

Dr. Tamara VÁZQUEZ-BARRIO

University San Pablo CEU. Spain. tamarav@ceu.es

Dr. Teresa TORRECILLAS-LACAVE

University San Pablo CEU. Spain. teresat@ceu.es

Dr. Rebeca SUÁREZ-ÁLVAREZ

University Rey Juan Carlos. Spain. rebecasuarez@urjc.es

Gender difference within digitalization affordances for social-political participation of adolescents

Diferencias de género en las oportunidades de la digitalización para la participación sociopolítica de los adolescentes

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Abstract

Social media facilitates the acquisition of information and the debate with other users, it also opens new paths towards social participation and for an individual empowerment. However, the data indicates that only one third of young people use them for this purpose. The main objective of this research is to identify, through in-depth interviews with experts plus two discussion groups with adolescents, male and female aged 15 to 18, the opportunities that arise from digitalization for social-political participation analyse the effective use that they make of those potentialities. The conclusion is that for adolescents, the Internet is fundamentally a leisure space. Participation in public affairs has not emerged spontaneously in his speech. The reactions to the question about the usefulness of social networks as tools for social-political participation have oscillated between disinterest, ignorance and scepticism regarding their potential effects. In addition, certain barriers emerged in the case of girls who, in fear of being criticized, prefer to silence their opinions in an exercise of self-censorship.

Keywords

ICTs affordances; social-political participation; adolescents; social media; second digital divide; feminism

Resumen

Las redes sociales facilitan la adquisición de información y el debate con otros usuarios y abren nuevos caminos hacia la participación social y para el empoderamiento individual, pero los datos indican que solo un tercio de los jóvenes las utilizan con este fin. El objetivo de esta investigación es identificar, a través de entrevistas en profundidad a expertos y dos grupos de discusión con chicos y chicas de 15 a 18 años, las oportunidades que surgen de la digitalización para la participación social y política y analizar el uso efectivo que hacen de esas potencialidades. La conclusión es que para los y las adolescentes Internet es fundamentalmente un espacio de ocio. La participación en asuntos públicos no ha emergido espontáneamente en su discurso. Las reacciones ante la pregunta sobre la utilidad de las redes sociales como herramientas para la participación política y social han oscilado entre el desinterés, el desconocimiento y el escepticismo respecto a sus efectos potenciales. Además, emergieron ciertas barreras para participar en el caso de las chicas que, ante el miedo a ser criticadas, prefieren silenciar sus opiniones en un ejercicio de evidente autocensura.

Palabras clave

Oportunidades TIC; participación político-social; adolescentes; redes sociales; segunda brecha digital; feminismo

1. Introduction

The irruption of digital technologies has opened a binomial of risks and opportunities that are inevitably linked; however, the majority of studies carried out to date, focus on presenting online risks for minors (Connell, Lauricella and Wartella, 2015; Gualdo, Sánchez and Sánchez, 2015; Haddon and Mante-Meijer, 2016; Reche, Peco, López, Montilla and Romero, 2016; Giménez, Luengo and Bartrina, 2017; López Gracia, 2017; Gamito, Aristizabal and Olasolo, 2017) being more limited those who investigate the opportunities of digitalization. As Hodgkinson (2017) points out, from the academic perspective as well as in social discourse, the most controversial aspects related to active participation in social media.

Kahne, Lee and Feezell (2011) establish three main forms of online participation: (1) political or civic, (2) cultural or leisure, and (3) friendship or social relations. In the specific field of political or civic participation of adolescents we find a current thought that emphasizes the negative effects of digital technologies, according to which, Internet and social networks would reduce the level of political participation, within a general discussion, the lack of political involvement between young people (Villanueva Baselga, Aguilar and Sánchez, 2017: 75). In this current, Wojcieszak and Mutz (2009) and Gaines and Mondak (2009) affirm that Internet favours the construction of homogeneous social networks and that lack of informative variety limits personal development and political participation of citizens. Putnam (2000) also postulates that Internet weakens the degree of commitment and political participation, contending that it is a medium that distracts from those issues that are supposed to be crucial. Gil de Zúñiga, Jung and Valenzuela (2012) indicate that most of the information that is sought and exchanged through social networks is not related to public affairs, but that entertainment is more and more important than information. Villanueva Baselga, et al (2017) concludes that the dynamics of political participation of adolescents do not differ excessively from older generations and that, therefore, social networks do not seem to have affected their degree of political involvement.

On the contrary, democratic potential of the Internet is underlined by other authors, in association with other individuals (Farrell, 2012) and access to different points of view (Brundidge and Rice, 2009). It is a scientific approach that confirms that the characteristics of digital technologies offer information under unforeseen possibilities, but also for democratic participation and for individual empowerment thanks to interaction (Castells, 2009; Gillmor, 2004; Shirky, 2008; Tapscott, and Williams, 2006). In the same manner, Natal, Benítez and Ortiz (2014) show that social media is not a form exclusively for social relations, but they are building more participation and new ways of exercising citizenship. As so, the research carried out by Campbell and Kwak (2012) has indicated that the use of technologies such as mobile phones to search for information is associated with an increase in citizens' civic and political participation. Valenzuela, Park and Kees' work (2009) shows the direct relationship between the use of Facebook, the commitment to civic and political actions and that García del Hoyo and Fernández (2014) conclude that young people do not exclusively use social networks to prolong their off-line relationships, but they offer endless possibilities for active social participation.

Transcending to the data, the study fulfilled by Carmen García and Del Hoyo (2013) shows that the 26% of young people surveyed in their research stated that social networks had encouraged them to attend to some mobilization, but that they had not done so, 51.1% stated that they usually join an online event, but that they have not been encouraged to participate in the same offline event and only 19% said they had joined an online event and also participated outside the virtual realm. Another study accomplished by García, del Hoyo and Fernández (2014) indicates that only 34% of young people declare using social networks to support solidarity campaigns, 27% use them to report unfair situations and this same percentage ensures that Social networks have led them to participate in some social protest. These figures indicate that active citizens (Price, 1994) remain a minority and confirms that it is not the medium itself that can affect the civic commitment of individuals, but the way in which individuals use the medium (Gil de Zúñiga, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2012) or, in other words, "only those who adopt in real life a positive attitude towards participation in acts of citizen responsibility, use social networks to involve others and promote citizen cyber activism" (del Carmen García and Del Hoyo, 2013: 120).

It is evident that social media facilitates, not only the acquisition of information, but also the debate with other users and opens new paths towards active social participation, involving their users in events that they could hardly hear before (Gil, 2012). But beyond the potentialities, regarding the impact of social networks on real social-political participation, exist contradictions that shows it is necessary to continue analysing. With the aim of determining whether universal access to the network has some effect on the political behaviour of teenagers in general and, as this work raises, particularly for girls.

According to the available public surveys, the global preferential uses of social networks are the same for boys and girls. To maintain contact with friends is the most important daily online activity of adolescents. They feel the need to always be connected (Gamito, Aristizabal and Olasolo, 2017) and use social networks

to have fun and interact with their friends, to meet others and exchange messages and images (Ballesta, Lozano and Cerezo, 2015), when asked what advantages they perceive from ICTs, they focus the benefits mainly on the communicative possibilities they offer (Amorós, Buxarrais and Casas, 2002).

Although in the global analysis of the use of social media there are no variations by gender, according to the range and type of activities practiced there are some differences. Games are the activity that presents the most differences according to sex. Games are more frequent amongst boys of all ages, while teenage girls share more photos, videos or music and visit more profiles on social networks. García and Espinosa (2018: 136) agree on this conclusion. They point out that the use of video games is a mainly male social practice and they also find differentiated game patterns between boys and girls who do play. They dedicate more time to them and prefer those that incite personal achievement, whilst the number of girls who play frequently is small and those who do, prefer them with social characteristics.

The use of social networks to communicate with parents and peers presents outstanding differences according to gender. Girls use social networks more in contact with their parents (18% vs. 13%) and, above all, with their peers (61% and 49%, respectively) (Garmendia Larrañaga, Jiménez Iglesias, Casado del Río and Mascheroni, 2016: 36).

With regard to political participation, study 2736 of the CIS (2007) unveils important gender differences. Men, watch or listen to more news daily than women on the radio or television (77.3% vs. 74%), watch more political programs (19.5% vs. 13.8%), are more interested in politics (much- 8.1% versus 5.2%; and quite-25.6% versus 16.9%), daily talk more about political issues (10.9% vs. 8.4%) and try to convince others about their views more than women (5.8% vs. 3.2%). Also, men have better self-perception, compared to 20.2% of women: a 10.9% of survey respondents strongly agree with the statement that "generally politics is so complicated that people like me cannot understand what happens".

Differentiated patterns are detected as to participating in associations or organizations. Men participate more than women in attending demonstrations (14% vs. 11.6%), participate in a strike (5.7% vs. 3.7%), contact politicians to express their opinion (9.1 % vs. 5.8%) and attend a rally (11.8% vs. 9%). Women have a greater participation than men in signing petitions (23.2% versus 20.1%), buying products for political reasons or to favour the environment (18.6% versus 21.1%), boycott products for political reasons (21.1% vs. 18.6%) and donate or raise money for some cause (28.7% vs. 21.9%). According to the above, the type of associations to which men and women belong also differ and manifest gender biases. Men participate more than women in political parties, unions, professional and sport associations and cultural or leisure groups, while there are more women associated with parishes, religious or charitable associations, environmental associations, pacifists or human rights and other type of voluntary associations.

In the CIS study 2790 (2009), gender-differentiated associations are reinforced. Women prevail in NGOs, AMPAs, and neighbourhood associations, also religious or parochial, cultural or artistic organizations; while men do it in political parties, labour unions, business organizations and consumer associations.

As to the youngest (15-29 years), the CIS study 3039 (2014) shows that the percentages of correlation are lower than when considering the population as a whole, but they are maintained, although with gender profiles closer to each other. Young women outperform young men in religious, cultural, charitable, welfare or civic (neighbourhood or consumer) and environmental associations; whilst male partners are more prone to sports associations, social clubs, students, political parties and labour unions.

Regarding online political activities, according to the CIS study 2736 (2007), it is also higher for men than for women, except in two activities: donations (7.9% compared to 8.9%) and signing a petition or joining a campaign or demonstration (13.2% versus 15.5%). In all the other, men have declared to be more participatory:

Table 1: Online political activities

Activity	Men	Women
Contact a politician or a political party through the internet	4,9	4,1
Contact an administration to protest	17,1	15,1
Communicate with an association or organization	30,6	26,5
Write comments on a forum, blog or website about up to date social or political issues	22,1	17,5

Source: own elaboration developed from P28 CIS study 2736

2. Methodology

The objective of this research is to identify the opportunities that arise from digitalization for the social and political participation of adolescents and analyse the effective use they make of those capacities.

The research questions that guide this work are the following:

Q.1: What are the opportunities that arise from digitalization in terms of new forms of political and social participation?

Q.2: What are the specific gender opportunities for political-social participation?

Q.3: What are the models of social and political participation of adolescents online?

Q.4: How do girls perceive the opportunities of digitalization for their contribution to public affairs?

Q.5: What are the barriers that adolescents experience when they try to express their opinion?

To answer these questions, five interviews have been thoroughly performed with experts in the subject as well as two discussion groups, technique that allows to incorporate "the voice of the participants, their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and reflections as expressed by themselves" (Sandín, 2004: 125), as they perceive them and collect large amount of discursive and conversational material that, when processed and analysed, enables a more complete and clear understanding of reality.

The research is composed mainly by teenagers from Madrid, between 15 and 18 years old. The samples are 20 minors; 10 boys and 10 girls. The sample of the discussion groups was determined following structural criteria. Through a homogeneous group (Krueger, 1991; Morgan, 1988) formed by young people who had to meet the following criteria:

- All participants are between 15 and 17 years old on the date of the development of the discussion group, without exceptions, 50% each.
- All participants have active social media accounts. To determine this aspect, the recruitment questionnaire asked how many networks they used and how often. Response options included Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Tinder. In which all used at least two of these social networks.
- All participants use social networks daily. In the same recruitment questionnaire they were asked how often they used social networks. All selected participants answered to this question that every or almost every day.
- All participants generate content (post, comment, share, upload photos).

The participants in the groups were selected in a professional manner, having been verified as to their suitability through the SQC, the ANEIMO System of Quality of Collections. The criteria for selecting the participants in the groups and the script were established by the European Institute for Gender Equality, funding entity for the research in which 10 countries participated. This article offers the results obtained in Spain. The dates of completion of the field work were February 28 and March 1, 2018.

The groups were moderated by an expert with the support of two annotators. Each discussion group ran for 100 minutes. They were recorded in audio, video and transcribed. The information obtained was analysed with microanalysis technique for the subsequent establishment of concepts. The transcripts were analysed paragraph by paragraph, fragmented into meaningful units and classified into open codes. The information was finally ordered in some cases transcribing literally the most relevant statements made by the participants.

Interviews with experts were conducted in person with an approximate duration of 90 minutes each and were based on a semi-structured script. The specific objectives of the interviews were:

1. Provide information concerning digitalization opportunities for young people.
2. Support the conclusion and interpretation of the focus group discussions.
3. Indicate relevant initiatives, measures and policy approaches developed in Spain.

The in depth interviews took place during the first semester of 2018. Being transcribed and analysed following the same methodology as the discussion groups.

3. Results

3.1. Digitalization opportunities for political and social participation

The interviewed experts coincide that Internet is a medium for individuals, groups and their causes. This aspect is especially relevant for women, who find internet a channel to: (1) express their opinions, (2) make other women visible and (3) report harassment and inequality situations.

E3: Internet is a powerful channel to convey ideas correlated to gender equality and give women visibility, thus creating models for girls and adolescents. In history books women do not appear except as male escorts. Everything is focused on the history of the "leaders" of humanity; the story is told by men, were woman has no presence. On internet you can change the perception of history. Girls and young people can access information about other women.

E3: Internet is a good complaint channel for groups that would find complicated through different media. An example is the #Metoo Movement. Anonymity is negative for those who use it to commit crimes, but it also allows public complaints that would not otherwise be possible.

Digitization allows evading isolation and improving self-esteem, which for many women and girls is particularly relevant. The network allows reaching other women, other stories and opens a world of possibilities, for example, through TED talks.

E2: "It is not the most obvious, they are not the most present and most accessible content on the web, because the mainstream media of the online world reproduce and amplify the gender stereotypes that exist in the offline world, but if know and want to search, there are contents that can open windows of opportunity for the equality and empowerment of women"

E3: There are teenagers who claim that in the technological context they can show themselves as they are, they can show more facets of their life, their personality and discover that there are other people who think like them, who have their same political, religious, musical, cultural concerns, etc.

LGBT groups, migrants, trans movement or reduced groups organized around particular interests, can also find on the internet a community that makes them feel "part of". These support networks allow people to get out of their isolation, give them the possibility to realize that what happens to them is not only to them and that they can be connected. Many times it is difficult to find these networks, you have to know what you are looking for and how to find it, but when you find the code you can change your life: "Seeing others gives perspective. It is traveling with the mind "" allows them to discover other worlds, verify things they think about, experiment, discover..."

Internet is also a tool for political participation, collective action and youth activism. In this sense, the network's distinctive opportunities are, on the one hand, the ability to reach citizens directly and, on the other, the ability to use digital services for mobilization in an almost personalized way. Before it was necessary to be part of an association and now one can start a movement outreaching to people autonomously.

E2: "The Internet allows you to find the channels to reach other people, manage collective action. Before I was more professional, now anyone can carry out initiatives".

However, in terms of opportunities, all the experts interviewed insist on indicating that it is necessary to differentiate between those offered by the internet and those that children take advantage of. Internet favours and facilitates mobilisation, but it depends on the personal attitude towards these type of actions.

E1: "There have always been young people who have mobilised for certain causes, members of associations that defend certain rights, people who sign for certain initiatives."

These attitudes move to the online world. Internet favours and enhances participation for a positive attitude towards these type of actions therefore people have ease to take action.

E1: "The change is in the facilities that the Internet implies to participate when there is an attitude prone to participation"

Since personal attitudes determine online political and social participation, inequalities do not disappear.

E2: "Ways of being and doing what we see in the offline are transferred to the online world. It is a space that inhabits us and inequalities are transferred, with other formats, so it is not surprising that men are more proactive, that they look for more content on internet and women are more observant, because that is what happens also in the offline field".

3.2. Motivational analysis of the use of Internet and digital technologies: the place of socio-political contribution

All boys and girls interviewed stated that they use Internet on a daily basis. Their main online activities are: accessing social networks, listening to music, watching videos and movies, finding information of all kinds (academic, current affairs and searching for work), reading books, buying and selling, playing video games, meeting people and to communicate with others. All these uses can be grouped into three broad categories: information, communication and entertainment. In the spontaneous speech, no participant referred to political or social participation among their usual online activities.

Regarding the search for information, the use of the Internet as a "problem solver" is evident. Young people search the Internet for problem-solving of any characteristics they might face more than for information on current news, which is already an indicative in lack of attention to public affairs, whether political or social.

Within informative usage, Internet is primarily a communicative channel with family and friends and a great source of entertainment.

When asked about what is the best thing about Internet, most suggest YouTube, Netflix and social networks as their preferred sites, which reinforces the observation about the ludic use of Internet between participants. One of the experts interviewed remarks this issue in relation to that:

E1: "entertainment is mainly based on watching YouTube videos, which is the most digital service along with social networks used to interact with peers. As for the selection of social networks, they are where their peer group is. Currently, children and adolescents have moved from Facebook to Instagram and use this network to interact socially. It is a continuity of their offline relationships. The deal is usually frivolous and superficial".

In accordance with expressed above by the participants in both groups, the most used social network is Instagram; All participants use it daily. In general, it is used to share photos of personal and social nature, for example, when visiting a place or when they are amongst friends, also to follow famous people such as influencers or football players, although most of the interactions are within friends themselves.

Most have their Instagram account under a private option. But even so, they don't know all their contacts or followers. The criteria to become friends in social networks are lenient. In some cases they may be known "by sight", such as friends of friends, but in other cases it may be a cause of recommendations that the application itself proposes.

Ma (G1): "I have two Instagram accounts, one for my friends (private) and one for music. I want to have followers in the music world and logically that cannot be private".

Mi (G1): "You make friends with people who have the same tastes. Friends in common. You can meet someone by look at and start talking on Instagram, and then, friends".

At this point, a matter in relation to security and privacy offered by these networks emerged spontaneously in both groups. In all cases there is a perception of loss of control, although it is more pronounced among girls. This difference in the perception of danger that was evidenced during the discussion groups, was also pointed out by another of the experts interviewed:

E2: Internet is a space of freedom, although women experience it to a lesser extent. Women detect the dangers of networks much more than men. They delete more contacts because they receive insults, harassment ... Triple the detection of the problem. They are much more cautious and suffer more the consequences, (...) what happens off line is reproduced and has to do with the education that each one receives. The perception of fear and danger of women doubles that of men. It also occurs in offline hazards. The woman returns home at night and is afraid and the man is not.

Just as Instagram was alluded to as the preferred application to share content of a personal and social nature, Twitter was identified as the most oriented network for discussions and current affairs. Some participants had an account on this site, but not the majority, which once again demonstrates the prevalence of ludic use of the network.

Some participants also have accounts on Snapchat and Facebook, although there is evidence of a minor participation in these applications and for communicative purposes with their inner circle, in no case mention was made of the use of this network for political and social participation.

P (G1): "Facebook used it more to gossip. Twitter is more in case I feel like spilling out something, things that piss me off, to give my opinion. Instagram, I see more private because I upload photos of me and my personal environment. On Twitter I express my opinion".

3.3. Social and political participation of adolescents online

In the spontaneous discourse of the participants there is no political and social participation among their uses of social networks. When they are explicitly asked about the possibilities offered by technologies for participation in public affairs, apathy is observed in both groups, with the exception of only one participant amongst men.

The first reactions to the question about the usefulness of social networks as tools for political and social participation have oscillated in both cases between disinterest, ignorance and scepticism regarding their potential effects.

- Disinterest. There is no perceived enthusiasm in getting involved or intervening in the public course linked to social and political issues. None have mentioned that they follow accounts related to political or social issues on the networks and none intend to do so.

- Ignorance. Only two participants, both women, knew the Change.org platform. One of them said that she had entered the website sometimes, but that he never supported any request since she had no clarity about what was done next with the signatures. The other participant did sign a petition shared by a friend, but also expressed doubts about the usefulness of this medium.

The (G1): "There is a platform called Change.org for petitions. I almost voted sometime, but in the end I didn't. Because I don't know what they are going to do with it".

Ma (G1): "I have used that platform sometimes. My friends or my mother sent me something that was important to them or to me and I voted. You don't really know what the result will be, but I voted anyway".

- Scepticism. There is a general feeling that a tweet or a post will not have any effect on reality. For this reason, participation in public discussions has been characterized as a "waste of time", a "meaningless", and "do not lead anywhere". The idea that it is impossible to convince other people or change their minds in the debates has been very present.

E (G1): "It is not fear, it is passivity. I don't want to get into that because people love to argue. You give your opinion, but you will never convince them, it is a waste of time. They don't even try to understand. Of course my opinion contributes, but I see how people argue and it's ridiculous".

E (G1): "I look the other way to simplify. I don't feel like getting into that. People who participate in these things are not going to change their minds, it seems like a waste of time".

Another reason that participants in both groups adduce for not participating in debates concerning social or political issues in social networks is the tone of these conversations. Everyone agrees that the discussions become easily aggressive and nothing changes for more than one gets involved.

Ma (G1): "I use my social networks to share photos that I like and that. But when I read comments on Instagram stories, for example, people argue a lot and attack each other. Then people start to join one side or the other ... and in the end this leads to nothing".

(G1): "I never give my opinion, but I do see that those who do are a bit extreme sometimes. If you don't match them, they give you a follow or they answer back".

Enquiring a little more, we can observe that amongst girls there is not only adversity regarding social and political issues, but there is also fear of the possible reactions generated by their intervention in public, which translates into a striking self-censorship, which it is not observed in the case of their male partners.

Some participants have appealed that if they think about "serious" issues, they can be criticised, they can lose friends or be labelled and catalogued as something they are not. Fear ends up giving priority to a conservative sense that leads them to prefer to remain silent, rather than expose themselves to the possibility of being criticised or entering into controversies with other people.

My (G1): "It gives me something because you express yourself and someone else may bother you, I prefer not to comment. Because I know someone is going to answer. When they make sexist comments, I don't like it, but I keep quiet. It gives me creeps".

Ma (G1): "I try to be careful. In your circle of friends, most people usually think the same as you, but I know that some friends think differently about certain issues and I never talk about it because I know it will generate controversy and can affect our friendship".

P (G1): "If you give many times your opinion and people don't agree with it, even if they don't know you, they'll label you".

In general it is perceived that girls do not want to aid situations of conflict with closest people or situations of dispute due to differences in opinion among strangers. In this context, they say they prefer to maintain neutral attitudes, not provocative, for fear.

Only one participant of the group of boys showed optimism towards the possibilities of networks for political and social participation amongst young people.

R (G2): "Social networks are a pillar for the expression of young people. The more people use the networks, the more they can get involved in these movements. Fewer people stay silent. Expressing your ideas on social networks is important".

3.4. From spontaneous speech to the #MeToo campaign

When the example of the international #MeToo campaign was cited, reactions in the two groups were very different. In girls, the tone of the conversation changed and every participant showed their support and adherence to the content of the campaign, with different nuances in the level of enthusiasm with the theme.

Girls considered that the campaign was successful and addresses problems felt by all women, including them. Although the focus was not the content of the campaign, this point gave rise to stories that showed, to some extent, that all the girls know from first-hand the macho harassment, either virtual or physical.

Some girls expressed a higher level of support for the campaign and considered it "very important." In other cases it was also possible to see agreement with the content, but expectation and enthusiasm were diminished and even certain scepticism about its potential results. One girl said that social networks are a tool to empower women and that this campaign serves to generate awareness, another participant said she does not believe that these actions change the mentality of the stalkers.

Overall, girls expressed that they could adhere to a campaign like this on social networks, although none had done so due to the reservations mentioned in the previous section, however, they all made it clear that they would not participate in a mobilization in the street and the reasoning coincided with those expressed regarding online mobilization: fear and serious doubts about the real changes that these manifestations may produce, but in offline mobilization, even greater than in click activism.

Ma (G1): "I don't like demonstrations. They give me 'the chills', but I would give online support to those people who have had such a bad time".

Lu (G1): "If I have to go to a demonstration, I will think about it before acting. Sometimes a manifestation does not change anything. For example, a rapist is people who are sick and will never change even if you go to a demonstration".

P (G1): "I could support, but not go to a demonstration. It's okay to join people who think like you, but usually nothing changes".

The example of the #MeToo campaign caused some girls to change or clarify what they had previously stated regarding participation in public affairs through digital technologies. Some participants expressed a more optimistic view regarding the potential of social networks as an expression instrument.

E (G1): "Now social networks are used to empower the role of women. It was not like this in the past. These campaigns are to generate awareness in people".

Ma (G1): "I think we should not keep quiet and help change. It is a first step. I can't do anything for those girls, but the public complaint is fine. That's why it's good that these campaigns exist".

P (G1): "It's just a tweet, you can express it or not. Probably nobody attacks you and you are helping people who need it. We see it every day in the news. If you join, and the next one too, it shows up".

Although the atmosphere of the conversation changed, some more favourable appreciations appeared apropos of participation in social life and about the use of social networks as tools for this purpose, the previously mentioned reservations reappeared. Again we were able to observe the existence of fears and barriers for the participation of girls in social-political affairs, and also the feeling of fear in some cases to be labelled "feminists".

Ma (G1): "When you talk about such an important topic online, I like to give my opinion, but you are very exposed to bullying. You can defend your ideas, but other people can attack you saying that you are a 'feminist' and wasn't your intention. You can support something, but carefully because people tag you or misunderstand you".

As to males, the reactions were very different. The majority showed responsive reflex regarding the campaign and the theme in general, whilst a single participant had a positive assessment. The first opinions raised a mixture of indifference and disinterest that quickly led to questioning.

Some interventions distrust the veracity of the stories expressed by women, while in other cases Twitter was also questioned as the means indicated for these complaints. These reactions showed an absolute absence of empathy with the claim and its protagonists.

G (G2): "I can also create a user called BonnyLeclair and say that I was sexually abused and it means nothing".

Go (G2): "I sincerely believe that Twitter is not the place for this. They should report it if they have evidence, and prove it. On Twitter, this can be a lie".

Again, the participant who showed a greater interest in political and social issues marked a counterpoint in the conversation. From his point of view, this campaign is fair and positive. Faced with this opinion, some participants qualified their point of view, which was structured in relation to distrust anyway. According to these opinions, some approaches of the #MeToo movement and feminism in general are reasonable, but not to the extent that they "outreach".

In this esteem, several participants commented that women who implement these ideas often want to overturn the established order and seek to impose the superiority of women over men. In the same line of reasoning, they have expressed that the demand for equality is fine, but not the desire for women to "exceed men". For these reasons, a participant interpreted that this movement "is radicalizing".

G (G2): "I do not consider myself part of any movement nor am I in favour of any. To the extent that equality is sought, it is fine, but not the superiority of one gender over another".

M (G2): "If you want gender equality, that's fine. But not to the extremes that they want to be more, that they want to step over one other".

This defensive attitude of some children could also be expressed in interventions that clarified that they had not abused anyone. One participant stated that many times "all men are in the same boat", which he considered an unfair generalization.

M (G2): "I don't like it when they say 'men are bad because of this and that'. I am a man and I didn't do any of those things. It can't be generalized".

Again, some participants referred to the futility of manifesting through social networks. To this point, the boy who had shown a different opinion from the rest said that the powers of social networks were being underestimated.

R (G2): "I think it is good to have means of expression. It is a way of making these issues public. Sexual harassment against women is obvious so it is very good that there are such movements".

This earned him adherence of two other participants, although the look on the theme of these boys was closer to the other half of the partakers, where held an open active position towards the subject.

A relevant fact is that most men identified this issue as a central part of women's agenda beyond social networks.

Ma (G2): "I don't follow many women (on social networks) but I can't stop seeing news about feminism and that, all the time".

The (G1): "On Instagram everyone talks about feminism and about cases of gender violence".

Beyond this particular campaign, the predominant trend of the debate was also marked by disinterest in social-political issues. In this way, we can see that social networks offer a channel for expression and organization to young people, but that it is inserted into a general framework marked by political and social disaffection. Again we can analyse that, networks, despite opening new perspectives and horizons of participation and expression, greater extents reflect and reproduce the general mood that exists in relation to political and social issues. This vision was clearly expressed by a participant from the second group:

J (G2): "It depends on the person, not the social networks. No matter how much is encouraged in the networks, if the person does not want to get involved, he will not do it".

4. Discussion and conclusions

The Internet has enormous potential for political and social participation among adolescents and the young. It also has qualities such as anonymity, interactivity and horizontality that enables the empowerment of citizens and, especially, of women and organized groups around particular interests, but there is no awareness among young people about these opportunities.

For the experts interviewed, the main opportunities that arise from digitalization in terms of political and social participation are: (1) a channel for individuals, groups and their causes, (2) means to get out of isolation and improve self-esteem and (3) a tool for collective action, protest and youth activism. These opportunities are especially relevant for women, who find on the internet a channel: (1) to express their opinions, (2) to make other women visible and (3) to report situations of harassment and inequality.

All participants in the discussion groups use the Internet on a daily basis. The main function of social networks for young people has to do with their social relationships. Digital technologies are part of your daily life in school, family and in relationships with friends.

In terms of opportunities, for them the Internet is fundamentally a space for leisure. The main advantages of social networks that have been identified in the conversation have to do with entertainment, communication with friends and acquaintances, and with the search for information. Participation in public affairs has not spontaneously emerged in his speech in either group.

When introducing the question of participation in public life, first detected is an important level of disaffection and disinterest. In both groups, the participants have been oblivious to social-political issues on social networks and outside of them, and only a single participant was interested in public affairs. His point of view contrasted with the other participants. According to this young man, social networks are an expression channel and have enormous potential to make claims heard and organized, and thus promote social change.

The reactions to the question about the convenience of social networks as tools for political and social participation have oscillated between disinterest, ignorance and scepticism regarding their potential effects. No enthusiasm is perceived in the participants as getting involved or intervening in the public scope linked to any social-political issues; they do not follow current information and are unaware of the existence and usefulness of platforms such as Change.org. In addition, there is an extensive feeling that online participation and mobilization due to social or political causes will not have any effect on reality, which allows us to conclude that there is no awareness among young people about the repercussions and potential these social networks can have. At this point, this study coincides with the results obtained by Subirats, Fuster, Moreno, Berlinguer and Salcedo (2014: 132) who point out that "utility as a lever for changing things is also not entirely clear (young people). They doubt the real impact of the mobilizations in the Network and in the street. They seem to face a wall. And they are aware of the limits of "clicking" and "liking". But, that is their world and they continue to interact in it." Also including distaste towards chats regarding to public affairs with an aggressive character.

Besides the lack of interest in these issues, certain participation barriers also emerged, especially in the case of girls. All have agreed that it is not worth intervening in debates on social networks. According to them, online discussions inevitably lead to confrontation and expose them to possible hostilities. Even when they have formed an opinion on some political or social issue, the girls clarify that they prefer to remain silent and "not to get involved." The main fear is to be criticized or labelled, as we can see, that girls are very aware of the dangers and risks that exist in social networks, such as harassment, cyber bullying, etc., so much that we can perceive that they are afraid. In this aspect the results are coincident with those obtained by Alonso-Ruido et al. (2015) who argue that "it is they who are most aware of the danger of social networks, stating that their use can become "dangerous" or "very dangerous" in 44.2% of cases compared to 35.1% mentioned of boys".

This fear has led them to develop a self-censorship, non-existent in the case of boys, and which highlights the validity of the second digital divide among adolescents (Castaño, 2008), a group in which the first gap has been completely overcome, based on Internet access.

Specifically addressing to social networks, Instagram is the most used and everyone has an account on this network. In general, they use it to upload photos and interact with friends, but also follow famous figures, such as football players in the case of boys and influencers in the case of girls, which largely reproduce certain gender stereotypes. All participants manage more than one profile in social networks. Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter are the other networks they use, although to a lesser extent than Instagram. The segmentation of use according to application is revealed, with Twitter being the only social network related to socio-political participation.

When the #MeToo campaign mentioned, the tone amongst girls was modified. All shared campaign content, this generated a climate of greater optimism regarding the possibility of promoting changes and participating through social networks. The previously discussed barriers did not disappear, but other elements entered the debate. All considered that this is a very meaningful issue, and expressed their full adherence to these slogans.

As to the male position, there was a participant who agreed with the content of the campaign (the same boy who had already been interested in political issues). But others had negative and indifferent reactions. Half of the subjects showed a lot of resistance against the #MeToo approaches and had a defensive attitude. They considered that feminist proposals tend to be radical and pretend that women surpass men.

The common point evidenced by the two groups is that the issue of feminism and gender equality programs are established in public debate. Both boys and girls let us see that it is a problem present in social networks, in schools and in the media.

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