

SELF-CONCEPT IN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ITS RELATION TO THE AFFECT IN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Social networks provide new spaces in which to explore one's identity and how it is presented to others. To do so, it is essential to study how they affect the construction of one's self-concept and perceived affection in adolescence. The principal objective of this study was to analyse the congruence or incongruence of self-concept within (online) and outside (offline) the social networks and their relation to affect. The participants were 350 adolescents (41% males), between 14 and 19 years of age. They completed the AF-5 to evaluate self-concept and the PANANS to evaluate affect states or personal emotions. Both questionnaires were completed twice, taking into account online and offline situations. We found differences in all the dimensions of self-concept in 24% of the participants, and only in the social dimension in 51.4% of the participants. The participants who showed differences between their online and offline self-concept obtained higher scores in wellbeing in comparison to those who maintained similar self-concept. Social media allow adolescents to experiment with a different self-concept which influences their affect.

KEY WORDS: *social networks, self-concept, affect, adolescence, identity, wellbeing.*

Resumen

Las redes sociales proporcionan nuevos espacios donde explorar la identidad y su presentación a los demás, siendo fundamental estudiar cómo afectan a la construcción del autoconcepto y el afecto percibido en la adolescencia. El objetivo principal fue analizar la congruencia o incongruencia del autoconcepto dentro y fuera de las redes sociales y su relación con el afecto. Participaron 350 adolescentes (41% hombres), de entre 14 y 19 años. Cumplimentaron el AF-5 para evaluar el autoconcepto y el PANANS para evaluar estados afectivos o disposiciones personales de emocionalidad. Ambos cuestionarios fueron rellenados dos veces, teniendo en cuenta situaciones dentro y fuera de las redes sociales. Encontramos diferencias en todas las dimensiones de autoconcepto en el 24% de participantes, y únicamente en la dimensión social en el 51,4% de los participantes. Los participantes que mostraron diferencias entre autoconceptos se describen con mayores grados de bienestar que aquellos con perfiles congruentes. Las redes

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sociales permiten a los adolescentes experimentar con un autoconcepto diferente, que influye sobre sus afectos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *redes sociales, autoconcepto, afecto, adolescencia, identidad, bienestar.*

Introduction

Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood that involves changes on biological, social and psychological levels (Parise, Canzi, Olivari & Ferrari, 2019; Siegel, 2014). A crucial task during these years is the development of a clear sense of oneself, an identity that can adapt to different situations (Erikson, 1968; Ybrandt, 2008). This identity is formed through the idea of self-concept, which is the mental image that each individual has of his/her own person. It consists of several dimensions, that is to say, personal attributes of a different nature that one perceives about oneself and which have to be internally consistent and stable over time (Campbell *et al.*, 1996; García & Musito, 2014). These attributes or self-esteem are then evaluated through sensations concerning the affect one perceives in social relationships (Guyer, Silk & Nelson, 2016). The clarity of one's self-concept in adolescence is related to lower levels of anxiety and depression (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2014), greater self-esteem (Wu, Watkins & Hattie, 2010) and more positive relations with companions and parents (Becht *et al.*, 2017).

It is one's peers who will reinforce the basic need to belong to a group and to accept oneself during adolescence. Adolescents will therefore look to maintain relationships with their peer group in order to build up their social capital, understood as a series of resources that enrich relationships and affective bonds that individuals in a community maintain with each other, thus benefitting their development (Smith, 2014; Vidales-Bolaños & Sábada-Chalezquer, 2017). The need for affect arises alongside this social perception, influencing the person's wellbeing, that is, the person's degree of satisfaction with their own life (Valkenburg, Koutamanis & Vossen, 2017). Although a consensus has still not been reached concerning a formal definition of what affect actually is, several dimensions can be perceived within it: positive affect, which reflects the point to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, alert, full of energy; and negative affect, which represents a general dimension of subjective distress, including a variety of aversive emotional states such as being upset, anger, guilt, fear and nervousness (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988).

It should not be forgotten that these processes of building up one's identity and establishing social and affective relationships take place in a social and relational system that we cannot currently understand without taking the internet and the social networks into account. The social networks are virtual spaces created to articulate interpersonal relationships between persons who may or may not know each other, or at least that is the expectation (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012). They are used on a daily basis by millions of users, the majority of whom are young people between 16 and 24 years of age (INE, 2019). There are several types of social networks, with different online contexts and uses (affordances) that influence the

quantity and type of information that users share or publish (Emanuel *et al.*, 2014; Rial, Gómez, Picón, Braña & Varela, 2015). Among them there are those considered to be generic, characterised by the interactivity they offer through the creation of a personal profile and the capacity to interact with others via images of oneself (Choi & Sung, 2018). The most popular currently among adolescents and young people in general is Instagram (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Kemp, 2019), a social network whose purpose is to share photographs and videos with others that contribute to one's own social self-representation, while also building up a network of friends in which the like button in the form of a heart is the greatest indicator of the support received concerning the shared publications. The use of social networks in young people is a normative experience (Rial *et al.*, 2015) that consists of a new virtual setting which can potentially influence the development of the users' personal and social life, as well as their wellbeing (Pertegal-Vega, Oliva-Delgado & Rodríguez-Meirinhos, 2019). Similarly, social networks can awaken emotions and serve as a channel for expressing affections. This, in turn, can have repercussions on the way said affections are modulated and unfold, as well as on the configuration of the person's identity as viewed by others (Serrano-Puche, 2016).

The social networks have become a fundamental social environment, where the online and offline contexts are connected psychologically (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Michikyan, 2015), covering such basic necessities of adolescents as making themselves visible, enjoying themselves, expressing themselves emotionally, reaffirming their identity as part of a group, or being connected to their friends (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012; Serrano-Puche, 2016). The social networks can provide a favourable context in which to exercise different, simultaneous roles and this can help to create a more flexible identity, adjusted to the social context, together with a greater and more intense exploration of self (Renau, Oberst & Carbonell, 2013).

Adolescents who possess a less stable self-concept have a greater tendency to say that they have an ideal self, creating more diverse online self-representations and establishing a self that is inconsistent with the offline self (Fullwood, James & Chen-Wilson, 2016). The extent to which a person needs to gain popularity determines a lowering of the expression of information concerning the true self (Lim, Nicholson, Yang & Kim, 2015). Thus, online users perceive themselves as more successful in managing relationships with their peers, improving their self-concept, even though they are really no different from those users who are not connected to the networks (Košir, Horvat, Aram, Jurinec & Tement, 2016). The consistency or inconsistency between both aspects of self-definition is related to wellbeing (Malo-Cerrato, Martín-Perpiñá & Viñas-Poch, 2018; Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013), since online popularity and friends make adolescents feel part of the group and accepted by others. Similarly, both the emotional connection to social networks and the time spent on them positively predict self-concept in relations between peers within social networks (Košir *et al.*, 2016).

Supportive relationships through social networks have become more frequent and are having a great impact on persons' affective wellbeing (Chan & Cheng, 2016) since it has been shown that online contexts facilitate, to a great extent, the capacity to receive social support from both friends and acquaintances (Donath, 2007;

Tufekci, 2008). This gives rise to a greater social interaction and possible benefits, such as increased perceived social support, a sensation of social connection, or less loneliness, especially in subjects with anxiety receiving the social interaction that can act as a substitute (Pertegal-Vega *et al.*, 2019) for their lack of social relationships in their daily life.

Nevertheless, it has been found that adolescents who have an active social life outside internet benefit more from their online social life, presenting high levels of positive self-concept; while those who spend a lot of time socialising online, but who lack face to face support, present lower levels of positive self-concept (Khan, Gagné, Yang & Shapka, 2016) and run the risk of becoming even more isolated by concentrating on their online social activities (Jackson, 2008). Even so, it is not expected that the use of social networks will favour users' self-esteem, since the publications can lead to interaction that is more exaggerated than reality, giving rise to altered impressions of oneself (Liu, Wright & Hu, 2018). Nevertheless, most of the time spent online is dedicated to a passive use that could favour a negative social comparison with the lives of others, leading to a decrease in emotional wellbeing (Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides & Kross, 2017). On the other hand, the inadequate use of social networks has demonstrated an association with difficulties and problems in adolescence, such as depression, attention deficit syndrome with hyperactivity, insomnia, fewer total hours of sleep, a worse academic performance and school dropout (Arab & Díaz, 2015; Pedrero-Pérez *et al.*, 2019). It has also been associated with a wide range of psychosocial problems that may, due to the existence of anonymity and a false identity, favour inadequate behaviour patterns, such as addictive use, cyber bullying, exhibitionism, aggressiveness or cheating, among others (Carballo, Marín-Vila, Espada, Orgilés & Piqueras, 2015; Ferreiro, Salgado, Harris, Tobío & Boubeta, 2017; Garaigordobil, 2017; Polo del Río, Mendo Lázaro, León del Barco & Felipe-Castaño, 2017). Therefore, analysing the use that we make of social networks is fundamental if we wish to know how it affects us, how we define ourselves and who we are (Haaf, 2012; Serrano-Puche, 2013), which in turn is linked to our interpersonal relationships, to how we relate to others.

In this work, we aim to delve into this line of research, as we believe that comparing how adolescents define themselves in social networks and in real life, as well as how these differences or discrepancies are related to affectivity and wellbeing, can help us to know how the social networks influence the construction of an adolescent's identity. Thus, the objective of this work was to analyse, through a sample of adolescents, the relationship between the consistency or inconsistency of one's online and offline self-concept and its relation to one's affectivity/wellbeing, both online and offline. The research hypothesis we pose is that to maintain a consistent online and offline self-concept is related to a greater positive affection and wellbeing in our participants.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 350 students from secondary schools and universities in the Region of Extremadura, Spain. The participants were between 14 and 19 years of age, with an average age of 16.67 years ($SD= 1.85$). 145 were male (41.4 %) and 205 female (58.6 %). The distribution of the participants according to level of education and gender can be seen in Table 1.

Cluster sampling was employed, using the educational centre as the cluster and selecting one class group per centre at random. Finally ten secondary schools and two colleges were randomly selected.

Table 1
Distribution of the participants according to gender and studies

Studies	Male <i>n</i> (%)	Female <i>n</i> (%)	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Secondary school	62 (18)	83 (24)	145
Sixth-form	65 (19)	65 (19)	130
University	18 (5)	57 (16)	75
Total	145 (41)	205 (59)	350

Instruments

- a) *Ad hoc questionnaire for sociodemographic data.* Age, gender, educational centre, year of studies, time dedicated to surfing the net, number of profiles, most used social network and activity carried out on it were collected. To do so, a sociodemographic questionnaire was used with open and closed questions using the questionnaires created by Echeburúa y Requesens (2012) as reference.
- b) *Self-concept form 5 (AF-5, García & Musitu, 2014).* The AF-5 measures different aspects of self-concept in children, adolescents and adults, attending to five dimensions: *Academic/work*, what is a person's perception of his/her role as a student; *Social*, which refers to the person's perception of how difficult or easy it is to maintain and extend his/her social network; *Emotional*, which refers to a person's perception of his/her control over situations and emotions; *Family*, which is a person's perception of his/her involvement, participation and integration in the family; and finally, *Physical*, which is a person's perception of his/her own physical condition and aspect. The AF-5 consists of 30 items with a Likert type response format of 99 points for each item, where the lowest score of 1 indicates total disagreement with the statement, up to 99, which indicates total agreement with the statement. The score in each dimension is obtained through the sum of the scores in the corresponding items, so a higher score means a greater identification with that dimension of self-concept. The coefficients of internal consistency (Cronbach's alfa) obtained by our participants offline and online, respectively, were: 0.77 and 0.78 for the

dimension of Family; 0.75 and 0.73 for the Social; 0.77 and 0.79 for the Physical; 0.84 and 0.86 for the Academic; and 0.1 and 0.78 for the Emotional. These values are similar to those obtained in the original version of the instrument (García & Musitu, 2014).

- c) *PANAS Positive and Negative Affect Scale for children and adolescents* (PANASN, Sandín, 2003). An adaptation for children and adolescents of the adult form of the PANAS (Watson *et al.*, 1988). The PANASN, like its adult version, is a self-reporting questionnaire of 20 items that measure more or less stable affective states or personal dispositions concerning the emotions. Ten items evaluate the *Positive Affect* (PA) and the other ten evaluate the *Negative Affect* (NA). The questionnaire is filled in taking into account the way a person usually feels and/or behaves, following a Likert type response scale of three intervals that are "Never", "Sometimes", and "Many times". A low score in negative or positive affection would indicate a relative lack of affective involvement; while a high score would indicate the presence of affective involvement. In this work, the coefficients of internal consistency (Cronbach's alfa) obtained offline and online, respectively, were: 0.66 and 0.77 for the PA and 0.75 and 0.81 for the NA. These values are slightly lower than those of the original version in the PA scale, but similar to those found by Barrón-Sánchez & Molero (2014) and Cazalla-Luna & Molero (2018); while in the NA, they are higher than those obtained by the original studies. On the other hand, the values of the internal consistency obtained with respect to affect in the social networks are higher than those given in the original version of the questionnaire (Sandín, 2003).

Procedure

The collection of the sociodemographic information was carried out in the class group, filling in individual printed questionnaires, only once for five minutes. Later, the AF-5 and PANASN questionnaires were applied, which were answered on paper twice, for which the instructions were modified. The students were asked to answer the questions the first time taking into account their behaviour and feelings in their everyday life or offline contexts; while the second time they were asked to do so in accordance with their behaviour in online contexts (in the online social network they used the most). These took approximately 45 minutes. The questionnaires were administered in the presence of the teachers, together with one of the researchers to ensure that the participants understood the instructions before starting to answer the data collection. The study was approved by the authorities of all the education centres asked to collaborate. To obtain data from those participants under 18 years of age, written information was given to the parents and/or legal tutors asking for their written informed consent. Furthermore, written informed consent was also attained from all the participants at the time of data collection. In the classrooms, the participants were given instructions on how to complete the questionnaires, ensuring them of the confidentiality and anonymity of the data collected and their exclusive use for purposes of the investigation. The study complied with the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki of 1975, and its revision of 2008.

Data analysis

The statistical package SPSS 21 for Windows was used to codify and analyse the data. Normality contrasts were carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, which found that all the variables fitted the normal curve. We therefore used parametric contrast tests, internal consistency analysis through the value of Cronbach's α , descriptive analyses and mean comparative analyses for independent and dependent groups using the Student t test. Cohen's d was calculated to estimate the size of the effect of the differences between the groups. A level of significance of 5% was assumed in the analyses.

Results

Presence in social networks and activity carried out in them

All the participants made use of social networks. The most commonly used by our participants was Instagram (97.4%). All the participants had a public profile on it. The second most common was YouTube (84%) and the least popular was Tumblr (9.1%).

As for the number of public profiles on social networks, of the 350 subjects of the study, all of them had at least one profile and 30.6% of the sample stated they had more than one, with an average of 2.85 profiles ($SD= 1.48$) in social networks. No statistically significant differences were found between males ($M=2.76$; $SD=1.762$) and females ($M= 2.90$; $SD=1.341$) concerning the number of profiles. As for the number of days and hours the participants connected to social networks in Internet, they stated that they did so between two and seven days a week with an average of 6.84 days a week ($SD=.692$). They were connected at least one hour and up to ten hours a day in order to update or see their social networks, with an average of 3.43 hours ($SD=2.09$). We found statistically significant differences between males ($M=2.97$; $SD=1.78$) and females ($M=3.75$; $SD=2.24$) concerning the number of hours they connected each day, in the sense that females connected for a greater number of hours than the males. However, this difference was of only 0.78 hours.

The most frequent activity carried out was that of contacting friends, the average for the most commonly used social network (Instagram) being 782.82 ($SD=647.29$), followed by publishing photos ($M=70.16$; $SD=134.90$) and, less frequently, uploading videos ($M=4.22$; $SD=15.5$). As for gender, we found statistically significant differences in the number of photos uploaded or shared, in the sense that females ($M= 91.39$; $SD=160.84$) uploaded more photos than males ($M=40.16$; $SD=76.87$). Thus, in accordance with our sample, females tend to present themselves visually in the social networks more than males.

Description and differences in the dimensions of online/offline self-concept and affection

In the AF-5 scales, the highest score was obtained in the dimension of family self-concept, followed by the social, academic, physical and emotional, for both the

online and offline self-concepts, except in the dimension of physical self-concept, which obtained a higher score than the academic in the online self-concept (see Table 2). Thus, in the definition that young people and adolescents give of themselves, the most important contents are related to the family and the social context, which in turn are related to psychosocial wellbeing and adjustment, acceptance by companions and prosocial conduct. The least important referred to emotional contents, which are related to the practices of affection, understanding, induction and support.

Table 2

Comparison of mean (Student's *t* test) in Self-concept and Affect offline and online

Variables (instrument)	Offline <i>M (SD)</i>	Online <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d (r)</i>
Self-concept (AF-5)				
Family	503.15 (87.29)	507.48 (91.50)	-0.804	
Social	439.61 (93.78)	445.36 (93.68)	-1.382	
Physical	386.30 (114.23)	387.04 (122.56)	-0.191	
Academic	393.36 (103.72)	360.83 (130.66)	3.888***	0.27 (0.14)
Emotional	268.05 (115.31)	248.90 (127.42)	2.884**	0.16 (0.08)
Affect (PANASN)				
Positive	24.43 (2.85)	23.64 (3.61)	4.945***	0.24 (0.12)
Negative	18.63 (3.36)	15.74 (3.88)	15.744***	0.86 (0.39)

Note: ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

We found statistically significant differences between the profiles of their online and offline self-concept in the academic and emotional dimensions. In both cases, the offline scores were higher than the online scores. This means that, in the online context, the participants used less academic and emotional contents to define themselves and to establish their self-concept than in face to face encounters. As for the differences concerning gender in the means of each of the individual dimensions of personal and virtual self-concept, we found statistically significant differences between males and females in the social, emotional and physical self-concept, in both online and offline profiles. In this case, the males obtained higher scores than the females in the social and physical dimensions, demonstrating a greater interest in their physical presentation and social relationships, while the females obtained higher scores than the males in the emotional, giving rise to a better control over their emotions or in situations that could act as a trigger (see Table 3).

On the other hand, there were also statistically significant differences between the online and offline profiles of affection in their positive and negative dimensions, in the sense that there is a lower affective involvement, both positive and negative, in the social networks (see Table 2). These results are reflected equally in both males and females; so there are no differences with respect to gender in this aspect.

Table 3

Comparison of mean (Student's t test) in offline and online Self-concept according to sex

Self-concept (AF-5)	Sex				t	p
	Female (n= 205)		Male (n= 145)			
	M	SD	M	SD		
Offline						
Academic	407.07	101.34	379.18	100.98	-2.540	0.012
Social	429.43	94.76	453.47	87.48	2.412	0.016
Emotional	294.44	113.08	226.60	104.06	-5.712	0.000
Family	509.29	86.60	502.64	82.59	-.721	0.471
Physical	341.15	109.278	420.13	105.73	-6.750	0.000
Online						
Academic	372.11	138.34	346.07	119.32	-1.211	0.228
Social	432.95	96.23	459.69	88.93	2.208	0.028
Emotional	279.93	130.86	209.07	111.69	-3.539	0.001
Family	514.27	82.29	498.70	102.11	-1.085	0.280
Physical	352.02	122.27	429.75	109.23	4.476	0.000

Discrepancies between the dimensions of online and offline self-concept and their relation to Affect

Groups of participants were established with congruent and incongruent profiles. To do so, the differences between the scores obtained in the online and offline AF-5 dimensions were calculated. We found that 170 participants obtained the same scores in all the dimensions of self-concept, so they were considered to have congruent self-concept profiles; while the rest ($n = 180$) had discrepancies in at least one of the dimensions, which was that of the social self-concept in all the cases. Of those who showed differences in the dimensions of self-concept, 84 participants had discrepancies in all of the AF-5 dimensions. Two groups were established on the basis of these results: without (congruent) and with (incongruent) discrepancies in the online and offline self-concept, and the differences in the PA and NA between both groups were calculated. We found statistically significant differences (see Table 4) between both groups in the online PA, in the sense that the groups with an incongruent self-concept had a higher online PA. This supposes that they report a greater wellbeing and more activity, energy and gratifying participation in social networks and, therefore, in the construction of their online self-concept. This would indicate that the affective support they receive through the social networks is also greater.

Table 4

Comparison of mean (Student's t test) in Positive and Negative Affect between congruents and incongruents profiles

Context/Affect	Incongruent (n= 180)		Congruent (n= 170)		t	p	Cohen's d (r)
	M	SD	M	SD			
Offline							
Positive Affect	24.47	2.85	24.38	2.87	0.275	0.783	
Negative Affect	18.54	3.51	18.72	3.20	-0.497	0.619	
Online							
Positive Affect	24.13	3.65	23.11	3.50	2.665	0.008**	0.28 (0.14)
Negative Affect	15.46	3.59	16.04	4.15	-1.379	0.169	

Note: ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

The use of social networks occupies a central position within the daily activities of the participants, corroborating the data collected by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2019). The most commonly used social network is Instagram, a virtual online platform of a generic nature whose aim is the creation of a personal profile with which to interact with the other users of the network (Choi & Sung, 2018). Women connect for more hours every day than men to see or update their profiles; they publish a greater number of photographs and obtain higher scores in the online emotional dimensions in comparison to men, which may suppose a greater emotional relationship with their social networks. The most frequent online activities are those of contacting friends and acquaintances, making a large number of friends, publishing photographs and sharing videos; so the virtual spaces influence the type and quantity of data divulged (Emanuel *et al.*, 2014). In this sense, Instagram is characterised by a great interactivity, so its main functions are directly related to the activities most often performed by the adolescents, covering the basic social necessities and self-knowledge demanded at such ages (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012; Serrano-Puche, 2016).

In our participants, the online self-concept focuses on the social and physical aspects, while their self-concept outside the social networks focuses on academic and social aspects. This would seem to fit with the main characteristics of the abovementioned analysed social network and their situation in everyday life as students at educational centres. In both cases, the family content is equally important, which tells us that the family is the key to identity among adolescents, both online and offline (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012). Nevertheless, it is the males who obtain higher scores in the social and physical dimensions, in both their personal and online life. This would suggest that they take an interest in their appearance and their relationships with others, aspects that may have been influenced by the use of Internet. Until relatively recently, it was women who had been most exposed to the imposed social pressure and canons of beauty over the years (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012). On the other hand, offline, it is the academic and emotional dimensions that have higher scores, which once more would be

subject to the most commonly used type of social network, where the predisposition to facilitate such data is low or non-existent, since it is not a platform aimed at job hunting, obtaining work grants or creating a CV.

As for the affective and emotional aspects, greater affective involvement, both positive and negative, is related to the self-concept beyond the social networks. Within the social networks, the affective involvement is less. This could be due, on the one hand, to a predominance of a person's more superficial aspects, such as the number of friends, the popularity of the publications because of their physical aspect, which would make them seem more socially active and attractive, but through fleeting and weak interactions, or perhaps by means of a masking of affection through the net. These results would seem to contradict those obtained up to now by other works of research, such as those of Serrano-Puche (2016) or Košir *et al.* (2016), for whom the online social networks act as a channel for emotional and affective expression.

As for self-definitions, the discrepancies between the self-concept shown online and offline, it could be supposed that the social networks provide a favourable context in which to play out several roles simultaneously, which could be related to personal exploration and experimentation of self that is so characteristic of adolescence (Renau *et al.*, 2013). However, they might also be an indicator of the need, on the part of the young people and adolescents, to be accepted by their peers or reference group (Malo-Cerrato *et al.*, 2018; Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013). Similarly, a different expression of self-concept is related to the need to achieve greater popularity (Lim *et al.*, 2015), as the social dimension is the one that shows differences in all the incongruent profiles. This could be because, in accordance with the results we have seen, the number of friends in social networks is very high, which could influence their feelings of social success in their online relationships (Košir *et al.*, 2016), and this would also favour the scores of self-concept in this dimension. The results also reflected the fact that 84 participants showed a self image in the social networks which was inconsistent with their personal self-concept in all the dimensions. This could mean that their identity was still in formation, which gives rise to the making of less stable and idealised self-representations (Fullwood *et al.*, 2016). In this sense, the participants who showed differences in their online and offline self-concept profiles also showed a greater positive affection in the net. From this we can assume that greater degrees of wellbeing will be present in those who create a different self-concept in the social networks, which differs from what was stated in the hypothesis of this work, indicating that the maintenance of a consistent self-concept both online and offline would be related to a greater positive affective involvement. This would suggest that the social support exchanged through the networks, as opposed to that obtained from face to face meetings, could be more beneficial (Chan & Cheng, 2016). Such results, in the current cybernetic world, could make sense of the fact that support provided through the social networks seems to be more dominant, with an important impact on persons' affective wellbeing (Chan & Cheng, 2016; Tazghini & Siedlecki, 2013).

Thus, with respect to the information collected, one of the main purposes of using the social networks by adolescents is to find and consolidate their self-image, together with the interaction and communication with their peers. As we have seen

throughout the presentation of this study, it is through such media that they experiment with their own self-concept, with different personal self-definitions online and offline, generating or omitting personal characteristics in the said platforms, which offer the possibility of sharing all kinds of personal information that affect the vision they can have of themselves. Their personal development can be distorted by the demands, not only of daily and social life, but also of their virtual world. All of this influences the affective dimensions, since supportive relations through the social networks are currently more prevalent and have a strong impact on wellbeing, as is reflected in the results of this study by means of the inconsistencies found. Thus, their online self-concept has a higher score in the dimensions of social and physical self-concept, aspects which can be related to the type of virtual platform used. It is in such platforms that these aspects are the most valued among users, giving rise to preoccupations that focus on the appearance and social popularity over and above the other dimensions that make up one's self-concept. Such pressure is representative of this stage in a person's life and it becomes more evident through the social networks, since it is through these same networks that a prototype profile with which to present oneself, and thus become popular, is established and this can influence acceptance of oneself, both personally and socially.

This work has some limitations. It would be necessary to have a larger sample size so that the sub-groups established could have a greater number of participants. This could make the meaning of the discrepancies clearer, as well as making it more representative, since information has only been collected from adolescents in educational establishments.

Nevertheless, we believe it is necessary to continue to investigate this line of research, since it is in adolescence when one's identity is built. It is also when interactions with others, with family and peer groups, become the fundamental pillars of daily life and the online world that surrounds them forms a part of this construction (Echeburúa & Requesens, 2012; Guyer *et al.*, 2016; Malo-Cerrato *et al.*, 2018). As has been reiterated throughout this work of research, we do not currently live "with" the communication media, rather we live "in" them, and it is adolescents who are the major participants in that respect.

Similarly, this importance does not depend solely upon an increased number of users, but also on the increasing appearance of diverse platforms that are making a place for themselves in the digital environment in which we are immersed. Despite having been present for a number of years, the rapid growth of social networks means that this environment is still little studied in such aspects as self-presentation and self-definition through the said media, and even more so concerning such a vulnerable stage of development as adolescence. We believe it is necessary, given their repercussions for identity building in adolescence, to provide information concerning the social networks and to educate in their good use.

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