

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL EDUCATORS ABOUT DIGITAL LEISURE FOR THE INCLUSION OF SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS EDUCADORES SOCIALES SOBRE EL OCIO DIGITAL EDUCATIVO PARA LA INCLUSIÓN DE LOS JÓVENES EN DIFICULTAD SOCIAL

A PERCEPÇÃO DOS EDUCADORES SOCIAIS SOBRE O LAZER DIGITAL EDUCATIVO PARA A INCLUSÃO DOS JOVENS EM DIFICULDADES SOCIAIS

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ABSTRACT: Online leisure in social disadvantaged groups of young people is, from the standpoint of socio-educational intervention, a current concern for the potential reach of inclusive processes. The objective of the present research is to explore the digital leisure practices implemented by socially disadvantaged young people in order to identify valid options for personal development and social inclusion from an educational perspective. Data were collected through open interviews which were conducted with a sample of nineteen social educators with accredited experience of working with socially disadvantaged young people. Data analysis through the technique of content analysis permitted three main categories to be established which comprised twenty-two codes. The categories described the meaning of digital leisure experiences in contexts of social difficulty, digital leisure and values in contexts of social difficulty, and the educational perspective and action strategies for digital leisure with vulnerable young people. Following analysis and interpretation a number of significant results were uncovered. These included current trends for this group to develop immediate and sustained leisure experiences online, easy entertainment, and the imitation of scarcely educational fashion trends and stereotypes. In consideration of these results, it is necessary to find alternatives for developing online activities. These should make it possible disadvantaged groups to enjoy a type of digital leisure which has educational value, enabling personal and social development as a vehicle for inclusion in the millennial society.

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<p>PALABRAS CLAVE: Ocio juventud dificultad social tecnología estrategias educativas</p>	<p>RESUMEN: El ocio en la red en colectivo de jóvenes en dificultad social es, para la intervención socioeducativa, una preocupación actual por el posible alcance sobre los procesos inclusivos. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar las prácticas de ocio digital que implementan los jóvenes en dificultad social para identificar opciones válidas para el desarrollo personal y la inclusión social desde una perspectiva educativa. Los datos fueron recogidos mediante la realización de entrevistas abiertas a una muestra de diecinueve educadores sociales con experiencia acreditada en el trabajo con jóvenes en dificultad social. El estudio de los datos, mediante la técnica de análisis de contenido, permitió establecer tres categorías centrales recogidas en veintidós códigos. Significado de las experiencias de ocio digital en contextos de dificultad social, ocio digital y valores en contextos de dificultad social y perspectiva educativa y estrategias de acción en el ocio digital con jóvenes vulnerables. Tras el análisis e interpretación se descubrió, entre otros resultados significativos, la tendencia actual del colectivo a desarrollar experiencias de ocio en la red sostenidas en la inmediatez, diversión fácil e imitación de conductas de moda y estereotipos escasamente educativos. Atendiendo a estos resultados, es necesario buscar alternativas para el desarrollo de actividades en la red, que permitan al colectivo disfrutar de un ocio digital con valor educativo que posibilite el desarrollo personal y social como vehículo para su inclusión en la sociedad del milenio.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Lazer juventude dificuldade social tecnologia estrategias educacionais</p>	<p>RESUMO: O lazer na rede em coletivo de jovens em dificuldade social é, para a intervenção sócio-educativa, uma preocupação atual para o possível alcance dos processos inclusivos. Esta pesquisa visa explorar as práticas de lazer digital implementadas por jovens em dificuldade social, a fim de identificar opções válidas para o desenvolvimento pessoal e a inclusão social a partir de uma perspectiva educativa. Os dados foram coletados através de entrevistas abertas com uma amostra de dezenove educadores sociais com experiência comprovada no trabalho com jovens em dificuldades sociais. O estudo dos dados, utilizando a técnica de análise de conteúdo, permitiu o estabelecimento de três categorias centrais coletadas em vinte e dois códigos. Significado das experiências de lazer digital em contextos de dificuldade social, lazer digital e valores em contextos de dificuldade social e perspectiva educativa e estratégias de ação no lazer digital com jovens vulneráveis. Após a análise e interpretação descobriu-se, entre outros resultados significativos, a tendência atual do grupo para desenvolver experiências de lazer na rede sustentadas no imediatismo, no divertimento fácil e na imitação de comportamentos de moda e estereótipos pouco educativos. Tendo em conta estes resultados, é necessário procurar alternativas para o desenvolvimento de atividades na rede, que permitam ao grupo desfrutar de um lazer digital com valor educativo que possibilite o desenvolvimento pessoal e social como veículo para a sua inclusão na sociedade do milénio.</p>

1. Introduction

Currently, young people enjoy leisure experiences which cross normal boundaries of space and time, as a good part of their activity has transferred into the digital setting. It is, therefore, understood that “the internet has substantially modified the free time and leisure of young people” (Viñals and Cuenca, 2016, p. 61).

This situation highlights that online leisure has now become an extra setting in the life of contemporary societies. The implications of this for human development make it essential that, in all ambits, education in relation to leisure aligns with pedagogical models of social education. In the words of Cuenca (2014, p. 28), such models must recognise leisure “as an element of personal development that facilitates individuals, communities and societies to access higher degrees of humanisation”.

This orientation contemplates socio-educational work in relation to digital leisure which puts the individual at the forefront. In this way, the

outcomes of interactions can be observed between individuals and the technological setting in which they participate. From this, sets of actions can be implemented through online networks which result in emotional benefits (Ballesteros and Picazo, 2018, p. 69) and, as indicated by Rivera-Vargas (2018), make it possible for recipients to develop feelings of belonging and participation. Consequently, this positively impacts upon socialisation processes. Thus, a perspective of leisure is proposed which attends to the humanist dimension and its potential as a cohesive element in society (Lázaro-Fernández and Bru-Ronda, 2016; Morata, Palasí, Marzo and Pulido 2019; Vasco-González and Pérez, 2017).

Within this concept of leisure as an inclusive and cohesive factor of society, disadvantaged young people offer cause for concern from the ambit of social pedagogy. The critical development of this group is compromised by contextual experiences which negatively impact upon their chances for inclusion. Digital leisure sees them taking control of the digital technologies available

at their fingertips, in order to resolve problems when striving to construct their own life project (Madariaga and Romero, 2016).

Thus, online leisure provides an easy resource to escape from tension generated within the analogue environment (Ricoy and Ameneiros, 2016). Lebrero *et al.* (2014) link the practice of online leisure to low quality leisure in situations where disadvantage is evident. The risks of this can include losing the sense of reality and dependence (Echeburúa and Corral, 2010; Sosa *et al.*, 2019). In relation with this idea, another of the risks that seems to concern the socio-educational community is that which suggests that these online practices involve passive or individualistic entertainment experiences. This is seen in the tendency of this group to displace their free time from other settings to the rooms of their house or residence (López, Sarrate and Lebrero 2016, p. 141). In this way, young people are faced with the freedom offered by digital networks to stay constantly connected with friends and quickly relate with strangers by sending instant messages (Tejada, Castaño and Romero, 2019).

This reflects, therefore, the need for social education to implement educational action within digital leisure as a means of ensuring the “digital inclusion of the group, in this way guarantying social inclusion” (Zermeño, 2019, p. 4029). All members of the community can be included through recognition of the value of educational methods which relate to the new digital culture, contemplating access to digital leisure opportunities for personal development, and the personal and digital inclusion of those with specific needs, amongst them, socially disadvantaged youths.

This group uses digital devices to operate within the technological setting, with 99.1 % reporting such practices (INE, 2019). They also have innate abilities when it comes to technology use due to them being digital natives. Despite this, they present large deficiencies in ICT training and the handling of digital information. This is evidenced by Cabero and Marín (2017, p. 36), who report that these groups display the second and third characteristics of the digital gap: lack of training to access information and difficulty managing this information in an operational way. This is explained by Palma (2019, p. 32) who stated: “under the appearance of totally mastering digital devices, given that they were born with them, serious deficiencies emerge in relation to rational use, with the serious consequence of being implicit, of going undetected”.

It is precisely this issue that differentiates digital leisure experiences in situations of social difficulty. In other words, the more or less competent

use of technology and ability shown by young people who are disadvantaged in the digital society, and the extent to which they are able to take advantage of opportunities as digital natives (Melendro, García-Castilla and Goig, 2016). Such opportunities have been eroded due to, amongst other aspects, family environments that do not provide these young people with the tools necessary to develop the precise skills needed to tackle the Knowledge Society (Darvin and Salandro, 2019). Thus, parents of these individuals are observed to have fewer resources, lack skills and interest in using digital devices, and lack the ability to transmit knowledge in relation to the educational uses of such devices. This evidences an educational family model of ICT use in disadvantaged settings which is characterised by various aspects. Such aspects include lack of control, permissibility and careless use of social networks (Vasco-González, 2018), resulting in a greater risk of suffering from cyber-bullying. This is evidenced in the study conducted by Castro, Vargas and Huerta (2019), which links these family models to the likelihood of suffering or exercising violence through online networks.

This contextually unfavourable reality demands a set of socio-educational intervention strategies. These will enable disadvantaged young people to move towards digital leisure models which have educational value for development, promote values previously set forth by Rivera-Vargas (2018) and, resultantly, improve socialisation processes.

Achievement of this alignment is viable through the proposal made by Melendro, González and Bravo (2013). This proposes that, when working with vulnerable young people, educational interventions should be extended into the various settings encouraged by the Information and Knowledge Society. In this sense, educational strategies should be considered within the digital environment which take advantage of the interest shown by socially disadvantaged young people in activities which take place within the online setting (López *et al.* 2016, p. 133). Further, their innate skills for handling technology should also be capitalised on (Gros, 2003; Vasco-González and Pérez, 2017; Prensky, 2001, 2011).

2. Background and objectives

In consideration of the aforementioned, research work is described that observes, from the perspective of educators, the educational opportunities related with online leisure that emerge in the previously described risk group. The aim of this is to improve the personal and social reality in

which they find themselves. In order to approach this proposed work, a set of specific objectives were outlined which focused on studying, identifying and interpreting digital leisure practices in this social group. This permitted fulfilment of the general aim of exploring the digital leisure practices implemented by socially disadvantaged young people. From this, valid digital leisure options will be identified for personal development and social inclusion from an educational perspective.

3. Method

The present research takes a qualitative perspective, guided by elements of validity set forth by Feuerherm, Towne and Shavelson (NRC 2002, p. 7) as shared precepts for research in the educational sciences. In particular, we attended to the requirements of asking meaningful questions that can be empirically researched, and obtaining results that can be replicated and generalised throughout other studies.

3.1. Participants

Interest of the present research is centred on understanding the perceptions of socio-educational professionals based on their own personal experience. Thus, informants were selected according to fulfilment of the following criteria: academic training in the ambit of educational sciences, availability, and professional experience with the group and context under investigation. In consideration of these parameters and the difficulties posed by work in this context, a group of nineteen informants was recruited, with these being distributed between socio-occupational and socio-educational care programs. All informants worked with disadvantaged young people aged between 16 and 21 years, and had an average of 10.3 years of experience working in the socio-educational setting. Specifically, the sample included one therapeutic pedagogy teacher, three psychology Masters, six social work and eight education graduates, and a primary school teacher. All participants were informed of the research aims and asked to provide express consent to take part in the interviews. Researchers guaranteed that all testimonies would be kept anonymous.

3.2. Instrument

Selection of the data collection instrument considered the specific nature of the context in which the research took place. Thus, an open interview was designed which contained 28 questions

focused on the themes of leisure, technology and education. The interview approach could be adapted to demands and objectives as they developed, and were flexible to the interests of the interviewee. In order to verify instrument validity, questions were submitted to an expert panel. The six members mainly considered observations in relation to the breadth of content, clarity, redaction and obtained adequacy. Judges rated the presented items highly. This confirmed that it was appropriate to use the instrument in its entirety, without modifying the number of elements it comprised. Likewise, a positive evaluation was required on behalf of the General Sub-directorate for Family and Children of Madrid Council, in addition to the program director, to carry out the interviews. This guaranteed appropriateness of items to the population to which the research was directed. Following their favourable approval, a pilot interview was conducted with the aim of verifying the belonging and adequacy of content within an estimated completion time of 50 minutes. The positive result of this activity enabled data collection processes to go ahead.

3.3. Procedure

Interviews were carried out within the offices of each of the five socio-educational centres held by the program, distributed across the 21 districts of Madrid. The process lasted two months. Informants' permission was requested to record sessions for their later transcription with the program F4 which facilitates, through its keyboard-based interface, the modification of audio speed and the introduction of time-frames -#00:09:04-8#-

3.4. Data analysis

In accordance with the methodological model, we opted for the technique of content analysis. Hermeneutical units were studied using Atlas ti.7 and Wordle web was used with the aim of obtaining word clouds.

Data were studied through "open coding", making it possible to aggregate open or in vivo codes. "The first [codes] conceptualise the phenomenon through the analyst's interpretation. The second are literal phrases which express the words used by individuals" (San Martín, 2014, p. 110).

In the first phase of coding, recurring ideas were identified in the discourse of professionals and notes were taken in the field diary. The final result established 58 categories which, following revision, were reduced to a total of 22.

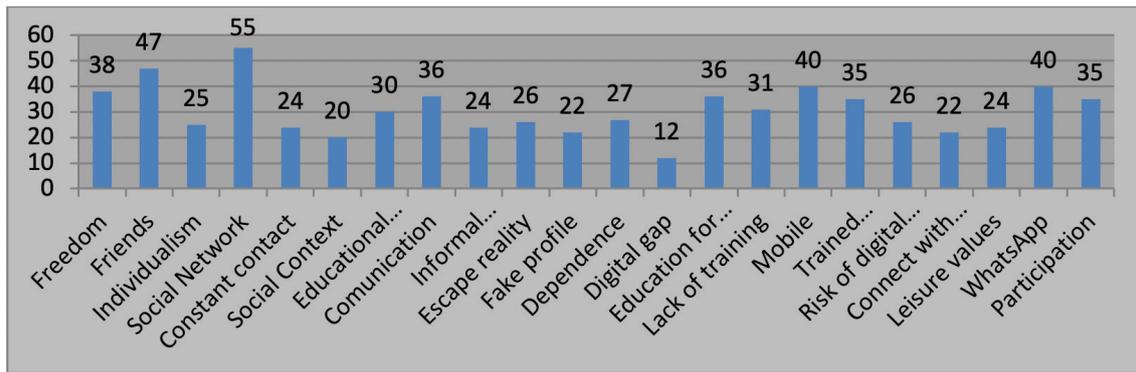


Figure 1. Code frequency Text level. Source. Prepared by the authors using Atlas ti and Excel.

Agreement between codes and the discursive reality enabled us to establish family groups and approach the next level of analysis which would determine the associations linking different units of the text. This enabled conceptual examination of the text.

With regards to the categorisation of content, this was based on the initial categorisation

performed from the theoretical framework and the research question. Thus, once examination with ATLAS ti was finished, data were submitted to a final process which considered thematic and semantic agreement criteria. From this, three central categories were inductively obtained which determined the study units upon which analysis and data interpretation would be performed.

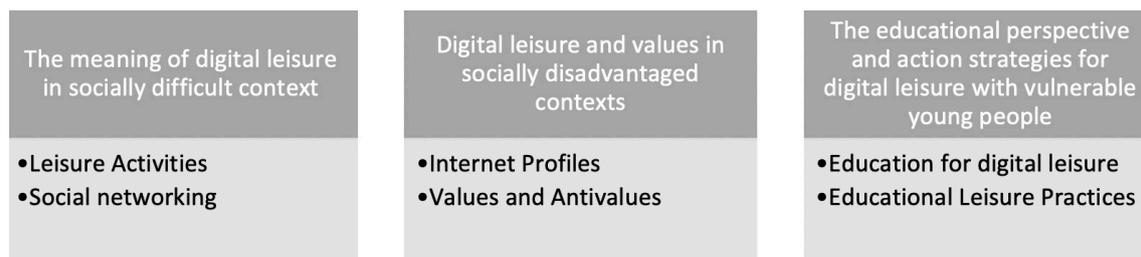


Figure 2. Analysis units and central categories Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. Results

Units of analysis, presented through thematic blocks, provide the point of reference from which results are described.

Block 1. The meaning of digital leisure experiences in socially difficult contexts

From informants' responses, we observe that leisure within online networks enables young people

to be in constant contact with friends in the digital setting. For this reason, experts point to their innate ability to manage digital technology devices, whilst also acknowledging the lack of competence seen in this social group for skilfully manipulating the content and information that circulates via social networks or the internet. This fact is linked with the lack of opportunities to securely access the information society and, consequently, opportunities to overcome educational or social barriers.

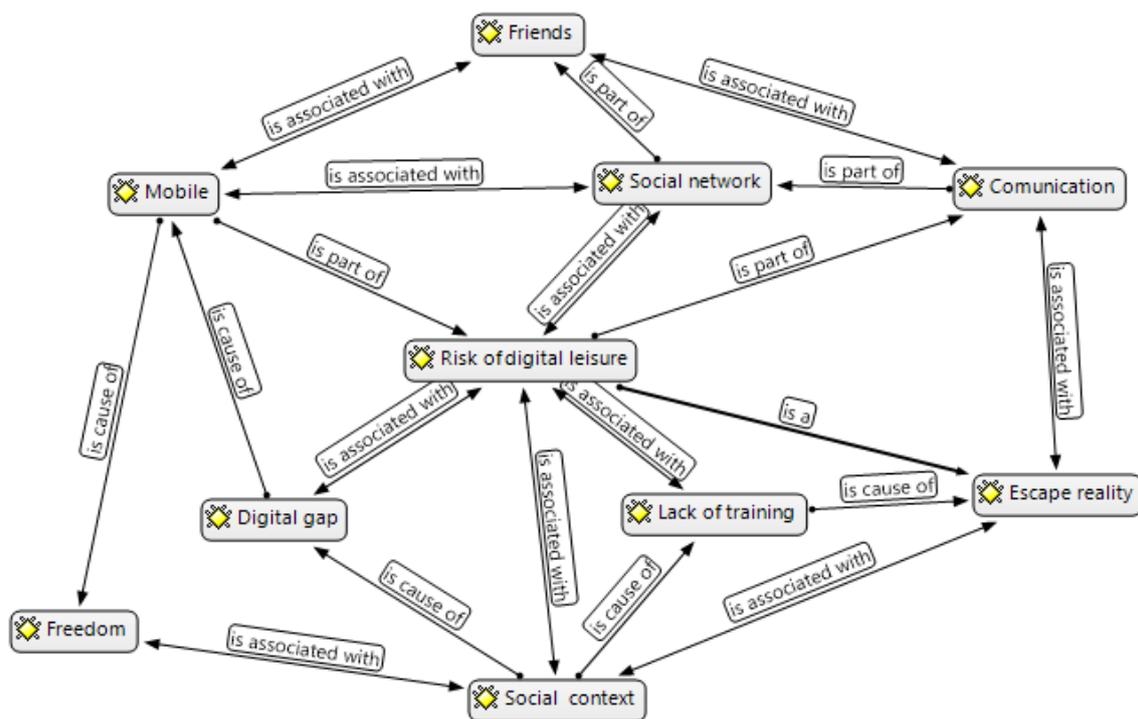


Figure 3. Network view Digital leisure in young people in social difficulty.
 Source: Prepared by the authors using Atlas ti.

On the other hand, informants spoke about the practice of digital leisure as an element that allows disadvantaged young people to freely and autonomously express themselves, without being controlled by the family, school or community. It offers a shared space for the group, largely through WhatsApp, in which relationships are established, and participants abide by their own rules and develop their own code of communication.

In the opinion of educators, this freedom makes it possible to develop sustained leisure experiences in the immediate present, find easy entertainment, and imitate non-educational fashions and stereotypes. This is a long way from leisure practices that develop attitudes such as commitment, effort or socialisation.

In the opinion of educators, young people in this social group practice a highly impoverished type of leisure, concentrated on the screen of their smartphone. They describe this as an individualistic activity which does not favour inclusion processes. In this sense, they indicate that these individual online actions are used by disadvantaged young people as an escape to forget about their complicated social and family context by constructing a character for themselves which they can present online. Thus, they can create a more attractive profile for themselves from the isolation of their own home. One educator presented this idea as follows.

Codes [social networks] [fake profile] [escape reality] [friends]

Educator: ...the chance to be someone else, to present and tell whatever they want opens them up to feeling better, they close themselves away online and forget the world, sharing things, even if they are not true, pretending to be what they aren't, you know that adolescents imitate everything, the way of dressing or speaking... well online it's the same, they can play YouTubers in a way that nobody sees, ¿you know?

The discourse reflects concern for the implications of continuously using social networks, WhatsApp or the internet as a distraction, on the appropriate socialisation of these young people. Thus, as argued by educators, this invented life means that children sometimes do not know how to limit the time they spend with their avatar as, for them, it provides a form of escape that blurs the reality in which they find themselves.

From this perspective, young people from this group lack criteria for their online activity due to the environment in which they learn to spend their free time online. This identifies the family environment as a risk factor as it is not concerned about ICT use in these young people, being excessively permissible when it comes to the content and leisure experiences exposed to on social networks. One educator explained this aspect in the following way.

With regards to the value of digital leisure experiences for the personal and social development of young people in this group, participants' responses again agree that the relationship between these experiences in disadvantaged situations and the social context provides an axis from which positive or negative values are developed through online leisure. Educators' opinions reflect that leisure habits, like all types of learning, are largely formed during early years via interactions with the family, social and educational setting. They warn that these are the three most damaged pillars in relation to the group of interest. From this perspective, lack of supervision, distancing from the educational setting and depleted social networks, open up the possibility that the most vulnerable young people will suffer in a virtual setting. On the one hand, interviewees state that behaviours linked to anti-social values such as violence or cyber-bullying may emerge, whilst the anonymity offered in the online space has led to dangerous trends of children being in contact with people they do not know through the internet.

Turning our consideration to values with little reach for the development of these young people, a generalised consensus amongst educators emerges from the analysis which alludes to the boom in leisure activities linked to sports betting and fashionable online games of chance in youth culture. From this point of view, digital leisure practices within this group play to the values that they consider to be inherent in current society. These include, over-exposing one's life, individualism and competition. Observe this reference linked to the codes of the values of leisure, risks of leisure, individualism and social context.

Educator: "Yes, young people are not isolated; they are all, let's say, shaped and manipulated by a society that has determined values, and so, the repeat some of these values... maladaptive values such as consumerism or individualism"

Continuing with the qualitative study, a causal relationship is also seen to be established by informants in relation to the potential of digital leisure experiences to generate positive values. In this sense, interviews consistently evidenced that the social values constructed through shared online activities and freely chosen by young people, extend and enrich spaces for relating and communicating with groups. This reinforces pro-social behaviours such as participation, empathy and activism through the use of WhatsApp and social networks. Here we observe an extract from a particularly relevant quote.

Codes: [values of leisure] [social context] [friends] [participation]

Educator: "I think that there are young people for whom their happiness is based on material consumption, you know better mobile phones and technology, and there are others who construct values through online networks like participation, citizenship or, evidently, solidarity..."

The position of educators in this sense is oriented towards observing virtual leisure through a positive lens. They justify the consideration of social networks or WhatsApp as vehicles that give access to the outside world, as indicated by one interviewee when they said that "there are various people with different realities". For these people, the digital setting makes it possible to develop critical skills and emotions such as empathy.

Further, a tendency is also observed for educators to consider that digital leisure, as with all leisure activities, brings with it the development of positive attitudes given that it requires the sharing of experiences, rules of engagement and shared spaces with peers, even if this occurs in a digital way. In this way, they highlight the role of social networks as spaces for socialisation, broadening the small interactional universe of this group. They also outline that use of these, in the same way as is seen with videogame use for the simultaneous entertainment of many individuals, makes it possible for disadvantaged young people to move closer to establishing relationships. In this way, proactive attitudes are promoted such as trust and respect. This makes them feel closer to their friends and others in their environment, thus facilitating the key aspect for this group according to their educators, the feeling of belonging to a group.

Block 3. The educational perspective and action strategies for digital leisure with vulnerable young people

We conclude the results section with the third block which reflects the suggestions of educators to construct a model of digital leisure from an educational standpoint. This model has the capacity to encourage the personal and social development of young people from a group of interest to the present study. According to interviewed educators, it is necessary to intervene through a set of educational actions embedded within digital leisure, which allow the development of values and attitudes presented in block 2, whilst also overcoming the gap evidenced by these children with respect to their digital skills. As highlighted by informants, equipping these young people to manage, critically

consider and appropriately select the information and content they come across, is the best approach for them to be able to face the current technological setting and, in this way, guarantee inclusion processes in the digital society.

In order to achieve this proposed model, educators agree that it will be necessary to orientate

the educational practices of digital leisure towards the inclusion and recognition of young people as the real protagonists of educational action. In this sense, by examining the frequency of agreement between informants on this topic, an educational focus is discovered whose elements are represented in the network presented below.

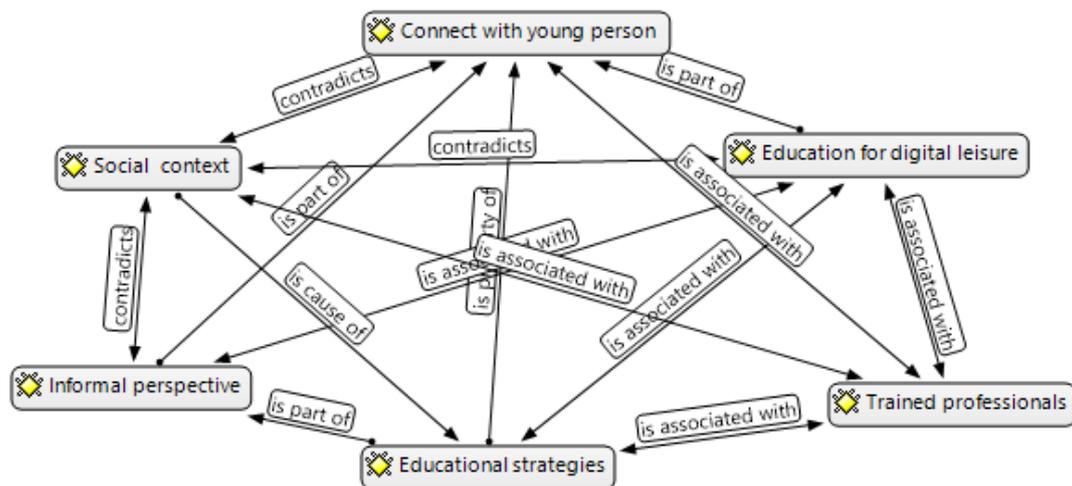


Figure 5. Proposed educational approach to digital leisure for vulnerable young people.

Source: Prepared by the authors using Atlas ti.

In relation to this standpoint, interviewees urge the importance of promoting a model of educational digital leisure, which is designed and programmed for the practice of educational experiences in virtual contexts adjusted to the needs of young people. In this sense, as shown by examination of the educational category for digital leisure, participation of children in the programming of digital leisure experiences must be encouraged, thereby facilitating the design of alternative educational practices in accordance with their specific likes and demands. Further, according to criteria outlined by informants, these experiences must include enjoyable digital activities. Such activities should be developed through an educational formula that is open, flexible, communicative, creative and joined-up, in this way taking advantage of the ease with which young people manage technological devices. Interviewees agree that, in this group, this approach to planning educational practice is the best vehicle for transmitting pro-social values and attitudes, as it is based on the provision of support and preferred activities for young people in current society.

Educators rated this option of education through digital leisure as a pedagogical resource that could open up this vulnerable group to the exploration of new learning, as explained here by one educator.

Codes: [educational strategies] [social networks]
[connect with the young person]

Educator: We engage in an outdated teaching-learning mode and it is not realistic... what they really like is to be online, well, let's take advantage of that! We can teach, educate, learn... through this instrument. I think that it is the best way to reach them, to speak their language, teach in their context, it is much easier to achieve what we propose in this way, don't you think?

Continuing with the examination of educators' discourse, we turn our consideration to the association established between the categories of educational strategies, education for digital leisure and trained professionals. This enables observation of the need for education in relation to digital leisure, within a group such as disadvantaged young people, to be provided by staff who are qualified to work in this complex setting. As observed in the analysed testimonies, an essential element of educational interventions is that disadvantaged young people can count on the support of an individual with whom they keep direct contact. Within the examined ambit, this leads to a paradigm of digital leisure that has educational value for young people in this vulnerable group. Observe the following quote.

Codes: [trained professionals] [educational strategies] [education for digital leisure].

Educator: “Young people in this situation establish an important link with educators... they have earned, not without effort, their trust... they require an educational guide... with clear technological information, but that, within this context, knows how to develop educational leisure activities related with what these kids are interested in”.

In consideration of interventional strategies for digital leisure in vulnerable young people, educators indicated the need to conceive such approaches within a context in which “we are not used to working”, with this context clearly being the virtual context. For this, it is necessary to replace traditional settings of educational intervention with the virtual contexts in which young people participate. In this way, as a result of the change in setting, an intervention is proposed that comprises strategies relevant to the virtual setting. We denominate this idea e-EFIS and it is described below.



Figure 6. Word Cloud: Intervention Strategies in Virtual Scenarios. Source: own elaboration.

e-co-responsibility: Understood as the shared responsibility of primary institutions (family, school and community) in relation to the use and enjoyment of ICT for digital leisure practices from the conceptualisation of valuable leisure.

e-actions: Sustained actions which are performed according to the interests, motivation and training of young people in virtual settings.

e-protagonist: Consideration of the young person as the main actor in the educational process relating to digital leisure through their participation in the design of educational actions.

e-contextualisation: Refers to the development of educational proposals for leisure in virtual settings which respond to the specific needs of this socially disadvantaged group in a contextualised way.

e-participation: Consists of promoting the use of virtual spaces for leisure so that young people can freely and actively express their ideas, feelings and needs.

e-planning: The act of programming and designing virtual leisure activities, conforming to an educational proposal whose aims, method and achievement indicators are formed in agreement with the protagonists.

e-teams: Refers to the formation of multi-disciplinary groups for educational work with socially disadvantaged young people in virtual contexts. Groups are comprised of educators, ICT specialists, teachers, psychologists and leisure professionals.

e-educators: Professionals capable of “attracting” young people in the digital environment by connecting with their likes, preferences and the linguistic code used by them in virtual contexts. They are able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by technology in order to develop digital leisure experiences from an educational standpoint.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In response to the objectives formulated, the present research discovered a group for which certain digital leisure practices were identified. These involved being in direct and constant contact with friends, mainly through social networks in the virtual setting. It was uncovered that socially disadvantaged young people operate in accordance with their own rules for participation. Findings of Terán (2018, p. 32) were corroborated in that young people were seen to communicate using their own language, doing so in a free and autonomous way that is removed from the space-temporal control of adults. Likewise, as advised by Tejada, *et al.* (2019), it was confirmed that young people participate in online activities carried out through interaction with strangers. This uncovered a number of risks associated with digital leisure practices such as cyber-bullying or violence. When such practices are enacted anonymously in a sustained way, opportunities for inclusion and to improve one’s reality become more difficult to achieve. In this sense, it must be kept in mind that we are dealing with a group of young people who evidence a lack of skills. In accordance with Cabero and Marín (2017) and Palma (2019), these young people lacked skills for critically selecting

the content they receive from the internet and demonstrated serious deficiencies when operating in the digital setting. Given the ability typically seen in young people of their generation, this digital gap has resulting implications on their learning and socialization.

On the other hand, the freedom afforded by online networks provides this group with digital leisure experiences which, in agreement with that presented by López *et al.* (2016), are regularly engaged in individually at home. This puts socialisation processes in danger. In accordance with the contributions made by Madariaga and Romero (2016) and Ricoy and Ameneiros (2016), we observe a socially disadvantaged group of young people for whom these individual online actions mean they have the chance of escaping from their complex personal and family situation. Given this revelation, one of the study findings is that this social group enjoys, from the privacy of their own home, digital leisure experiences for which they invent idealised characters. This may be associated with a loss of the notion of sustained reality, described by Echeburúa and Corral (2010, p. 92) as “self-deception or fantasy”. This formula of online distraction keeps the most vulnerable hooked to the internet through passive leisure of questionable quality, nurturing them with easy entertainment. A study by Lebrero *et al.* (2014) warned about this issue, yet the present research has uncovered further characteristics in relation to this specific group. These characteristics include the reproduction of social stereotypes associated with fashion, imitation of non-educational roles, consumerism and increased use of sports betting games and games of chance. This occurs through utilisation of the most significant element of digital culture at the moment, the Smartphone. (INE, 2019; Pastor *et al.*, 2018).

It appears evident that one of the main aspects responsible for this situation is, without a doubt, the family context in which socially disadvantaged young people develop their idea of leisure. In this, an educational model of digital leisure is recognised which provides little training, being neglectful and permissible. Such a model has been presented by Vasco-González (2018, p. 91) for ICT use in disadvantaged settings. This does not encourage young people to move towards digital leisure experiences which bring with them opportunities for personal growth and the development of social values which are more tightly linked to the concept of leisure in the 21st century.

Nonetheless, faced with this reality, the present research outlined the digital leisure practices of this social group, educational opportunities based on the power of communication and

socialisation attributed to social networks (Ballesteros and Picazo, 2018) through applications such as WhatsApp or Facebook.

In this way, the present research highlights the potential of digital leisure experiences for the development of leisure practices which enable socially disadvantaged young people to escape from the hostility they experience in the analogous reality. This occurs through interactional processes that, in the virtual setting, helps them to improve their communication skills and social abilities. As a consequence, values develop that are associated with the current concept of leisure such as creativity, freedom and independence, in this way improving self-esteem and significantly impacting inclusion opportunities.

The potential of digital leisure experiences as a source of inclusion, reveals the educational alternatives we set out in the objectives. Thus, the present research highlights the need for such options to cater to the innate skills of young people in the technological setting (Prensky, 2001, 2011). In so doing, an educational model of digital leisure can be implemented whose essential purpose is to place young people at the heart of the educational process (Melendro, González and Bravo, 2013). In this way, interventions will be effective as long as they are organised according to an educational standpoint, outlining fun activities that are implemented via digital devices and contextualised according to young peoples' interests, preferences, participation and motivation. To this end, the present research contributes the following principles as fundamental elements.

- Examine and identify needs of this collective as a social group, in such a way that educational interventions can be contextualized.
- Operate in virtual settings in accordance with detected needs.
- Understand the educational potential of leisure in order to mould interventions in the digital setting, taking a standpoint that attributes educational value to the essential development of the young people who participate.

Educational alternatives to digital leisure replace traditional settings with those that impart educational interventions in social contexts. The virtual settings in which young people interact play a huge part. These are referred to as e-EFIS, as they are linked with flexible socio-educational intervention strategies developed by Melendro (2007, p. 143, 2010) and Melendro *et al.* (2013).

In this new virtual context, as emphasised by the presented research study, appropriate interventions contribute to improving the social skills of the young people who interact with them. The

reason, as we have discovered, is that it is conceived as a work system for cooperative learning that is based on participation and communication of protagonists in order to respond - from their personal perspective and interests - to the demands that arise through their own online leisure experiences. In this sense, the capacity to identify their own needs helps them to gain autonomy and self-confidence. It reveals the development of characteristics linked to the Knowledge Society, providing evidence of the potential of digital leisure experiences as an educational tool for the

inclusion of vulnerable young people in contemporary society.

It is important to indicate the main limitation of the present study. The speed with which the online behaviour of young people changes means that related research constantly requires updating. On the other hand, this limitation offers the chance to explore other research spaces, with information being provided by the main protagonists of the present research study, these being socially disadvantaged young people.

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