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**SOCIODIGITAL
ENVIRONMENTS IN
TINDER AND ITS IMPACT
ON MENTAL HEALTH**

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Abstract: This project is created under the premise that there is an affectation of mental health with the use of sociodigital applications for the construction of affective bonds. This way, the research question that guides the work is: How are identities built in sociodigital environments for the creation of affective bonds that are interfering with the mental health of Tinder users? The objective is to identify the type of digital identity elaborated in the profiles and the elements of this that affect the mental health of the users. Up to now, a mixed methodology has been used. Specifically, for the analysis of digital identities, content analysis of the photographs of the application's user profiles and an online survey of Tinder users have been used. And, for the qualitative part, an in-depth interview was used with Tinder users who have created affective bonds from it. The results allow us to point out that communication has exceeded the limits of visualization and physical contact of face-to-face encounters and implemented a new scenario for affective bonds and for the creation of an emerging process that defines and transforms the forms of social interaction. with mental health effects. This paper specifically presents the results of the construction of digital identities in the social network in the post-pandemic period.

Keywords: sociotechnology, mental health, Tinder, digital identities

INTRODUCTION

In current digital environments, subjects look for ways to project themselves, configuring different narratives —fictional or not— of what they want to present or represent about themselves based on the multiplicity of mechanisms and “technologies of the self” (De Piero, 2019). The advantages that can be found in these sociodigital environments is the apparent variety of identities under the use of narratives that, although they are not a novelty,

do present the advantage of diversification and the combination of different codes to carry them out, depending on the objective that be pursued. Among these objectives is the search for affective ties, including love ones, within platforms such as Tinder.

However, this apparent diversity in the construction of identities and narratives, researchers and specialists in the area of health and information technology have detected effects and consequences on the health of cyberspace users, specifically within the field of mental health.

Mental health, understood as the collective and individual capacity through which feelings are manifested (World Health Organization, 2018), is one of the areas of health that is affected when, by the same technology, the intimate “us” is broken (Simmel, 1986; Zelizer, 2009), as well as the historical, cultural and personal context in which it develops (Wetherell, 2012).

If it is taken into account that loving affective ties seek in the first instance to be a source of well-being and happiness, with the platforms, the process of meeting an “ideal” couple is being disrupted (Ángel, 2020) in an incessant search for the ideal candidate. ; the deployment of strategies and skills to obtain higher scores (“likes”, matches) as well as “surface consumption”, or the way of relating to profiles as objects of consumption (Linne, 2020); and in other cases, the perpetual dissatisfaction of the image (De Pedro; 2021) that the user has to be able to establish relationships and the requirement to be within certain canons to be positioned in the social network. Aspects to which are added problems of sociodigital phenomena such as sexting and synchronous or asynchronous violence. (Zapata, Vargas and Marin-Cortés, 2021)

This paper presents the results of the first stage of the investigation in which an analysis

of Tinder user profiles is made to recognize the identities built in the sociodigital environment of said application, through virtual ethnography.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

Mental health, according to the World Health Organization (2018) is both a collective and individual capacity through which feelings are manifested, interaction with others is put into practice and has social, psychological and biological determinants, so it is vital for today's societies. This organization also points out that, just as it is part of the effective functioning of the community, it is also associated in a negative sense with situations of exclusion, discrimination and even human rights violations.

Lopez. et.al (2023) point out that the concept itself is immersed in a series of contradictions arising from the diversity of approaches and approaches emanating from the sociocultural contexts of different times, although most of them overlap. Under this perspective, they conceptualize three models of mental health that include diseases. The first is the mental as an organic-brain product, this is the biomedical conception of mental health, having the brain as its axis and the mental is reduced to biological and neurochemical processes. The second corresponds to the mental as cognition and behavior that includes a behavioral conception of mental health. And the third, the mental as a social product, that is, the socio-economic-cultural conception of mental health. These three models raise, in any of the cases, the need to address the disease situation that occurs beyond a process of medicalization and address it from the perspective of a fundamental human right.

Mental health is more than the mere absence of mental disorders and is part of a complex human process that each person experiences

in a different way, with different degrees of difficulty and with social and clinical results that can also be very different. In this sense, mental health conditions include, among other situations, mental disorders and psychosocial dysfunctions, as well as other mental states associated with high degrees of anguish, functional disability or risk of self-injurious behaviors. (López, et.al, 2023, 19)

The use of platforms such as Tinder will form part of the confluent elements within the last two mentioned models that can lead to these health effects mentioned by López, et.al. (2023). Above all, if the time that users spend within the platform is taken into account, the skills they require for its use, and, even more, to achieve visibility and in this case the like (like) within it. Denying the negative effects caused by the use of the application on the mental health of users would be trying to deny that one lives in this sociodigital environment of multiple fictional narratives and denying participation in them under the diversity of digital identities.

With this, we cannot omit that, although technology as such supposes a diverse and complex scenario due to the nature of its application and insertion in the social context, it will be the one that gives meaning to a series of transformations associated with culture and the experiences of the individuals who in turn give rise to the conformation of the identities and the new realities of the groups.

The new culture on technology in our social world gives rise to new ways of thinking, new ways of interpreting the social environment and the sociodigital environments themselves are modified to become a fundamental element that builds, builds, manages and recreates the identity of the users and the point can not only stay there, but in the affectations that are registered in the individual horizon and with specific mental health problems.

The emanated affectations turn out to be diverse and the sociodigital environments

allow crossing many of the variables that define these risk patterns which are increasingly replicated among more Internet users and in different ways, with greater scope and greater repercussions.

In one of the aspects, although not considered as affectation, but as a way of understanding what happens in digital networks, we must attribute digital identity in the sense of being understood as the presence and immersion of each one of us in cyberspace, that is, the personal representation that leads us with the activity that we develop on the Internet, structuring a “digital Self” through links, communications and interrelationships with others who are present there.

As is known, Tinder is an application to make appointments with people who are registered in it. In fact, due to its inherent characteristics of building affective ties, it is a digital partner environment that has oscillated to a greater or lesser extent among the most popular around the world.

Marwick (2010, quoted in De Piero) proposes considering identity as a product that fluctuates between the public and the private and as a self-marketing strategy. Which means, in the context of marketing, that like any product created to sell and be consumed, it will be aligned with the prevailing values of the cultural market or industry. This same aspect is what gives it the possibility that the constructed identity can change as market demand changes and also changes as it can be manipulated according to the dominant technology. As Giddens (1991) would say, it is woven over time, it has a narrative and is based on a personal belief system that in turn makes it possible to reinforce the construction of identity and other constructs that have generated a focus of attention. and for this reason, public policies have even taken on the task of addressing such a scenario.

By official decree the National Commission

on Mental Health and Addictions is created as a decentralized administrative body of the Ministry of Health in Mexico, there is a precedent with the signing of various international instruments on mental health in our country, however and with all the coverage they may have, the current context allows us to see that this decree will take care of mental health problems, understanding mental disorders, psychosocial disabilities and mental states, that is, what is related to mental health and the state of physical, mental well-being, emotional and social determined by the individual's interaction with society and linked to the full exercise of human rights; This means that the opportunity to observe the affectations emanating from the interactions created in the sociodigital environments.

The foregoing supposes a panorama with possibilities of not only observing and understanding the affectations, but a door to the creation of intervention and application programs for the attention of the problems that can arise from the different modalities of interacting through the digital environments.

DIGITAL IDENTITIES ON TINDER

For the analysis of the Tinder profiles, the proposal of Rogers (2013, 2015 and 2019) was taken into account regarding studying the digital objects generated in web environments and social network platforms, thus considering the logic of the digital environment, which implied resorting to virtual ethnography. And under this logic it was decided to analyze the digital identity profiles, considering that these are the first contact to select or reject potential partners and that they are modified or changed according to technological advances and market values of stereotypes and codes for links. affective. At the same time, it was assumed that the use of this platform is linked to the identification of the user with it to socialize or build the link, taking advantage

of the flexibility and mobility through mobile devices and other technologies.

This way, a collection of 28 profiles of digital native and migrant men and women with Tinder accounts was made, of which 20 were men and 8 women. Virtual ethnography, in this case, required the creation of a Tinder profile that allowed access to the photographs of platform users. The age range was from 35 to 55 years. The youngest profile being 37 years old and the oldest 49.

The analysis dealt with textual and visual aspects, understood as staging for the first contact and therefore the setting for the construction of digital identities to achieve the affective bond. For the analysis of the photographic compositions of the profiles, the proposal of De Alba (2010) on “The image as a method in the construction of social meanings” was used, as well as the proposal of Muñiz and Navazo (2021) regarding the “Visual disinformation in social networks and digital media: a taxonomic proposal of distributed photographic manipulation during the pandemic”.

The proposal by Muñiz and Navazo (2021) was used to identify one of the 3 ways of manipulating images: the first, the one in which the scene is manipulated before being captured in any medium (ex-ante manipulation); the second, in which the image is manipulated once it is taken and reflected in some medium (ex-facto manipulation); and third, those in which its publication is decontextualized, that is, it is placed in another different context to which it really belongs (ex-post manipulation). De Alba’s perspective (2010) was to carry out a critical reading of the image, taking into account its communicative function and its effect on the receiver. This is because the author starts from the idea that images are signs that communicate messages and that require interpretation to understand their meaning as they express social reality

in a game of representations and meanings that must be deciphered in the sociocultural context. the producer and the viewer.

In the profiles analyzed, it was possible to identify multiple scenarios and possibilities, as patterns, about the origin of being part of that community. For some, the experience seemed new, for others, it was already a way of life and of relating to other people.

It was also possible to recognize that a new digital narrative is presented or has been formed according to that sociodigital space where men and women manipulate their photographs, although the difference between them lies in the level of their manipulation. In the case of men, all use still, realistic and informative images, while combining certain elements of the environment to make the experience of eye contact more pleasant.

This is predominantly ex-ante manipulation. In the case of women, the three types of manipulation are presented in the same way, however, there is a greater presence of manipulated images after the shot — ex-facto and ex-post manipulation. In such a way that, in the images that they show as part of their digital identity, those where the face is explicitly shown to highlight physical and aesthetic beauty predominate, without social or group settings, as men do.

The search for the affective bond then leads to a trend in the way of building digital identities exclusively for the sociodigital market and to occupy the territory of identity within that narrative with iconographic value, which, in turn, narrates the dynamics, the intentions, the affections and the symbolic meaning attributed to this search for the affective bond, where gender roles and stereotypes intervene.

The intentions recognized from the elements analyzed were: a) the sociability and establishment of the link based on the demonstration of the cultural and economic

level shown from activities in elegant places and of high socioeconomic level, as well as the possession or use of luxury cars or personal property with a high market value. b) Build links based on culture and/or educational level to share knowledge, showing professional profiles and hobbies of reading and music, theater, etc. c) To form a bond from leisure and recreation activities such as sports and activities during free time. d) To form ties based on the use of time both for fun or recreation in such a way that it is not a loss of it. e) The link from sharing interests of social responsibility and activism such as the defense of the environment, pets, endangered species. f) To build a daily link based on the authenticity or simplicity of life and introspection itself, that is, for whom the important thing is not to describe the aspects of interest to the user but simply to show their image without highlighting any of the activities previously described. g) From bonds formed from interest and openness to new experiences and getting out of everyday life. h) To achieve links by retaking attributes such as charisma, “naturalness”, formality, mystery or physique —bodies worked from sports or extreme activities—.

Based on the above, it can be shown that the idea of building an affective bond in sociodigital environments requires an effort to position itself as a good product in the affectivity market. However, achieving this requires, as already mentioned, a display of skills both in the management of technologies, and in possession of the attributes inherent to eligible merchandise that can cause mental health effects.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, considering that mental health (WHO, 2018) is defined as a state of well-being in which the individual is aware of their own abilities, can face the normal

stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, being able to make a contribution to your community.

The construction of the image of oneself, the concept and the beliefs of the person are the social, cultural, and socio-emotional construct that promotes the mental health of the person in the perception of oneself and of others. The alteration of this image mediated by technology and the offer of it in sociodigital environments carries a risk of a false perception of the person and a false acceptance of others towards who alters their image in these media, which favors a weak cognitive structure., affective and social that results in socio-emotional relationships that are not very involved and responsible for showing who they really are.

What invites us to question according to all this, what effects do these diverse identities have in digital applications? How to recognize the work of manipulation or alteration of the image with the change or modification of the perception of oneself? Sociodigital environments contribute to the creation of stereotypes? What are the risks of establishing relationships or couple bonds mediated by sociodigital environments?

For all this, it can be said that the creation of diverse identities in digital applications leads to visualizing the internet as the ideal scenario for the reinvention of identities and of the “I” itself, it is the possibility of a fragmented identity and with possible consequences to level of affectations with mental health identifying processes of construction deconstruction of identity. All based, on the one hand, on the possibilities —positive and negative— offered by sociodigital environments; and on the other, in the interests built historically and culturally by each user and under the consideration that today is currently held to include in the national public policy a decree of such a nature that it includes and integrates

care and attention towards mental health.

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