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Vulnerabilidade das crianças e adolescentes no uso das redes sociais e a mediação parental

Vulnerabilidad de los niños y adolescentes en el uso de las redes sociales y la mediación parental

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ABSTRACT

With the fast dissemination of technologies of information and communication, social networks occupy a fundamental role in the life of young people, changing the means of communication and interaction – being the principal reason of internet access among them. In view of the large number of children and adolescents who have a profile in these networks according to recent research (Cgi.br, 2012, 2013, 2014), one of the problems relates to the difficulty of caregivers to mediate the use of those technologies, with the need to assist their children in the responsible use of these tools and to understand their benefits and risks. Therefore, we analyzed which strategies parents have been using to supervise the use of those tools by their children. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of children and adolescents in the age ranging from nine to seventeen years old, residents of the city of Recife, located in Pernambuco, Brazil. The interviews were analyzed according to the Discursive Social Psychology (Potter, 1996; Potter & Whetherell, 1987). We conclude that, for the participants, social networks are important mechanisms in the processes of social interaction. However, they still report difficulties in what they consider risky or not for their children and mediation strategies occur in different ways and without following a specific orientation.

Keywords: Social Networks. Risk. Parental mediation. Discursive Social Psychology.

RESUMO

Com a rápida disseminação das tecnologias da informação e comunicação, as redes sociais ocupam um papel fundamental na vida dos jovens, mudando as formas de comunicação e interação – e este vem sendo o principal motivo de acesso à internet entre eles. Diante do grande número de crianças e adolescentes que possuem perfil nessas redes apresentados por pesquisas recentes (Cgi.br, 2012, 2013, 2014), um dos problemas diz respeito à dificuldade dos cuidadores em mediar o uso dessas tecnologias, havendo a necessidades de apropriação dessas vivências para auxiliarem seus filhos no uso responsável dessas ferramentas e compreender seus benefícios e riscos. Portanto, tivemos por objetivo analisar quais estratégias os pais e mães vêm realizando para a supervisão do uso dessa ferramenta por parte de seus/as filhos/as. Foram realizadas 12 entrevistas semiestruturadas com mães e pais de crianças e adolescentes na faixa etária dos nove aos dezessete anos residentes no Grande

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Recife. As entrevistas foram analisadas de acordo com o referencial da Psicologia Social Discursiva (Potter, 1996; Potter & Whetherell, 1987). Concluímos que para os participantes as redes sociais são importantes mecanismos nos processos de interação social, porém ainda relatam dificuldades do que elas consideram arriscado ou não para seus/as filhos/as e as estratégias de mediação ocorrem de maneiras diversas e sem seguir uma orientação específica.

Palavras-chave: Redes Sociais. Risco. Mediação Parental. Psicologia Social Discursiva.

RESUMEN

Con la rápida difusión de la tecnología de información y comunicación, las redes sociales ocupan un papel fundamental en la vida de los jóvenes, cambiando los medios de comunicación e interacción, siendo la razón principal del acceso a Internet entre ellos. En vista del gran número de niños y adolescentes que tienen un perfil en estas redes introducido por investigación reciente (Cgi.br, 2012, 2013, 2014), uno de los problemas se relaciona con la dificultad de los cuidadores para mediar el uso de esas tecnologías, con la necesidad de ayudar a sus hijos en el uso responsable de estas herramientas y comprender sus beneficios y riesgos. Por lo tanto, analizamos qué estrategias han utilizado los padres y madres para supervisar el uso de esas herramientas por sus hijos. Se realizaron 12 entrevistas semi-estructuradas con padres y madres de niños y adolescentes de edades comprendidas entre nueve y diecisiete años, residentes de la ciudad de Recife, ubicadas en Pernambuco, Brasil. Las entrevistas fueron analizadas de acuerdo con la Psicología Social Discursiva (Potter, 1996; Potter & Whetherell, 1987). Se concluye que, para los participantes, las redes sociales son importantes mecanismos en los procesos de interacción social. Sin embargo, todavía reportan dificultades en lo que consideran arriesgado o no para sus hijos y las estrategias de mediación ocurren de diferentes maneras y sin seguir una orientación específica.

Palabras clave: Redes Sociales. Riesgo. Mediación Parental. Psicología Social Discursiva.

Introduction

Although two decades ago John Suler (1996) already warned of relationships in the virtual environment – describing their possible risks and considering the complexity of communication through messages, in which you can assume any identity by creating the character you want – it's through instant messages associated to social network that we are faced with today's main means of communication, wherein more than one billion people in the world use those mechanisms. Despite the fact that some communication technologies have had a significant impact on social life over time, it is the cellphones connected to wireless networks that now call attention to new factors that influence and impact on the process of social interaction. In this article we will discuss this trend of use by children and adolescents, the risks that they are exposed to and the means of supervision carried out by their parents.

According to the *Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil*³, the data collected from November 2015 to June 2016 reveal that 87% of the respondents between 9 and 17 years old have profile in social networks (Cgi.br, 2015). In these studies, it was possible to visualize dangers experienced by the young, demonstrating that in 2015 20% of young people viewed images/videos of sexual content on the internet in the last 12 months, 9% through social networks, as well as a total of 20% of children and adolescents aged 9 to 17 years were treated offensively, and 12% reported having acted offensively. It was also highlighted that 40% of the young

people said they had had contact with people they did not know personally.

Furthermore, situations of discrimination were highlighted by young people, and of the 23,677,796 stipulated internet users in Brazil aged between 9 and 17 years old, 25% of them said they felt discriminated on the internet because of their color or race, 14% for their physical appearance and 11% for liking people of the same sex. Only 6% said they used internet to discover a way to commit suicide, 11% ways to hurt themselves, and 19% ways to get very thin. Other risk conditions that also draw attention are the practices of cyberbullying and sexting. In 2010 in the United States, for example (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010, 2016), 20.8% of young people claimed to have been victims of cyberbullying at least once at some point in their lives. That number increased in 2015 to 34% of respondents.

In a research conducted by Miriam Janeth Cajamarca Becerra in her graduation work in Universidad de Cuenca (2016), 345 young people between the ages of 14 and 19 were interviewed at a school in the province of Azuay, in which it shows a significant existence of cases of sexting. The study reveals that young people find this activity very common, and that both genders, feminine and masculine, perform sexting. In social networks, the main activities carried out by 95.9% of the young people are: sending, receiving and publishing photos, videos and messages. The research also indicates that such content is most often disseminated through messages, 31.2% said they had sent sexual messages.

We state that data such as those cited above are part of centers of calculation in which information, numbers and data are collected about people and facts of social life. Scholars and specialists who are interested in certain aspects of a population – in this case, the number of

³ *Internet Manager Committee in Brazil*. Since 2012 it has presented the research *TIC Kids Online Brasil*, investigating the online experiences of children and adolescents and the action of the parents in the process of mediating the use of the internet by their children.

children and young people who have access to social networks – collect data with the aim of presenting a map that makes possible the creation of public policies that attend this population, making the link between the public power and the needs and the desires of the individuals. In this way, as soon as the reference about a phenomenon is calculated and grouped, it becomes possible to make a connection between them, thus enabling governmental action on it (Rose, 2011).

In other words, the way in which data on a phenomenon are cataloged and the importance of these in describing types of person as "at risk" – as in the case of children using TIC⁴s without adequate supervision – allow the development of governmental policies for this new being that emerges. For it is from the visualization of the problem, based on the collection of numbers that a type of person is recognized, then when he/she becomes perceptible, possibilities for transformation emerge in the form of risk management (Figueiredo, 2014). In this case, the appearance of the child at risk in social networks and discussions on how to manage the behaviors are considered risky.

Regarding the forms of supervision by parents, the statistics of the *TIC Kids Online Brasil* (Cgi.br, 2015) show that there are concerns from parents: 41% of them worry that their children are contacted by strangers on the internet as well as 38% are concerned that children are victims of crime; alcohol/drug abuse appears with 35% of causes of parents' fears. Concerns about the sexual life of their children are also one of the causes addressed by 26% of parents. 23% of the parents pointed out as their fear that their children are treated offensively or unpleasantly by other children. Guidance measures are also mentioned in the survey, and indicate that 79% talk to their children about what they do on the internet and

70% stay close while their children use the cellphone; 61% sit with their children while using the internet just to observe what they do, but do not participate in what is being done; 40% engage in any type of activity with the children on the Internet; and 36% encourage the children to explore and learn things on the internet on their own. Of the parents/caregivers interviewed, a total of 59% believe that the children use the internet safely. Despite this, 42% feel they should take more action on their children's use of the internet and claim that 11% of their children have experienced some embarrassment in using the internet in the last 12 months.

Comparing with the responses of children and adolescents, 52% said they felt uncomfortable after contact with images/videos of sexual content on the internet in the last 12 months. These data contrast with the claim of the surveyed universe because only 11% of children and adolescents had acts of embarrassment recognized or declared by their caregivers. It seems that parents still need to take more ownership of their children's online experiences, in order to provide more responsible mediations so that they can assist them in the development of these learning, entertainment and socialization tools. According to Nejm (2011):

Among the many challenges imposed in this scenario, we seek to point out the advantages of mediation and education for good choices as a viable and urgent alternative when the use becomes increasingly individualized and mobile. We believe that digital technologies can be allied in promoting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents when we avoid opposing freedom versus security and focus on empowerment for good choices and creating the conditions for responsible mediation. (pp. 101-2, *free translation by authors*)

With regard to how parents should supervise the use of TIC by their children, Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafssonet

⁴ Technologies of Information and Communication.

(2010) propose a precursor classification of types of mediation, so we cite a few which are appropriated to our purpose in this article:

- *Active mediation of child's internet use:* Where the person in charge is present next to the child, talking with him or her about the activities carried out online.
- *Active mediation of child's internet safety:* The caregiver guides the child before, during or after use, discussing what to do in cases of difficulties.
- *Restrictive mediation:* Parents set rules, which limit some activities.
- *Monitoring:* The caregiver checks the browsing history after the children use the internet.
- *Technical mediation of the child's internet use:* Installation of software, restricting and monitoring the activities carried out by children on the Internet.

However, to Simões, Ponte, Ferreira, Doretto & Azevedo (2014), the transition from the computer to smartphones and other mobile means to access the internet are creating a challenge to parents and the effectiveness of these strategies are changing. What is risky in the face of the proportion of children using internet is the lack of responsible supervision, recognizing that the family plays a fundamental role in this process of mediation. And according to the report CGI.br (2014):

Parental mediation is a point of attention, especially when only 50% of parents are internet users. Although they report a willingness to engage in active mediation strategies, research indicates that parents or guardians feel they need information about safe use of the Internet and information that helps them cope with the potential risks experienced by their children. (p. 164, *free translation by authors*)

Faced with this, the parents have a challenge: how to supervise this tool used

by their children? The relevance of the topic addressed arises from the need to adapt parents to the new forms of interaction, and in the prevention of vulnerability that those born in the digital age are subject to when making use of this tool. In the next section, we aim to analyze the discourses of parents of children and adolescents to understand how they have addressed the issue of the use of technology of information and communication by their supervised children, identifying possible risk situations.

Method

We performed a qualitative research taking into account the process of discursive material production with a subsequent analysis, and then open interviews (Aragaki, Lima, Pereira & Nascimento, 2014) were conducted with twelve parents (six fathers and six mothers) from the city of Recife, located in Pernambuco, Brazil, who have children between the ages of 9 and 17 years old who have cell phones with internet access. The selected age group was chosen based on the large number of data that the survey *Kids Online Brasil* (Cgi.br, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) makes available online about experiences of young people in this age group on using TICs.

The interviews were conducted individually and respondents answered questions related to the use of the WhatsApp social network, considering that this social network is massively used on the cell phones. Questions were asked about the experiences of young people and how the parents are dealing with this scenario. According to what was recommended in Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council on Ethics in Research with Human Beings, our research was approved by an Ethics Committee with the CAAE 61149316.0.0000.5206.

The anonymity of the participants will be preserved, mentioned by fictitious names.

We chose these research tools (Spink & Medrado, 2013) within a constructionist orientation, using them to understand the interface between the performative aspects of the language and the conditions in which it is produced, conceiving language as action, as a social practice that produces consequences. The produced material was analyzed based on Discursive Social Psychology (Potter & Wheterell, 1987). According to Potter (1996), when performing discourse analysis, we must consider concepts such as *indexicality and reflexivity*, in which the meaning of the word depends on the context in which it is used; in other words, the meaning produced in conversations with parents, on the use of social networks by their children, may vary for them or other caregivers when going through other experiences and/or social contexts. After the interviews, we gave continuity to the process of transcriptions of the speeches, followed by a thorough reading of the transcribed material, and the analysis itself, categorizing some themes raised by the parents. Our analysis resides on how the participants describe their own actions and others' on how they mediate the use of TIC by their children. Thus, we divided the analysis into the following categories: "Communication and information", "Risks" and "Forms of supervision" that will be discussed next.

Communication and information

When asked how their children started to use social networks, it was possible to notice in the interviews with the parents that they associated social networks with communication, and these were pointed out as a kind of new configuration of telephone calls. In their speeches, it was notorious that social networks are presented as a kind of

evolution of this medium. In this sense, Rosa states:

It's outdated, this thing of talking over the phone, they live in silent mode, I sometimes get upset. "Mom, for the love of God, why didn't you send me a WhatsApp? Why didn't you..." Right?⁵

It was also pointed out in the parents' statements a naturalness of the use of social networks, showing the collective demand of their children to be inserted in the social groups through WhatsApp, thus defending the use by their children – justified by the circumstances that it is their way to communicate and share information nowadays:

Maria: They also have because of their friends, right? In the school everybody already has it, they end up asking to have it too.

Caio: That's the current reality, isn't it? Unfortunately, it's like this now, we don't even have what to go back. Everybody is like this, why is he going to be different? It would be different if he was against it, if he didn't use, then I would say "Are you crazy?"

In the Brazilian scenario, as mentioned above (Cgi.br, 2016), 87% of young people have a profile on social networks. This is corroborated by the discourse of the parents in saying "they all use it". Such a framework appears to be decisive for the parents to give their consent to the children to make use of such networks. In another moment, Rosa herself raises other justifications that are pointed out as reasons for which she agreed, after the request of their daughters to use the social networks.

⁵ All speeches were freely translated to English and the authors tried to maintain the meaning and nuances of the same excerpt in Portuguese, although something will be lost in translation (Cf. Hacking, 2002).

Rosa: They asked, we tried to delay it, but then they have work from school, friends from school, dates, then we had to let go.

Similar arguments are brought up by other parents during the interviews, and we identified that the reasons why the parents interviewed allowed their children to use social networks, at first, it is because the social networks are certain to be the new forms of communication – an argument defended only by the mothers; and secondly the naturalness of the use of this technology, present in all interviews. However, as in this narrative presented by Rosa in which she cites that another possibility related to the use of WhatsApp is to study, other speeches arisen from the use of social networks which are presented as opportunities for development and access to information. For instance, in a context in which telephones cannot provide access to social networks and thus preventing the feasibility of exchanges of information between parties, in the same way that social networks do:

Isabela: Not every time because nowadays she uses both WhatsApp and the computer as a study tool. Both with the teachers who send reviews and questionnaires through WhatsApp, they send the question pictures, as well as through the computer itself, as the class group sends the questions, so she needs this tool to study at some point.

Interviewer: Do they share school material with the group?

João: Also, there are a lot of other things like movies, videos that they find funny, they schedule to get organized and lunch and spend the weekend. Not the weekend, but they spend the day together at a friend's house.

In this way, social networks are also presented by parents in a positive way as a space for development, in which their children cannot be excluded. At this point, faced with the possible risks that their children are subjected to, such as accessing inappropriate content, and being victims of crimes on the internet, which we will

discuss next; They contrast the risks with these potential benefits which are highlighted by them as a space for interaction and exchanges of information through social networks.

Risks

The parents declared that they were doubtful about what may be considered inappropriate for their children and had difficulty identifying these possible risks. Livingstone (2013) reinforces that there are difficulties of this recognition in the case of sexual content. For example, at a stage where we assume that culturally, and by influence of the media, young people have spontaneous access to these materials. It becomes difficult for parents to realize the impacts of unsupervised use, arguing that families should be aware and have an appropriate course of action in such risky situations – talking about possible risks that their children can find online (Livingstone, 2013). In the interviews it was possible to identify speeches where the possible contacts with strangers are notoriously considered dangerous, which also led to the emergence of the use of Facebook as a space in which children would be more vulnerable because of the accessibility of strangers to this environment.

Mariza: In relation to Facebook, he does not have it, he uses mine with my password. So, everything he does in this social network when there is an involvement of different people... I will always supervise, I will see who wrote, what he wrote, why he wrote, right?

Beatrice: I don't like Facebook for children, I don't authorize it, I only have Instagram, ok? And the Snapchat I deleted, and he came back to use it, but I do not like it, but he uses it, but for me it would really be just Instagram.

However, the belief of a possible security in WhatsApp in relation to other social networks which are supposed to be

dangerous is contrasted in the incongruous accounts of the events experienced by narrations of the children:

Interviewer: You know that inappropriate content for his age circulates, right? For his age group. Are you aware of this?

Beatrice: I am, but not in the chat groups he participates because there are only children of his age.

Mariza: I am, in relation to WhatsApp it does not exist any type of content that I forbid, because the contents are all within his age range, and are with his own friends from school. Once, his friends created a WhatsApp chat group and it was just for boys.

Both Mariza and Luiza bring up also improper situations that their children were exposed to, contradicting the above illustrated statements of previous moments in the interview when asked about the awareness of inappropriate content seen by their children.

Beatrice: So WhatsApp he uses with my supervision, but there is always something, there is always a problem. Every time I look, there is either something like bullying, that we see that it is one trying to be better than the other, there is cursing and you know what... or there is a gossip and flirting that I say is not meant to be exposed, right? On the internet that's it. It's... sometimes some complaint about the school. But we must have caution, and we let them use it, and I think there is always some problem, WhatsApp is the dangerous one.

Mariza: Then in that little group, they only sent sex things to an eleven-year-old boy, and when I saw him, I did not believe what he said: "Mom, they already took my name off because they made the group and they said 'take Alysson from the group because his mother looks through his cell phone'". So they took it, he did not even spend one day. It was serious, they took it soon because they know I'm watching.

It was also possible to identify that when they noticed in their own statements situations in which their children could be vulnerable, the mothers themselves found it difficult to recognize

this hypothesis, exemplifying episodes in which other children became involved, and thus, removing the possibility that their children are in some situation of risk.

Mariza, for example, in the above-mentioned speech, says that supervising for her is sufficient, and reports that her son was withdrawn from the group in which sexual content circulated, saying that due to her supervision the other children considered her intimidating – making it evident that she believes in the participation of other children, but not her child in this particular group. In a similar way, Luiza narrates a situation of uneasiness that her son Benjamin went through. Despite this, she says that everything was a misunderstanding and that it was a little friend from the class who performed such an act: "I see two situations, there was a specific case that a child took Benjamin's cell phone and typed a text for another child, right? Such a text, terrible content, right? Of sex thing".

Later in the interview, Luiza comments how her son felt embarrassed about such a situation, and for that reason he even refused to attend classes: "we explained what had happened, the family forgave but he spent a lot of time without even wanting to... come to class with shame, you understand?". We observed this contradiction between the initial talk in which she was questioned about possible inappropriate content accessible to her child, and the report she brings up moments later in the interview, stating that it is not possible to believe that he has access, because of his friends' age. It was also possible to point out some contradictions in some fathers' accounts.

José: Cell phones, social networks, not these things, that's it... I don't have the smallest... I at least have not the slightest... concern about that.

Marcos: Regarding his talks, who they are talking to, I honestly do not worry too much because I know this universe.

But in a few moments later these narratives were denied, and the parents revealed apprehension in some risks that the children could be submitted to.

José: And I also talk to them... we talk to them about caution, right? Because it really is a very dangerous thing [...] and we always try to talk. There have been already stories with Maria Odete [his daughter], things like to take photos and post on the internet... and this photo had such a repercussion, it was not a big deal, but the moment that happened we intervened immediately and tried to solve and alert her.

Marcos: So my biggest concern is with regard to overuse, it is now public and notorious that the main issue is the conversations, and the dialogues, who are you talking to and what are you talking about, this is something that worries a lot, because we see it every day in the news, people being harassed and exposed.

In this context regarding the risks, the parents contradict their initial statements, when reporting that there are no worries regarding the use of the WhatsApp by their children. Later on the same interviews, they talk about their fears. Besides that, they argue about the convenience of the groups, the fact that the chat groups of their children being formed by children only, or just by family members, which reduce the possibilities of danger.

Interviewer: You know that there is pornographic content circulating, don't you? Do you worry about it?

João: One hundred percent. However, I look at his contacts, I always take a look to see who they are and what they send, and so far, all his contacts, besides family, are schoolmates. So no, I have not seen yet, it's not in their interest, right?

The contradictions during interviews are frequent. The parents presented incoherent reports – as illustrated above – and difficulties in perceiving and recognizing the contents and risky situations in which their children

are vulnerable. In the following, we will discuss the difficulties they report in carrying out responsible supervision.

Forms of supervision

We will analyze in this last category the parents' discourses on the means of supervisions carried out to mediate the use of social networks by their children. We observed that the direction taken to perform the supervisions are like the orientations given in the daily life outside the Internet. Beatrice and Rosa, for instance, claim to dialogue with their children about “real world” situations to raise awareness about the risks of social networks:

Beatrice: I think explaining what's actually in the social network is what is happening in the daily basis. So, the care I have with them whenever they are talking to a person is that they should not trust almost anybody, this is also true when talking to people on the internet, but I do not get in this paranoia because it's the internet, but because I think that behind the internet are people.

Rosa: When a case comes up, we are always showing them as an example, and tell them: “Beware of relationships with strangers whenever you are out in the streets”; “Do not talk to strangers, don't add anyone, because these cases are showing up”. So that's a way of letting them know.

Regarding the fathers, only in some isolated reports this comparison was made, as well as the child's age was not raised by them as criteria for risk prevention; while the mothers are concerned about the minimum age for use of social networks by their children. When asked about possible psychological or social harm caused using WhatsApp, some of them said:

Rosa: No, I do not think so, because as I say, there must be first a preparation according to the child's age.

Isabela: No, I think we must pay a lot of attention to the age issue. I gave one to Leticia [her daughter] after she was twelve

because she asked for it. Everyone had one, and it was needed for communication. What I do not agree on today is when you give one to a very small child who has no maturity. Leticia today is fourteen, I can talk and I know she understands what I say, I know she understands the risks... so, I have a different approach... I could not have this conversation that I have with her with a child of seven, eight, or ten years old. That worries me because there are girl friends of my youngest daughter who have a cell phone and are in the social network sending WhatsApp... that is what really worries me 'cause I think they are much more vulnerable than the adolescents who would theoretically have a certain understanding.

It is possible to notice the concern with the minimum age for the use of social networks, which Rosa and Isabela point out as an important aspect to be observed in relation to preventive measures for the safer use of social networks. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the children of the three mothers mentioned above started their activities on social networks before reaching the minimum recommended age for use of WhatsApp - until August 2016, the app indicated sixteen years old as the minimum age for use it. Another strategy mentioned as a form of mediation were rules regarding schedules and places to use, however, this is also another issue highlighted by the mothers interviewed; although only one father revealed to impose rules on how much time his daughter must use WhatsApp.

Isabela: No, I do not think it causes damage, but you have to know how to use it. Not only WhatsApp, but any other social network because that's what happens... suddenly everyone is at home, but everyone is on the phone, so what do I do? I do like this: if everybody's going to have lunch in family, we put the phones on the table, one on top of the other, and nobody's on the phone, so we can have lunch, talk and interact. Or else each one stays on their phone and we don't interact. We're by our child's side, but he's alone because he's on the phone, do you see?

These rules, as shown above, mention concerns in the interference of the social networks used in most of the times by mobile devices, which they consider according to their speech, disrupting the family relationship. This leads them to establish rules as preventive ways to the processes of individualization and isolation in families.

The structuring of families has undergone a process of transformation, which is intertwined with TICs, but also stemming from the current context in which we live. Spink (2010) states that in *Late Modernity* the autonomy gained through social movements provided women and mothers with a different role in society. Children and teenagers have also changed their places by being legitimated as subjects of rights. If on the one hand this is a characteristic that has brought about achievements, on the other hand we live in the context in which individualization and isolation are increasingly present. Through the participants' reports it was possible to note that this problem – isolation – is one of the main concerns of the mothers, being this point the impediment cited by them to carry out the active supervisions.

They also talked about looking at their children's cell phones to follow them in the use of WhatsApp, but they admit the ineffectiveness of this method since the conversations and contents can be erased.

Beatrice: I get his phone in secret. Sometimes I look and I'm always watching. Every time I look through his phone he ends up knowing, then I tell him: "Be careful with what you say, everything that is talked about can be proof, you cannot accuse, you cannot curse". Then he says "I'm not doing this". I say "But I'm warning you, you know?" I don't let go, I try to keep him close, but I recognize he gets loose anyway.

Isabela: Then I started to control, I can't control one hundred percent, it's an illusion, but I try. I have the password, so I try to look at her WhatsApp, what she is talking about in the groups, her Facebook. I have her added, so I control what she posts, if she

puts some photo she is not supposed to I warn her. We keep trying.

In regard to this case, when asked how they monitor the use of WhatsApp by their children, the fathers also stated that they look at their cell phones.

Plínio: Her phone, both her mother and I have access to the password, so from time to time we look to investigate if there is anything, but until today, thank God, everything is quiet, no problem.

João: Every time he sleeps I get his WhatsApp and look what he has said.

Among the strategies used to supervise, most of them still bet on the “good old talk”, the dialogue between parents and children emerges as a fundamental means of mediation in which parents report guiding their children through conversation. Once again this ratifies the initially illustrated speech in relation to the mothers who usually carry out the supervision of social networks guided by the strategies that they use in the day-to-day outside the Internet.

Isabela: I’ve seen other experiences of girls who sent private photos on WhatsApp, and it circulated in the school. But that was the girl who did it, the boy asked and she did it, sent it just to him trusting that he wasn’t going to show it to anyone else, but then he spread it. It was another kind of conversation that I had, another kind of approach, I bet a lot on talking. It’s my approach, because we can’t deviate from this... it’s an illusion. If I say to her “I’m taking your cell phone...” it’s no use, she’ll use her friend’s. If I block the pornographic content, she’ll find a way to access, she’ll access it, it’s no use, do you see? I think that unfortunately it is a very hard reality, but that is a very close one. No parent can have one hundred percent surveillance, then you try to divert but the main thing is to talk...so you must trust, knowing who you have at home... knowing who your son is.

Even though fathers report talking to their children about the use of social networks - they even have highlighted

different situations – mothers are usually the ones who not only discuss the issues that their children may encounter, but also guide them on how to use the tool safely. While fathers’ approach is diverse in these points of conversation, some of them have narrated doing this type of mediation and guidance about the dangers while others claim to talk only to know their children’s experiences on WhatsApp. João says, “I always talk to him, but what he talks to me never goes beyond the school, friends and his day. What he comments with me in WhatsApp is usually what he talks to me”.

Among the strategies reported, we have identified that the forms of supervision stated above, some are related to those we have already referred to Livingstone et al. (2010). Most of them are performed only by mothers, such as, *restrictive mediation*, in which participants such as Rosa sets rules as well as schedules for use “[...] at the table at mealtimes they can’t [...] when we are talking too”. *Monitoring* has emerged in the speeches of most parents, such as checking browsing history and looking at conversations after children use the internet. However, this type of strategy, as well as *restrictive mediation* is considered ineffective for Duereger and Livingstone (2012). On the other hand, among the six interviewed mothers, five of them narrated that they guide their children through conversations about risks and possibilities of prevention before, during and after internet use by their children. That is the so called *active mediation of the use of the internet with security*, the type of mediation which the authors consider more effective (Duereger & Livingstone, 2012), in this way preventing the risks, and providing the possibilities of good use.

Speaking of the guidance through conversations, it is notorious that parents bet on believing in their children. In another speech Rosa states that in her home this type of mediation has worked: “Yes, I do not know how it is in every

family, but we have a relationship of friendship, trust, and so far it has worked very well, they do not hide it [...]”. Even in the case of Isabela, her narration shows that she believes that no parent has 100% vigilance, claiming that she believes the main thing is to talk and trust.

For the analysis in this study, we carried out the reading of the interviews thoroughly and analyzed the parents’ discourses separately, and later compared not only the participants’ speeches to find out the points of proximity and accordance, but also tension and incongruence, as preconized by the reference we used to analyze discourse (Potter & Wheterell, 1987). After that, we selected the categories mentioned above. In respect to this, we did not identify differences in the forms of supervision related to gender, though the mothers appear to be more suitable about this role. All the parents interviewed lived with their children and only one father narrated that he felt discharged of this supervision because the mother is the one who does it.

Final considerations

It was possible to observe through the interviews innumerable contradictions in which would be considered risky or not. In their reports, parents at times demonstrated that they know what types of content are accessible to their children, potential risks and damages, such as pornographic content, verbal abuse, image exposure and discrimination. However, they reported that they did not believe their children would access such content or were involved in risky situations. The accomplishment of this work emphasizes the importance of data registries that allow the visualization of new configurations of violence against children and adolescents and other situations producing psychic suffering that can happen on social networks.

The benefits provided by TICs such as the exercising of citizenship and the sharing of knowledge must be considered in this conflict between risks and opportunities – benefits perceived by parents in relation to their children being inserted in social networks. Thus, we deem important the proposal of Nejm (2011) that parents, schools and civil society organizations must appropriate TICs to help and promote responsible autonomy for young people at a time when social interactions are mediated by digital media.

It is important to note that some institutions, such as the SAFERNET (non-governmental organization that aims to promote human rights on the internet in partnership with the Brazilian federal public prosecutor's office) already carry out campaigns to enforce the rights and the protection of young people on the internet. In addition to that, they allow citizens to report online crimes, clarify possible doubts and receive guidance from psychologists on a help channel available on the SAFERNET website (Cgi.br, 2016).

Being only a small sample of how parents mediate their children and adolescents’ use of social network, we assume that this work can help the understanding of the social interaction processes mediated by social networks. Thus, the reflections on the theme here reported by the parents in the search for an understanding the difficulties they face can generate subsidies for educational campaigns that focus on the benefits of using it.

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Recebido em 31/08/2017

Aprovado em 16/11/2017