ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

The Impact of RICTs on Coexistence in Andalusian Families: Challenges and Opportunities

El impacto de las TRIC en la convivencia en las familias andaluzas: desafíos y oportunidades

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ABSTRACT

The use of ICRTs (Information, Communication and Relationship Technologies) is one of the elements causing the most significant intergenerational conflict within family relationships, posing a huge challenge for cohabitation. Through qualitative methodology, we analyze the different perceptions and uses that the Andalusian adolescent population have in their digital socialization and practices and we compare it to the habits and ideas held by their parents. By identifying common points and differential logics related to the advantages and opportunities of the digital ecosystem, as well as various risks and challenges, the aim of the analysis is to define agreed strategies to achieve safe and high-quality digital mediation in the homes.

KEYWORDS: ICRTs; families; adolescents; conflicts; digital mediation; ubiquity; reconnection.

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RESUMEN

El uso de las TRIC (Tecnologías de la Relación, la Información y la Comunicación) es uno de los elementos que mayor conflictividad intergeneracional está produciendo en el seno familiar, erigiéndose en un enorme desafío para la convivencia. Con el fin de abordar ese desafío, analizamos mediante metodología cualitativa las diferentes percepciones y usos que realiza la población adolescente andaluza en su socialización y prácticas digitales frente a los hábitos e ideas que sostienen sus progenitores. Se han implementado seis técnicas conversacionales grupales, tres con adolescentes y tres con progenitores. La categorización de los discursos registrados ha permitido identificar las principales divergencias entre el imaginario juvenil y el adulto y las estrategias que han facilitado una mediación digital segura y de calidad en los hogares.

KEYWORDS: RICTs; families; adolescents; conflicts; digital mediation; ubiquity; reconnection.

1. Introduction

Nowadays we live in a hyper-connected, multimedia[1] world in which digital technologies, which have penetrated Spanish society and whose use has intensified in recent years, have become increasingly ubiquitous in our social interactions and practices. As a result, digital technologies now play a fundamental role in modern socialisation processes (Spanish Institute for Youth [INJUVE], 2021). In 2023, almost all Spanish households had an Internet connection (96.4%, while in the previous decade the percentage stood at around 62%), and 95.4% of Spaniards aged between 16 and 74 were Internet users—considered to have used the Internet in the last three months—with 90% doing so daily. In addition, the use of devices has increased: the data show that 82.6% of the population has some type of computer and 99.5% a mobile phone (Spanish National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2023). This translates into a rise in Internet access and an increased availability and use of technological devices. However, this leads to more intense digital activity: eight out of ten people browse the web several times a day and around nine out of ten do so using a *smartphone* (Statistical Office of the European Union [Eurostat], 2021). If we break this trend down by age group, practically all under-35s are Internet users and own a mobile phone (INE, 2023).

Mobile phones are the most widely used device by youths for digital connectivity, making them a multifaceted and multifunctional "Swiss Army knife" (Calderón, 2021) through which more and more daily activities are carried out (accessing information, communicating; commercial, consumer and administrative activities; leisure and entertainment, etc.). Given this social and technological convergence, mobile phones play a pivotal role in youth socialisation processes (Lasén and Casado, 2014). Another of the distinctive features of the

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ways younger generations socialise using digital means is the multimedia and diversified nature of their digital connectivity, since they use a wide range of devices—such as *smartphones*, computers, *tablets*, video game consoles, *smart TVs* and *wearables*, among others—to maintain contact and interact with their social environment and to expand the possibilities of the physical world around them, not forgetting leisure and entertainment purposes. As such, around three quarters of this age group have more than four technological devices and 29.2% have more than seven, with computers, especially laptops (79.8%), being most common, although an impressive variety of other devices is also used (Calderón-Gómez and Gómez-Miguel, 2022). These data show how young people in Spain, regardless of their social, cultural or economic capital, participate in digital culture and sociability and construct their social lives through digital technologies (devices, platforms, apps, social media, etc.).

In any case, it is worth highlighting the existence of a digital divide as regards access to devices, the development of skills linked to the use of these devices and the *offline* enjoyment of the benefits provided by digital technologies, with the most vulnerable populations being particularly affected (Calderón *et al.*, 2022). Digital divides not only impact skills development, but they also increase exposure to the possible risks associated with the *online* environment (Livingstone and Helsper, 2009). Despite this, the connectivity provided by digital technologies and the Internet has a profound, cross-cutting impact on our lives, with employment, education, communication and leisure practices all being made possible thanks to the myriad RICT devices that are connected to the enormous multimedia repository that is the Internet. This digitisation of social life transforms the way in which reality, identity, the body and lifestyle are understood and experienced, as well as the ways in which we interact with one another (Bucher and Helmond, 2017; Hernández, 2022). Although the use of digital technologies in everyday activities has enormous potential, the literature also identifies possible problematic behaviours in their use (Gordo *et al.*, 2018):

- Personal hyper-exposure: constant and uncritical display of personal life.
- Hyper-self-quantification: the meticulous and excessive measurement of one's behaviour through self-tracking practices or automated, systematic and chronological recording.
- Over-identification: the attachment to certain digital devices that results in the strict uncritical use of specific devices or platforms as a way of constructing one's own identity.
- Predominance of evasive use: identified when evasive use, which is very common, clearly exceeds the other types of uses, which can give rise to problematic behaviours that make us renounce daily activities that, were it not for this evasive use, we would have carried out normally.
- Isolation of digital environments: an absolute isolation of digital networks and technologies, which can work to the detriment of money-ownership structures.

Taking these elements into account, the presence of screens and devices in homes and in everyday life has obvious effects on family relationships, as not only do they create spaces in which their members can come together and communicate, but they also cause tension and disagreements between the diverging habits of adults and adolescents. The family institution has a fundamental role in socialisation, in which education around technology is increasingly relevant (Martín-Perpiñá *et al.*, 2019), both in terms of forms of control and formal education and in its use for entertainment and leisure activities. Faced with this ever-changing context, digital mediation is no easy task (Bran *et al.*, 2016), and given the ubiquity of screens in domestic and public spaces, it is tough to establish and enforce limits on their use (Carrasco *et al.*, 2017). In fact, adults too are exposed to a good part of the problems that their children experience (Megías *et al.*, 2022). And, thanks to funding from the Andalusian Studies Centre as part of its 12th call for research projects, this is precisely what we intend to focus on in this article, which will explore the uses and perceptions of RICTs (relationship, information and communication technologies) in the family environment and examine their impact on peaceful coexistence in the home.

2. State of the matter: tensions in the home arising from screen use

Previous studies carried out by the Centro Reina Sofía de Fad Juventud have demonstrated that the use of the Internet, social media and electronic devices is one of the main points of contention and produces the most intergenerational conflict within the family. Some examples of this kind of conflict can be seen when parents try to manage quality family time without technological devices and when they request that their children tell them where they are and when they are coming home when they are out (Megías *et al.*, 2022). The data show that the use of technology is a common theme and tends to lead to tension and misunderstandings within households. Parents of adolescent children are witnessing a generation that is experiencing changes at an accelerated rate, and in this relationship we can find cyber-utopian discourses that idealise the digital skills and abilities of young people, as well as perspectives that highlight the risks and problematic uses of technologies, with an emphasis on overexposure, the importance of personal image in interactions on social media and even screen addiction. Both parties agree that the Internet offers adolescents a greater diversity of resources, but also from different perspectives, so concern for privacy and *online* exposure is a key issue for parents. And this concern is amplified as a result of the generation gap, with adults fearing that they will lose control given the greatly increased time the younger generations spend using devices and the higher level of digital competence they perceive them to have.

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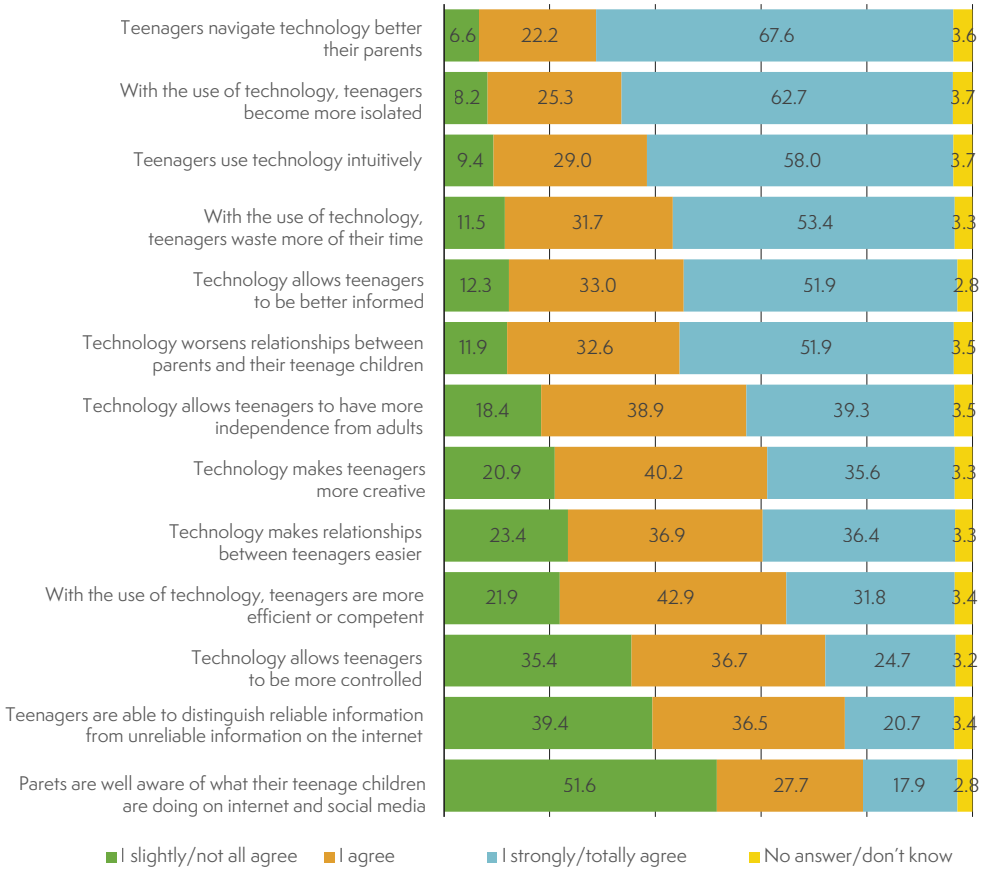
Figure 1

Degree of agreement with statements about the use of RICTs by adolescents (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,803)



Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

The data presented in Figure 1 show that adolescence tends to be associated with high levels of digital skills, with high agreement on the statements that they "perform better than their parents" (67.6% agree) and "use technology intuitively" (58% agree). However, they also reveal fears about technology use, such as adolescents have a "tendency to isolate themselves" (62.7% agree), that they "waste their time" (53.4% agree) and that "family relationships worsen" (51.9% agree). They also express a feeling of inability to control adolescents' use of these technologies, along with a number of other responses that recorded a lower degree of agreement.

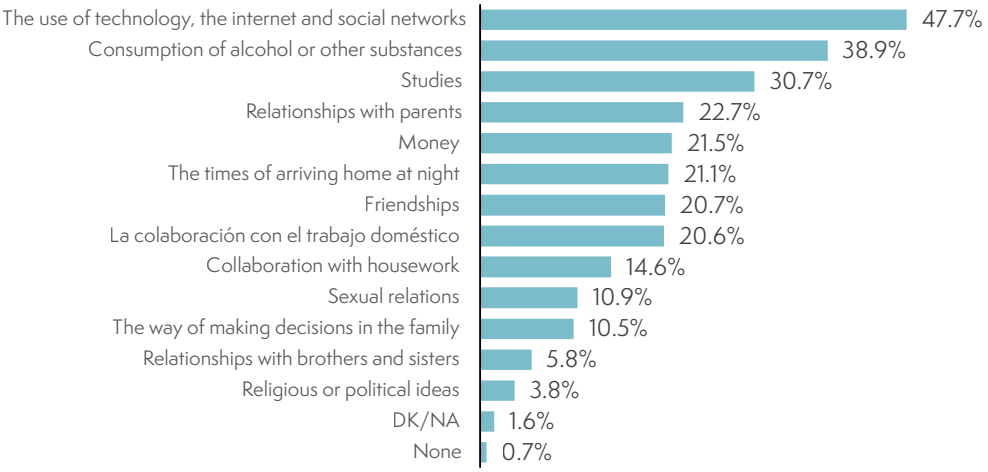
On the other hand, the adolescent population is generally perceived as having good digital skills, superior to those of both their parents and teachers. When asked about five specific skills that anyone who uses the Internet and social media must have

(information searching, communication, safety, problem identification and resolution, and content creation), the perception is that the younger generations generally possess high or medium-high levels of these skills. And in turn, the latter do not view their elders as being equally adept in technological matters: when asked who they turn to when requiring help solving a problem with a technological device or the Internet, they mainly ask their friends (27.5%) and to a much lesser degree their partner (18.9%), parents (14.1%), siblings (12.8%), other relatives (12.4%), other people (10.1%) and teachers (8.5%). On the other hand, 18.9% say that they solve these problems on their own, without having to ask anyone for help, and 13.8% claim to have not encountered any issues with which they require assistance (Megías, 2024).

The family is losing its status as a hub for life and socialisation as peer groups continue to grow in importance for their children and adolescents demand more and more autonomy, something that always requires readjustment and negotiation within the family. One of the main sources of conflict for parents is the use of technology, as we can see in Figure 2: for 47.7% of parents, the use of social media, the Internet and technology is far and away the number one reason for disagreements at home, with a huge gap compared to other issues such as alcohol consumption (38%) and academic performance (30%) (Megías *et al.*, 2022).

Figure 2

Main reasons for disagreements in families with adolescents (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,803)



Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

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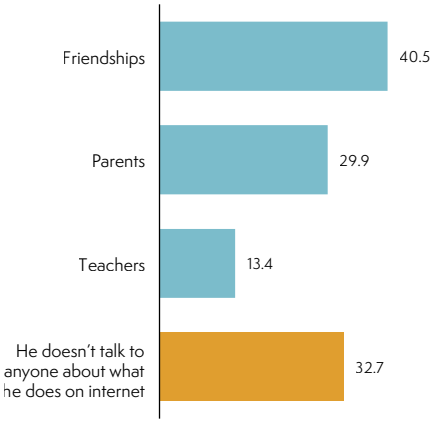
Now that technology use has been identified as the main cause of family disagreement for parents, a final piece of data, in this case the responses of adolescents and young people (Megías, 2024), invites us to reflect on the type of technological involvement that adults have with their children.

Figure 3

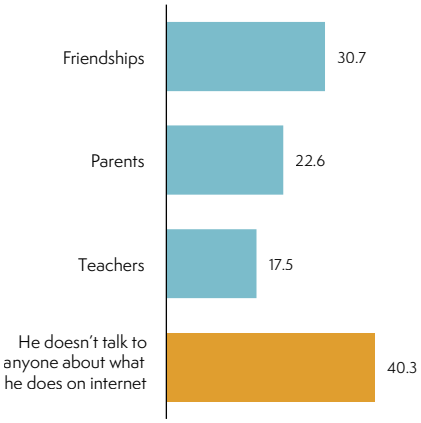
People who show interest in or talk about what adolescents do on the Internet (last year) (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,510)



Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

Figure 4

People they talk to about cybersecurity or online behaviour (last year) (figures as a %. Total sample size N = 1,510)



Source: own research based on data from Megías *et al.* (2024).

Figure 3 shows that a third of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 do not talk to anyone about what they do on the Internet (32.7%), while Figure 4 suggests that over 40% have not received advice from anyone in their surroundings on how to increase their safety or on how they should behave while on the Internet. For youngsters, their peer group is their primary source of information and support regarding *online* behaviour, with their parents coming in second place. The data reveal that only 30% of parents show an interest in their children's *online* activity, and only 22.6% of the latter say that they talk to their parents about cybersecurity or their *online* behaviour. As such, it is evident that there are important shortcomings in the way families communicate regarding the use of digital technologies.

3. Objectives

The main goal of this research project is to analyse the perceptions and uses of digital technologies in family settings in Andalusia in order to promote safe and consensual use of the Internet in homes.

This, in turn, is broken down into the following specific objectives:

- Delve into the experiences and perceptions of adolescents and of adults with adolescent children regarding digital technology use.
- Examine the main differences and commonalities between adolescents and adults in terms of their use of digital technologies and the perception of the risks associated with them.
- Analyse the ways in which conflicts, tensions and problems that occur within families are exacerbated and/or caused by technology use.
- Highlight the main requirements of adolescents and adults in terms of strategies, challenges and opportunities generated by digital technologies in family interactions.

4. Methodology

Our methodological approach comprises two techniques. First, we performed a review of the literature and secondary sources, which allowed us to contextualise the theoretical framework in which the research has been carried out and this article has been written. Second, we undertook a qualitative analysis of two types of group dynamics.

This qualitative approach allows us to capture a narrative by using conversational techniques that bring to light the emerging discourses around the topics addressed (Alonso, 1998). We use two types of group dynamic: discussion groups and core groups. The discussion groups followed a mostly well-defined structure (Colectivo

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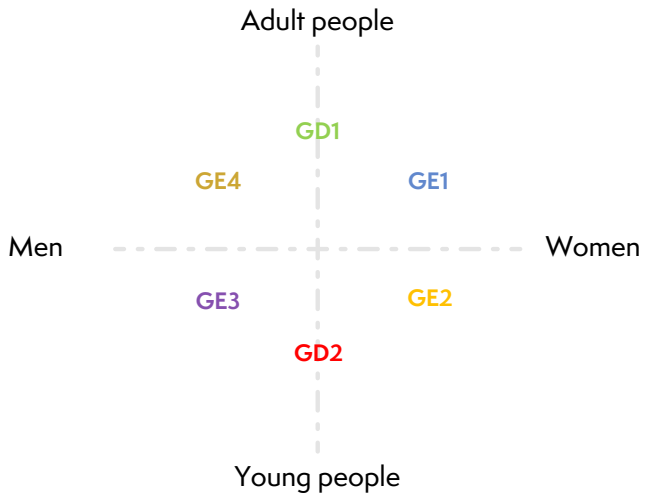
IOE, 2010) that gives us access to generalised social representations of a given phenomenon. It is a consensual process that aims to (re)construct the crystallised discourse of a social group and capture a collective identity (Callejo, 2001). Core groups have been created specifically for this project (Orgaz, 2025) by combining aspects of Conde's (2009) triangular group and the discussion group (Ibáñez, 1979). They are made up of four to five members and emulate the dynamics of the discussion and triangular groups, providing a semi-guided and agile setting in which to explore the emergence of representations while facilitating moments with little intervention that explore the crystallisation of these representations. The name "core group" comes from the fact that it is not a triad, like the triangular group, nor a defined grouping, like the discussion group, but rather the smallest viable group size. This group is designed to capture discourses that, although no longer emerging, are still crystallising within society.

As can be seen in Figure 5, two mixed discussion groups—one for parents and one for adolescents living in Seville and Granada—and four non-mixed core groups (two for parents and two for adolescents) were set up. The fieldwork was carried out between May and June 2023. All the groups used the same semi-structured script addressing the main themes set out in the objectives (digital skills, uses and perception of risk, conflict perception and management, requirements and ideal models).

Figure 5

Graph showing the qualitative sampling. Discussion groups (DG) and core groups (CG) by age and gender



Source: own research.

A number of variables were taken into account when selecting the participants: gender, age, children's age (for parents), family living situation, place of habitual residence (eastern or western Andalusia) and intensity of use of social media. All participants self-identified as middle-class, and not as poor lower-class nor upper-middle- or upper-class. It should be noted that the selected individuals do not share households. We chose to prioritise generalised groups, given that we do not have enough groups to be able to perform an in-depth analysis of the discursive diversity around social class, educational attainment, rurality and family models.

The chosen parents are all aged between 40 and 55, live with children aged between the ages of 15 and 25 and use technology either moderately (instant messaging and content platforms such as YouTube or Netflix, but do not use social media on a daily basis) or intensively (daily use of social media as well as *streaming* platforms, *online* video games, etc.).

The groups of adolescents, aged between 15 and 18, were selected taking into account the fact that they live with parents or legal guardians aged between 40 and 55 and that they too use technology either moderately or intensively.

The group sessions, which lasted between one and a half and two hours, were recorded in a digital audio format and subsequently transcribed and anonymised, with the interviews being coded for thematic analysis using the computer *program* Atlas.ti. Next, a "socio-hermeneutic analysis" was carried out (Alonso, 1998), focusing on the main topics addressed. The work of Lanigan (2009) and his "sociotechnological family model" was used as a reference when analysing the use of digital technologies within families. This model highlights the need for a holistic approach to understanding how technologies, individual traits, family factors and external influences such as access to certain devices jointly shape the management of technology use. The way parents and their children perceive and use technologies individually directly affects digital parenting strategies.

This qualitative approach allows us to discover social representations regarding technology, family relationships and the relationship between the two, taking into account both the most well-established imaginaries and discourses and those that are still taking shape and being constructed. As there is a small number of groups, the variables taken into account when forming them are limited and the resulting data are therefore exploratory.

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5. Results

Following analysis of the resulting discourse from the discussion groups and the core groups we have been able to identify the main differences between the attitudes of adolescents and parents towards the use of digital technologies, with gender being one of the most conditioning variables. At the same time, we can perceive points of convergence regarding technological mediation that reveal a number of strategies for fostering a more harmonious family coexistence. Below we will explain each of these concepts in further detail.

5.1. Disputed legitimacies and logics

This qualitative approach highlights multiple nuances in the perceptions about technology use among adults and youngsters, about the perceived effect of its potentialities and advantages on daily life and about the risks and bad habits it involves. It also brings to the fore how different legitimacies and logics are disputed, fundamentally due to age and vastly distinct expectations regarding digital activity.

Parents share a discourse that highlights the logic of focus, which dictates that presence and attention can only be in one place and on one action at any given moment. They tend to concentrate on a task and stick to the ideal of staying away from distractions since multitasking generates discomfort. They create specific, limited spaces in their technology use, trying not to overlap one task with another, and strive to ensure that their *online* activity does not excessively interfere with their *offline* activity. In contrast, adolescents adopt the opposite logic: their technology use does not require a single, specific meaning, but instead seeks various objectives at one time, such as integration, presence, recognition and social prestige, entertainment, self-expression and self-knowledge. The logic of ubiquity prevails among the younger digital users studied, since technologies allow them to exist simultaneously in various spaces and times, making *everything possible everywhere and at the same time* (Lasen, 2020). According to this logic, young people are able to shift their attention based on their interests, both *online* and *offline*, without any significant or apparent problems.

As such, here we can see two different legitimacies, each with a different capacity and bargaining power, since in the dynamics described it is usually the parents who try to impose their logic on their children when deciding which technology uses are appropriate.

As demonstrated by the discourses, for parents, their adolescent children's ways of being present and connected conflict with their own perceptions of which uses are appropriate, which, according to their criteria, would be those prescribed by the logic of focus. A good example of this tension occurs at family meal time, one of the main rites in the home and the protagonist of most device-related conflicts. The clash arises as a result of parents assuming that this moment, sitting around the table at meal time, is an opportunity for some quality time where family members can comment on their day or bring up, discuss and attempt to solve possible problems, and

these moments can be impeded by the use of technological devices. Here youngsters are asked to adhere to two different sets of rules: family demands, such as being required to sit down to dinner at a specific time, which clashes with what is expected of them by the youth world, which is to synchronise their social time with that of their peer group (start a game, follow a conversation thread, etc.).

> They'll say: "But we're all going online at 11 o'clock."
>
> "We have to have dinner early today because I have a tournament at eleven." And I say: "Ah, so the tournament is going to dictate what the whole family does? I'm going to say in the group that your tournament is the most important thing of the day." I mess with him, but I don't really pay him too much mind. "Mum, you just don't get it" (mixed parent group, Seville).

Therefore, in the adult groups there is a recurrent negative opinion of their children's digital activity. Various issues are mentioned, such as the loss of communication skills due to the use of very simplistic language (constant use of emojis, *stickers*, etc.) and the loss of spontaneity in interpersonal relationships as a result of being immersed in a digital world in which, the parents believe, appearance is all that matters. The feeling of isolation is also a concern, which is why parents encourage their children to engage in activities outside the home.

> Now I want her to go swimming, camping or just outside, anything but lying on the sofa. She spends all morning on holidays lying on the sofa with her mobile phone. So I tell her: "No, you can go anywhere you want: the pool, the public pool, the beach. You can go wherever you want, but just get out of the house!"
>
> We used to be to scared for them to leave the house. Nowadays we're afraid of them staying at home (group of mothers, Granada).

There are significant differences between the perspectives of fathers and mothers[2]. Fathers underline the importance of technology as a tool for acquiring knowledge and training and generally dismiss the recreational and social uses of RICTs. For them, who believe that the Internet is a tool for looking for something specific, the idea of consuming content without a purpose is inconceivable. In addition, they tend to hold more pessimistic and critical views, emphasising concerns about the possible risks associated with or derived from technology, exemplifying an already classic opinion of technology that lies somewhere between "apocalyptic" and "integrated"[3]. The discourses of the fathers refer to a widespread sense of loss of control when faced with technology and the difficulty they have restricting and limiting their children's use of it.

> He always gets his way. I don't know how I'm supposed to manage it. It's what we were talking about before, he gets his way. He knows... I tell him off, I punish him, whatever. But in the end he gets what he wants. How can I stop him? (group of fathers, Seville).

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> But the boy spends most of the day watching videos on YouTube. Listening to podcasts.
>
> That's where he gets all his information from.
>
> Why does he get his information from there? Why does he follow all these YouTubers?
>
> Following YouTubers...
>
> That's not real information. It's just learning how to get better at playing a video game... (mixed parent group, Seville).

Mothers, on the other hand, adopt a more integrated position and stress the advantages of technology use and how it makes it easier for them to care for their family; for them, technology-mediated care is vital to them managing their parental responsibilities. What's more, and in contrast to the fathers, they show a greater willingness to explore the recreational dimension of RICTs, proving to be remarkably versatile in the way they interact with these technologies: they don't emphasise the dichotomy of loss or gain of time and they tend to use technology more naturally for the purpose of escape and entertainment, even though, unlike the adolescent population, their recreational moments are very limited in time and are restricted to the free time they have left once they have completed all their other duties.

> What I like about mobile phones is that they give me a sense of security that if anything happens to my daughter... (group of mothers, Granada).
>
> I have made TikToks with my friend and we couldn't stop laughing (group of mothers, Granada).

Young people, unlike adults, spend much less time forming opinions about adults' relationship with technology. Their parents come up in the conversations, of course, but more as interferences that try to impose themselves or modulate the children's use of technology. Their stories comment more on their own personal relationships with technology, such as their habits and routines, leading them to describe RICTs in terms of necessity: technology helps them complete everyday tasks and its absence would mean having to face insurmountable obstacles. Likewise, they talk about their digital profiles in biographical terms, since social media provides a detailed compilation of their lives, showing their milestones, places, reflections and the people around them, among other intimate details.

> Honestly, I think that if they took our phones away, we wouldn't know how to live without them.
>
> I do everything on my phone. Everything (group of boys, Seville).

> It's like an album of your entire life, all the different stages of your life, and it's like you have everything stored there (mixed group, Granada).
>
> Technology forms an intrinsic part of their interactions, their leisure and their relationship with their studies. You have to be available to be part of a peer group.
>
> But you also do it as a way to fit in. It's the same with social media; you use it to fit in, since everyone else has it, so you also have to have it.
>
> If not, you can't keep up with what's going on. You don't know what they're talking about when you see them. You simply have to use it,
>
> because if you don't you feel left out (mixed group, Granada).

They are, however, also aware of the risks, including possible screen addiction, but they tend to relativise the harmful or more serious impacts: they understand that, in the case of abusive use or possible addiction, the solution would not be to abandon their devices altogether, but rather to learn how to manage their bad habit. In fact, they advocate for flexible control over their relationship with technology.

> It is also a drug, but not one that has so much of an impact. It affects us in different situations, but it doesn't affect us as much.
>
> You can even learn things by watching TikToks and
>
> listening to podcasts.
>
> It's a great source of culture. But it's not a drug that you'll ever quit because there's no actual need to quit. I can see that I am hooked, but I don't need to give it up because it doesn't do much damage to me... (group of boys, Seville).

When confronting these bad habits, they refer to a series of more or less effective self-control strategies. Among them, they acknowledge that the presence of social relationships is what most effectively turns their attention away from technology, instead shifting the focus towards face-to-face social interactions. This does not imply a total separation from technology, but it does entail a substantial reduction in its use.

Therefore, the discourse of the youngsters reveals a certain ambivalence: on the one hand, they talk of a logic of freedom, made possible by the emancipatory nature of the new digital media, while on the other, they demonstrate an awareness of the dependence and saturation that is provoked by the use of digital technologies (Calderón-Gómez and Kuric, 2022). The Internet is seen as an open, flexible, accessible and democratic environment, and the need for and dependence on the use of technological tools to conduct all kinds of social practices is deduced. These tools not only allow access to information, they emphasise, but they also play a pivotal role

in social interactions and, in most cases, there is no equally beneficial *offline* counterpart. However, this sometimes leads to a feeling of addiction. Digital technologies effectively have the potential to be liberating, facilitating people's lives in terms of access to information, social interaction, entertainment and just about any other type of daily activity, but they also make them dependent on the use of certain types of technological devices, telecommunications services or information tools, which not only tethers the subjects to the productive and consumption logics of the capitalist system, but also generates anxiety, stress and frustration as a result of having to always keep up with the pace of social change.

5.2. Opportunities for coming together

Despite the tensions described and the different points of view expressed, we were also able to identify a set of common views, possible meeting points and responses to the interference that technologies may cause when it comes to finding quality time to spend as a family, whether face-to-face or *online*, such as proposals aimed at integration (friends or couples) into family circles, and others designed to promote reconnection through shared technology use. These may be very useful when implementing appropriate technology management measures in the home, which must be proposed by the families themselves based on their own digital experiences.

In the first case, seeking to counteract the impact of technology on the possible impoverishment of their family relationships, young people and adults highlight the benefits of integrating the children's friends or partner into household activities. The result is a shared space in which technology is relegated to the background without the need to veto it.

> I enjoy it more when my girlfriend comes over and we spend time with my parents. Because when I'm alone with my parents, whether you like my parents or not, and no matter how much trust I have with them to talk about what's going on with me or anything like that, when it comes to having fun... Well, we are different ages. [...] And what happens is that my girlfriend also becomes part of the family
>
> and I'm not on my phone. Instead I'm listening to the conversation... It's kind of cool. You get excited (group of boys, Seville).

Regarding the reconnection strategy, the opportunity for shared technology use as a family stands out, from watching television together to involving parents in other technology uses that are more similar to those of their children, such as video games or the social media they most use. These practices not only seek to provide a chance to spend time together as a family, but they also involve adults in the digital universe of the youth and nurture common interests.

> Watching a TV series together. Or, if the four of us are there, a film. I've also spent a lot of time with my father and brother watching films at home. "There's a great film on at 10 o'clock", and for all four of us to be there, or not. Just to talk about it.

> And have a good laugh together.
>
> Yes. Having dinner and watching [name of TV show]. Teasing people: "Look at what that guy is wearing", my father says...
>
> Something outrageous, while my mother's there saying: "Come on, not in front of the children."
>
> This is especially the case with TV series and stuff (group of boys, Seville).
>
> Well, I am very interested in music and dance, so I can always interact with them about what interests me: "Download that song for me." Because if I don't, tell me what else we have in common if it's not: "What's for dinner?", "What time are you coming home?" and not much else. So, you have to look for... [...] But technologically speaking, you have to get with the programme, as she would say. If you get lost at that point, what do you have in common with them? Nothing (mixed parent group, Seville).

And, finally, we refer to scheduling face-to-face activities where there's no real need for technology, such as sharing experiences outdoors. Some examples are sports activities, whether playing sports or attending sporting events (which parents claim create genuine spaces without technological interference by their children), or organising family trips or outings that allow them to build intimacy and dialogue outside of technological means.

6. Discussion

The goal of this research project was to gain a more profound understanding of the use and perception of digital technologies by adolescents, and compare these with the practices and perceptions of parents of adolescent children in order to identify challenges and opportunities regarding family coexistence. We have investigated intergenerational divisions and tensions linked to the use of RICTs and attempted to define safe and quality uses revolving around the idea of digital accompaniment, in which the home represents a space where consensual, safe and critical digital practices can be enjoyed and shared.

The fieldwork has demonstrated that there are a number of different logics regarding technology in the home and the tensions it causes between adults and adolescents. In addition, it allowed us to hear what young people and parents have to say, how they express their discomfort, concerns and disagreements, and how they use a variety of elements to manage digital socialisation, something that they recognise as an inevitable part of modern life.

In general, adolescents view technology as a positive and essential part of their daily lives, although they are also cognisant of the risks it entails and acknowledge that

they are not always able to manage them. Despite the fact that the use of technologies is seen as an unquestionable necessity in the collective imagination, most young people also admit that, in the past year, they have felt saturated by or fed up with using the Internet or social media to the point of needing to "disconnect". In this regard, 30.1% claim to have felt like this quite frequently or very frequently, while 35.4% stated that they have felt this way at times (Megías, 2024). A great deal of technological dependence is socio-structural, deriving from an environment in which constant connectivity and total availability are expected of the subjects. It is not so much that the subjects have an individual addiction to technology use, but that the information environment in which they go about their daily lives ingrains in them a type of continuous and mobile connectivity, particularly so given the universal nature of smart phones. Faced with this scenario, the desire to disconnect is a common experience, especially at specific times and places where isolation is necessary to fully focus on the physically present world (Calderón-Gómez and Kuric, 2022). As a result, the idea of creating spaces for disconnection may be attractive for adults and young people alike, especially if these spaces also serve to deepen family ties.

Even though, as we have seen, the young population does not overly rely on their family members for help solving the problems they encounter in the digital realm, are generally able to teach themselves and, for the most part, believe themselves to possess outstanding digital skills, it is still essential that they receive education and guidance. Elements such as disinformation, overexposure, the saturation of content, online harassment and sexual violence, and access to harmful content and hate speech, among others, make training and development in terms of critical thinking and media and digital literacy vital (Eleuteri *et al.*, 2017; Megías, 2024; Megías *et al.*, 2020). The family continues to play a central role in guiding adolescent children during their immersion in the digital ecosystem for multiple reasons: to develop their own digital skills, to be able to amplify the advantages of RICTs, to prevent inappropriate use and to provide them with the resources to overcome possible risks. Just because children are considered "digital natives" does not eliminate the need for digital guidance because, despite being familiar with the devices and being digitally adept, their ability to assess and learn in the digital ecosystem requires direction and their autonomy must be acquired gradually and in a supervised manner.

It is worth mentioning that certain limitations were detected in the scope of the research. Firstly, the qualitative approach can make it difficult to generalise the results to the general population, since variables such as social class, educational attainment and habitat have not been taken into account. Therefore, the analysis does not consider socio-economic differences, education levels or differences between rural and urban areas when exploring the impact of digital technologies on family relationships. Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that the rapid evolution of technologies can affect the long-term relevance of the findings, given that digital practices and family dynamics are likely to change with the emergence of new platforms and devices. These limitations highlight the need for continued exploration of the issue with future methodological approaches that further refine our understanding of the impact that RICTs have on family coexistence.

Regardless, the results of the research underline the importance of and need to establish digital parenting models with which parents can guide their children and modulate their use of technologies. Strategies based on active and shared mediation in RICT use, technical restrictions, restrictions on the types of interactions and monitoring are some of the most widespread approaches that parents can adopt to mitigate the potential risks associated with Internet use. Past studies, such as Livingstone and Helpser (2008), reveal that the main way to reduce risk is by restricting interactions between users; however, these types of strategies come with a clear cost as they limit the benefits and potential opportunities of Internet use and can provoke intra-family conflict. Digital gaps have clear consequences on the range of strategies employed by parents, since those who perceive that their children have weaker digital skills tend to opt for a more restrictive approach. By doing so, they avoid more potential risks, but they also impact digital inclusion and cap the benefits of the opportunities presented by RICTs, thus reproducing these gaps (Livingstone *et al*., 2017).

7. Conclusions

To conclude, the development of digital skills and the reduction of digital gaps are essential for ensuring a suitable digital intervention strategy. Aside from skills development, the results of the research point to further elements that could be crucial for facilitating this family involvement:

- Intergenerational parallels: there is an obvious common ground shared by the views of both adults and adolescents, so putting generational differences on the table would help establish a family dialogue about each member's individual relationship with technology with the goal of creating a link through shared experiences and finding a consensual way to address the tensions.

- Spaces for dialogue: it is important to seek and promote spaces where family members can engage in horizontal and respectful dialogue, empowering them to listen to and legitimise different views regarding needs and preferences in relation to technology in order to reach an agreement.

- Agreed limits: limits on technology use must be set (times, spaces, content, etc.) and these decisions respected. The purpose of the negotiations must be to agree on guidelines and limits that adults and young people alike consider as legitimate and tolerable.

- Consensus around threats (and search for solutions): both adults and adolescents identify digital threats and risks, and here children can play a key role in detecting them and training or guiding the adults in managing them. During the months-long lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw schools and workplaces close, we experienced the digital immersion of numer-

ous activities that had until then been carried out in person, and up to 72% of adolescents and young people declared that they had to provide social support to their family members in the use of RICTs (Sanmartín *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, this exchange and transmission of skills to parents and grandparents was key to overcoming barriers and difficulties.

- Gender perspective: studying the ways in which men and women, and adults and adolescents, face technologies is always necessary to detect different perceptions and habits, the different threats to which they are exposed, as well as strategies to overcome them and to meet the needs for care, so that the widest possible spectrum of collective uses is taken into account.

- Strategies for coming together: strategies validated by both adults and young people for integrating technologies into the home and causing as little change to family relationships as possible have been identified, including the integration of different worlds (family, friends, partner), disconnection to enjoy leisure or outdoor activities and reconnection to share technology with family members with whom they wish to strengthen their relationship.

These strategies do not exclude the need for society as a whole to be involved in managing the digital life of its citizens. The role of families is key, but they cannot replace the responsibility of industry, schools or institutions in regulating platforms, content control and digital skills training.

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Notes

1 The term "multimedia" is used to refer to how the digital communication ecosystem is characterised by its mobility, diversification and multiplicity, since a wide variety of devices are used to interact with the social environment (Calderón-Gómez and Gómez-Miguel, 2022).

2 Here we mention differences detected in the interest of exemplifying different positions with regard to the advantages and risks of technology use. However, these viewpoints must be contrasted in future research with a larger sample size.

3 Based on the definition of the polarity of apocalyptic and integrated put forward by Umberto Eco (2007).

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