

The desire of minors to be an influencer and/or youtuber. Narcissism as a factor of influence

1. Introduction

1.1. Identity construction and social networks

Social networks are configured as a space for communication and interaction with other individuals and social groups. They are a new context of socialisation in the maturational development of adolescents (Del Prete & Redon, 2020), which enables new, more flexible, omnipresent and anonymous processes, providing the time and space to respond to the needs of immediate acknowledgement by others. This is a phenomenon which stands alone from the geographical context in which they are found, and expresses a marked global character (Aznar et al., 2019).

Social networks have become the new scenario chosen by young people and adolescents to prioritise personal contact and begin the construction of their own social being (Calvo & San Fabián, 2018). In this virtual space, parents are no longer the referents, nor the people who guide their transition processes to build the identity of the future adult (Vázquez & Fernández, 2016), which implies a greater vulnerability of minors, who require the “way of being regarded by others” to see and be approved through their peers, now mediated by technologies (Dans, 2015).

On their behalf, adolescents feel the pressure in the need to participate in social networks, as belonging to a social network has ceased to be a leisure option and has become a requirement. The interactions that their publications provoke also have an immediate effect on their personal identity and the construction of their self-esteem (Yus, 2019). Therefore, the use of these social media influences the configuration of one's own identity, both who they are and who they aspire to be (Dans, 2015).

Currently, minors select and publish what they want others to see about themselves and the feedback of their publications is immediate, they can instantly see the repercussion of their publications, the approval of who they are, laying the foundations for the construction of their identity (Vázquez & Fernández, 2016). In this process, in addition to their peers, other references linked to social networks emerge: youtubers and influencers.

In this sense, Pérez-Torres et al. (2018) state that youtubers and influencers play a fundamental role, as their videos and publications provide information on aspects such as sexuality, gender identity and/or their vocational choice, which, in our opinion, provokes reactions in the form of likes or emoticons, thus influencing these and other aspects of identity.

In the study by Aznar et al. (2019), the trend towards a greater use of social networks by Primary School students is noted and how, due to the fact that they are in a stage of identity construction, this fact is taken advantage of by brands to include advertising and even use minors to promote their products (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2021; Núñez-Cansado, López-López & Somarriba-Arechavala, 2021).

1.2. The new identity referents of minors

YouTubers, according to Hidalgo-Marí and Segarra-Saavedra (2017), are people who have a channel on YouTube and use it to publish videos and comments, with the aim of achieving a greater number of views and improving their audience. This definition could apply to many people who meet these requirements. However, being a youtuber implies having created a social movement around the channel, generating the interest of millions of users and constantly increasing the number of views, followers and downloads of the videos.

Influencers are also emerging strongly in the media environment, defined as a “person who has a certain credibility on a specific topic and whose presence and influence on social networks makes them an ideal prescriber of a particular brand” (Gómez-Nieto, 2018, p.149). Márquez and Ardèvol (2018) indicate that a youtuber can become an influencer when he or she mobilises and influences a large number of followers.

These transmedia celebrities (Redmon, 2014) have a profile defined by aspects such as: being normal people who have become famous by posting videos on YouTube and other social networks; transforming a hobby into a new and lucrative profession (Salmon, 2010). In this sense, according to Ardèvol and Márquez (2017, p. 79), many of these youtubers have no specific training and show their followers that their success story is based on perseverance and enthusiasm, which creates the impression that anyone can become a youtuber.

Along the same lines, Lovelock (2017) and Ardèvol and Márquez (2017, p.73), state that youtubers are the “new role models for a whole generation of young people, teenagers and children from different parts of the world”. By becoming role models, they make many of their followers want to pursue the same profession. Children tend to idealise them, thinking that it is a fun profession, recognised and in which they can earn money from home, just by talking about themselves, video games or even doing challenges, etc. (Cortejoso, 2019).

Thus, different authors (Castelló-Martínez & Tur-Viñes, 2020; Tur-Viñes et al., 2019), state that being a youtuber is one of the professions most preferred by Spanish children, a trend that may increase in the coming years (Bermúdez, 2020). This is demonstrated by Adecco surveys (2016, 2021), which show a progressive increase from 2.4% to 5.9% of children who want to be youtubers, especially boys.

1.3. Personality traits and the desire to become a youtuber and/or influencer

The use of social networks is associated with the search for an increase in self-esteem (Greitemeyer, 2016; Mehdizadeh, 2010), since sharing publications can reach a greater number of followers and, hence, reinforce the image through the likes received. Self-esteem is fed by the comparison and social reinforcement that social networks provide. Some studies (Blachnio et al., 2016a; 2016b; Valkenburg et al., 2017) have shown both a direct and indirect positive relationship between self-esteem and social networks.

In addition to self-esteem, narcissism is also the subject of research (Eşkisü et al., 2017; Wang, 2017), as Martínez-Mena (2010, p.13) expresses “never before postmodernity had it

been speculated that narcissism could be a category of cultural analysis, that is, a characteristic in contemporary man”.

Mehdizadeh's (2010) studies found that Facebook users who scored high on the narcissism test showed a higher frequency of accessing the network per day and logged on for longer periods of time. Wang (2017) showed that more time that was spent online was related to narcissistic traits in users.

Interest in the correlation between narcissism and social media activity is a constant in much of the scientific literature. Some studies have focused their results on the relationships detected between selfies and predictors of narcissism (Sorokowski et al., 2015; Weiser, 2015).

Following a review of the existing literature on the subject and the current state of the phenomenon (Tomás et al., 2016), there is a clear need to investigate which are the factors that influence the desire of minors to become youtubers or influencers.

For this reason, the aims of this research are, firstly, to determine what factors influence primary school children's desire to become YouTubers and/or influencers. Secondly, to find out the vision or perception they have of these emerging professions.

The research hypotheses derived from these objectives would be the following:

1. There are differences in terms of gender and educational level in the children's desire to become youtubers and/or influencers.
2. The self-esteem and/or the level of narcissism of minors that conditions them to the decision to be a youtuber and/or influencer.

2. Methodology

The methodology used is quantitative, with a descriptive, non-experimental and correlational methodological design.

The sampling, carried out in the first phase, was non-probabilistic by chance by convenience, and in the second phase, a simple random sampling. The sample finally consisted of 343 Andalusian students in the 5th and 6th years of Primary Education, of whom 50.4% were girls and 49.6% boys. Their ages were between 10 and 13 years old, making them part of the so-called Z and Alpha Generations. In terms of educational level, 44% were in the fifth year and 56% in the sixth year of Primary Education.

They were asked about the number of followers they had on their social networks (approximately), with 29.7% stating that they had none and 49.3% from 1 to 250, the rest, being a much smaller proportion, stating that they had more than 250 followers.

60.2% would like to be a youtuber and/or influencer (27.8% girls and 32.5% boys). The data identifying the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1*Sample descriptive variables*

Variables	%
Type of content they watch on Youtube	Sport=39.4
	Pets and Animals=26.5
	News=7.3
	NGOs=2.6
	Cinema and cartoons=35.9
	Videogames (Gamers)=66.2
	Education=10.5
	Travel=21
	Music=74.3
	Beauty and Fashion=21.9
	Memes=37
	Politics=1.2
	Motor=11.7
	Challenges (retos)=52.2
Religion=0.9	
Social media accounts or channels	Facebook=6.7
	YouTube=38.2
	Instagram=36.2
	Tik Tok=63
	Discord=19.5
Frecuencia de uso de redes sociales	Don't have any=21.3
	Never=15.8
	Sporadically =12
	Weekends only=19.6
	Every day seldom (less than 10) =33
Content uploaded to social networks	Every day many times (10 or more) =19.6
	None=44.4
	Photos taken by me =24.9
	Videos made by me=42.1
	Forwarding photos I receive =7.6
Forwarding videos I receive =13.5	

The technique used in the research was the survey and the instrument used was a questionnaire, consisting of the descriptive variables mentioned above and two standardised scales: the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965; Atienza et al., 2000) (levels 1 to 4) and the N-15 Narcissism scale (levels 1 to 6).

The N-15 Narcissism scale of Trechera et al. (2008) measures three dimensions: 1) Narcissism, which includes “the idea of a distorted self-image, the need for recognition, or feeling of being special” (p.29); 2) Machiavellianism, which expresses “the use and management of other people for one's own benefit” (p.29); 3) Dominance (leadership), which reflects “the component of dominant leadership, the sense of special ability, power and control over other people” (p.29).

The reliability of these scales in the present research and in previous reports is shown in Table 2.

Table 2*Scale reliability análisis*

Scales	Cronbach's alpha in the study	Cronbach's alpha in other studies	Dimensions and number of items
Self-Esteem Scale	.773	.87 (Vázquez-Morejón et al., 2004)	10 items
Narcissism N-15 Scale	.876	.83 (Trechera et al., 2008)	Narcissism (5) Machiavellianism (5) Dominance (5)

After the design of the questionnaire, it was sent in paper and digital format to the participating schools, together with an informed consent form to be sent to the families.

The data obtained were processed with the SPSS v.25 statistical programme and the level of statistical validity was set at $p < .05$. The variables that were reverse coded in the original scales were recoded.

The first statistical analyses carried out were the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which determined the non-normality of the responses and the subsequent use of non-parametric tests, as well as the reliability analysis of the different scales (Cronbach's alpha). Subsequently, descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out.

3. Analysis and findings

When asked about their perceptions of the professions of youtubers and/or influencers, these were the results (Table 3):

Table 3

Perception of the professions of youtubers and/or Influencers

Items	Average	Typical deviation
Earn money easily	3.68	1.284
Little study	2.99	1.281
They are their own boss	3.97	1.205
Fun profession	4.16	1.139
They become famous quickly	2.84	1.302
Easy to become a <i>youtuber</i> and/or <i>influencer</i>	2.53	1.312
Influence their followers	3.81	1.230
Receive gifts from brands	4.38	1.009

In either case, there is some variability in the responses. There are high levels of averages in terms of considering these professions as fun and the advantage of receiving gifts from different brands. However, it seems that they do not consider it easy to do it.

A descriptive analysis of the scales included in the questionnaire was then carried out (Table 4). In the case of self-esteem, the average obtained by the participants is above the average of the scale itself, which indicates high levels of self-esteem and homogeneity in their response. Regarding the average of the narcissism variable, the results show low levels, furthermore, in the three subscales, however, a greater variability in the response is observed.

Table 4

Average and variance of the Self-esteem and Narcissism scales

Scales	Dimensions	Average	Typical deviation
Self-esteem		3.05	.57
Narcissism N-15	Narcissism	2.9	1.02
	Machiavellianism	2.61	1.07
	Dominance	2.56	1.03

Table 5 shows that most of the items have a high average, which indicates that students have good self-esteem. As far as the typical deviation is concerned, the items with the greatest dispersion are 5, 8, 9 and 10 and, therefore, the greatest heterogeneity in the participants' responses.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics. Self-esteem scale

Items	Average	Typical deviation
1. I feel that I am as valuable a person as others	3.17	.970
2. I am generally inclined to think of myself as a failure*	3.32	.884
3. I think I have some good qualities	3.44	.747
4. I am able to do things as well as others.	3.33	.824
5. I am proud of myself	2.75	1.170
6. I have a positive attitude towards myself	3.31	.884
7. I generally feel satisfied with myself	3.36	.771
8. I would like to have more self-respect*	2.27	1.068
9. I really feel useless sometimes*	2.73	1.140
10. Sometimes I think I'm good for nothing*	2.99	1.115

Note: * Reversed correction items

Numerous items are below the average of the scale (Table 6). Those with a higher average are included in the Narcissism and Machiavellianism subscale, with the exception of item 13, which belongs to the leadership subscale. However, there is some heterogeneity of response in the totality of the items, with the deviation ranging between 1.2 and 1.9.

Table 6

Narcissism N-15 Scale

Items	Average	Typical deviation
1. It is very important that others pay attention and admire what I do	3.80	1.708
2. I take advantage of others when I have the opportunity without feeling guilty.	1.75	1.262
3. I am a good leader	3.58	1.708
4. I want to become something in people's eyes.	3.76	1.774
5. I sometimes trick others by being friendly when I am only really interested in them in order to get something from them.	1.67	1.256
6. I think it is easy to manipulate others	1.75	1.228
7. I need to know that people think I am an important person.	3.23	1.816
8. I don't feel bad if I satisfy my needs at the expense of someone else.	2.01	1.403
9. I don't like to have authority over people*	2.34	1.528
10. It bothers me that people do not notice my physical presence when I am in public	3.74	1.934
11. I feel bound by the principle of justice only when it is to my own advantage	2.56	1.530
12. I am more capable than most people	2.76	1.685
13. Impressing others is important in order to be able to move forward.	4.04	1.687
14. I can take advantage of my friends	1.60	1.105
15. I like to feel that I control my friends.	1.88	1.434

Note: * Reversed correction items

The non-parametric tests applied were Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis on a case-by-case basis.

Taking into account the grouping variable "gender", significant differences are found with respect to the following variables:

- Boys think, more than girls, that the advantages of these emerging professions are that they are their own bosses ($p=.001$), that it is a fun profession ($p=.006$) and that they are people who influence their followers ($p=.011$).

- Boys have higher self-esteem than girls ($p=.005$), as well as higher levels of narcissism ($p=.000$) and its corresponding subscales: narcissism ($p=.000$), Machiavellianism ($p=.008$) and dominance ($p=.001$).
- In terms of the type of content they watch on YouTube, boys watch more sport, video games, memes and motoring than girls ($p=.000$ in all cases). While girls are more likely to watch music ($p=.002$) and beauty and fashion ($p=.000$).
- Regarding the social networks on which respondents have accounts, differences are also found, with boys preferring YouTube ($p=.000$), Discord ($p=.000$) and Facebook ($p=.001$) and girls preferring Tik Tok ($p=.001$).
- Finally, with regard to wanting to be a youtuber and/or influencer, it cannot be affirmed that there are significant differences ($p=.05$), although as we can see the result is within the established statistical validity limit (27.7% of girls and 32.46% of boys would like to dedicate themselves to this profession).

Secondly, taking into account the grouping variable “Educational Level”, we have found that there are significant differences with respect to the following variables:

- Boys and girls in the sixth year of Primary School think, more than those in the fifth year, that the advantage of this type of emerging profession is that you have to study very little ($p=.019$).
- Although no significant differences were found in terms of self-esteem in general, differences were found in some particular items within self-esteem. Specifically, students in the sixth year of Primary School are more inclined to think that they are failures ($p=.016$) and that they are good for nothing ($p=.023$). However, they believe that they are proud of themselves ($p=.009$), something which, apparently, could be contradictory.
- There were neither differences obtained in narcissism, in general nor in any of its three sub-dimensions. Only in one of the items of dominance, in which the students in the sixth year of Primary School think that situations are fairer as long as it benefits them ($p=.017$), above those in the fifth year of Primary School.
- In terms of the social media channels they use, the only difference was in terms of Instagram, where it seems to be used more by sixth grade pupils ($p=.004$).
- With regard to the question whether they want to be a youtuber and/or influencer, there are also differences in terms of the year ($p=.044$). Sixth grade students have this desire more than fifth grade students.
- In relation to the number of followers, it seems that it is also the pupils in the sixth year of primary school who have the highest number of followers ($p=.003$), especially in the range of 250 followers and above.

Finally, taking into account the grouping variable “Would you like to be a youtuber and/or influencer?”, it has been proved that there are significant differences in the following variables:

- If we analyse the type of content they watch on YouTube, there are differences in the following content: Those who answered affirmatively that they want to be a youtuber and/or influencer are those who watch more content about video games ($p=.000$) and challenges ($p=.008$). However, significant differences can also be seen

among those who want to pursue this profession, but state that they do not watch content about memes ($p=.016$) or beauty and fashion ($p=.019$).

- Interesting data were also obtained regarding the social networks on which students who want to be youtubers and/or influencers have accounts. Students who have accounts on YouTube ($p=.000$) and Tik Tok ($p=.030$) responded that they would like to dedicate themselves to these professions. On the other hand, students who have declared that they have accounts on Discord ($p=.034$), Facebook ($p=.002$) or do not have any accounts on social networks ($p=.000$), do not show interest in them.
- Differences can also be seen in the number of followers they have ($p=.001$). All those who have a follower (in all the categorised ranges) have mostly answered that they want to be a youtuber and/or influencer. The highest percentage of those who do not want to become one of these celebrities is among those who do not have a single follower.
- With regard to their perception of this type of profession, significant differences are also found in the following items: students who want to be a youtuber and/or influencer think that it is not a profession that requires little study ($p=.000$) and that it is a fun profession ($p=.000$).
- In relation to self-esteem, no significant differences were found, in contrast to the general value of narcissism ($p=.000$). Children with a higher level of narcissism are those who want to dedicate themselves to these professions, as is the case in the three subscales ($p=.000$).

Finally, to verify the correlation between the different scales and subscales, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used, and what was found was that most of them showed positive correlations with each other (Table 7), except for self-esteem with the Machiavellianism subscale. In general, the correlation of self-esteem with narcissism and its subscales is weak, while the correlations between the narcissism subscales are high.

Table 7

Spearman correlation coefficient. Self-esteem and Narcissism Scales

		A	N	SubN	SubM	SubD
A	Correlation Coef.	1	.127*	.171**	.024	.153**
	Sig. (bilateral)		.018	.002	.661	.005
N	Correlation Coef.	.127*	1	.877**	.900**	.867**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.018		.000	.000	.000
SubN	Correlation Coef.	.171**	.877**	1	.686**	.641**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.002	.000		.000	.000
SubM	Correlation Coef.	.024	.900**	.686**	1	.702**
	Sig. (bilateral)	.661	.000	.000		.000
SubD	Correlation Coef.	.153**	.867**	.641**	.702**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	.005	.000	.000	.000	

Note: A: Self-esteem; N: Narcissism; SubN: Narcissism subscale; SubM: Machiavellianism subscale; SubD: dominance sub-scale. * The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral)

4. Discussion and conclusions

In relation to the objective of finding out what children think about the professions of youtuber and/or influencer, it has been found that, in general terms, pupils think that these emerging professions are fun, they receive gifts from brands and have the advantage of being their own bosses, as the most outstanding factors. The idea that they do not agree with is that it is not easy to get into or if they can become famous quickly. This opinion coincides with the idea expressed by Establés et al. (2019), who consider that adolescents, due to their inexperience and lack of knowledge of how social networks work, may have high expectations when it comes to wanting to dedicate themselves to these new professions, however, in most cases, they will be frustrated when they do not achieve their initial objectives. Having an account on these social networks and uploading content is relatively easy with a minimum of knowledge, but it is not so easy to make a living from them.

This idea changes when variables such as gender, academic level or the desire to be a youtuber and/or influencer are taken into account. Both the pupils who want to dedicate themselves to these professions and pupils in the fifth year of primary school are those who consider that they have to study for it, that is to say, it is something that requires effort. Those who want to get into these professions think that they are fun, so they take this criterion as important in their choice. Furthermore, the boys, more than the girls, are those who agree with this. Finally, gender is a variable that influences the opinion that they can be their own bosses and influence their followers.

Interesting results were obtained with regard to the second objective, which aimed to find out what factors influence children's desire to become a youtuber and/or influencer. Gender is not a determining factor for wanting to pursue these professions, which contradicts the last Adecco study (2021), which indicated that boys had a greater desire to pursue these professions than girls. It is also true that in this research we are dealing with pupils in the third cycle of primary school and the study referred to surveyed pupils aged 4 to 16 (a wider age range), which leads us to suppose that age may also be a factor influencing the results in terms of choice by gender. This is confirmed by the fact that significant differences have also been shown according to the academic year, that is to say, pupils in the sixth grade are more interested in these professions than those in the fifth grade.

Other factors that seem to favour the boost the motivation to get into these professions are among those children who have YouTube or Tik Tok accounts and have more followers on these accounts.

Finally, despite initially considering that children who want to be transmedia celebrities would have high self-esteem, the results of the study have shown that self-esteem in the participants is not related to the desire to be a youtuber and/or influencer. The approach to this objective was based on contradictory assertions. According to Mehdizadeh (2010), low self-esteem was related to the increased use of digital platforms such as YouTube or Facebook. In contrast, Pérez-Torres et al. (2018) argue that youtubers are people who have good self-esteem and, at the same time, advise their followers about it. In this research, what has been found is that it does not influence this decision-making.

However, narcissism is a factor related to this decision, as those who would like to pursue these professions display more narcissistic traits than those who do not. The latter coincides with Wang's (2017) assertion that the narcissistic culture is higher in those who

use social networks. Therefore, narcissism is identified as a factor directly linked to children's desire to become youtubers and/or influencers.

As for the first hypothesis, where we wanted to check whether gender or educational level influenced the children's desire to become youtubers and/or influencers, we can say that gender does not appear to be an influential variable in this desire, on the contrary to the educational level. Therefore, it seems that it is more age (related to educational level) that shapes this desire, which may possibly increase as children approach adolescence.

The second hypothesis assumed that both self-esteem and narcissism were psychological factors that could explain children's desire to be a youtuber and/or influencer. As confirmed, only narcissism and its three sub-dimensions resulted in being the variable that explains this desire.

The research referenced in the introduction to this article demonstrated the relationship between self-esteem and social networks. However, this psychological factor has not been found to be a discriminating factor in wanting to work in these professions.

Different research has shown a relationship between social networks and narcissism (Dumas et al., 2017; Eşkisu et al., 2017; Monteiro et al., 2020; Reed et al., 2018; Susilawati & Dhaniawaty, 2018), but none of them have revealed a direct or indirect relationship with Machiavellianism and dominance, as demonstrated in this research.

In this sense, these factors should be further explored and include other personality factors that could influence these desires, such as the analysis of young people's personality traits from their selfies (Qiu et al., 2015; Weiser, 2015) to link them to detectable tendencies in their interpersonal relationships.

It would also be interesting to increase the sample, both in number and age range, to see if the trend is similar in the adolescent group.

With regard to the implications that can be derived from this study, we believe that it is essential to encourage critical thinking among children that promotes action and personal and social transformation. In educational centres, actions linked to the field of educational guidance can be implemented to prevent and/or develop certain behaviours related to personality traits. In this sense, Arguís et al. (2012) present the programme "Happy Classrooms" through which the different personality traits are worked on in a positive way.

Moreover, taking into account that new professions require a great deal of knowledge of social networks and ICT resources, schools should promote the development of digital competence which, in turn, is promoted by youtubers and/or influencers through their videos (Barujel et al., 2017). Not only should they be taught to acquire skills, but also to know how to identify the risks and opportunities, as well as the pros and cons that derive from them.

5. Funding

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