parents	Studying
EC20 Sabrina	Female	21	Medium	Living with parents	Studying
EC19 Raúl	Male	25	Medium	On his/her own	Working
EC18 María S.	Female	25	Medium	Living with parents	Studying
EC17 María B.	Female	28	Low	Living with parents	Preparing public competition
EC16 Jose D.	Male	25	Low	On his/her own	Studying
EC15 Jorge	Male	25	Medium	On his/her own	Working
EC14 Joaquín	Male	23	High	On his/her own	Studying/working
EC13 Iván	Male	23	Medium	Sharing	Studying
EC12 Ilen	Female	29	Medium	On his/her own	Working
EC11 Diana	Female	25	Medium	On his/her own	Working
EC10 Daniela	Female	22	High	Living with parents	Studying
EC09 Carla	Female	21	High	Living with parents	Studying
EC08 Basilio	Male	21	High	Living with parents	Working
EC07 Antonio	Male	19	High	Living with parents	Studying
EC06 Javier	Male	22	Medium	Living with parents	Studying
EC5 Alejandro	Male	22	Low	On his/her own	Studying
EC04 Marcelo	Male	18	High	Living with parents	Studying
EC03 Mariana	Female	23	Medium	Living with parents	Studying
EC02 Estefanía	Female	19	Low	Living with parents	Studying
EC01 Ignacio	Male	25	High	Living with parents	Working

Authors' elaboration.

practices' and 'self-regulation practices'. In fact, almost all the fragments present in both codes are also present in the 'smartphone' code. Finally, it is observed that respondents frequently mention the smartphone to explain their perceptions towards ICTs. The same analytical process was used to create the code 'language of addiction' (the expressions 'getting hooked on the smartphone', 'getting caught up in the loop', and 'staying glued to the screen' were selected as related terms). Focusing on how the fragments coded at this level relate to others, it is observed that the perceptions of interviewees towards ICTs and their own overuse practices are described in terms of addiction (Figure 1).

4 Results

4.1 Survey data

Table 5 shows respondents' opinions on the consequences of the use of ICTs. A total of 15 items were included in the questionnaire, asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement. The response options were organized on a scale as follows: strongly disagree, slightly agree, somewhat in agreement, quite agree, strongly agree.

The frequency analysis focused on the categories 'quite agree' and 'strongly agree' of each item. The percentage of cases obtained in each of these categories was added and is included in Table 4. It should be noted that those items that account for the majority of cases reflect a critical perception of ICTs, as they refer to risks and negative effects while questioning the benefits in terms of work or personal relationships. Firstly, 'Young people are more likely to develop an addiction' (83.3%). Secondly, 'Young people consume more' (83%). Thirdly, 'Young people are more exposed to risky situations (violation of privacy, bullying, identity theft, etc.)' (81.9%). Fourthly, 'Young people waste more time' (68.1%). At fifth and sixth places are ranked two items written in a positive manner that concentrate the lowest level of agreement (20%): 'Young people are better prepared for the labour market' and 'Young people relate more with their family and friends'. Another group of items reflects a more positive view of ICTs, showing a lower level of agreement compared to the first group of items. Here are included 'It is easier to make new friends' (60.6%), 'Daily life has become easier' (58.4%), 'Young people have more freedom' (56.2%), 'Young people have become more involved in social/political issues' (56.1%), 'Young people are more creative' (55.8%), 'It is easier to find a partner' (54%), 'Young people are better informed' (49.8%). The item 'Young people become more isolated' (59.6%) differs from the others

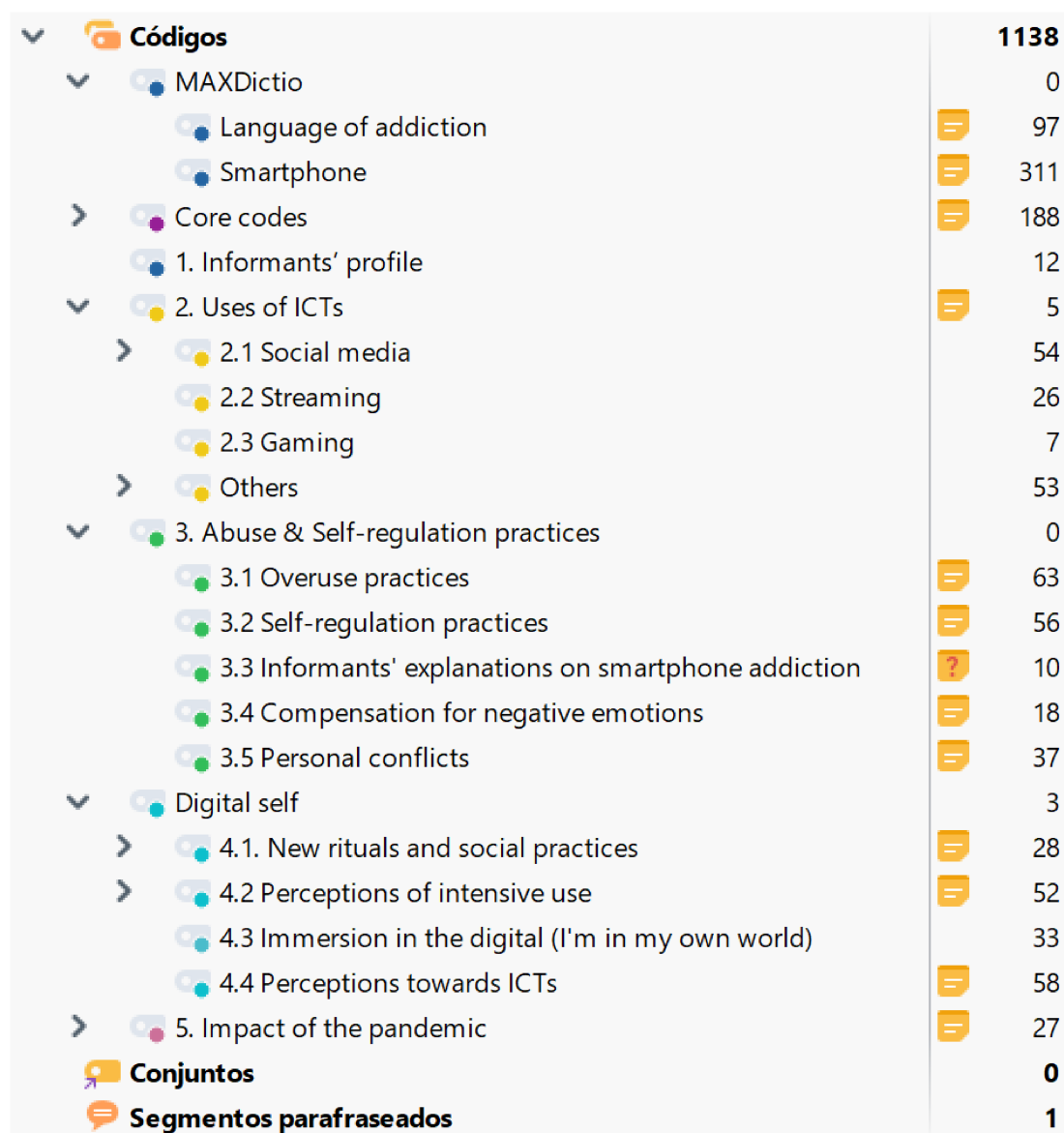


FIGURE 1
Qualitative research codes tree. Authors' elaboration.

as it means a negative view of ICTs. Finally, there is the item 'Inequalities between people have increased' (42.2%).

Additionally, the questionnaire asked informants to report whether their use of the internet for fun had increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were 332 valid cases that answered affirmatively (77.4%) and four out of 10 in this group (172 valid cases) stated that they felt that such use was detrimental to them. Table 6 shows how informants behave in response to this perception. Survey data show a mixed picture, since the responses obtained were equally distributed: those who reduce the time they spend on the Internet (33.7%), those who simply try to do so (33.7%), and those who do nothing (25.6%). A small group of interviewees stated that they had asked friends (1.7%) or their parents (1.2%) for help/advice, leaving them in the minority. None of the respondents declared that they had sought professional help.

4.2 We are born like this

In line with the survey data, the narratives of the respondents mix both positive and negative views on ICTs (Ballesteros et al., 2020). These are mentioned in terms of freedom, improved communication, participation and relationship possibilities. Beyond the enabling role of ICTs in everyday life, interviewees addressed the problematic use of ICTs in terms of overuse and its effects. In this regard, they mentioned issues related to self-esteem, pressure to fulfil social standards, low quality social relationships, lack of control over online contents or isolation. Related to this, social media is widely mentioned as a factor related to the psychological well-being of the participants (Yang et al., 2021). Julia reported being very attached to her smartphone because she felt the need to be constantly communicating. In her opinion, social media stimulates the need for approval and knowing what is going on.

TABLE 5 Level of agreement regarding the following statements in relation to the use of ICTs (Quite agree and strongly agree).

	%
Young people are more likely to develop an addiction (<i>N</i> = 430)	83.3
Young people consume more (<i>N</i> = 430)	83.0
Young people are more exposed to risky situations (<i>N</i> = 430)	81.9
Young people waste more time (<i>N</i> = 429).	68.1
It is easier to make new friends (<i>N</i> = 429)	60.6
Young people isolate themselves more (<i>N</i> = 431)	59.6
Daily life has become easier (<i>N</i> = 421)	58.4
Young people have more freedom (<i>N</i> = 431)	56.2
Young people have become more involved in social/political issues (<i>N</i> = 428)	56.1
Young people are more creative (<i>N</i> = 428)	55.8
It is easier to find a partner (<i>N</i> = 428)	54.0
Young people are better informed (<i>N</i> = 430)	49.8
Inequalities between people have increased (<i>N</i> = 429)	42.2
Young people relate more with their family and friends (<i>N</i> = 430)	20.0
Young people are better prepared for the labour market (<i>N</i> = 430)	20.0

Authors' elaboration.

TABLE 6 Faced with the feeling that using the Internet was detrimental to you, how did you try to resolve the situation?

	%
(<i>N</i> = 172)	
I have reduced the time I spend on the INTERNET	33.7
I have tried to reduce the time I spend on the INTERNET	33.7
I have asked my parents for help/advice	1.2
I have asked my friends for help/advice	1.7
I have done nothing	25.6
Another way	4.1

Authors' elaboration.

In her words, there is a relationship of slavery: 'People are hooked on that-on having their content liked, on constantly receiving messages of validation, that's how I feel. That's also why there was a time when I quit Instagram' EC24 Julia (high-risk group, 25 years old). In a similar way, other respondents mentioned social media in terms of a disadvantage to deepen personal relationships or a distraction from what is happening in their immediate environment. These findings are in line with other studies that found that young people perceive risks related to social media use (Ramos-Soler et al., 2018).

Interviewees are observed to engage in an in-depth discourse to address the problematic use of ICTs. Basically, they provide an explanation that ranges from technological design to individuals' behaviour. On the one hand, the narratives consist of a pessimistic view of technological development seen as potentially addictive (Puig, 2017). According to the interviewees' discourse, the design of ICTs appears to be innocent, but then they feel like trapped. Antonio, who reported excessive use of applications such as Instagram, TikTok or YouTube, stated that 'those who create these applications do it in a way that seems innocent, as if they were harmless, but in the end, out of curiosity, we try them and we get hooked' EC07 Antonio (high-risk group, 19 years old). On the other hand, respondents stated that the problematic use happens as social media becomes a tool for emotional self-regulation. It has been observed that low moods are associated to the use of ICTs, as over-use allows people to avoid personal problems. In this line, interviewees described a vicious circle of anxiety/depression and overuse of ICTs. Despite this, interviewees' reflection on the risks related to ICTs highlight the fact that people are not aware of their own detrimental use due to the digitalisation of life. Following Marcelo, the design and applications of ICTs have resulted in people staying connected most of the time. 'We do not see it so much because we do not blame ourselves so much, because it's so, so widespread, because everybody does it, maybe we do not get over it' EC04 Marcelo (high-risk group, 18 years old).

This study has found that the relationship of young people with ICTs can be described either in terms of negative feelings (sadness, guilt) or conflict between the virtual world and the real one (disturbance, disengagement), having an impact on family life or work performance. From the narratives collected, young people's opinions on ICTs are based on two main statements, which can be labelled as 'addiction' and 'digitalisation'. 'Addiction' summarises the fact that ICT use can be detrimental or lead young people to engage in risky behaviours. 'Being hooked' or 'getting caught in the loop' are expressions easily found in the narratives collected. However, these statements do not mean participants feel alarmed (de la Hoz, 2018), highlighting youth contradictory feelings towards ICTs (Hall and Baym, 2012).

'Digitalisation' highlights that ICTs play a key role in daily life. During the interviews, ICTs are mentioned in terms of day-to-day routine, with respondents stating that they felt they could not live without their smartphones. Digital devices are perceived almost as an extension of the body (Malikhao and Servaes, 2011). Raúl, who uses social media to promote his work, stated that 'it's like putting on pants' EC19 Raúl (medium-risk group, 25 years old). Participants assumed the risk regarding ICT use through narratives that naturalise the effects of ICTs on society and people's lives. There is a discourse that considers youth and ICTs to be a natural fit. The interviewees' views follow the main standpoints that describe young people as an always connected and multi-tasking generation whose identity and ways of expression is based on technology use (Taylor and Keeter, 2010). This result is in line with research that concludes that risk taking is not perceived as problematic by young people (Austen, 2009). Mariana approached digitalization and its effects from a generational point of view. She perceived youth as the most technologically skilled generation, as they have grown up in a digital environment. Risk and their management are thus seen as 'an ordinary matter' (Samoh et al., 2019). 'We were practically born with this, it's like part of our nature already, we do not think of a

world that did not exist, we can look on Google Maps how to get to a place or search for anything' EC03 Mariana (medium-risk group, 23 years old).

4.3 Control is up to me

In line with those studies that focus on smartphones to describe digital youth culture (Childs and Holland, 2024; Goggin, 2013), qualitative analysis confirmed that the smartphone stands out in the everyday life narratives of participants. In general terms, it is the device to use to access ICTs. More precisely, the tool they use to control that access. During this research fieldwork, smartphones were mostly mentioned to describe informants' typical day, from the moment they woke up to the last connection before falling asleep. For instance, Estefanía reported a wide range of daily uses: communicating, listening to music, watching series, searching the Internet, doing sports. She explained how picking up her smartphone activated her mind: 'When I wake up I'm almost always, I mean, I pick up my cell phone. It's like, immediately, my mind says "ping, I'm going to see if they have sent me a message," and it's already like I literally need to pick it up. [...] I check Instagram, WhatsApp, and then I get up' EC02 Estefanía (low-risk group, 19 years old).

Interviews under analysis show that participants used different strategies when they felt the need to control their online activity (Priyono and Fradianto, 2022). In general, interviewees reported they were aware when ICTs use had an impact on them. Multiple coping strategies were observed: time controlling apps, removing apps/games from the smartphone, specific devices used offline, installing apps to be used only on the personal computer, using social media accounts not followed by anyone they know, leaving the smartphone in another room, doing sports, friends support to plan overuse warnings or giving the smartphone to their parents to hide it. These strategies aimed at moderating ICT overuse and providing a sense of control. During the interview, Alejandro talked about how he was able to control the use of ICTs. After getting in touch with a Telegram community devoted to personal development, he started to control the use of ICTs according to a strict time-management plan. In this context, he mentioned different applications to monitor his own use. 'It's on the phone and from nine o'clock at night, I have set that I already block my mobile phone, everything, that is, I block WhatsApp, I block Instagram, and if I want to access them I have to pay 12 euros' EC05 Alejandro (low-risk group, 22 years old).

Despite these strategies, controlling the risk of overusing ICTs is described in terms of unsuccessful attempts and warnings that are sometimes ignored. The narratives of participants deal with an unfinished process that depends on how they balance their digital practices and their effects (Schuster et al., 2023). For instance, during exams seasons, interviewees report more control. Conversely, when they experience personal crisis, their use of ICTs is more likely to spiral out of control. During the interview, Ignacio reported different strategies to avoid the use of the smartphone when he felt he was engaging in a compulsive behaviour. However, he ultimately talked about his attempts in a way that the risk of ICT overuse seems to be ever-present. 'But I do, I mean, you could say I've tried, but I've never, I consider it a habit to use my cell phone

and so, uhuh, I have a hard time to break that habit' EC01 Ignacio (high-risk group, 25 years old).

Qualitative analysis shows that behind these practices lies the perception that the problematic use of ICTs is an individual concern. This finding is in line with the survey data presented above, that stressed that most of the interviewees did not ask for help when they felt their use of the internet as detrimental. Narratives were framed by ideas such as self-experience, self-management, responsibility or even struggle, which point to social discourses on individual responsibility and pathologisation of the negative effects of digitalisation (Vrecko, 2010). Some of the informants even mentioned the existence of an inner voice that reminded them they could get stuck. 'Yes, just yes, there is the little voice that tells you, you cannot stay glued to your mobile, you have to study, let it go'. This image is used to stress that, as adults, control is up to them. 'The control, it's mine, is that when, is that I always say it, when you become an adult, the control is yours, your mother is no longer there' EC03 Mariana (medium-risk group, 23 years old). Consequently, adults barely appear in the interviews under study. If they do, parents are also considered to be overusing ICTs. According to this individualistic approach, professional support is not considered as a resource to control the overuse of ICTs during the interviews. Added to this is the perception that the problematic use of ICTs does not require intervention compared with other problems and the fact that overuse peaks are typical among young people, which explains why they do not seek treatment (Griffiths, 2015).

However, some informants suggested that there was a need to adopt a more collective approach to the use of ICTs. Educational policies are mentioned as way of preventing problematic ICT use (Castañeda et al., 2019). In this vein, ICT use is compared with eating habits or weapon use to stress the need for re-education. According to the interviewees, young people and parents should be involved. When asked if the problematic use of ICTs is due to the design of technology or the responsibility of individuals, María focused on education to question whether young people can control their own ICT use. In her opinion, society does not know how to use them. 'Like, for example, chocolate, or when you eat, you know? It tends to be like that. So you have to re-educate yourself, you know? And even if you use it too or eat it, but it's. But with your head over your shoulders, you know?' EC18 María (medium risk, 25 years old).

5 Conclusion

The results of this study show that the perceptions of young people towards ICTs cover their dark side. Respondents claimed to be fully aware of the problematic use of ICTs, socially and personally speaking. The survey data indicates that young people agree on highlighting the risk while the narratives of interviewees address addiction-related terms when reflecting on the use of ICTs. However, this is an assumption on their part. This study shows that digital risk, namely the problematic use of ICTs, such as its overuse, seems to be part of youth culture in a digitalised society. The empirical data presented above stressed that, on the one hand, informants share social discourses on digitalisation, youth as a digitalised group or individual responsibility when confronted with the problematic use of ICTs. On

the other hand, they regularly engage in a series of specific practices to control their ICT use patterns and effects.

The narratives collected show how young people construct the problematic use of ICTs. Respondents systematically consider risk (addiction) and digitalisation to be attributes of youth and relate them in their discourse. As a result, risk is perceived as a common (generational) matter in the context of an ambivalent view on ICTs. The perceptions and practices presented in this study show reflexivity and individualisation as narrative axis. Interviewees thus focus on self-experience to explain how they face the problematic use of ICTs, mostly reported as a continuous process. Based on the data, this view is widely shared by the sample under study, regardless of sex, age, social background or CIUS scale score. The contribution of this study has been to expand empirical evidence on young people's problematic use of ICTs. Drawing on the discourse of young people, this research has identified key issues in the narratives to gain a better understanding of youth perceptions and practices.

The perceptions and practices analysed have a number of implications for social policies and further research. Since risk is considered as a natural consequence of digitalisation, most respondents perceived the problematic use of ICTs from an individualistic point of view. Therefore, it can be concluded that a community-based and educational approach is needed. The design of applications should also be considered, given that they are seen as potentially addictive. This is especially true given that smartphones guarantee constant connectivity and their use is related to the emotional well-being of participants. Bearing in mind that informants may or may not use ICTs in a problematic way depending on their personal time and their own experience, one case to be addressed from a qualitative approach is that of the youngest groups among young people. In analysing people aged 15 to 29, this study has covered different biographical contexts; however, there is a lack of focus on those groups considered more vulnerable and more closely associated to a non-work-related use of ICTs. Another approach to consider for further research is to delve deeper into the opinions of parents. It was observed that parents are mostly excluded from narratives, while peers are widely mentioned. Knowing that youth narratives are culturally framed, qualitative research on adult opinion is needed to understand the problematic use of ICTs from a generational point of view.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Ethics Committee of the Vice-Rectorate for Research at UCAM. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

JP: Visualization, Software, Data curation, Resources, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Validation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Formal analysis. JR: Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Project administration, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resources, Investigation, Software, Methodology, Supervision, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization. AN: Visualization, Data curation, Methodology, Investigation, Supervision, Conceptualization, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Validation, Writing – review & editing, Software, Resources, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis.

Funding

The author(s) declare that financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article. This article is based on the PUICTs project (Problematic Use of Information and Communication Technologies), funded by the Catholic University of Murcia. Research Support Program (PMAFI-05/19). In addition, the costs associated with the publication of the article were covered by funds from the annual assignment of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities at Miguel Hernández University.

Acknowledgments

We are very grateful to the Catholic University of Murcia for allowing us to carry out this project. We would like to express special thanks to all the participants in this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

Any alternative text (alt text) provided alongside figures in this article has been generated by Frontiers with the support of artificial intelligence and reasonable efforts have been made to ensure accuracy, including review by the authors wherever possible. If you identify any issues, please contact us.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

- Adorjan, M., and Ricciardelli, R. (2021). Smartphone and social media addiction: exploring the perceptions and experiences of Canadian teenagers. *Canadian Review of Sociology = Revue Canadienne De Sociologie* 58, 45–64. doi: 10.1111/cars.12319
- Álvarez, M., Torres, A., Rodríguez, E., Padilla, S., and Rodrigo, M. J. (2013). Attitudes and parenting dimensions in parents' regulation of internet use by primary and secondary school children. *Comput. Educ.* 67, 69–78. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2013.03.005
- Anderson, E. L., Steen, E., and Stavropoulos, V. (2017). Internet use and problematic internet use: a systematic review of longitudinal research trends in adolescence and emergent adulthood. *Int. J. Adolesc. Youth* 22, 430–454. doi: 10.1080/02673843.2016.1227716
- Aranda Juárez, D., Sánchez-Navarro, J., and Mohammadi, L. (2020). Perception and self-assessment of digital skills and gaming among youth: a dataset from Spain. *Data Brief* 28:104957. doi: 10.1016/j.dib.2019.104957
- Austen, L. (2009). The social construction of risk by young people. *Health Risk Soc.* 11, 451–470. doi: 10.1080/13698570903183871
- Ballesteros, J. C., Calderón, D., Kuric, S., Megías, I., and Sanmartín, A. (2020). Barómetro Jóvenes y Expectativa Tecnológica 2020. Fad: Centro Reina Sofía sobre adolescencia y juventud. Available online at: <https://www.adolescenciayjuventud.org/publicacion/barometro-jovenes-expectativa-tecnologica-2020/> (Accessed June 10, 2025).
- Baumgartner, S. E., Valkenburg, P. M., and Peter, J. (2011). The influence of descriptive and injunctive peer norms on adolescents' risky sexual online behavior. *Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw.* 14, 753–758. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2010.0510
- Beck, U. (1992). Risk Society. London: Sage.
- Beck, U., Giddens, A., and Lash, S. (1994). Reflexive modernization. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* 3, 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp0630a
- Bryce, J., and Fraser, J. (2013). "It's common sense that it's wrong": young people's perceptions and Experiences of cyberbullying. *Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw.* 16, 783–787. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2012.0275
- Buckingham, D. (2013). Making sense of the 'digital generation': growing up with Digital media. *Self Soc.* 40, 7–15. doi: 10.1080/03060497.2013.11084274
- Calderón Gómez, D. (2021). Juventud, desigualdad y sociedad digital. Estudio sociológico de las prácticas, brechas y trayectorias biográficas juveniles en el uso de las TIC. Valencia: Tirant Humanidades.
- Castañeda, E. C., Casado, D. G., and Molina, O. A. (2019). Los riesgos del uso inadecuado de Internet y las redes sociales. Conocimiento y percepción de riesgos en jóvenes a través de la historia de vida. *UTE Teach. Technol. (Universitas Tarraconensis)*, 33–47. doi: 10.17345/ute.2019.1.2626
- Castells, M. (2024). Advanced introduction to digital society. London: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Cernikova, M., Dedkova, L., and Smahel, D. (2018). Youth interaction with online strangers: experiences and reactions to unknown people on the internet. *Inf. Commun. Soc.* 21, 94–110. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1261169
- Childs, C., and Holland, F. (2024). Young peoples' lived experiences of shifts between face-to-face and smartphone interactions: an interpretative phenomenological analysis. *J. Youth Stud.* 27, 57–72. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2022.2101356
- Dedkova, L., and Mýlek, V. (2023). Parental mediation of online interactions and its relation to adolescents' contacts with new people online: the role of risk perception. *Inf. Commun. Soc.* 26, 3179–3196. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2022.2146985
- Díaz, J., and Gómez-Torres, I. G. (2019). Cribado e intervención breve digital en el uso problemático de Internet: Programa piensaTIC. *Escritos de Psicología - Psychological Writings* 12:2. doi: 10.24310/espiescpsi.v12i2.998
- Douglas, M. (1985). Risk acceptability according to the social sciences. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Douglas, M., and Wildavsky, A. (1982). Risk and culture. An essay on the selection of technological and environmental dangers. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Ekberg, M. (2007). The parameters of the risk society: a review and exploration. *Curr. Sociol.* 55, 343–366. doi: 10.1177/0011392107076080
- Feixa, C. (2014). De la generación @ a la #generación. La juventud en la era digital. Barcelona: NED Ediciones. Biblioteca de infancia y juventud.
- Feixa, C., Planells, A. F., and Maz, M. F. (2016). Generación Hashtag. Los movimientos juveniles en la era de la web social. *Rev. Latinoam. Cienc. Soc. Niñez Juventud* 14:6. doi: 10.11600/1692715x.1416301115
- Foster, B., Mihailidis, P., Johnson, P. R., Burth, S., Tully, M., Ramasubramanian, S., et al. (2024). Designing equitable media literacy interventions for critical youth agency. *Glob. Stud. Child.* 14, 462–476. doi: 10.1177/20436106231208445
- Gaspard, L. (2020). Australian high school students and their internet use: perceptions of opportunities versus 'problematic situations'. *Child. Aust.* 45, 54–63. doi: 10.1017/cha.2020.2
- Gervilla-García, E., Lloret-Irles, D., Cabrera-Perona, V., Fernández-Martínez, I., and Anupol, J. (2023). Online risks at adolescence. Design and validation of a Parental Mediation Scale for Information and Communication Technologies (Riesgos en línea para los adolescentes. Diseño y validación de una escala de mediación parental para las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación—TIC). *J. Study Educ. Dev.* 46, 492–528. doi: 10.1080/02103702.2023.2191428
- Giddens, A. (1999). Consecuencias de la modernidad. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Giddens, A., and Sutton, P. W. (2010). Sociology. Cambridge: Introductory readings: Polity.
- Gjoneska, B., Potenza, M. N., Jones, J., Sales, C. M., Hranov, G., and Demetrovics, Z. (2022). Problematic use of the internet in low- and middle-income countries before and during the COVID-19 pandemic: a scoping review. *Curr. Opin. Behav. Sci.* 48:101208. doi: 10.1016/j.cobeha.2022.101208
- Goggin, G. (2013). Youth culture and mobiles. *Mobile Media Commun.* 1, 83–88. doi: 10.1177/2050157912464489
- Gómez, P., Harris, S. K., Barreiro, C., Isorna, M., and Rial, A. (2017). Profiles of internet use and parental involvement, and rates of online risks and problematic internet use among Spanish adolescents. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 75, 826–833. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.06.027
- Griffiths, M. D. (2015). Problematic technology use during adolescence: why don't teen-agers seek treatment? *Educ. Health* 33:1.
- Guan, S.-S. A., and Subrahmanyam, K. (2009). Youth internet use: risks and opportunities. *Curr. Opin. Psychiatry* 22, 351–356. doi: 10.1097/YCO.0b013e32832bd7e0
- Guglielmucci, F., Granieri, A., Munno, D., Zullo, G., and Saroldi, M. (2017). Personality profiles and problematic internet use in a sample of Italian adolescents. *Clin. Neuropsychiatry* 14, 94–103.
- Hall, J. A., and Baym, N. K. (2012). Calling and texting (too much): mobile maintenance expectations, (over)dependence, entrapment, and friendship satisfaction. *New Media Soc.* 14, 316–331. doi: 10.1177/1461444811415047
- Han, B.-C. (2021). No-cosas: Quebras del mundo de hoy. Madrid: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial España.
- Hoz, J. P. de la (2018). Riesgos percibidos por estudiantes adolescentes en el uso de las nuevas tecnologías y cómo reaccionan ante ellos. *Bordón. Rev. Pedagog.* 70. doi: 10.13042/Bordon.2018.55486.105–120
- Kiss, H., Fitzpatrick, K. M., and Piko, B. F. (2020). The digital divide: risk and protective factors and the differences in problematic use of digital devices among Hungarian youth. *Child Youth Serv. Rev.* 108:104612. doi: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.104612
- Kuckartz, U. (2014). Qualitative Text Analysis. A guide to methods, practice and using software: Sage.
- Kuss, D. J., and Pontes, H. M. (2018). Internet addiction. Göttingen: Hogrefe Publishing GmbH.
- Lash, S. (2000). "Risk culture" in The risk society and beyond: Critical issues for social theory (London: Sage).
- Le Breton, D. (2015). Disparaître de soi. Une tentation contemporaine. Paris: Métailié.
- Lopez-Fernandez, O., GriffithsMark, D., KussDaria, J., DawesChristopher, PontesHalley, M., JusticeLucy, et al. (2019). Cross-cultural validation of the compulsive internet use scale in four forms and eight languages. *Cyberpsychol. Behav. Soc. Netw.* 22, 451–464. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2018.0731
- Lupton, D. (2016). "Digital risk society" in Routledge handbook of risk studies (London: Routledge), 301–309.
- Lupton, D. (Ed.). (1999). *Risk and sociocultural theory: New directions and perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Machackova, H., Bedrova, M. J., Muzik, M., Zlamal, R., Fikrova, J., Literova, A., et al. (2024). Digital skills among youth: a dataset from a three-wave longitudinal survey in six European countries. *Data Brief* 54:110396. doi: 10.1016/j.dib.2024.110396
- Malikha, P., and Servaes, J. (2011). Surviving in a 24/7 media shock and awe-distracted by everything. *Telematics Inform.* 28, 66–76. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2010.09.005
- McLuhan, M., and Powers, B. R. (1992). The Global Village: Transformations in world life and media in the 21st century. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meerkerk, G. J., Van Den Eijnden, R. J., Vermulst, A. A., and Garretsen, H. F. (2009). The compulsive internet use scale (CIUS): some psychometric properties. *Cyberpsychol. Behav.* 12, 1–6. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2008.0181
- Megías, I. (2024). Desde el lado oscuro de los hábitos tecnológicos: riesgos asociados a los usos juveniles de las TIC. Centro Reina Sofía; Fundación Fad Juventud.
- Méndez, I., Jorquera, A. B., Esteban, C. R., and García-Fernández, J. M. (2020). Profiles of problematic internet use in bullying and cyberbullying among adolescents. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 17:E7041. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17197041
- Mishna, F., Saini, M., and Solomon, S. (2009). Ongoing and online: children and youth's perceptions of cyber bullying. *Child Youth Serv. Rev.* 31, 1222–1228. doi: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2009.05.004

- Morozov, E. (2013). To save everything, click Here. New York: Public Affairs.
- Mostyn Sullivan, B., George, A. M., and Rickwood, D. (2024). An exploration of motives that influence problematic smartphone use in young adults. *Behav. Inform. Technol.* 1–15. doi: 10.1080/0144929X.2024.2380102
- Muñoz-Miralles, R., Ortega-González, R., López-Morón, M. R., Batalla-Martínez, C., Manresa, J. M., Montellà-Jordana, N., et al. (2016). The problematic use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in adolescents by the cross sectional JOITIC study. *BMC Pediatr.* 16:140. doi: 10.1186/s12887-016-0674-y
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., and Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *Int J Qual Methods* 22:1–18. doi: 10.1177/16094069231205789
- Özparlak, A., Karakaya, D., Önder, A., and Günbay, İ. (2023). Problematic internet use in adolescents: a phenomenological study. *J. Psychiatr. Ment. Health Nurs.* 30, 731–742. doi: 10.1111/jpm.12900
- Palacios, J., Gehrig, R., and Rodes, J. (2020). Viviendo en una burbuja: Pasos tentativos para una antropología de la «adicción a las nuevas tecnologías». *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 15, 531–555. doi: 10.11156/aibr.150306
- Park, S., and Lee, Y. (2017). Associations of body weight perception and weight control behaviors with problematic internet use among Korean adolescents. *Psychiatry Res.* 251, 275–280. doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2017.01.095
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 2: do they really think dif-ferently? *On the Horizon* 9, 1–6. doi: 10.1108/10748120110424843
- Priyono, D., and Fradianto, I. (2022). Coping strategies in adolescents with online games addiction. *Int. J. Prog. Sci. Technol.* 34:1. doi: 10.52155/ijpsat.v34.1.4534
- Puig, E. (2017). La gran adicción. Barcelona: Arpa.
- Racz, S. J., Lindstrom Johnson, S., Bradshaw, C. P., and Cheng, T. L. (2017). Parenting in the digital age: urban black youth's perceptions about technology-based communication with parents. *J. Fam. Stud.* 23, 198–214. doi: 10.1080/13229400.2015.1108858
- Ramos-Soler, I., López-Sánchez, C., and Torrecillas-Lacave, T. (2018). Percepción de riesgo online en jóvenes y su efecto en el comportamiento digital. *Comunicar* 26, 71–79. doi: 10.3916/C56-2018-07
- Rose, N. (1999). Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryding, F. C., and Kaye, L. K. (2018). “Internet addiction”: a conceptual minefield. *Int. J. Ment. Heal. Addict.* 16, 225–232. doi: 10.1007/s11469-017-9811-6
- Samoh, N., Boonmongkon, P., Ojanen, T. T., Samakkeekarom, R., Jonas, K. J., and Guada-muz, T. E. (2019). ‘It’s an ordinary matter’: perceptions of cyberbullying in Thai youth culture. *J. Youth Stud.* 22, 240–255. doi: 10.1080/13676261.2018.1495835
- Sasson, H., and Mesch, G. (2016). Gender differences in the factors explaining risky be-havior online. *J. Youth Adolesc.* 45, 973–985. doi: 10.1007/s10964-016-0465-7
- Schuster, A. M., Cotten, S. R., and Meshi, D. (2023). Established adults, who self-identify as smartphone and/or social media Overusers, struggle to balance smartphone use for personal and work purposes. *J. Adult Dev.* 30, 78–89. doi: 10.1007/s10804-022-09426-3
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*: Cambridge University Press.
- Sutton, T. (2020). Digital harm and addiction: an anthropological view. *Anthropol. Today* 36, 17–22. doi: 10.1111/1467-8322.12553
- Tapscott, D. (2008). Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world. New York: McGraw Hill Professional.
- Taylor, P., and Keeter, S. (2010). Millennials. Confident. Connected. Open to change. Washington, DC: The Pew Center.
- Taylor, S. J., and Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Torrijos-Fincias, P., Serrate-González, S., Martín-Lucas, J., and Muñoz-Rodríguez, J. M. (2021). Perception of risk in the use of technologies and social media. Implications for identity building during adolescence. *Educ. Sci.* 11, 1–12. doi: 10.3390/educsci11090523
- Townsend, P. (2017). The dark side of technology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, L., Bewick, B. M., Kent, S., Khyabani, A., Bryant, L., and Summers, B. (2021). When does a lot become too much? A Q methodological investigation of UK student perceptions of digital addiction. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 18:11149. doi: 10.3390/ijerph182111149
- Vandoninck, S., D’Haenens, L., and Donoso, V. (2010). Digital literacy of Flemish youth: how do they handle online content risks? *Communications.* 35, 397–416. doi: 10.1515/comm.2010.021
- Vickery, J. R. (2017). Worried about the wrong things. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Vrecko, S. (2010). Civilizing technologies and the control of deviance. *BioSocieties* 5, 36–51. doi: 10.1057/biosoc.2009.8
- Wood, A. C., and Wheatcroft, J. M. (2020). Young adult perceptions of internet communi-cations and the grooming concept. *SAGE Open* 10:2158244020914573. doi: 10.1177/2158244020914573
- Xi, J. (2016). “Introduction to Chinese youth” in Chinese youth in transition (London: Routledge).
- Yang, C., Holden, S. M., and Ariati, J. (2021). Social media and psychological well-being among youth: the multidimensional model of social media use. *Clin. Child. Fam. Psychol. Rev.* 24, 631–650. doi: 10.1007/s10567-021-00359-z
- Yong, R. K. F., Inoue, A., and Kawakami, N. (2017). The validity and psychometric proper-ties of the Japanese version of the compulsive internet use scale (CIUS). *BMC Psychiatry* 17:201. doi: 10.1186/s12888-017-1364-5
- Yoon, J., Chun, J., and Bhang, S.-Y. (2024). Internet gaming disorder and mental health literacy: a latent profile analysis of Korean adolescents. *Psychiatry Investig.* 21, 300–310. doi: 10.30773/pi.2023.0303