ICT Use and Digital Inclusion among Roma/Gitano Adolescents

Engl. transl.: ICT Use and Digital Inclusion among Roma/Gitano Adolescents

# Keywords

* adolescents
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* digital divide
* Gitano
* ICT
* Roma
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* Spain

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Social mediation
* Wellbeing
* Online safety and policy regulation
* Digital and socio-cultural environment
* Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities
* Literacy and skills
* Other

## Sample

This research is part of a broader Study, which covers some other ethnic/nationality groups such as migrants from Latin America, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, refugees, and
children in foster care (UNICEF, 2018). Altogether, nearly one hundred people were interviewed, mostly children or adolescents but also a few community workers.
Sampling was performed through different institutions providing support to the social integration of these groups. Attempts were made to interview children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in all the groups, however, it was not possible to achieve full representation in this sample.
The authors stress out that the findings of this article cannot be generalised to any of the entire populations concerned since those who are better off will presumably have little contact with such institutions.
This analysis of children’s interaction with ICTs will focus on the situation of the members of the ethnic Roma/Gitano community as a particular case among those socially underprivileged groups. Mainstream research tends to focus on the capabilities of the individual user and has resulted in a somewhat narrow view of digital inclusion, insofar as it tends to individualize the
issue.
The fieldwork was conducted using a qualitative methodology enabling an in-depth examination of these children’s digital experiences in the context of their everyday life.
In order to ensure that all relevant themes were covered, the comprehensive interviews were based on a semi-structured conversation guide. Seventeen adolescents aged between 11 and 18 from an ethnic Roma/Gitano background were interviewed at different locations in the autonomous communities of Madrid and the Basque Country. We also interviewed two educators and one officer from institutions working with the group—some of them belonging to the same ethnic group—to obtain a more complete overview of the social context
of these children’s interaction with digital technologies. All interviews were recorded in audio and transcribed.

## Implications For Parents About

* Parental practices / parental mediation
* Parental digital literacy
* Parenting guidance / support
* Other

## Other Parent Implication

To give education concerning digital skills to both parents and children together.

## Implications For Educators About

## Implications For Policy Makers About

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Improving digital skills through national school curriculum,

## Implications For Stakeholders About

* Researchers
* Industry
* Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Family and Children welfares, Public and private digital literacy initiatives

# Abstract

This article analyses the way in which the digital divide affects Roma/Gitano minors. This ethnic group is a paradigmatic case among socially underprivileged groups in Spain; excluded from industrial society, they appear to be facing a similar situation in the post-industrial era. We, therefore, sought to explore the digital experiences of minors from this group in order to study social and digital exclusion/inclusion among them. The research strategy took a comprehensive approach, covering both offline and online behaviour. We focused on the results of fieldwork undertaken in Spain during 2017. In all, interviews were conducted with 17 adolescents (aged 11 to 18) as well as with several social workers who were providing support to the minors. Given that the use of technology has become a prerequisite for the welfare of children and for the development of their rights, the issue tends to center on three main areas, commonly known as the three Ps: provision, participation, and protection. As such, the analysis of inequality was based on these areas. The findings presented in this article illustrate that the use of ICTs can contribute to empowering Roma/Gitano adolescents to improve the position they occupy as a group in the social structure.

# Outcome

This research emphasize that although most of the Spanish children Roma/Gitano interviewed had a smartphone for their own use, in terms of digital provision, few had laptops or desktop computers at home, which is a significant barrier to their schoolwork. The education system does not appear to be well positioned to stimulate the development of digital skills among these children. The general lack of commitment to formal—particularly secondary education among these children should be a cause for concern given the likely consequences for their vocational development and subsequent social inclusion. Nonetheless Garmendia et al. (2019: 28) remark that “some Roma/Gitano young people are performing out- standingly well at university and are very active among institutions supporting their communities”.
Although these children have access to devices, inequality essentially takes the form of an absence of digital skills that could allow them to benefit from other opportunities provided by the digital environment. As for protection, this group displays a striking level of digital vulnerability in relative terms, with families rarely regulating their use of technology. The authors state that even though they made use of interviews and the focus on the three Ps and this has allowed focusing their attention on the children as individuals, it is also important to bear in mind that, “ the girls certainly, are all affected by gender inequality”(Garmendia et al., 2019: 29). This research also gathered some evidence showing some women’s awareness of their own need for self-empowerment. It is also remarkable that the families of nearly all the interviewees were in receipt of welfare benefits, underlining their economic and social vulnerability. The authors summarise that “effective digital inclusion initiatives for Roma/Gitano boys and girls should focus on families, outside the school environment, where people of different ages with shared needs or interests from the same community or family could learn together” (Garmendia et al., 2019: 29).