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A philosophical assessment of social networks impact on adolescents' development in conditions of unlimited access to information

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Abstract: The purpose of this work is to implement a philosophical assessment of social networks impact on adolescents' development in the context of unlimited access to information. The study is a philosophical and methodological structuring of the modern worldview paradigm of gender identification fundamental and innovative elements. While the fundamental clusters of the information worldview are similar to the paradigmatic elements of previous eras, the innovative dimensions of perception of the information flow have new socio-cultural characteristics. The study also aimed to examine the relationship between social media and changes in the sexual behavior, as well as to find out whether the disclosure of adolescent sexuality is influenced by unlimited use of social media in the absence or in strict parental control. Methodology: in this broader context, the analysis was narrowed to a philosophical assessment of adolescent socialisation, articulating two dimensions of this process: gender identification and the impact of unrestricted use of social media on communication, which leads to adolescent sexual risk behaviour. Adolescent sexual risk behaviour on social media and its consequences remain global. There is little empirical evidence on the impact of social media on youth sexual disclosure behaviour. The study involved 555 Albanian adolescents who completed a baseline and follow-up a survey in 12 Albanian public high schools as part of a sexual education intervention. The linear mixed-effects regression was used to examine the relationship between social media and gender identification as well as social media risk behaviours. The results showed that the sexual risk behaviours significantly increased between baseline and follow-up (12 months), (mean = 0.432 vs. mean

= 0.734, $P < 0.001$). Adolescents who watched more than 100 videos of sexual content per day had significantly higher rates of sexual risk, i.e., ways of socialising in relation to gender differ ($\beta = 1.008$, $P < 0.001$), and a significantly greater reduction in sexual risk, i.e., sexual performance on social media, was observed with higher levels of parental control ($\beta = -0.237$, $P = 0.009$). A separate methodological approach in the study of the information picture of the world is the philosophical revelation of gender philosophy, designed to use an interdisciplinary approach. The results of the work led the authors to two epistemological stages: first, the concept of the context where adolescents are socialised is revealed, and second, the concept of the context where adolescent identity is constructed is proposed to understand the issues on the agenda in the construction of today's youth identity in terms of the old and new social realities. The study helped penetrating the essence of adolescent practices of staging and discussing the gender identity on social networks in order to show the processes by which gender is perceived as an integrating dimension of self-identity in adolescence, within identification niches that are becoming increasingly exclusive and multiple.

Keywords: adolescents, gender, identification, socialization, performance, autofiction.

Introduction

Nowadays, social networks provide new platforms for the self-presentation, the self-realising as a person, as a representative of a certain gender, for identifying femininity or masculinity in the context of adolescent socialisation. It is about distinguishing between forms of self-awareness, self-attachment, and self-esteem. In addition, one should not forget about the sexual risks that social media entail (Kolan & Dzandza, 2018). Adolescent sexual risk behaviour and its consequences remain a global problem. The adolescence is a phase of rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive development. This period is characterised by the increased importance of social relationships when young people are focused on developing a sense of self-worth and personal identity. Given the importance of social relationships and the inability to fully control impulsive behaviour during adolescence, there may be some concern about the role that social media plays in adolescents' lives and in the exposé of their sexuality.

Thus, the self-esteem slowly matures in childhood, but it is in adolescence that it takes its full measure. Teenagers perceive and evaluate themselves more and more as others do. Teenagers value what others value, public opinion, especially through the phenomenon of social media. Adolescents' tastes of become conformist, their preferences are shaped by group perceptions. Moreover, young people compare themselves to others in a hierarchical way. Social networks seem to dictate to adolescents who are the most beautiful, popular, or who is the strongest, and of course, such comparisons are often traumatic (Basha, Telaku & Mustafa, 2021). A similar study examines the practices that enable adolescents to gender themselves through the routine exchanges and self-images that occur between them on social media. In other words, the way how "feminine" and "masculine" are fabricated (Elezi, Tomori & Kaja, 2021). Actually, routine exchanges and self-staging, as mentioned above, take place between adolescents on social media in conditions of unlimited access to them.

Table 1

Statistics on messaging apps among Albanian teenagers for 2021

98% adolescents aged 12 to 16	have a computer at home in Albania
97%	have an internet connection
99%	use the mobile Internet
81%	have an account in at least one social network
87%	Snapchat
80%	Instagram
94%	TikTok

Source: created by the author based on the analysis Klosi (2021).

Almost all teenagers use messaging apps that allow them communicating with a specific circle of people, often instantly, on a daily basis. Social media help adolescents to self-identify in all areas and at different stages of development (Klosi, 2021). This paper also addresses the issue of masculinity and femininity in mediated social relations. It is believed that the influence of social media and unlimited access to information contextualise the contemporary socialisation of adolescents in terms of gender and sexuality, and then in terms of mediated practices of sociability (Brock, 2018). The perception and understanding of modern youth identity construction problems is an important element of a new worldview philosophy in the realities of the information revolution. Thanks to the tools such as blogs, social networks, and instant messaging, adolescents can express their thoughts and doubts online in the form of small notes accompanied by photos, as in a regularly updated diary. It seems that adolescent girls' self-expression and fascination with these activities can be explained by education-focused from an early age on the development of creative practices, emotional expression, and self-expression, while boys mimic the behaviour of adult men and the norms "for men" set by the society (Bovarnick & Cody, 2021). In general, adolescence is a period of personal openness to the world, the fundamental issue that is the process of empowerment. Due to internal and external changes, the identity configuration formed in childhood no longer allows for satisfactory adaptation to the new demands of the social environment (Ciocca, Solano, Nimbi & Jannini, 2020). In the context of the social media culture, which prevails and intensifies along with the development of information and communication technologies, self-expression practices that describe how a subject thinks, acts, and these thoughts are invested in the Internet by children and especially adolescents. A teenager has to actively form the personal identity, i.e. consciously establish a synthesis between their interests and values, and filter out fake information. Today, all of these processes take place through social media.

Research Problem

Social media are new platforms for discussing and reclaiming youth identities, including the gender identity. This article aims to show the processes by which gender is perceived as an integrating dimension of identity in adolescence, within exclusive identity niches, what risks exist with unlimited access to information, and the possibility of sexual disclosure online as well as the issue of parental control is raised. This article gives an idea of the scale of unlimited access to information as a today's reality. The impact of social media on adolescents development aged 12-16 is primarily due to the

regular use of social media. The term “social media” refers to any type of digital social network and sharing applications designed to connect and communicate between people (Li, Cai, Deng, Wang, Sellis & Xia, 2020). This definition includes social networks such as Instagram, Tiktok, or Snapchat, as well as messaging apps and sharing sites such as TikTok, a popular site among young Albanians (Tartari & Lutaj, 2021). In addition to the pragmatic functions of connecting and communicating with peers, the impact of social media use raises questions about the meaning of socio-normative practices, particularly in terms of adolescent socialisation philosophy and the socialisation of gender identification and sexuality. The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between self-expression practices and the processes of engagement and identity exploration among adolescent social media users aged 12-16. There is a differential relationship between the form of video content production that adolescent girls and boys emphasise in terms of content and topics of publishing activities that reveal their identity and gender identification.

Research Focus

For the theoretical basis of the paper, a literature review based on forty-five contemporary related works was conducted, attempting to reveal the issues of philosophical assessment of the impact of social networks on the development of adolescent socialisation and unlimited use of digital technologies. For the practical part of the paper, data were obtained from a sample of Albanian adolescents aged 12-16 (mean = 15.73, SD = 1.03). Participants were recruited from 12 public secondary schools in Albania as part of a preventive sexual education program. Participants completed a baseline and a 12-month follow-up survey between 2020 and 2021. All participants provided their own consent and agreed on all questions with their parents. Since the data were obtained from an intervention study, the final analysis statistically controlled for participation in the intervention or control group. The analytical sample for this study is a subsample of the entire study sample (555/873) that was enrolled beyond 2020-2021. Participants who completed the baseline survey but did not complete the follow-up survey accounted for 25.7% (224/873), and participants who completed only the follow-up survey accounted for 10.8% (94/873). Participants who were lost to follow-up were more likely to be male adolescents, aged 16 years. Participants who were lost to follow-up also had statistically significantly higher sexual risk scores at baseline. Excluding participants who were lost to follow-up from the analytical sample leads to an underestimation of sexual risk over time, and therefore provides a more conservative estimate.

Research Aim

The purpose of this paper is to answer the following question: how does the use of social media affect adolescents and what are the current ways of gender socialisation? More specifically, the analysis focuses on a dimension of indirect assertion of individuality that has been little studied from the perspective of philosophy and social sciences: the so-called gender performances and declarative acts of belonging to a certain gender, which also entail certain risks associated with unlimited access to information and its distorted presentation on social media.

Research Questions

This paper focuses on the articulation of the two dimensions problematised above: how is adolescents' gender socialisation through social media and does sexuality correspond to the practices of mediated sociability? Based on the obtained data, the paper examines the main challenges and problems faced by Albanian adolescents in constructing and negotiating their identity, in the face of gender norms and demands, and in the face of the obligation to be unique. Therefore, this paper will focus on the contemporary dimension of philosophy, specifically on defining the context in which

adolescents' contemporary socialisation takes place, within the various institutions involved in defining gender, as well as within the mediated communication practices that take place among peers.

The hypotheses of this paper are as follows: 1) at this stage of development of the latest technologies, adolescents have unlimited access to information and often encounter fake information in their attempts to self-identify; 2) the essence of adolescent practices of staging and discussing the gender identity on social media is to show the processes by which the issue of gender is perceived as an integrating dimension of self-identification in adolescence; 3) the use of social media by adolescents is a window into modern processes of socialisation and a manifestation of escapism.

Literature Review/Theoretical Overview

Studies on the impact of social media and relationships between adolescents in the context of unlimited access to information are full of controversy.

Such works show visions and practices that are highly heteronormative among young people, i.e., built on the dual principle of opposition and complementarity. According to Cislighi & Heise (2020), the gender socialisation takes place primarily in the family and is therefore a process closely linked to social ties and gender dichotomy. It should be noted that today's youth have much less freedom of movement than in the past. It is not an exaggeration to say that teenagers are increasingly confined to the home, and thus their tendency to stay connected to their peers on social media is a bit of escapism. There is a need to see a real loss of autonomy and freedom in young people, and if earlier teenagers were met in public places, today their hours of walking are limited and tightly controlled. In addition, social networks are new tools of parental control that no longer allow young people the full autonomy they so desire.

Anić & Spahić Šiljak (2020), are interested in parents' educational practices regarding young girls' clothing, demonstrating significant differences in representations and practices between different social groups, holding the view that different social backgrounds are not so much about the middle and upper class, but that middle and upper-class mothers and working-class mothers encourage girls to follow different norms of femininity. In this context, Rothermel, A. K. (2020) note that mothers from working-class families are more lenient with the attributes of "sexy" fashion than mothers from privileged backgrounds, but this does not mean that the latter offer less heteronormative gender models, which is believed to be due to the early disclosure of sexuality in order to prepare the adolescent girl for early marriage, which is practiced among representatives of lower social strata.

Cherniak & Walker (2020) analyse the gender dichotomy in the light of modern philosophy. The work focuses on the socialisation of men in the family, where one can observe the connection between social belonging and gender socialisation. In families from privileged backgrounds, there is a distancing from clothes associated with street culture, which reflects the rejection of the values of masculinity that these clothes embody. The author notes that this is more than a concern with gender norms; it is primarily a concern with social difference, as street culture clothing and accessories are rejected by parents because they are reminiscent of the dangerous working classes and as such are perceived as potential stigmas. Differences in clothing and accessories among different social groups are visible. Thus, clothing becomes an indicator of trustworthiness and wealth. Establishing such values can be seen as a form of instilling proper identity development. In the sense of social differences, well-off parents seem to play the role of mentors who complement personal characteristics and social standards of behaviour.

Pacukaj, Brajshori & Deda (2021) analyse the perpetuation of heteronormative notions of gender, i.e. those that are consistent with "promoting the heterosexual norm in defining gender equality".

Timmer, A., Böök, B., Burri, S. D., & Senden, L. (2021) address the issue of social media, which allows adolescents communicating anywhere and anytime. The smartphone is both a tool for identity exploration and a reassurance tool, a tool that accompanies adolescents in all their daily activities and is a powerful configurator of collective practices.

In other words, the smartphone mobilises uses that are highly relational. The strong attachment to the object of its materiality and presence correlates with the intimate and meaningful content it contains: photo and video memories, favourite music, personal messages (Wang, Wang, Wu, Xie, Wang, Zhao & Lei, 2018). Social media also allows for constant contact with peers, sharing identity and complicity at a time when adolescents are seeking new examples of their own legitimacy (Valkenburg, Beyens, Pouwels, van Driel & Keijsers, 2021). Indeed, identification processes on social media take on different meanings depending on the form of self-disclosure. Participants in content or correspondence are actively involved in the publication and can decide what the purpose of their practice will be: to make a statement about themselves, their commitments, their own position on certain topics (e.g., sex), or to try out new relationship techniques based on what they have learned.

In this way, smartphone use supports the process of adolescent empowerment through social media. Social media also demonstrates complex processes of social hierarchy among peers. The social prestige of adolescents is closely linked to the ability of individuals to engage in intimate relationships with “significant others” (Torres, Gerhart & Negahban, 2018). Unlike parents, friends and first romantic partners are people who need to be identified and won over. The challenge of acquiring this intimate capital is also to make it visible in the media (Talaue, AlSaad, AlRushaidan, AlHugail & AlFahhad, 2018). On social media, a whole process of philosophical value judgment towards intimate connections established with peers can be observed, where the challenge is to have authenticity and legitimacy to the new intimate connection established with peers (Elezi, Tomori, & Kaja, 2021).

In contrast, those adolescents who do not have this intimate capital represented on social media and in face-to-face settings such as school are considered “friendless” (Kazaj, 2021).

The figure of the “friendless” is similar to what Gálik (2020) calls the “default individual,” a kind of social deprivation characterised by the absence or deprivation of resources and objective support necessary to ensure their independence as individuals.

In social networks, as they symbolise distancing from the first socialisation environment, thanks to the resources of the audience, which participates in the discussion of the audience's reaction, adolescents can express themselves and be recognised as subjects (Zhang, Shi, Xu, Qiu, Turel & He, 2020).

It should be noted that one of the positive effects of social media is the various validation processes that can be observed throughout the mediated interaction on the network, which makes it possible to assign social value to an individual: polite phrases, expressions of friendship, declarations of love, expressions of complicity, evidence of exclusivity and authenticity of a social connection (Heersmink & Carter, 2020). Posting on social media is a way to get attention, be heard, to find empathy and validation from peers, i.e. people who share their experiences. Thus, communities on various social media are formed around the desire for self-esteem and social recognition. The influence of social media on adolescents occurs in the space for comments, which are then posted by those who share the same life experience.

Table 2*The impact of social media on teenagers*

Restrictions on freedom of movement	Restriction of autonomy, parental control, the tendency to stay in touch with peers in social networks, social escapism
Early disclosure of sexuality	Mostly practiced by parents among lower social strata. Social networks provide unlimited quasi-information about sexual relations
Forms of social indoctrination for proper identity development.	Different attitudes to the style of clothing, which can be a stigma in certain circles

Table: author's own development

In this context, Reglitz (2020) notes that in order to receive signs of recognition, it is necessary to master the ways of presenting oneself on the Internet. Indeed, receiving requests for recognition on the Internet largely depends on the popularity that a teenager enjoys among peers in areas of direct interaction, including at school (Scott, Pera, Valaskova, Horak & Durana, 2020). After all, adolescents find interesting content on the Internet that allows them escaping from isolation or even identity exclusion. Indeed, what they are clearly looking for in online interactions is a sense of similarity with their interlocutors. By sharing life experiences, identity positions, or political viewpoints, adolescents ask their audience to validate their own practices and beliefs.

This online self-presentation is done by documenting events experienced with peers (Reglitz & Rudnick, 2020), publicly demonstrating friendships (He & Harris, 2020), and promoting a digital identity that involves multiplying “self-expressions” (Paçarizi, 2021). These dynamics are particularly sensitive to issues related to adolescence, during which it is necessary to provide a double proof of an identity that is both personal and socially conforming. Gender identity begins to be constructed simultaneously with physiological transformations. In adolescence, puberty leads adolescents to position themselves as male or female. Changes in the body during puberty complete the formation of gender identity, bringing the individual out of a certain androgyny of childhood.

Thus, the use of social media is mostly gendered and its impact is reflected in the formation of adolescents as individuals.

Research Methodology

The analysis presented in this paper is based on a double field of social philosophy: firstly, it is a clear indication of adolescents' social media activity, secondly, it is a philosophical grounding for the research questions, which primarily concern the staging of intimate relationships by adolescents on social media: puberty, relationships, and subjective attitudes toward the self. The way how adolescents publicly problematize intimacy was at the heart of the analysis of the paper, with the concept of “intimacy” referring to an individual's experience and identity that is not visible or tangible from the outside to others, and thus something that belongs to individual subjectivity.

The issue of unrestricted access and use of social media was addressed with questions about SMS, the Internet, and social media adapted from the survey of adolescents. Participants were asked whether they had a cell phone, whether they used SMS and the frequency of video views of sexual content per day (high SMS frequency: >100 videos per day; low SMS frequency: ≤100 videos per day). All participants had a cell phone and reported using it for the following purposes: sending or receiving email, taking pictures, listening to music, sending or receiving instant messages, recording videos, playing games, or accessing the Internet.

The frequency of views of videos with sexting content and sexually explicit videos posted by adolescents on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram was dichotomised at 100 based on Pew data, which indicates that the average number of views per day for Albanian adolescents is 100. Furthermore, the results of a one-way analysis of variance showed that the two highest categories of views (i.e. 101-200 per day and more than 200 per day) are sexting and (F5= 10.36, P<.001) are video casts.

Participants reported how often they viewed such content (1 = rarely or never, 2 = several times a week, 3 = at least once a day, 4 = several times a day), which was subdivided into “at least once a day” and “less often”.

Participants were asked if they use the Internet, for what purpose, and how often (0 = never, 6 = several times a day). Finally, participants were asked if they had accounts on any of the following social media, and a count variable was created, e.g., TikTok, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, Google buzz, Flickr, Ustream, and others. Respondents who had any account were asked about the frequency of logging in, which was dichotomised into daily logging in and rare logging in.

The parental interference scale was validated in the survey. The scale consisted of five items that measure participants' perceptions of what their parents/guardians know about their preferences and how often they interfere with their social media activities. The scale was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=most of the time, 4=always). Internal consistency was high at both time points of the survey (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85 at baseline and 0.86 at follow-up).

General Background

The data analysis revealed that the impact of social media on Albanian adolescents is primarily the instilling of a desire to be publicly intimate. Unrestricted access to information is manifested in the desire for visibility and popularity, which is realised through various representations of intimacy.

Research Results

Table 3 shows the basic demographic characteristics of the study participants, as reported by them in the questionnaires. The average age of the participants was 15 years old (mean age = 15.73, SD = 1.03), and there were slightly more girls (58.6%) than boys (41.4%). The majority of respondents were in the ninth grade (72.8%), and fewer were in the tenth grade (48%). On a scale from 1 to 4, participants reported above-average levels of parental control (mean = 3.06, CI = 0.748, range 1-4).

Risky sexual behaviour on social media and sexting preferences increased significantly between baseline and follow-up (T3) (mean = 0.432 vs. mean = 0.734, P<0.001; Table 3). Regarding the use of social media and sexually explicit video clips, almost 90% of participants responded positively at both stage 1 and stage 2 (T3).

The mean number of activities on TikTok increased significantly between surveys (mean = 5.90 vs. mean = 6.30, P<0.001), while the number of sexting views (i.e. >100 per day) decreased significantly (34.0% vs. 27.9%, P=0.02). In terms of social media accounts, the use of TikTok decreased over time (82.9% vs. 73.0%, P<.001), while the use of YouTube and Instagram increased significantly.

Table 3

Unadjusted changes in social media use among adolescents.

Variables of interest and response categories	Mean value of the composite sexual risk score
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Social media use and behaviour	(range 0-6) 0.425 (0.97) 0.733 (1.13) 0.31 (P<0.001)
Access to a mobile phone	yes 88.7 (488) 92.0 (494)
The average number of activities on a cell phone	(SD) 5.90 (1.61) 6.30 (1.26) 0.4 (P<.001)
Viewing video content of a sexual nature	SMS use 95.7 (467) 98.6 (486) 2.88 (P=.007)
Watching sexting	more than 100 per day 34.2 (149) 27.9 (135) - 6.13 (P=.02)
Watching video casts	at least once a day 53.4 (239) 54.1 (260)
Sexually explicit SMS to a boyfriend/girlfriend	at least once a day 87.6 (403) 86.0 (418)
Using the Internet to search for sexual information	at least once a day 64.8 (283) 68.7 (322)
Using the Internet once a day	96,9 (533) 98,5 (529)
Account in social networks	78,2 (415) 78,6 (416)
TikTok	95.7 (528) 97.0 (518)
YouTube	82,9 (458) 73,0 (390) -9,94 (P<.001)
Facebook	58.7 (324) 55.8 (298)
Instagram	61.8 (341) 66.9 (357)
The average score of parental monitoring (SD)	14.8 (82) 27.4 (119) 12.65 (P<.001)

Table: author's own development

Static data made it possible to philosophically assess the processes of affirming one's own gender identity in social networks, where adolescents' socialisation is simultaneously taking place. The socialisation of adolescents involves a process of self-subjectification associated with the process of empowerment.

Growing up, means perceiving oneself and being perceived as a unique and incomparable personality, capable of making one's own choices, outside the world. It means that a child is able to make his or her own choices, outside the reference of the adult world. After all, adolescence itself is constructed only by escaping from adult control. This distancing goes hand in hand with belonging to an increasingly prominent standard of identity. The desire to be someone for oneself very often goes hand in hand with the desire to fit in with one's society. However, the need for autonomy stems from the need to belong to a social group. A person feels the need to be unique and autonomous but also needs to be integrated into the social group to which they belong.

Modern adolescence is not only based on the fact of being young but also on the acquisition of reference points and objects for investment. However, one should not underestimate the negative impact of social media, which can cross the boundaries of what is permissible. Cyberhating, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking are usually directed against an individual or a small group of individuals who try to disclose themselves and self-identify on social media.

The analysis showed that between the ages of 12 and 16, the gender is a central dimension of self-presentation and self-determination, especially on social media. The work carried out (12 months) is primarily an observation and all research procedures were conducted in accordance with the norms of ethics and related rights to publish materials. The results of the work are based on the analysis of the relevant scientific literature, and therefore, the results can be attributed to individual subjectivity.

The findings show that the increased use of social media is also associated with lower self-esteem and increased symptoms associated with eating disorders among adolescents. This is an alarming situation, as it occurs at a crucial time in adolescent development and lasts for a long time. The content analysis has shown that screen time and self-esteem contribute to the emergence of eating disorder symptoms in adolescents, especially females. However, no studies have been conducted that take into account the use of different types of social media (YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat) and their negative impact specifically in the context of eating disorders and low self-esteem. On the contrary, the results of this study confirm that adolescent adherents of sexual performance on social media are likely to have low self-esteem. And this effect is particularly pronounced among social media users, whose low self-esteem persists and leads to a marked increase in symptoms related to social behaviour disorders.

Social media has a profound impact on young people's self-perception. Prolonged exposure to and sharing of peer images that promote unrealistic standards of beauty, sexuality, and thinness lead to distorted perceptions of body image and weight. By evaluating the exchange of ideal and overrated images through special filters that are considered the most popular, social media thus contribute to creating a biased representation of adolescents' self-image and self-determination. There is an urgent need for social media platforms to collaborate transparently with experts in the field of cyber socialisation in adolescence. Social media owners need to choose between their profits and the mental health of their users to quickly find solutions to mitigate the physical and psychological impact of social media on young people. More and more young people are choosing platforms that promote the development of social competence and are willing to address their needs.

The results of the study confirm that the staging of intimate relationships on social media is focused on affirming gender identity. When adolescent boys and girls address their audiences through videos posted on social media, being categorised as a "boy" or "girl" allows them activating recognition processes based on a shared gender. To be a spectator is to be part of the 'we', but this does not mean that the 'we' is constituted through the opposition to the 'other' and the readings that these others demonstrate. Young Albanian social media users address their audiences in a highly interactive and dialogic dynamic and use enunciative processes articulated around the creation of a distinct exclusive "we": "we boys" versus "us girls". Many communities that exist and express their views on social media are built on the principle of division into "us" and "them", where "us" is "them" and "them" is "us," consisting of a kinship of identities.

Thus, different platforms provide an opportunity to be part of a multitude of identity niches, bringing together, for example, "vegans" and "women," young mothers, women in veils, gamers, etc. However, according to the identification process presented in the results of the article, it turns out that among the diversity of affiliations, gender clearly stands out as the most widespread among adolescents.

The search for socio-philosophical recognition on social media is carried out through the activation of a sense of intimacy and complicity mobilized in discourses around the shared gender experience of adolescence: what girls experience cannot be understood by boys, and what boys experience cannot be understood by girls, and vice versa. These gender performances are highly heteronormative, as they are based on the principle of a fundamental binary and lend themselves to the naturalization of gender differences (Alarcon & Mullor, 2018). For example, in video casts created by teenage girls, the target audience is girls, and the topics are formed around representations inherent in the female gender.

Among the results of this study was the "dramatisation effect" inherent in adolescents' ideas about femininity and masculinity.

While boys focus on sexualised notions of youthful masculinity, through the evaluation of sexual desire and its manifestations - erection, masturbation, ejaculation - girls present themselves as manic individuals, “obsessed” with hygiene and order, in a form of constant control of the emanations of their own bodies.

As Hamburger (2020) argues in his sociological study of adolescent anorexia in Albania, this disease expresses an extreme form of the desire to control one's own existence through control of the body. This leads to a pathological need for young girls to control their weight and is expressed through the demonstration of femininity on social media. If the physiological and sexual outbursts belong to the male sex, girls are left to tame the impulses in order to characterize themselves as girls.

In short, boys demonstrate masculinity based on their tastes and preferences in female physiology, while girls are more problematic with their body aversion, noises, and other physiological emanations.

This gendered distribution of gender and sexuality characteristics is not new, but the ways in which self-expression is mediated through social media has not led to a distancing of these representations, at least among adolescents. The conditions of “restrained culture” and certain contexts, such as “moral prison,” have the effect of provoking exacerbated manifestations of gender among young people in order to flaunt their gender identity.

Far from this disciplinary form of socialisation, various social networks also seem to encourage a kind of competition in the ritualization of femininity and masculinity.

The hypothesis put forward in this study is that this phenomenon is related to the performative and public dimensions of social networks. Their success depends on the viewers' commitment to the content produced. The ability to say “we girls” or “we boys” requires demonstrating that one is oneself in accordance with gender norms, which indicates confusion between a sense of belonging and the obligation to conform to gender.

Inclusion in a male or female collective is thus the main reason for the demand for recognition expressed by Albanian adolescent girls and boys on social media, and it is perhaps the most socially inclusive dimension of identity at this stage of life.

Discussion

This study found a statistically significant relationship between the frequent use of social media, unlimited access to information, and adolescents' gender identity. In a related study, the authors emphasise that social media create a context in which adolescents who have a need for social recognition and gratification (Bzdok, Floris & Marquand, 2020), but who are also still developing self-regulation skills, may be vulnerable to pressure or unforeseen risky situations (Vilotijević, Mitić & Vilotijević, 2018). Social media has the potential to extend and strengthen existing peer relationships, which are well documented to influence sexual disclosure and gender performances (Zannettou, Caulfield, Blackburn, De Cristofaro, Sirivianos, Stringhini & Suarez-Tangil, 2018). The social media may also provide greater access to more experienced partners, leading to more active communication about sex due to the perceived privacy of social media (Young, Bowers, Reyier, Morley, Ault, Pye & Ellis, 2020). Thus, those who are more active on social media may be prone to engage in more risky behaviours due to a wider peer network that influences their attitudes and social norms (Heersmink & Knight, 2018). While these findings suggest a decrease in the frequency of sexual video content use between baseline and follow-up, this does not necessarily mean a decrease in overall use. Adolescents are turning to newly developed software products (e.g., apps) that allow for in-app communication. It is visible in the sharp rise in popularity of new apps like TikTok. Other studies show similar results of a decline in Facebook

use among European youth (Kern, Duinhof, Walsh, Cosma, Moreno-Maldonado, Molcho & Stevens, 2020).

In the context of this study, Jordan (2018) emphasises that adolescents' use of social media is embedded in the context of a philosophical understanding of differentiated socialisation. Indeed, double standards apply just as much at home as they do in school classrooms, playgrounds, families, or places where adolescents socialise.

According to the study, the practices of staging oneself and one's body online are related to the norms that regulate the gendered behaviour and the sexual behaviour offline. In a similar study, the authors suggest that sexting practices between adolescents are particularly revealing of the social constraints young people face in managing their gender identity (Peshkopia & Giakoumis, 2021). Whereas, according to the findings of social media use in Albania, girls' sexual expression is subject to control and moral judgment by various social actors (peers, parents, teachers, media), and boys face the inability to be sentimental or sexually unavailable.

In the same vein, a study by Nolan, Hendricks, Williamson & Ferguson (2018) shows that the dimension of representation that is important in social media, exacerbates attitudes and gender self-affirmation. Kim & Hastak (2018) add that being a boy or a girl is a characteristic of identity that is more readily problematized today than political, religious, or national affiliation. According to Dal Yong (2018), gender identification has the advantage of encouraging identification to share experiences and establish reassuring reference points: this is what a girl feels like all girls; this is what a boy understands like all boys. Indeed, in a globalised and cosmopolitan society, the gender plays a unifying role. As Heersmink (2018) argues, the gender allows defining a form of "us" that appears in the face of clearly identifiable "them". Moreover, different sexual orientations and identities that differ from the heterosexual norm are subject to the same process of collective identification: homosexuals and transgender people, for example, find themselves around shared discourses built on common experiences that are specific and exclusive to the community of "we" (Ciocca, Solano, Nimbi & Jannini, 2020).

The figure of otherness is constantly present both in philosophical discourses and among adolescents on social media, whether it denotes a dominant social group or not (Malkouari, 2020). The results of this study show that the main premise of self-identification is that people who do not share the same identity cannot understand the life experiences of community members.

Thus, the unlimited access to information and social networks in the era of the information revolution allows adolescents finding themselves through a community of other people. Individuals tend to affiliate themselves with identity niches where they feel they belong, rather than discovering other ways of being and thinking. This can be a disadvantage or a norm of the present.

Conclusions and Implications

The paper analyses the philosophical assessment of adolescent socialisation. The issue is considered in terms of gender identification and the impact of unrestricted use of social media on the formation of adolescents as individuals. Based on the results of the scientific literature review, the article explains how Albanian adolescents use social media, how social relations take place in adolescence, and how they socialise in relation to gender. Using the epistemology of gender philosophy disclosure, two epistemological stages are identified: the concept of the context where adolescents are socialised, and the concept of the context where adolescent identity is constructed. The study helped penetrating the essence of adolescent practices of staging and discussing gender identity on social media in order to

show the processes by which the issue of gender is perceived as an integrating dimension of self-identity in adolescence through social media.

The use of social media by adolescents is a window into contemporary socialisation processes. Social networks crystallise the need for each person to think, construct and present themselves in society as a subject with a particular identity, an identity that they are able to articulate and link to social ties. According to discourses centered on a particular form of individuality, adolescents are constantly preoccupied with their individuality or normativity, i.e., conformity to the norms of the various communities to which they claim to belong.

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