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## ARTICLE

# Citizen participation and critical digital literacy of university students

## Participación ciudadana y literacidad crítica digital de estudiantes universitarios

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**Abstract:** The forms of citizen participation have been reconfigured in recent years. The presence of social networks and digital media in general have favored multiple modes of access to information, expression of ideas and social participation. A necessary reflection to think about a sustainable future requires an assessment of communicative practices in digital media and the challenges in citizen education that globalization entails. This research focused on the analysis of citizen participation practices of university students in digital media and its implications for global citizenship. A mixed investigation with a quantitative-qualitative sequence was proposed. In the first phase, a cross-sectional descriptive study was developed with 740 students from a Colombian university, to whom an electronic questionnaire was applied. In the second qualitative phase, discussion groups were held with 42 students, with the purpose of discussing the findings of the questionnaire from the perspective of the participants. It was found that the practices conducted by the students focus mostly on basic and intermediate levels of citizenship represented in the consultation of online information and expression of the ideological positions in social networks, with high limitations towards higher levels of citizenship referred to concrete actions to impact reality. It is evident that this difficulty in contributing to social changes in the world is due to the lack of education for critical global citizenship. Therefore, critical literacy for the use of digital media is proposed as a citizen educational strategy, considering that it contributes to the construction of a more hopeful vision of the future.

**Keywords:** Citizenship, Critical literacy, Media literacy, Participation, Higher education.

**Resumen:** Las formas de participación ciudadana se han reconfigurado en los últimos años. La presencia de las redes sociales y de los medios digitales en general han favorecido múltiples modos de acceso a la información, expresión de las ideas y participación social. Una reflexión necesaria para pensar un futuro sostenible exige una valoración de las prácticas comunicativas en medios digitales y los desafíos en formación ciudadana que supone la globalización. Esta investigación se centró en el análisis de las prácticas de participación ciudadana de jóvenes universitarios en medios digitales y sus implicaciones para la ciudadanía global. Se planteó una investigación mixta con una secuencia cuantitativa-cualitativa. En la primera fase se desarrolló un estudio descriptivo transversal con 740 estudiantes de una universidad colombiana, a quienes se aplicó un cuestionario electrónico. En la segunda fase, de corte cualitativo, se llevaron a cabo grupos de discusión con 42 estudiantes, con el propósito de profundizar y discutir los hallazgos del cuestionario desde la mirada de los participantes. Se encontró que las prácticas de los estudiantes se centran en su mayoría en niveles básicos e intermedios de la ciudadanía representados en la consulta de información en línea y expresión de posturas ideológicas en redes sociales, con limitaciones en niveles superiores relacionados con las acciones concretas para impactar la realidad. Se evidencia que esta dificultad para aportar a los cambios sociales se debe a la falta de una educación para la ciudadanía global crítica. Por consiguiente, se propone como estrategia de formación ciudadana la literacidad crítica para el uso de los medios digitales considerando que ello aporta a la construcción de una visión más esperanzadora del futuro.

**Palabras clave:** Ciudadanía, Literacidad crítica, Medios digitales, Participación, Educación Superior.

## 1. Introduction

When thinking about the future from the perspective of what is currently being transmitted in digital interaction online, the result appears discouraging. Believing in a future where well-being and unity overcome division and social injustice is becoming increasingly difficult. The way in which these imaginary situations are constructed has to do with phenomena such as infoxication. This phenomenon challenges people's ability to filter and interpret information (Pinto-Santos et al., 2018), including fake news that is massively reproduced due to a lack of criteria when assessing sources and data (Baptista & Gradim, 2020), a rise in radicalism about politics that make it difficult to consider multiple perspectives (Brussino, et al., 2011), and hate speech that condemns the diversity of peoples, and subjects (Izquierdo, 2019), among others. The consequences of these constructions are complex. They include an inability to articulate a desirable future and a future that is linked to real social change (Santisteban & Anguera, 2014), and a lack of alignment between positions about social problems and the actions to take to transform them.

This outlook demonstrates the need to commit to responsible citizenship that transcends short-termism and develops practices that foster participatory democracy in the digital world (Johansson, 2018). In order to achieve this, training in critical global citizenship is required (Andreotti, 2006), the ability to think of oneself as a citizen in an interconnected world (not only as a participant in a local sphere) (Nussbaum, 2002), and the integrated exercise of the four dimensions of citizenship, which are civic, political, social, and cultural (Pagès, 2019). With this, it is hoped to move beyond lower-order citizenship practices such as access and the reproduction of information in digital media, to reach higher-order citizenship levels that become established practices for social action, justice, and the construction of a more promising vision of the future.

This research aimed to analyze the citizen participation practices of young university students on digital media and the potential of critical literacy as an educational strategy to achieve transformative critical global citizenship. This involves studying not only digital media conditions to access information (Aguirre, 2014; Rámila & Martinell, 2018; Ramos Chávez, 2019) but also action and change toward a more sustainable, more inclusive, and more just world (Boni, 2011; Oxley & Morris, 2013). Three levels of participation were considered for online citizenship practices: informational interests and an evaluation of information, positioning vis-à-vis sociopolitical issues, and active participation in social transformation processes.

### **1.1. Critical global citizenship as a commitment to the future**

An introduction to the concept of citizenship should consider its historical evolution and, above all, the challenges posed by globalization and access to information in increasingly interconnected societies. Although citizenship has Greek and Latin roots, its conceptualization and consequent crises and problems are modern. The concept acquired its meaning as a result of the French Revolution. It is founded on principles of equality, liberty, and fraternity and is linked more directly to the idea of the nation-state (Isin & Turner, 2002; Santisteban & Bravo, 2018). The consolidation of political, social, and cultural rights articulated in the twentieth century shaped the contemporary conception of citizenship that's main exponent was Thomas Marshall (1950), through whom the link between "citizenship, rights, and State" acquired its best-known and

most widespread form. Thus, we recognize three dimensions of citizenship from Marshall's studies: legal or civil citizenship, related to the rights of freedom and equality before the law; political citizenship, related to the right to vote and political participation as part of the State; and social citizenship, related to decent living conditions (Marshall, 1950; Russo, 2020).

However, citizenship as a concept linked to these ideals is in crisis as a consequence of migratory phenomena, cosmopolitanism and education (Camps, 2007; Cortina, 1997; 2021), and the challenges posed by citizen participation in the digital world that some have called "digital citizenship" (Galindo, 2009; Téllez Carvajal, 2017). Two central ideas stand out in this review. The first is that, in the general conception of contemporary citizenship, a citizen is not born but is made; that is, training is required for critical, participatory, and democratic citizenship. Second, citizenship practices are no longer limited exclusively to the political sphere, nor are they restricted to a specific territory; they now take on a global and interconnected form where world problems demand the consolidation of a global citizenship.

Global citizenship upholds the idea that any person, anywhere and regardless of his or her characteristics, has rights and duties of coexistence with other people since before being a citizen of a nation-state, he or she is a citizen of the world (Dower & Williams, 2016; Tully, 2014). In line with this, critical global citizenship is understood as the search for social justice and respect for human rights in the joint construction of universal moral principles of mutual respect and cooperation (Estellés & Romero, 2016; Santisteban, González, et al., 2020). Educating for critical global citizenship presupposes; an understanding of global processes that affect us directly or indirectly in transnational orders, a search for democratic principles that advocate freedom, the fight against inequality and social injustice, and a commitment to practical action that transcends the sphere of opinion. In other words, it is not only a matter of knowing how to critically interpret the world, but of transforming it. Therefore, critical global citizenship aims to strengthen critical reflective thinking that allows a global view of problems and a transformative, inclusive, and democratic perspective of the future as a principle of action for a sustainable future.

### **1.2. Critical digital literacy as a transformative principle**

Critical literacy is understood as the deconstruction of texts and discourses, that considers the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which they are produced. It starts from the principle of linking language, meaning-making, power structures, and the distribution of labor and resources (Foley, 2017). Consequently, it cannot be understood solely as a cognitive skill or a higher-order level of understanding, since it is a critical and reflective attitude towards the information circulating in the world and a requirement for democratic citizen participation (Abiss, 2016).

Various disciplines and theoretical perspectives have contributed to the shaping of critical literacy: the critical and transformative pedagogy proposed by Freire, which focuses on the empowerment of subjects through language; the critical discourse analysis that studies how representations of reality are constructed and how to unmask ideologies; and the new literacy studies that focus on what people do with language, i.e., on its understanding as a social practice, among others (Cassany, 2021). More recently, the transformations associated with technological development have

rethought the forms of critical literacy, giving rise to critical digital literacy. For Leander et al. (2017), digital media offer particular types of relationships between subjects and discourses. The amount of information and the ease of expression "without filters" can be considered as amplifiers of social inequalities. The phenomena of misinformation and media manipulation have occurred throughout much of human history, but they are now more frequent and involve increasingly sophisticated strategies and resources (Burnett & Merchan, 2019; Kashani, 2020). This poses significant challenges for people who are committed to navigating the network with a critical rudder, according to Vargas (2015).

Understanding that language constructs and reconstructs realities, critical digital literacy has been proposed as a transformative principle in today's world (Ruiz-Bejarano, 2018; Takaki, 2021). Van Sluys et al. (2006) proposes the following as essential dimensions of critical digital literacy; questioning what is ordinary and commonplace, examining and challenging from multiple perspectives, focusing attention on relevant social problems, and bringing these analyses to specific actions aimed at social justice. Lee (2020) adds to these dimensions training to establish criteria to assess information and manage safe communicative environments where people can express and discuss their ideas. Critical literacy is also essential in digital media to identify, combat and reconstruct hate narratives (Izquierdo, 2019). All these elements are essential for the scope of critical global citizenship.

## 2. Method

The practices of online citizen participation constitute a complex phenomenon involving factors that can be quantified, such as how often devices are used, the interfaces and media used to access information, and share positions on issues, etc., and factors that must be understood from the perspective of the participants themselves, such as the social contexts, beliefs and individual attitudes involved in these practices. Consequently, a mixed methods approach was developed for this research. This involved a set of systematic processes (eclectic in nature), involving the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the joint articulation of findings, and the establishment of inferences from the collected information (Creswell, 2014).

According to Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014), mixed methods allow complementarity in research, and favor a broad (quantitative) and deep (qualitative) understanding of the phenomenon. There is also greater variety and richness in the data, which allows more evidence and increases confidence that there is a more faithful approach to reality. More than just the sum of data, mixed methods seek the articulation and joint discussion of the findings and the establishment of inferences from the information collected (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The design was sequential since each approach was used in a different phase and the second phase depended on the results of the first phase. The sequence was quantitative-qualitative, which means that quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, decisions were then made using that data, to develop the qualitative phase.

### **2.1. Primera fase**

A non-experimental transectional design of descriptive scope was proposed that sought to characterize the online civic participation practices of young university students, without involving the manipulation of variables. For this first phase, a simple random representative sampling of first year students from a private Colombian institution was established, with 97% confidence and a margin of error of 3%, resulting in 740 participants out of 1233. University entrants were defined as participants because they belong to a generation characterized by a close link with digital technologies, as well as for being in transition toward the legal exercise of citizenship.

The 740 participants were randomly selected using the STATS "Random Number Generator" and were invited to answer an electronic questionnaire, which was the main collection instrument. The questionnaire focused on the identification of citizen participation and critical literacy practices. It included three categories: informative practices, expressive practices, and participatory practices. The items gave descriptions of each type of practices and the students had to indicate how often they carried out these actions (frequently, sometimes, never). To these items were added sociodemographic questions and general use of digital media. Categorical variables, frequency tables and graphs were mainly used for data analysis.

The instrument was designed by the study's researchers and validated by five experts (university professors with at least three years' experience in higher education, research experience and intellectual output) and based on five criteria: relationship with the objectives, clarity in writing, adjustment to the audience, internal cohesion, and extension. The experts rated all criteria with scores above 4.5. A pilot test was also conducted with 30 students from the study population, but not chosen as part of the random sampling, which allowed initial adjustments to be made in terms of item clarity, length, and frequency levels. To establish reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed (a coefficient used to measure internal consistency or the degree to which the items of the instrument covary with each other), obtaining a result of 0.83 (high level).

### **2.2. Second phase**

Once the main findings of the first phase were identified, a qualitative study was proposed that sought to explore the meanings constructed by the participants around their online citizen participation practices. To this end, at the end of the electronic questionnaire, we asked about their willingness to participate in the second phase of the research. The invitation was sent via e-mail to those interested and a positive response was obtained from 42 students. The sampling, therefore, was by convenience or specific purposes (McMillan, 2015).

The 42 participants were distributed in six discussion groups, with a minimum of five and a maximum of eight members, with a balance of male and female participants, as well as the disciplines to which they belonged. The purpose of these groups was to go deeper into the results of the questionnaire, based on the configuration of individual and group discourse: opinions, adhesions, oppositions, expansions, and discussions on the findings of the quantitative phase. The audio recordings were transcribed, and the qualitative content analysis technique was

applied to process them (Díaz Herrera, 2018). Three phases were established for the analysis. First, the corpus (consisting of the participants' discourse) was defined. Second, the contents were coded and categorized through a semi-inductive process, as the three categories used in the quantitative phase (informative practices, expressive practices, and participatory practices) were defined a priori and the subcategories emerged from the data. Thirdly, inferences were drawn about the findings, and the categorized data were related and contrasted with previous research and theoretical references.

### **2.3. Integration**

To achieve methodological integration, triangulation and complementarity were defined as technical-operational strategies (Aldana, 2007), while the two phases of the research focused on the study of a single phenomenon: citizen participation practices in digital media.

Triangulation was based on the establishment of contrasts between the results; that is, the identification of similarities and differences between the data obtained through the two instruments. Complementarity made it possible to highlight the differentiated contributions of each phase of the research: a quantification phase that sought the breadth of the information, while the qualitative phase sought a deeper understanding through dialogue and the views of the participants themselves.

As a result, the data presented articulates the results of the questionnaire with the students' statements from the discussion groups, in the three central categories.

## **3. Results**

First, the findings present a brief characterization of the participants and then provide a description of the digital practices in the categories defined for the research.

In the sociodemographic analysis, the proportion of men and women were 52% and 48%, respectively, and an average age of 18.3 years. Sixty percent of the participants were classified as having a middle socioeconomic status, 24% low and 16% high. With regards to university disciplines, 38% belonged to Engineering, 25% to Humanities and Social Sciences, 14% to Health Sciences, 14% to Administrative Sciences, and 9% to Experimental Sciences.

In terms of their use of technology and digital media, 94% of the participants indicated having at least one personal electronic device and 80% had three: smartphone, laptop, and desktop computer, with a preference for using their phone for social networking activities and searching for information.

100% of the participants indicated having an internet connection through public or private networks. The most frequently used forms of digital media were instant messaging on the WhatsApp application (91%), Instagram (89%), email (85%), Tik Tok (60%), Facebook (41%) and Twitter (38%). Below 25% were Snap Chat, own blogs, own website, Flickr, Pinterest, and other networks.



### 3.1. Information practices

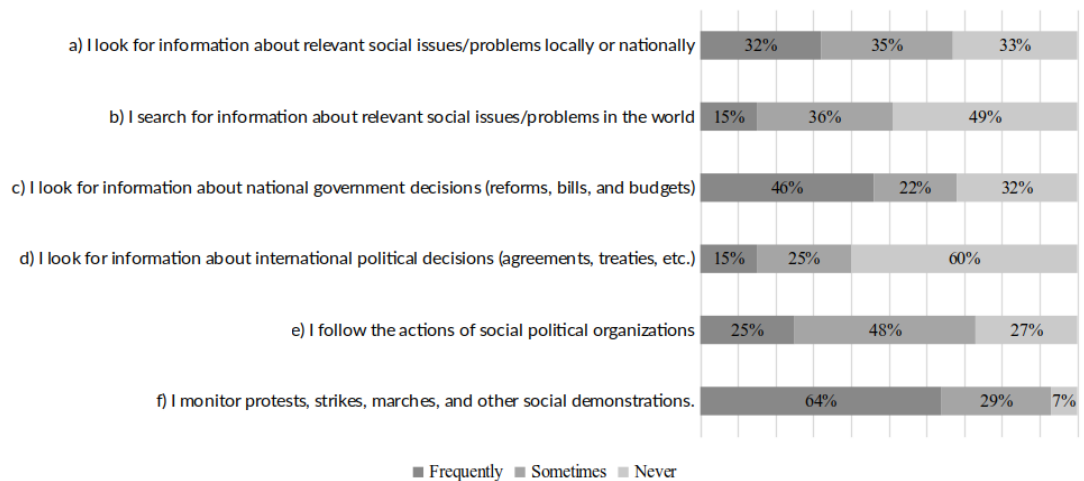
This category refers to the uses and means available to young people to access, select, interpret, and assess information and how this affects their online citizen participation. Within these practices, we inquired about their informative interests and strategies for assessing the sources and data found in digital media.

Regarding information interests (Figure 1), the responses show a greater attention to local social issues/problems than to global ones. In particular, in item c, nearly half of the participants indicated that they frequently consulted social media about national government decisions. In items b and d, related to monitoring global issues, the majority of the participants chose the "never" option. In the focus groups, the participants established the complexities of the Colombian context as possible reasons for this difference:

P5: "I look for issues about corruption, armed conflict, violence in the city, things that usually happen here" (male student, Administrative Sciences).

P6: "In order to stop corruption, we must be very aware of what the president and the congress do... of course there is disinformation and manipulation by the media allied to political groups, just as there are more transparent alternatives to get information, you just need to look a little harder" (male student, Experimental Sciences).

P31: "The environmental problems, the #MeToo movement, all the food they are importing, and yet this country is also a big food producer, the migration of Venezuelans, that affects everything, but with such serious problems here we have to focus on this" (female student, Humanities and Social Sciences).



**Figure 1.** Information interests

These results are also related to item f, in which 64% of the students indicated that they frequently follow up on local social demonstrations:

P21: "Protest is what appears the most because this country is so unequal that this is the only way to call attention to it" (female student, Administrative Sciences).

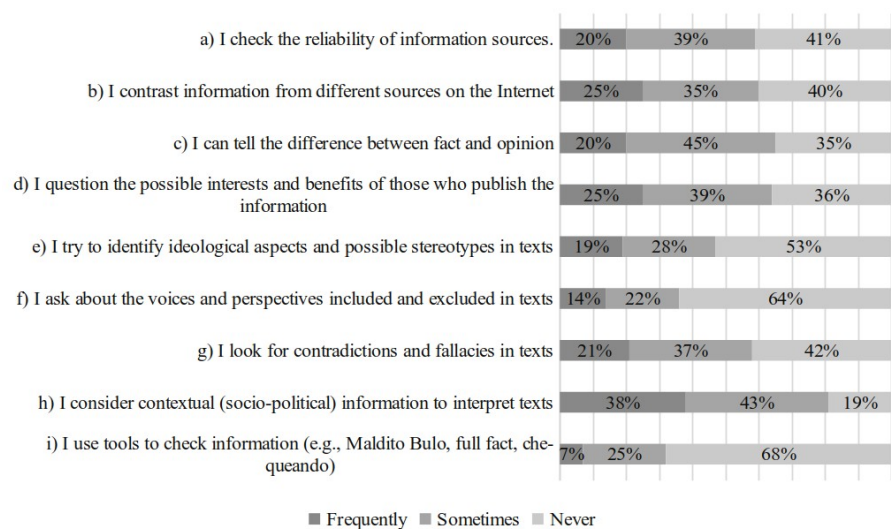
In the second dimension for informational practices, we inquired about the strategies used by young people to assess the information they look for in digital media. As Figure 2 shows, "frequently" was not chosen as the main option in any of the strategies. However, in item h, about considering sociopolitical information for the interpretation of texts, a medium frequency was seen. There was a relatively even distribution for the frequencies identified in items a, b, c, d, and g. In the discussion groups, some students pointed out that several of these strategies are taught in language courses in both secondary and higher education. In particular, they highlighted mechanisms such as the search for reliable sources and the historical contextualization of texts and authors.

P9: "I look at transparency watchdogs, independent media, old news, that helps me not to believe any information sent by WhatsApp..." (female student, Humanities and Social Sciences).

P16: "Normally they ask you to know who the author is, where he was from, what era he lived in, and with that you can interpret the texts better, and learn about why certain discoveries were made in science, etc." (male student, Health Sciences).

It is striking that more than half of the participants reported never focusing on identifying ideological aspects or wonder about the voices and perspectives included or excluded in the texts or use digital tools to verify the reliability of the information. In this regard, several stated that they have had problems with assessing the quality of sources and have faced disinformation phenomena such as fake news:

P26: "...I fell for some fake news, and I felt very sorry about contributing to that. The one about the pediatrician who supposedly did not want to see a child who had been waiting for an appointment for two months. I became indignant, I shared the video of the mother explaining... And that was because I did not wait for both versions, because I did not listen to both sides, that poor doctor had to leave, because Colombia is an ignorant country in which people go out and kill before thinking" (male student, Humanities and Social Sciences).



**Figure 2.** Assessing information.



### 3.2. Expressive practices

This category includes ways of interacting and expressing personal positions on relevant social issues and problems in digital media. As Figure 3 shows, expressive practices have a medium frequency, and were selected as the majority option in items a, b, c, and f (sharing and responding to publications, understanding the positions of others, and participating in political discussions).

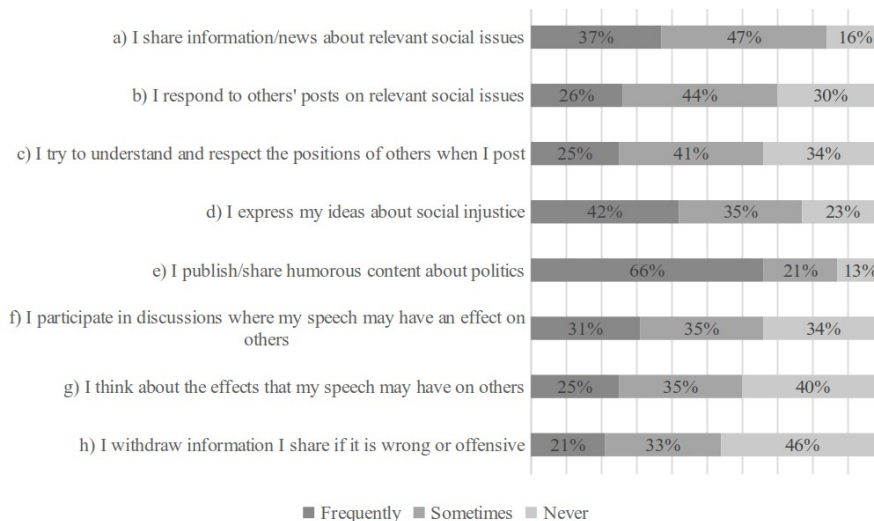
Expressing ideas when identifying situations of injustice and sharing humorous content are the most frequent options. In the focus group, young people defended the possibility of expressing themselves on the Internet freely and without filters:

P1: "Everyone knows that on the Internet everyone says whatever they want..." (female student, Engineering).

P4: "Social networks are for expression and if others do not like what I say they can delete or block me. Freedom of expression is a right" (female student, Health Sciences).

Likewise, the dissemination and impact of humorous content about political issues stand out:

P14: "Political memes are the best way to express resistance, because they reach people..." (male student, Administrative Sciences).



**Figure 3.** Expression of positioning

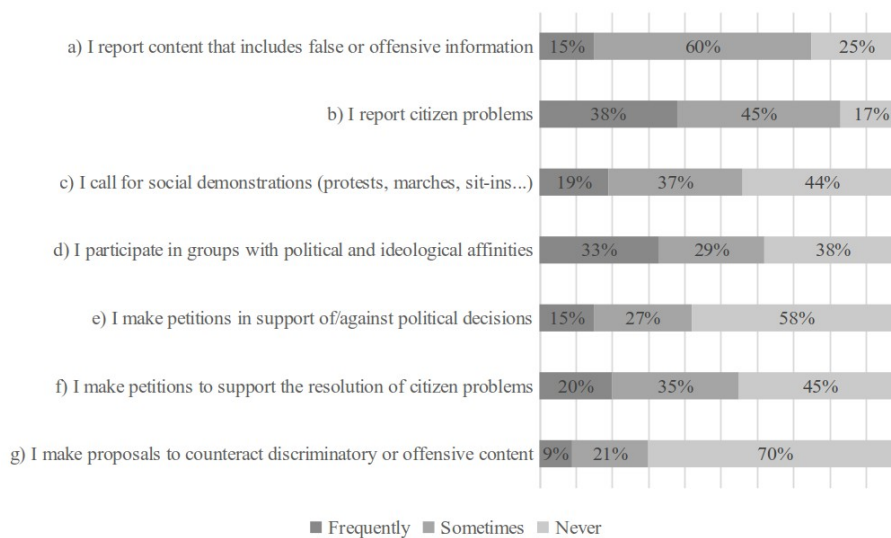
On the other hand, considering the effects of discourse on others and withdrawing erroneous or offensive information are reported as less frequent. Some participants attribute the low frequency of these practices to the type of audience with which they interact and to the interfaces themselves, which allow content to be removed or edited:

P27: "Normally if I make a mistake with something, I delete it and that's it, it's not like I apologize for what happened. I think that can be done if it is a very serious case or if it affected someone" (female student, Engineering).

It is important to highlight that young people do not usually share their publications with big audiences. In a question about who the recipients of their posts are in digital media, students responded friends and family (80%), classmates (45%), broader public (39%), teachers (15%), and others (6%).

### 3.3. Participatory practices

This category refers to the development of online actions related to citizen participation. According to Figure 4, participation practices are not frequent. The "never" option is predominant in actions such as calling for marches, participating in groups with political or social affinities, making requests for support regarding political decisions or for the resolution of citizen problems. Making proposals to counteract hate speech is definitely the least common option.



**Figure 4.** Participation.

Reporting activity in digital media shows an intermediate frequency both for reporting false or offensive information and for reporting citizen problems. This medium frequency is attributed to the ease of expression in digital media and to the functionality included in social network platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter reporting option).

P4: "When inappropriate content is identified, such as violence, or aggression, it is very easy to report it on any network" (female student, Humanities and Social Sciences).

In the focus group, young people also recognize the potential of digital media to carry out citizen participation actions:

P3: "I do believe that the Internet supports participation, rallies, calls for protests, and complaints; in some way it gives people a voice, especially young people who are the ones who use social networks most" (female student, Experimental Sciences).

However, they also identify that these actions are not as frequent and are not usually reflected in "the real world" or offline:

P19: "Yes, there are many things you can do, but many of these actions do not have repercussions, such as signatures to repeal a law... political issues are not really top of young people's agenda" (female student, Health Sciences).

P22: "There is not much coherence between what happens in the networks and what happens at the polls, because it is easier to show your opinion on the Internet without leaving your home..." (female student, Humanities and Social Sciences).

#### **4. Conclusions**

This research addressed three categories of online citizen participation: a first-order category, related to the practices of accessing and assessing information; an intermediate-order category, focused on the expression of positionig; and a higher-order category, focused on the transformation of action.

Regarding the first category, it was found that young people use digital media to consult socio-political information they are interested in and focus on local or national problems rather than the global context. The apparent cause (supported by the information gathered in the focus groups), is a saturation with internal problems, for example; corruption, the history of the armed conflict in Colombia, or poverty. Although some participants are interested in issues outside their borders, such as environmental problems, gender violence or migration, the link between these global situations and local or national situations is not clear, i.e., they fail to analyze the impact of transnational phenomena in their immediate contexts.

Although practices associated with access to information are frequent, participants do not seem to be prepared to work critically with such information. This is evidenced by; the poor use of strategies to check the reliability and validity of sources and data, to identify ideological aspects, contradictions, interests, or to contemplate multiple perspectives on a topic. In relation to critical analytical skills, it has been shown in previous research that, despite having multiple resources, young people tend to place themselves at basic levels of critical literacy, particularly when addressing social issues or controversial topics (Castellví et al., 2018; Santisteban, Díez-Bedmar et al., 2020). Cassany (2012) characterizes the uncritical reader as one who focuses on identifying main ideas and single meanings in texts, without assessing the underlying intentions and ideologies.

Regarding the second category, the findings show an intermediate frequency for student's participation in expressive or communicative citizenship. This is facilitated by digital media's features and functionality and supported by ideas such as freedom of expression and the web as a sensitive and uncensored space. This reveals that young people are not only consumers but also producers of information, although this expression of positionig is usually generally restricted to private spaces, with audiences such as friends and family (Torres, 2018; 2021).

These initial findings are problematic because they demonstrate a disconnect between the types of practices. The expression of positionig appears with medium

frequency, but is not necessarily supported by conscious, reflective, and critical informational practices. This is because participants use digital media to access information but use few strategies to assess its reliability and validity. This disconnect helps to understand behavior with respect to such common phenomena as viral information, disinformation, media manipulation, and the radicalization of personal positions, etc. It should be noted that several young people identify the implications of these phenomena and employ strategies such as contrasting information sources, but this does not happen in most cases.

In relation to the third category, it was found that action-oriented participation practices in digital media are scarce. González et al. (2020), identified that young people may adopt a socially committed perspective, but that is not supported by a critical attitude or one that is mobilized to transform reality. Low participation is also frequently referred to in the literature, since digital media offer possibilities for action, but young people do not always taken advantage of them (Aguilar, 2021; Corrales, 2015; Torres, 2021). In part, this is related to the idea that online participation does not have direct repercussions in real life or offline, an aspect that is also supported in the legal conditions of digital citizenship (Aguirre, 2014). Although this finding is not ideal, the fact that participants show an interest in and sensitivity towards social and political issues, as well as the expression of ideas and the exchange of ideas with others on social networks, can be considered as building blocks for action (Maltos-Tamez et al., 2021).

This action (considered as a "higher" level of citizenship) is linked to the notion of critical global citizenship and involves mediated access to information (effective practices of consultation and contrast) and a commitment to the materialization of moral imperatives of social justice and human rights. How can the level of citizenship that is transformative be scaled up? The strategy must be to educate for citizenship, assuming the contemporary principle that a citizen is not born but is made. For this to be possible, the development of a critical digital literacy is indispensable. This literacy, as indicated, does not only refer to the ability to analyze, interpret or question the "readings" of the world, but mainly to having a reflective, insightful attitude and the commitment to move to reasoned action (Abiss, 2016; Lee, 2020). If this critical view is not achieved, the scarce understanding of global problems and their linkage with the local will remain unchanged, as will the expression of positioning without sufficient substantiation and a call to action.

In short, digital critical literacy is proposed as a strategy to achieve higher levels of citizen engagement, i.e., the formation of citizens who transform the world, based on universal ethical principles and concrete actions in their local context that have an impact on global problems. Thinking about alternatives for the future involves transcending concerns about what is happening in the world in order to be true citizens who interpret and transform it. In order to achieve this goal, a formative commitment is required at all educational levels (Tarozzi & Mallon, 2019).

Although the results of this research allow us to establish relevant conclusions and proposals in relation to the practices of citizenship and digital critical literacy, it also has some limitations that should be considered. On the one hand, the sample was restricted to first year students at a Colombian university, with access to digital media and frequent internet connection. This fact does not allow us to generalize about citizenship practices among the young population of Colombia or to estimate how

their conditions of access to information influence their understanding of reality. Similarly, the collection techniques and instruments used focused on the assessment of the frequency of practices by the students themselves, so it would be worthwhile studying the consistency between what young people indicate they do and their actual practices in digital media. Uses may include critical literacy skills, but also attitudes, representations and values attributed to online civic participation.

Finally, another limitation of the research has to do with the category of citizenship. Establishing the boundaries between the various interpretations makes it difficult to establish sufficiently broad differentiating characteristics to link it with previous research and findings on the subject. Citizenship, as a category, is dynamic; as a practice it is complex. This makes it difficult to consolidate an interpretation that is widely accepted and a generalized training strategy (Oxley & Morris, 2013). Here the focus was towards social citizenship (Pagès, 2019). Citizenship was considered key to the analysis of studies on the future because of its eminently practical and encompassing nature, which allows us to inquire into its past, analyze its present uses and, above all, establish its role in the joint construction of a shared and hopeful future.

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