



Information and communication technologies (ICT) use as a risk factor for child-to-parent violence. A case study with adolescents in the Community of Madrid

El uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) como factor de riesgo de violencia filio-parental. Un estudio de caso con adolescentes de la Comunidad de Madrid

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship between inappropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and child-to-parent violence in juvenile offenders. The responses of 53 adolescents, 72 family members, and 53 professionals from a juvenile justice centre in Madrid (Spain) were analysed, allowing for a comprehensive view of the issue from different perspectives. The results indicated that problematic use of ICT is linked to an increase in family conflict, difficulties for parents in regulating technology, and addictive behaviours, including frequent exposure to harmful content. Furthermore, it was observed that a lack of parental control and poor family communication exacerbate the situation, increasing the likelihood of violent behaviours towards parents. The findings highlight the need to develop multidisciplinary intervention strategies that promote the strengthening of family dynamics and responsible digital education.

Keywords: adolescents; child-to-parent violence; digital health; juvenile justice; ICT.

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar la relación entre el uso inadecuado de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) y la violencia filio-parental en menores infractores. Se analizaron las respuestas de 53 adolescentes, 72 familiares y 53 profesionales de un Centro de Ejecución de Medidas Judiciales de Madrid (España), lo que permitió obtener una visión integral de la problemática desde diferentes perspectivas. Los resultados indicaron que el uso problemático de las TIC está vinculado a un aumento del conflicto familiar, dificultades de los padres para regular la tecnología y comportamientos adictivos, incluida la exposición frecuente a contenido perjudicial. Además, se observó que la falta de control parental y la escasa comunicación familiar agravan la situación, incrementando la probabilidad de conductas violentas hacia los progenitores. Los

hallazgos evidencian la necesidad de desarrollar estrategias de intervención multidisciplinar que promuevan el fortalecimiento de las dinámicas familiares y la educación digital responsable.

Palabras clave: adolescentes; violencia filio-parental; salud digital; justicia juvenil; TIC.

1. Introduction

Technology within the family sphere affects behaviour and development from an early age (Coyne et al., 2020). Inappropriate information and communication technologies (ICT) use involves repeated behaviours that harm psycho-emotional well-being, causing self-regulation problems, disrupted routines and distress when access is restricted (Morales-Domínguez et al., 2022). Such use is linked to psychological, physical, academic, social and familial difficulties, including nomophobia (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014), fear of missing out or FOMO (Oberst et al., 2017), anxiety (Rodríguez et al., 2012), social maladjustment (García et al., 2014), depression, insomnia (Jaradat et al., 2020) and tech-related stress (Villanueva-Blasco & Serrano-Bernal, 2019). González-Álvarez (2012) describes adolescents who assault parents as socially isolated, spending long periods online, gaming or chatting. Using the internet mainly for entertainment, rather than educational purposes, correlates with higher addiction and violence levels (Eveli et al., 2023).

The Spanish Public Prosecutor's Office (Fiscalía General del Estado, 2024) reports that social media addiction contributes to minors' physical aggression towards parents, particularly when devices are withdrawn, and highlights a rise in domestic violence linked to ICT misuse. Many families conceal such incidents out of shame or fear (Pérez & Pereira, 2006). Parents frequently experience guilt and may normalise violent behaviour (Loinaz & de Sousa, 2019; Gallagher, 2008).

Child-to-parent violence (CPV) comprises repeated physical, psychological or economic aggression, excluding isolated acts or those linked to mental disorders (Pereira et al., 2017). This study focuses on severe cases subject to judicial measures, indicating persistent and intense violence (Loinaz et al., 2017). The legal-criminal framework surrounding CPV in Spain has evolved substantially. The former 'right of correction', which legitimised corporal punishment by parents, has virtually disappeared from jurisprudence, reflecting cultural and regulatory rejection of family violence (Agustina & Romero, 2013). The Spanish Criminal Code now penalises both parental and filial violence. Organic Law 5/2000 on the criminal responsibility of minors (Ley Orgánica 5/2000, de 12 de enero, reguladora de la responsabilidad penal de los menores, 2000) established specific measures – from closed detention to conciliation and reparation – for offenders aged 14 to 18. Reforms such as Organic Law 11/2003 expanded penalties for domestic violence, applicable to minors as well. However, many incidents remain unreported or handled privately or via social services, revealing tension between family privacy and state intervention.

Although the Organic Law on the criminal responsibility of minors (Ley Orgánica 5/2000, 2000) provides a judicial framework according to a minor's maturity, CPV is not explicitly defined as an offence in the Spanish Penal Code. It must be prosecuted as: a) habitual abuse within the family (Article 173.2); b) abuse in the family environment (Article 153); c) threats (Article 169); or d) harassment (Article 173.4). In 2024, 4425 cases of child-to-parent and sibling violence were recorded in

Spain – 0.20% more than in 2023 – with concerns over limited resources for rehabilitation ([Fiscalía General del Estado, 2025](#)). Reported cases represent only an estimated 10–15% of the total. CPV has gained visibility and is now recognised as a broader social phenomenon ([Cortina & Martín, 2020](#)), though it still receives less scholarly attention than other forms of adolescent violence ([Margolin & Baucom, 2014](#); [Routt & Anderson, 2011](#); [Simmons et al., 2018](#)).

CPV is multi-causal and requires a systemic approach integrating personal, relational and contextual factors ([Arias & Hidalgo, 2020](#); [Del Hoyo-Bilbao et al., 2020](#)). ICT use within the home influences development from an early age ([Coyne et al., 2020](#)), and problematic use impacts education, social functioning and family relationships ([Díaz-Vicario et al., 2019](#)), particularly among vulnerable adolescents ([Melendro et al., 2016](#)). Studies reveal correlations between CPV, excessive social media use, alexithymia and norm violation ([Martínez-Ferrer et al., 2018](#)). The absence of adequate media education exacerbates such problems, damaging mental health and fostering anxiety, depression, isolation and aggression ([González-Pérez et al., 2024](#)). Adolescents engaging in CPV often display psychosocial maladjustments that increase the likelihood of reproducing violence in other contexts, such as school or online spaces. These adolescents exhibit significantly higher levels of violent behaviour towards peers than those with no history of CPV ([García et al., 2022](#); [Cuervo & Górriz-Plumed, 2024](#)).

The main objective of this study is to analyse the link between inappropriate ICT use and child-to-parent violence using a single-case design. This approach enables an in-depth and contextualised exploration of the problem, identifying risk factors tied to ICT misuse and the familial and behavioural dynamics that may foster violent conduct towards parents. The study seeks to provide qualitative and quantitative evidence to advance understanding of this growing phenomenon and inform prevention and intervention strategies. Furthermore, it aims to enhance clinical practice by identifying effective coping and therapeutic strategies for at-risk adolescents and families, supporting mental health through evidence-based recommendations for preventing and managing emotional distress associated with problematic ICT use and CPV.

According to the literature, few empirical studies have explored judicial samples of CPV that examine ICT's role in the emergence and persistence of violence. Such research could inform the development of more effective intervention programmes. The hypotheses of this study are: (1) the absence of clear ICT boundaries predicts CPV; and (2) excessive ICT use within family life reduces communication between parents and children, heightening conflicts and negatively affecting adolescents' mental health by increasing anxiety, depression and emotional distress.

2. Method

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques with the aim of exploring how the inappropriate use of ICT affects CPV. In order to approach this issue as realistically and holistically as possible, a descriptive case study has been conducted to provide a detailed understanding of the selected unit of analysis: the only centre in the Community of Madrid that serves minors subject to judicial measures for CPV. The sample used in this study is small because it is a single case study with a judicial sample, which is justified by the particular and

exceptional nature of the case analysed, allowing for an in-depth and detailed analysis of a specific phenomenon within the judicial sphere. This methodological choice responds to the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the characteristics and dynamics of the case, which would not be possible with large samples, as the main objective is to obtain intensive and contextualised knowledge that provides significant and relevant evidence from a qualitative and exploratory perspective.

Before beginning the field study, the necessary ethical and legal approvals were obtained from both the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the Universidad a Distancia de Madrid (N03/22_23) and the Community of Madrid Agency for the Re-education and Reintegration of Juvenile Offenders. Subsequently, authorisation was granted by the management of the Judicial Measures Enforcement Centre 'El Laurel' to carry out the study. Afterwards, the centre's technical teams (psychologists and social workers) contacted the families to inform them about the study and to obtain their written consent.

At all times, current regulations regarding the protection of participants' personal data were strictly adhered to, ensuring their privacy and security. In this regard, it is important to note that anonymity was guaranteed through the automatic coding of their responses. All participants in the quantitative and qualitative study were Spanish speakers. The study was very well received, with 100% of the target population participating, except for two families and two adolescents who were excluded from the process: one due to the existence of a language barrier which hindered communication, and the other due to the presence of a restraining order that prevented inclusion in the study.

2.1. Quantitative study

The sample of the quantitative study comprised 53 adolescents from 'El Laurel', located in Madrid (Spain), which is operated by the Community of Madrid Agency for the Re-education and Reintegration of Juvenile Offenders and dedicated to the care of young people serving judicial measures of closed, semi-open or open internment. 'El Laurel' was selected as the context for the study because it is the only juvenile reform centre in the Community of Madrid housing young people interned for CPV that carries out a specific treatment programme for such adolescents and their families.

The sample for the quantitative study comprised the entire target population ($n = 53$), which enabled an exhaustive and accurate representation of the characteristics and experiences relevant to the research objectives. Of these participants, 62.3% were male ($n = 33$) and 37.7% were female ($n = 20$), with ages ranging from 14 to 19 years ($M = 16.96$, $SD = 1.20$).

The two scales selected to collect data for this part of the research and assess problematic ICT use among adolescents were the ERA-RSI and UPNT scales ([González-Pérez et al., 2024](#)).

Both scales were administered on paper, with each preceded by a written statement informing the adolescents of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the test. The psychologists informed each participant about the procedure for completing each instrument and addressed any comprehension issues that arose as the participants completed them. The response times ranged from 15 to 20 minutes, and the data were collected during two periods: April–June 2023 and February–April 2024, in order to achieve a larger sample size. In the second recruitment period, the number of participants was increased, capturing a greater temporal and contextual diversity, thereby enriching the quality of the data and the generalisability of the findings.

Instruments

ERA-RSI (Peris et al., 2018) is an instrument composed of 29 Likert-type items designed to assess the risk of Internet addiction via four key dimensions: addiction symptoms (e.g. 'I feel that connecting to the IHR has interfered with my academic/work'), social use (e.g. 'I see what my contacts are doing in the last few hours'), geek traits (e.g. 'Playing virtual and/or role-playing games') and nomophobia (e.g. 'If they don't respond immediately to my messages I feel anxiety and distress'). The items are answered on a Likert scale, from 1 (never or not at all) to 4 (always or very much). This scale is organised into four factors: addiction symptoms (9 items), social use (8 items), geek traits (6 items) and nomophobia (6 items). Higher scores imply greater addiction to social networks and the Internet. In addition, the interpretation of the ERA-RSI scores is based on three risk levels defined by percentiles. A score at or above the 95th percentile indicates a very high risk of addiction to social networks and the Internet; scores at or above the 85th percentile indicate a high risk, while scores at or above the 75th percentile suggest a possible suspicion of risk. This instrument has been used in recent studies involving adolescents in educational and clinical contexts, demonstrating adequate validity and reliability. For instance, González-Pérez et al. (2024) applied the ERA-RSI in a sample of Spanish adolescents to evaluate problematic ICT use and its relationship with child-to-parent violence, obtaining a total reliability of $\alpha = .91$ and confirming its diagnostic utility in judicial settings. Similarly, Peris et al. (2018) validated the scale in a sample of 2,417 adolescents, confirming its factorial structure and risk levels based on percentiles, which reinforces its methodological relevance in research on digital addiction among youth. In the present study, the ERA-RSI had a reliability of $\alpha = .80$ for the addiction symptoms subscale, $\alpha = .78$ for the social use subscale, $\alpha = .70$ for the geek trait subscale, $\alpha = .83$ for the nomophobia subscale and $\alpha = .91$ for the total score.

UPNT (Labrador et al., 2013) consists of 41 items divided into four subscales: the first two explore the frequency of use and problems associated with different technologies, 10 items related to the use of Internet (e.g. 'Do you spend more time than you think is necessary on the Internet?'), 10 items related to the use of video games (e.g. 'Do you lie to your family or friends about the hours you spend playing video games?'), and 10 items related to the use of mobile phones (e.g. 'Do you feel nervous if it has been a long time since you last used your mobile phone?'), and the last 9 questions ask about television viewing (e.g. 'Do you feel bad when you can't watch TV for some reason?'). All questions are closed-ended, and the questionnaire offers predetermined answers, but also includes specific questions to analyse the frequency of use, the presence of possible problems and particular characteristics of use, such as place and time spent using each technology. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, from 0 (never) to 3 (always), with higher scores indicating a more problematic use of these technologies.

The reliability of the UPNT for the present sample was $\alpha = .73$ for the Internet subscale, $\alpha = .83$ for the video games subscale, $\alpha = .84$ for the mobile subscale, $\alpha = .72$ for the television subscale and $\alpha = .90$ for the total score.

In the process of quantitative data analysis, the SPSS V-28 software package was used, where the results of the descriptive analyses are presented in terms of frequencies for categorical variables and as mean and standard deviation for quantitative variables. The normality of the distribution of the variables was assessed through skewness and kurtosis values; those variables with values within the range of ± 2 were considered normal, following the criterion proposed by Gravetter

and Wallnau (2014). For the analysis of differences between two groups with normal distribution, a student's t-test was used for the independent samples; in the case of variables that did not conform to normality, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used for the independent groups. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d and biserial rank correlation, interpreted according to the criteria proposed by Lovakov and Agadullina (2021) and López-Martín and Ardura (2023), respectively. To examine the association between variables, Pearson's or Spearman's correlation coefficients were used, depending on the normality of the distribution, and interpreted according to the criteria proposed by Gignac and Szodorai (2016). The test-retest reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with values above .70 considered acceptable for research purposes (DeVellis, 2017).

2.2. Qualitative study

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. On the one hand, interviews were conducted with families who had experienced CPV and whose child was serving a judicial measure at 'El Laurel'; on the other hand, focus groups were held with the social workers and psychologists involved in each adolescent's case. The interview guide, developed by the research team, contained preestablished questions for all participants, allowing for additional questions to explore emerging themes in greater depth (Blasco & Otero, 2008; Sandoval, 2002). In total, 56 interviews were conducted between April-June 2023 and February-April 2024, each averaging 45 minutes. Seventy-two family members participated across 55 interviews, as some were attended by more than one family member. Participants comprised 62.5% mothers (n = 45), 33.3% fathers (n = 24), and 4.2% other relatives (n = 3), enabling the inclusion of diverse perspectives.

The interviews followed a three-phase structure. In the initial social phase, participants were informed about the study objectives, confidentiality and participation conditions (Sandoval, 2002). During the development phase, the interviewer introduced herself, guided the discussion and asked both prewritten and spontaneous questions. In the closing phase, the interview was concluded, and participants were invited to share final reflections or questions. The questions sought to generate data on categories aligned with the research objectives, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Categories of interview questions

Research objectives	Interview categories
Analyse ICT access and patterns of use	Access and use of ICT
Explore family regulation strategies	Family norms and compliance
Examine impact on family relationships	Impact of ICT on family dynamics
Identify links with CPV	Relationship between ICT and violent behaviour
Propose intervention strategies	Proposals to improve ICT use

The second qualitative component consisted of 53 focus groups, divided equally between social workers (50%) and psychologists (50%) involved with the adolescents. This approach aimed to (1) deepen understanding of findings derived from the quantitative phase and family interviews,

and (2) gather information to inform media education strategies encouraging families to promote responsible technology use. To facilitate triangulation, these focus groups addressed the same categories as the interviews, incorporating an additional dimension on proposals for improving ICT use. Using a structured guide (Annexe 1), professionals' perspectives on ICT-related consequences within family dynamics were examined.

Data analysis across interviews and focus groups followed a systematic procedure ensuring consistency and rigour. First, all responses were transcribed and digitised. Second, the textual corpus was thoroughly read to familiarise the researchers with the material and identify emerging ideas. Third, primary and secondary categories were established to guide coding and ensure structured data organisation. Fourth, a thematic analysis was performed based on word frequency to determine the most prevalent and relevant themes across the dataset. NVivo 14 software supported this process, enabling content exploration, frequency analysis and the comparison of perspectives through the Jaccard coefficient (Morgado et al., 2017). The identified categories allowed the construction of broader themes and the detection of key agents described by participants. Classification was undertaken both manually, ordering words by content or speaker, and automatically, identifying recurrent and CPV-relevant concepts. Where appropriate, expressions were assigned to multiple categories to capture interpretive nuances.

3. Results

The descriptive results of the subscales and total scores of the quantitative tests are shown in Table 2. The results tables were deposited in Figshare, following the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) principles that promote open science (10.6084/m9.figshare.30530414). Except for the video games and television subscales of the UPNT, all scales displayed skewness and kurtosis indices within ± 2 , considered adequate for normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). All tests and subscales reached reliability coefficients above .70, acceptable for research as suggested by DeVellis (2017).

Table 2.

Descriptive statistics and reliability

	M	DT	Asymmetry	Kurtosis	α
UPNT Internet	13.60	4.28	0.26	-0.84	.73
UPNT Video games	9.85	3.72	2.17	5.87	.83
UPNT Television	8.45	2.95	1.21	2.09	.72
UPNT Mobile phones	11.53	4.67	0.79	-0.15	.84
UPNT Total	43.43	12.52	1.01	1.25	.90
ERA-RSI Symptoms of addiction	20.47	5.81	0.47	-0.73	.80
ERA-RSI Social use	19.60	5.36	0.56	-0.60	.78
ERA-RSI Geek traits	9.96	3.65	1.20	1.22	.70
ERA-RSI Nomophobia	13.87	5.21	0.34	-0.83	.83
ERA-RSI Total	63.91	16.62	0.60	-0.19	.91

Table 3 presents the correlations between the variables and the participants' gender and age. Being female correlates positively and significantly with both the UPNT and ERA-RSI total scores, as well as with their subscales. According to [Gignac and Szodorai \(2016\)](#), who classify correlations of .10, .20 and .30 as small, moderate and large, respectively, the correlation between gender and the UPNT total score is moderate, while that between gender and the ERA-RSI total score is large. Only problematic video game use exhibits a negative correlation, revealing stronger associations among boys. Age did not show statistically significant correlations with any scores or subscales.

Table 3.

Bivariate correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Sex ^a	1											
2. Age ^a	.01	1										
3. UPNT Internet ^a	.31*	-.10	1									
4. UPNT Video games ^b	-.29*	-.12	.18	1								
5. UPNT Television ^b	.15	-.04	.51**	.31*	1							
6. UPNT Mobile phones ^a	.35*	-.14	.85**	.20	.59**	1						
7. UPNT Total ^a	.177	-.16	.87**	.44**	.74**	.87**	1					
8. ERA-RSI Symptoms of addiction ^a	.27*	-.20	.73**	.01	.45**	.81**	.69**	1				
9. ERA-RSI Social use ^a	.37**	-.16	.70**	.10	.46**	.71**	.70**	.70**	1			
10. ERA-RSI Geek traits ^a	.09	.00	.40**	.15	.31*	.38**	.46**	.42**	.51**	1		
11. ERA-RSI Nomophobia ^a	.27	-.23	.67**	-.03	.37**	.67**	.64**	.61**	.72**	.37**	1	
12. ERA-RSI Total ^a	.32*	-.19	.78**	.04	.48**	.81**	.77**	.86**	.91**	.65**	.84**	1

Notes. a = Pearson correlation coefficients; b = Spearman correlation coefficients; *p < .05; **p < .01.

Table 4 summarises the student's t-tests and Mann-Whitney U-tests examining gender differences. Statistically significant differences were found, with girls scoring higher on the Internet and mobile subscales of the UPNT, the ERA-RSI total score, and the ERA-RSI subscales of addiction symptoms and social use. Conversely, boys scored significantly higher on the video games subscale. Applying [Lovakov and Agadullina's \(2021\)](#) guidelines, with Cohen's *d* of .15, .36 and .65 interpreted as small, moderate and large effect sizes, gender differences in the ERA-RSI total score and Internet and mobile subscales were large; in addiction symptoms, moderate; and in social use, small. For male participants, the rank-biserial correlation coefficient of .33, according to [López-Martín and Ardura \(2023\)](#), indicates a moderate effect size.

The qualitative analysis explored families' and professionals' narratives concerning ICT influence on family interaction and violent behaviour. Table 5 presents the textual references grouped into analytical categories concerning ICT's impact on family dynamics. The central theme identified is the effect of ICT use on family life, with prolonged or unsupervised use perceived as leading to

Table 4.

Gender differences

Variables	Men	Women	p	Size of the effect
UPNT Internet	12.58±4.15	15.30±4.04	.023 ^a	-0.66 ^c
UPNT Video games	10.58±4.20	8.65±2.39	.038 ^b	0.33 ^d
UPNT Television	8.30±3.30	8.70±2.32	.267 ^b	0.18 ^d
UPNT Mobile phones	10.27±3.83	13.60±5.26	.010 ^a	-0.75 ^c
UPNT Total	41.73±13.36	46.25±10.73	.205 ^a	-0.36 ^c
ERA-RSI Symptoms of addiction	19.24±5.49	22.50±5.89	.047 ^a	-0.58 ^c
ERA-RSI Social use	18.06±5.30	22.15±4.52	.006 ^a	-0.81 ^c
ERA-RSI Geek traits	9.73±3.60	10.35±3.79	.552 ^a	-0.17 ^c
ERA-RSI Nomophobia	12.79±5.34	15.65±4.58	.052 ^a	-0.56 ^c
ERA-RSI Total	59.82±16.57	70.65±14.71	.020 ^a	-0.68 ^c

Notes. a = student's t-test; b = Mann-Whitney U-test; c = Cohen's d; d = biserial rank correlation.

emotional disengagement and increased parent-child conflict. Parents expressed concern about their children concealing online activities – particularly when linked to deviant or criminal content –, which intensified household conflict. Families frequently lacked consistent ICT-related rules, contributing to heightened tension. Parents recognised the risks of ICT misuse but often failed to implement preventive measures. Altogether, 93 excerpts drawn from family member interviews explicitly connected inappropriate ICT use with child-to-parent violence (CPV), highlighting the perceived association between digital dependence, secrecy and escalating aggression within the family context.

Table 5.

Category systems

Categories	Textual references
1. Access to and use of ICT	160
1.1. Location of devices	57
1.2. Frequency and duration of use	77
1.3. Type of use	23
1.3.1. Adequate	3
1.3.2. Inappropriate, abusive	143
2. Content consumed and activities carried out	395
2.1. Most used platforms or video games	145
2.2. Perception of concealment of activities on the Internet	78
2.2.1. Does not avoid or hide sharing information	3
2.2.2. Hide or avoid sharing information	64

(continued)

Table 5.

Category systems (continued)

Categories	Textual references
2.3. Relationship between criminal activities	83
2.4. Type of content	89
3. Family rules and compliance	311
3.1. Consequences for non-compliance	30
3.2. Existence of rules of use	58
3.3. Lack of rules and consequences	88
3.4. Degree of compliance with standards	135
3.5. Consequences for non-compliance	9
4. Impact of the use of ICT on family dynamics	565
4.1. Emotional and social consequences	203
4.2. Problems in the family	228
4.3. Violent reaction to interruption	134
5. Parents' perception of inappropriate use	333
5.1. Attitude towards ICT	175
5.1.1. Indifference, justification for use	40
5.1.2. Concern, awareness	122
5.2. Awareness of overuse (adolescent/parents)	130
5.3. Vulnerability	28
6. Relationship between ICT and violent behaviour	198
6.1. Indirect impact on the judicial measure	47
6.2. Influence of video games	12
6.3 There is no relationship between ICT and family abuse	40
6.4 Relationship between ICT and CPV	93
7. Proposals to improve the use of ICT	158
7.1. Consequences of non-compliance with regulations	47
7.2. ICT risk education	53
7.3. Establishment of consistent rules and limits	58

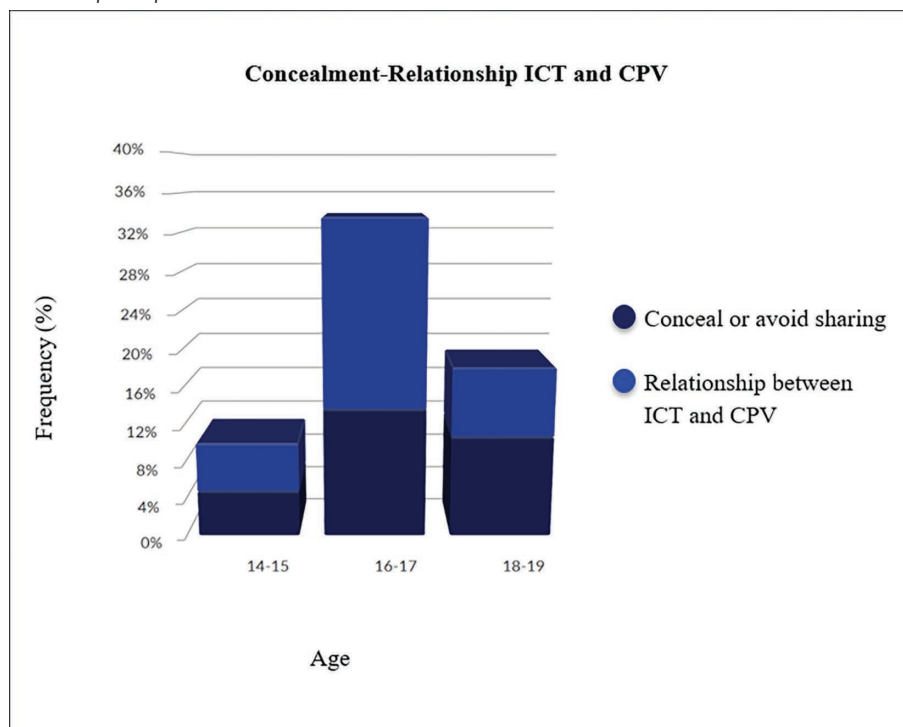
As can be seen in the table above, the predominant theme revolves around the impact of ICT use on family dynamics, highlighting the interviewees' view that the prolonged use of technological devices, as well as being in unsupervised spaces, not only seems to contribute to emotional disconnection from the family environment, but also, when used inadequately or excessively, can lead to confrontations between young people and parents. Moreover, the parents interviewed expressed concern that their children were hiding their online activities, especially when the content consumed is associated with criminal activities, a dynamic which further exacerbates family conflict. ICT dependence has a considerable impact on family dynamics, and adolescents with increased dependence often react violently when families made attempts to control their usage time or

monitor the content consumed. In many families, there was a significant lack of clear and consistent rules, and this inconsistency led to increases in tension in the home. Parents reported high levels of concern about excessive use of ICT and the associated risks, which shows that families are aware of the dangers but, in many cases, do not implement effective interventions. Ninety-three statements recorded in family member interviews linked inappropriate ICT use to CPV.

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between parental perception of adolescents' secrecy regarding Internet use and family conflict. The sample was grouped by age, revealing differing behavioural patterns. Adolescents aged 16–17 were most prone to conceal online activities (13.89%), followed by those aged 18–19 (10.90%) and 14–15 (4.93%), with higher frequencies among girls (15.85%) than boys (13.88%). Parents reported that some adolescents maintained multiple social media accounts for privacy and engaged online primarily in private spaces. Most parents believed that ICT misuse heightened violent arguments between parents and children. Reports of violent behaviour linked to technology were most frequent among 16–17-year-olds (19.80%), followed by both 18–19-year-olds and 14–15-year-olds (7.46%). Male adolescents exhibited a higher prevalence of violent responses (19.50%) compared to females (13.05%). Many parents expressed fear of aggressive reactions from adolescents when trying to monitor or restrict ICT use, particularly in the 16–17-year group (26.35%), decreasing among 18–19-year-olds (14.79%) and 14–15-year-olds (5.85%). This perception varied by gender, with higher reported fears concerning sons (31.23%) than daughters (15.76%).

Figure 1.

Parents' perceptions



Source: Own elaboration through the NVivo program.

The focus groups with practitioners dealing with CPV offenders and victims confirmed that adolescents' online activities sometimes coincided with criminal behaviours such as sharing violent

content, theft, substance-related posts or gang-related acts. These practices were more prevalent among boys (15.78%) than girls (8.06%) and increased with age: 3.64% at 14–15 years, 10.82% at 16–17 and 9.37% at 18–19. Professionals also highlighted frequent resistance to parental limits: 21.30% of girls and 19.56% of boys often disregarded established ICT rules, with 16–17-year-olds showing the highest non-compliance (19.52%), followed by 18–19-year-olds (18.37%) and the lowest among 14–15-year-olds (2.97%). Although girls engaged less frequently in ICT-related offending behaviour, they showed a stronger tendency toward rule-breaking.

Practitioners recommended that parents establish clear rules and consistent consequences regarding ICT use and actively monitor online behaviour. They emphasised that sanctions should remain proportionate and comprehensible to adolescents to enhance adherence and reduce conflict.

4. Discussion

This study examined the link between child-to-parent violence (CPV) and inappropriate ICT use among adolescents admitted to the only juvenile justice centre in the Community of Madrid. It incorporated the perspectives of adolescents, their families and professionals, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Guevara et al., 2020). The chosen methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative data, was well-suited to the complexity of the context, allowing for a nuanced analysis of ICT's role in CPV. The mixed-methods approach ensured that all stakeholders' voices were included and facilitated data triangulation. This not only enhanced the validity of the findings but also provided a deeper, more precise understanding of the issue, overcoming the limitations of single-source studies (Forni & De Grande, 2020). Results indicated moderate concern regarding problematic Internet use, with a mean score of 13.60 (SD = 4.28), contrasting with Labrador et al. (2013), where 85% reported no issues. Television use scored lower (M = 8.45, SD = 2.95), suggesting a lower perceived risk, possibly due to the broader appeal and functionality of mobile devices. Mobile phone use showed a mean of 11.53 (SD = 4.67), reflecting notable concern and aligning with previous findings linking this technology to behaviours such as disconnection anxiety (Labrador et al., 2013).

Findings suggest that inappropriate ICT use is a risk factor for CPV. Early, unsupervised exposure to harmful content, lack of clear rules and emotional dependence on social media are linked to increased defiance and aggression. This coincides with studies connecting screen exposure to disruptive behaviours (Padilla-Walker & Coyne, 2011). A relevant aspect is adolescents' rejection of parental limits, including those related to ITC use; this is congruent with studies that associate CPV with the absence of clear and consistent limits at home (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Along these lines, Bartau-Rojas et al. (2018) highlight several mediation strategies, such as rule setting, spatial-temporal limitation, supervision and support. However, although ICT facilitates supervision and control (Santana-Vega et al., 2019), Gairín-Sallán and Mercader (2017) show in their study that 63.5% of 15–17-year-olds lack supervision regarding the time they spend using ICT and the manner in which they use it. The difficulty for parents in imposing limits without triggering aggressive reactions – out

of fear of cutting the connection or taking away the mobile phone – creates a context in which young people gain greater autonomy over their own ICT use.

One of the most striking findings of this study is the higher rate of non-compliance with rules and limits among younger adolescents. Although this variable did not show statistically significant correlations with age in the quantitative analysis, the qualitative data revealed a clear pattern: adolescents aged 14–15 exhibited greater resistance to family norms regarding ICT use. This observation aligns with the findings of [Gairín-Sallán and Mercader \(2017\)](#), who reported that 63.5% of adolescents aged 15–17 lacked supervision in terms of time spent and manner of ICT use. While both results point to a deficit in parental regulation, it is important to note that they stem from different methodological approaches and are not directly correlated. Nonetheless, the convergence of these findings reinforces the relevance of early intervention strategies aimed at promoting responsible ICT use and strengthening family boundaries.

Families and professionals report frequent exposure to inappropriate content –pornography, drugs, violence – through ICT. While digital tools offer educational benefits, they also facilitate harmful behaviours ([Alfaro et al., 2015](#); [Agustina, 2010](#); [Buelga et al., 2010](#); [Chóliz & Villanueva, 2011](#)). This exposure is associated with aggression and socialisation issues ([Anderson et al., 2003](#)). Parents' failed attempts to report such content underscore the lack of effective platform regulation, increasing adolescents' vulnerability.

Women present higher problematic social media use in high CPV contexts ([Martínez-Ferrer et al., 2018](#)). This pattern is consistent with previous findings indicating that adolescent girls tend to experience greater difficulties associated with mobile and social network use than boys ([Álvarez & Moral, 2020](#); [Rial et al., 2015](#)). Similarly, and in line with the findings of [Luengo-González et al. \(2023\)](#), the UPNT results reveal statistically significant differences between genders, with girls showing higher scores in the use of mobile technologies and the Internet – including social networks and smartphones –, suggesting a preference for social interaction. In contrast, boys score higher on video game use.

Excessive social media use, particularly on platforms like Instagram, fosters self-esteem tied to online validation. Parents noted that some daughters represent themselves in excessive and sexualised ways, which parents believe is driven by the need for acceptance and fear of social rejection. This often led to conflict. Research links intensive Instagram use to lower self-esteem, especially in girls due to physical comparisons ([Bernal et al., 2025](#)), and to risky behaviours like posting sexualised content ([Livingstone & Helsper, 2007](#)).

Some adolescents use ICT to avoid in-person interaction, leading to emotional dependence on virtual relationships. This is associated with depression, anxiety and poor social skills ([Twenge & Campbell, 2018](#)). Meanwhile, the excessive consumption of violent or high-stimulus content is related to increased emotional reactivity and reduced self-control skills ([Gentile et al., 2017](#)). In addition, victims of bullying may seek refuge online, exposing themselves to further risks such as toxic relationships or contact with older individuals. Families report more abusive use of technological devices since the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing family isolation and weakening parents' ability to regulate this activity, leading to conflicts when parents try to impose limits ([Orgilés et al., 2021](#)).

Research on family influence highlights that strict control and intrusive monitoring are ineffective in reducing digital risks ([Baldry et al., 2019](#)). Furthermore, as the age of adolescents increases,

so does their propensity for violence (Gökalp et al., 2024). A decrease in the age of onset of Internet use is associated with an increase in this propensity, highlighting the significance of the age of onset of Internet use and its relationship to the development of violent behaviours.

These results provide a critical view of the effects of excessive ICT use on family relationships and underline the importance of balanced parental supervision together with educational strategies that, through educommunication, encourage responsible and healthy use of technologies. This holistic approach seeks not only to mitigate the risks associated with problematic ICT use but also to prevent the emergence and maintenance of CPV associated with this maladaptive behaviour.

Despite the clarity of the findings – particularly regarding gender, type of ICT used (e.g., social media, video games) and age –, this study would benefit from outlining more explicit socio-educational and clinical proposals to prevent ICT-related child-to-parent violence. Given that excessive control and surveillance have shown to be ineffective as protective factors (Baldry et al., 2019), future interventions should focus on strengthening digital literacy, emotional regulation and family communication. Educational programs should include training for parents and adolescents on the responsible use of technology, conflict resolution, and the development of empathy and assertiveness. Clinically, interventions should incorporate systemic family therapy approaches that address the relational dynamics underlying CPV, as well as individual therapy for adolescents to work on impulse control and digital dependency. These strategies should be tailored to age and gender differences, as the data suggest distinct patterns of ICT use and associated risks.

In light of the findings, it is also essential to provide families and professionals with actionable strategies that go beyond control and surveillance. For families, this includes establishing consistent and negotiated rules for ICT use, fostering open communication and promoting shared activities that do not involve screens. Psychoeducational workshops can help parents understand the emotional and behavioural impact of ICT and develop skills in conflict resolution and emotional regulation. For professionals, especially those working in juvenile justice and education, training should focus on identifying early signs of ICT-related distress, applying restorative practices, and integrating digital literacy into therapeutic and educational programs. Collaborative interventions involving both families and professionals are key to creating a supportive environment that mitigates the risks associated with problematic ICT use and prevents the escalation of child-to-parent violence.

The use of multiple data collection techniques was essential to enrich and triangulate information from adolescents, families and professionals. Despite the novel insights, the study has limitations. This includes the sample size, which, despite being representative of the Community of Madrid, would need to be extended to other Spanish communities and provinces. The reliance on self-reporting introduces potential social desirability bias, although anonymity was ensured to mitigate this. Focus group participation was lower than recommended (Buelga et al., 2010), due to limited availability in the specific context. However, the professionals involved worked exclusively with the target population, which enhanced the quality of participation and optimised resources without compromising validity. As for the quantitative results, the small sample size employed also presents a limitation that could affect the generalisability of the findings. Although it is possible to apply both the t-test and the Mann-Whitney U-test with small sample sizes (Kim, 2019; Rahardja et al., 2009), this condition may compromise the statistical power of the analyses, particularly when the actual effects are subtle. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies replicate these analyses with larger sample sizes to obtain more precise and robust estimations.

Despite these limitations, the study provides novel data that advance our understanding of CPV. Specifically, it highlights the importance of parental regulation and supervision in the use of technology, showing how the lack of limits and excessive exposure can alter communication and degrade the family bond.

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Authors' contribution

Elisa González-Pérez: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Data curation; Investigation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Isabel Martínez-Álvarez: Conceptualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

Sergio Hidalgo-Fuentes: Data curation; Writing – review & editing.

Alba García-Barrera: Conceptualization; Writing – review & editing.

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Annexe 1

1. Do you think that the adolescent's use of ICT has created problems at home? Why? In what way?
2. Do you know which video game or social network they use the most? Do you think it is appropriate?
3. Are there any rules, limits and parental control on the use of ICT, and if so, what are the consequences for non-compliance?
4. Is the reason for the judicial measure directly related to the inappropriate use of ICT?
5. What proposals would you make to parents to encourage appropriate ICT use?