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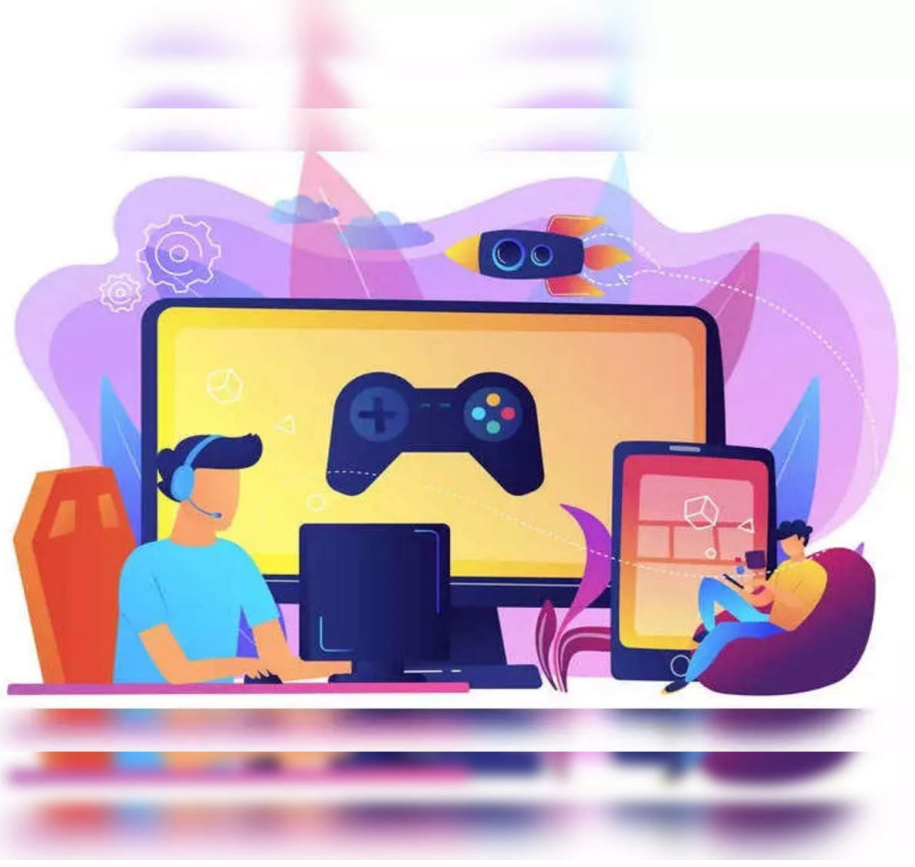
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CHILD IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Social Networks and Video Games in Children and Young People during the Post-Pandemic: A Growing Problem?



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INTRODUCTION

...¿WHATS HAS HAPPENED DURING THE LAST 4 YEARS?

- **Political and social crisis in Chile** (since the social outbreak in 10/2019 and the current governance and public insecurity crisis)...
- Pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Chile and the world prolonged periods of confinemen, non-face-to-face classes, different types of losses and grieving processes, etc.).
- **Massive use of mobile devices in children and young people**... So, the way we learn and communicate changed (inevitably)...
- **Increase levels of violence in school contexts**...
- **Proliferation of multiple risk factors in child and adolescent mental health**...
- **¿Educational backwardness?** in teaching levels, as a consequence of the pandemic, such as reading and writing difficulties, inattention, alterations in cognitive functions, low self-esteem.
- **We are called to RETHINK the behaviors and relational dynamics that children and young people build on social networks and video games**.



Research Problem



- **Changes in parenting dynamics and emotional support of families**
- **Media device use is increasing** year by year in many countries (Sandoval-Obando, 2020)
- **COVID-19 pandemic represented one of the greatest disruptions for everybody's** everyday life. The greatest risk was that of taking refuge in excessive use of smartphones, electronic devices, and social networks, running into a "digital overdose".
- **On social media, the young are more vulnerable and may display risk behavior**, including pertaining substance abuse, sexual behaviors, anxiety, depression or violence.
- **There was also a "school" use of smartphones and social media during lockdown** which represented a tool of information and education (7,8,9).
- **Actually, social networks are attractive** (Facebook with 2.9 billion monthly active users, YouTube with 2 billion, Instagram with 1.5 billion, and TikTok with 1 billion are the most accessed social media in the world).
- Therefore, **how much do we know about video game disorder and problematic social media use in childhood and adolescence**? (Sandoval-Obando, 2023)

BACKGROUND

GLOBAL KIDS ONLINE FINDINGS: THE CASE OF CHILE

- **The average age at which boys and girls get their first mobile phone decreased from 11 years in 2016 to 8.9 years in 2022**.
- **87% of the children and adolescents surveyed indicated they had their own cell phone with Internet access**. Likewise, **the age groups that increased their access the most were boys and girls from 0 to 5 years old (who went from 2% to 9%, between 2016 and 2022) and from 6 to 9 years old (from 30%, in 2016; to 49% in 2022).**
- **87% of children and adolescents surveyed report that they are asked to search for information to complete school assignments**, 83% to send assignments or assignments for a subject, and 77% to review a video to study the subject seen in class.
- Other widespread practices are working on shared documents with their colleagues and reviewing the tasks, assignments or tests they have to do on a platform (76%). On the other hand, **66% report that their school organizes activities in classes in which the mobile phone is used**.

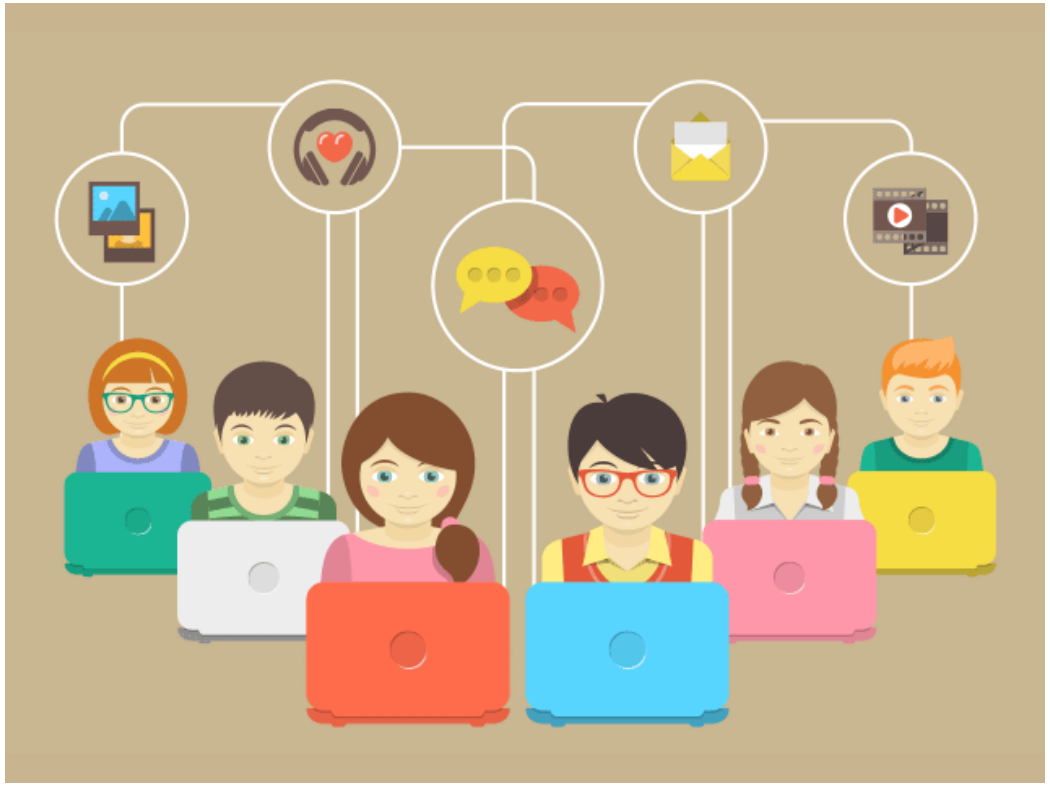


NOTE: Global Kids Online, an international research project carried out between UNICEF and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), which has been applied, to date, in 12 countries and which seeks to generate and maintain a rigorous international evidence base on the use of the Internet by children. It is the second time it has been applied in Chile (the previous one was in 2016).

What is the Internet used for?

The Children report that…

- They asked what the Internet is used for: **training (71%) and informal learning (46%) were the most frequent activities,** followed by socialization (37%), study (28%), creativity (23%) and, finally , participation (14%).
- **These practices are carried out mainly on the platforms of Whatsapp (77%), Tik Tok (68%), music platforms (73%), YouTube (70%), Google (60%) and Instagram (52%).**
- **Girls and female adolescents use more socialization platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok, while boys and male adolescents use those linked to online games and videos such as Discord and YouTube.**

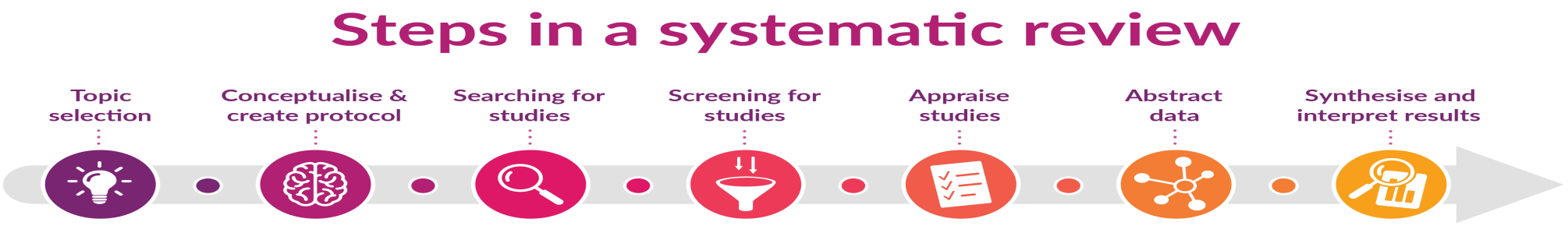




Method



- A **systematic, analytical literature review was used (**Newman & Gough, 2020; Sandoval-Obando, 2020). The categories were considered as search criteria: (a) use of social networks, (b) video games, (c) addiction and (d) video game disorder, according to studies published in **PubMed, Web of Science and Scopus** databases, **during the last 5 years, written in Spanish or English**. Likewise, **empirical studies, systematic reviews, meta-analysis and randomized descriptive studies were considered** respectively.



Preliminary Results

1. **Many articles reported more than one issue correlated to social media use** **(In this review, a total of 16 scientific articles were selected).**
2. The **most frequent problems found are related to mental health**: depression, anxiety, and addiction (Chang et al., 2022).
3. **Other problems are related to sleep, diet and nutrition, cyberbullying, psychological aspects, behavioral problems, sex, body image perception, physical activity, online grooming, sight, headache, and dental caries**.
4. Some reports found **correlations between social media use and risk of different types of addictions**: with internet (Mougharbel et al., 2020; Khalil et al., 2022; Bozzola et al., 2019; Nagata et añ., 2020), with substance abuse (Turhan et al., 2021)], with alcohol addiction and gaming (Hawi et al., 2019), with gambling (Emond et al., 2020), and with tabacco use (Unger et al., 2018).
5. **Warning signs of Internet addiction can be skipping activities, meals, and tasks because of social media**; weight loss or gain; a reduction in school grades (Khan et al., 2020). **Specifically:** increasing worry, low tolerance for frustration, withdrawal, inestability and impulsivity, sudden changes in mood, avolition and anhedonia have been identified as risk factors for smartphone addiction. **Women have almost three times the risk of smartphone addiction than men and this may be related to a greater desire for social relationships** (Muzzafar et al., 2018; Gazendam et al., 2020).
6. **The main problems related to addiction are low self-esteem, stress, anxiety, depression, insecurity, loneliness and poor school results** (Almoddahi et al., 2022; Bozzola et al., 2022; Forni et al., 2020; Kemp et al., 2020; Okada et al., 2021)

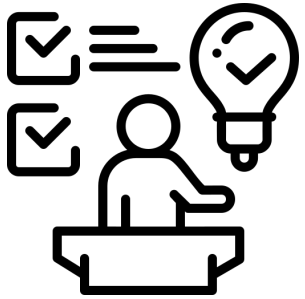
Limitations

- From the literature reviewed so far, **it is not possible to determine whether problematic use of social media or video games causes internalizing symptoms and problematic behaviors**, or whether children and adolescents who suffer from depression, anxiety, or other psychological disorders have more likelihood of spending more time on social networks.
- However, **we can affirm that there is an association between the use of social networks and health problems, but this is not necessarily explained in terms of cause-effect**, since these are multidimensional phenomena that vary from one context to another.
- Furthermore, **the articles included are different and range from systematic reviews to clinical studies or meta-analyses, so it may be difficult to compare them accurately**. Thirdly, as specified in the materials and methods, we excluded reports that were not written in other languages, with a publication date greater than 5 years.



CONCLUSION

...Prevention is Everyone`s Task...



- **Children and adolescents who use social media/video games for many hours a day are also at increased risk of behavioral problems**, cyberbullying, online bullying, sleeping difficulties, eye problems (such as nearsightedness, eye fatigue, dry vision, blurred, irritation, dry eye disease) and headache. Particularly, **uncontrolled social media use increases the risk of sexting, exposure to pornography or unwanted sexual material online, and early sexual activity**.
- **Social media users face more risks online than their peers, with greater risk for those who have higher levels of digital literacy**.
- **Public and medical awareness on this issue needs to be increased and new prevention measures must be found**, starting with healthcare professionals, caregivers, and website and app developers. On the other hand, **families should educate their children about the potential dangers and risks associated with the problematic pattern of use of social networks and video games**.
- **Health and education professionals play an important role in preventing cyberbullying by educating both adolescents and families about appropriate online behavior and respect for privacy**. Likewise, they can encourage parents to develop timely and clear rules and strategies on the responsible use of multimedia devices and social networks at home and in everyday life.
- It is necessary to **reach a greater degree of consensus regarding the diagnostic criteria used for Video Game Disorder, through the selection of the most suitable psychometric instruments to investigate this problem**, as well as the clinical phenomenology that supports its use in the field of Mental health.

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¡Thank you so much!

Let`s Keep in Touch!

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