

# Childhood and adolescence: abandonment in the digital age

## Abstract

The various forms of abandonment in childhood and adolescence show high human, social and economic costs that compromise the future of humanity. In this study, some of the elements that are part of the complex problem faced in a hurried and anemic era in values that characterize a present with the imprint of post and ultra-modernism in a digital era are stated, for which some lines of action.

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## Introduction

Abandonment, for the purposes of this study, is explained by the detachment, disaffection or lack of protection of the child and adolescent population by those who must provide protection and care: from the State to the basic nucleus that is the family.

Addressing childhood and adolescence can lead us to think about a stage of life or disconnect it from our individuality and point to a sector of society, that of “the minors” that of “the others” who are going through the moment that we have already gone through in which identities are formed and values are assimilated. In both cases, we are talking about people and a reason for this reflection: there could not be an “us” without childhoods and adolescences and without them, there will be no future either.

There are many pages of history that show that in the greatest crises, girls, boys and adolescents receive the first devastating effects, all under the paradox that the social and family environment “should” act as “protection and care.”<sup>1</sup>; However, there are no approximate data that reveal the dimension of the problem; It is not known how many boys, girls and adolescents have been victims of violence, exclusion or social marginalization in each nation in the last century, nor how many have carried out violence in these scenarios; social neglect is evident. An everyday and normalized face is that of an indifferent society, increasingly digitalized.

From the line of analysis Lilia García<sup>1</sup> takes up Michel Foucault's analysis, regarding the exercise of power, it is surrounded by loneliness from violence and forms the “disciplined individual” monitored and punished from the panoptism of the State based on a legal mechanism with rules that allow us to live in harmony and protect common goods. What explains why in contemporary societies the lack of comprehensive protection in childhood and adolescence is clear? Some keys for reflection.

First- Understand the environment under a context that has left the mark of postmodernism, an aspect that, according to José Miguel Gómez,<sup>2</sup> shows that social behavior is summarized in three aspects: “consumption, search for pleasure and anxiety for the new status” and under these dimensions new identities and values are built, in the coming and going of the rush and the search for immediate pleasure. From this author's perspective, detachment, disaffection and emotional anemia are increasing. Thus, from epistemology, the symptoms of “ultramodernism” also appear as an expression of the absurd and trivialized.

One of the symptoms of this era is seen in the increase in suicides in the world. In Japan, the Ministry of Loneliness was created to “combat the scourge of loneliness”<sup>3</sup> as it is considered more lethal than the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the growing increase in suicides that include children since they were registered in In 2020, the suicide of 498 minors. Another country that has this Ministry is the United Kingdom, which recognized in 2018 that it is a public health issue.

There are yet few and sporadic records in the nations regarding suicides in the child and youth population and the circumstances surrounding their daily lives in a digital ecosystem that is part of the construction of their personalities along paths of opportunity and great risk.

Second- Social learning through digital networks determines the rhythm and patterns of hasty community behavior, with or without objectives, largely absent of axiological sense, even far from the direction that underpins social life: the common benefit. Post and ultra-modernity are present.

Thus, relational teaching is consolidated according to the models assumed in each culture, time and space, which are increasingly uniform, in fashions, needs and shared interests in a digital environment that does not require criteria of reason or humanity from the simple basis of the value and respect of being people.

Third- The fragility of social ties in childhood and adolescence is not a recent problem. In World War II, humanitarian cost is estimated to range between 80 and 100 million deaths among civilians and soldiers,<sup>4</sup> the number of children and adolescents who were affected has not been determined what has been clear is the frank absence of protection and abandonment of life and its most basic human rights. Responsibilities continue to be questioned.

Within the framework of this social problem and several decades later, the Convention on the Rights of the Child took place, which turns out to be the most recognized international instrument in the world and signed and ratified by all countries except two and which incorporates the entire range of the human rights of children. Although it is an instrument widely questioned for having a European and adult-centered bias, the World Summit Action Plan for Children was derived from it. One of the most important aspects is that it recognizes protection and development as a priority child development as indispensable for the “survival, stability and progress of all nations, indeed, of human civilization”.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, this brief description of the circumstances in which this abandonment is framed, some actions regarding these challenges are stated.

- 1) This global problem compromises social stability, in the present and future it requires being part of an international and national agenda that joins efforts between nations. For this reason, it is proposed to create registries with standardized designs among nations that collaborate to measure the number of abandoned girls, boys and adolescents in all of its variants, social, economic, cultural and technological. The construction of quantitative and qualitative indicators that seek evidence to influence the problems of abandonment in girls, boys and adolescents.
- 2) Reorient through new designs of public policies, learning in social relationships with humanist bases, which strengthen social and family ties from approaches of respect for equality and inclusion with society, the environment and especially with technologies of information that is accompanied by a culture of prevention of digital risks.
- 3) Transcend from “suggestions and advice on the use of the Internet” in childhood and adolescence, to normative lines that link the responsibilities of the family, educational and social nucleus, on the safe and conscious use of technological tools that provide greater opportunities for use and less risks.
- 4) Incorporate in the institutions of nations, the priority of protection and care for children and adolescents as a fundamental value that guides new social behavior towards children and adolescents from a public agenda that provides material, human and budgetary elements.
- 5) Consider the example of the model of the Ministry of Loneliness of Japan and the United Kingdom, to generate designs in nations with a specialized focus on the child and youth population and can make visible the specific needs of the child and youth populations in each social context. , economic, digital and cultural to counteract social and family abandonment.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the present work.

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