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Digitalización de la mortalidad: Cómo la pandemia cambió la percepción de la muerte de los jóvenes adultos a través de las redes sociales

Digitalizing mortality: How the pandemic shifted young adults' perceptions of death through social media

Digitalizzazione della mortalità: come la pandemia ha cambiato la percezione della morte nei giovani adulti attraverso i social media

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Abstract

Social media have emerged as prominent spaces for young adults to openly express their thoughts and emotions about the concept of death. This study examined the impact of social media on perceptions of death among young adults from two Ibero-American countries whose cultural roots have been deeply entrenched in traditional festivities related to death. Employing a quantitative approach through a questionnaire, we evaluated 322 Spanish and 314 Mexican young adults, totaling 636 participants, assessing their exposure to content about death on social media platforms. The findings shed light on the role of this cyberspace as a catalyst for conversations about mortality that challenge conventional beliefs and emotions. The data underscore the dualistic nature of social media. While it has the propensity to exacerbate psychological issues such as depression and anxiety, it also presents a unique avenue for educational endeavors and awareness efforts aimed at demystifying death and mitigating the associated stigmas.

Keywords: Death, young adults, death challenge, social media, Ibero-American

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Resumen

Las redes sociales se han convertido en espacios clave para que los jóvenes adultos expresen abiertamente sus pensamientos y emociones sobre el concepto de la muerte. Este estudio examinó el impacto de las redes sociales en la percepción de la muerte entre jóvenes adultos de dos países iberoamericanos, cuyas raíces culturales están profundamente arraigadas en las festividades tradicionales relacionadas con la muerte. Mediante un enfoque cuantitativo mediante un cuestionario, evaluamos a 322 jóvenes adultos españoles y 314 mexicanos, con un total de 636 participantes, para evaluar su exposición a contenidos sobre la muerte en las redes sociales. Los hallazgos dilucidan el papel de este ciberespacio como catalizador de conversaciones sobre la mortalidad que desafían las creencias y emociones convencionales. Los datos subrayan la naturaleza dualista de las redes sociales. Si bien tienden a exacerbar problemas psicológicos como la depresión y la ansiedad, también representan una vía única para iniciativas educativas y de concienciación destinadas a desmitificar la muerte y mitigar los estigmas asociados.

Palabras clave: Muerte, jóvenes adultos, desafío de la muerte, redes sociales, Iberoamérica

Riassunto

I social media si sono affermati come importanti spazi in cui i giovani adulti possono esprimere apertamente i propri pensieri ed emozioni sul concetto di morte. Questo studio ha esaminato l'impatto dei social media sulla percezione della morte tra i giovani adulti di due paesi iberoamericani le cui radici culturali sono profondamente radicate nelle festività tradizionali legate alla morte. Utilizzando un approccio quantitativo attraverso un questionario, abbiamo valutato 322 giovani adulti spagnoli e 314 messicani, per un totale di 636 partecipanti, valutando la loro esposizione a contenuti sulla morte sulle piattaforme dei social media. I risultati chiariscono il ruolo di questo cyberspazio come catalizzatore di conversazioni sulla mortalità che sfidano le credenze e le emozioni convenzionali. I dati sottolineano la natura dualistica dei social media. Pur avendo la tendenza a esacerbare problemi psicologici come depressione e ansia, rappresentano anche una strada unica per iniziative educative e di sensibilizzazione volte a demistificare la morte e mitigare gli stigmi associati.

Parole chiave: Morte, giovani adulti, sfida della morte, social media, iberoamericano

Introduction

Young adults' perceptions of death vary according to factors such as education, culture, personal experience, and religious or philosophical beliefs. In the digital age, social media and online news significantly influence how they understand and interpret death (Cupit *et al*., 2022).

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Studying how young adults perceive death on social media is essential because these communicative spaces significantly influence how individuals process and manage issues related to mortality, thereby affecting their psychological well-being (Selfridge & Mitchell, 2021). Understanding these perceptions also provides insights into young users' online behavior, which in turn informs digital etiquette, moderation policies, and governance practices (Patton et al., 2017).

Moreover, analyzing such interactions can help identify warning signs of risky behaviors such as suicide (Moyer & Enck, 2020) and reveal broader cultural shifts in attitudes toward mortality (Rossetto et al., 2015). Social media function as an educational tool where young adults learn to interpret and contextualize death (Frey et al., 2020). Within this framework, the present study examines young adults' perceptions of death on social media, with a particular focus on cultural differences between Spain and Mexico.

Theoretical framework

Death and consequences of the global pandemic on young adults

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, noting a "very high" risk in China and a "high" risk worldwide (WHO, 2020). Governments implemented measures such as health guidelines, social restrictions, and lockdowns to contain the virus (Albitar & Aboualchamat, 2023), however, infection and death rates continued to rise (Lim et al., 2023).

During this period, media narratives portrayed death as "random, inexplicable, and sudden," intensifying feelings of fear, frustration, and guilt (Casas-Patiño, 2022). Media imagery played a crucial role in visualizing infection data and serving as a constant reminder of mortality (Hughes & Jones, 2022).

The pandemic's social consequences, especially isolation, restrictions, and disrupted norms had severe effects on global mental health (Jones et al., 2023). Young adults faced significant psychological strain due to widespread loss and grief (Mejia, 2022; Harrop et al., 2022). An increase in, depression, substance abuse, and

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suicidal ideation were also reported (Campos & López-Pérez *et al*., 2023), with a notable rise in suicide rates among women and young adults (Ryu et al., 2022).

Cultural differences on death between Spain and Mexico

The perception of death is deeply shaped by the cultural context, manifesting differently in Spain and Mexico due to their distinct histories, traditions, and sociocultural frameworks (Real Academia Española and Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, n.d.). In Spain, death is often considered a taboo topic, as postmodern society emphasizes youth, joy, and constant happiness (de-Miguel, 1995; Uribe-Rodríguez et al., 2008). Religion, particularly Catholicism, influences young adults' understanding of death through rituals and widely observed festivities such as Christmas and Holy Week, fostering early familiarity with mortality (Timón-Tiemblo, 2021; Andujar, 2021).

In Mexico, perceptions of death are shaped by indigenous and European influences, blending pre-Hispanic rituals with Catholic practices (Reyes-Ruiz, 2011). The "Día de los Muertos" (Day of the Dead) exemplifies a unique, intimate, and familial approach to death, combining music, food, decorations, and family gatherings to honor deceased loved ones (Malvido, 2006; Gómez-Gutiérrez, 2011). Unlike the more formal and restrained funeral practices in Spain, Mexican ceremonies are expressive and festive, encouraging reflection on mortality as part of the continuum of life.

These cultural differences influence how young adults experience and interpret death, with practices and beliefs transmitted through traditions shaping attitudes toward mortality in each country.

Young adults' perceptions of death and social media platforms

The digital environment has become a key cultural space where young adults engage with ideas of mortality during formative stages of identity development (Primack et al., 2017). In Spain, 99.8% of people aged 16–24 are active Internet users (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2023), while in Mexico, 83.2% of Internet users engage with social media (We Are Social, 2023). These platforms reshape traditional

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norms and create new ways of understanding death, influenced by cultural, personal, and experiential factors (Ünal, 2017).

Religious orientation, whether faith-based, atheist, or agnostic, also shapes how individuals imagine death and cope with anxiety or grief (Manning, 2023; Krysinska et al., 2014). Although death remains a taboo topic, often expressed through euphemisms (Morales-Aguilera, 2021), digital media have blurred the boundaries between public and private mourning (Morales-Aguilera, 2021). Social media enables users to share stories, commemorate loved ones, and express emotions about mortality. Patients also use these platforms to discuss health issues and promote awareness, helping to reduce stigma and foster empathy (Seltzer et al., 2019; Prieto-Leo, 2023; Nerghes & Lee, 2019; Navarro-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

However, continuous exposure to death-related content can harm young adults' mental health, provoking anxiety and stress. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media messages often carried a more depressive tone (Banna et al., 2019), and the need for online validation increased emotional pressure (Fontana & Velásquez-Fernández, 2023). Studies link this increased exposure to higher rates of depression and anxiety among young adults, who represent the demographic most active on social networks (Hossain et al., 2020; Martínez-Taboas, 2020).

Objectives and hypotheses

The main purpose of this research was to analyze how the pandemic influenced young adults' perceptions of death through their exposure to social media content. To achieve this, the study focused on the following objectives:

To understand how young adults describe death.

To identify the types of death-related content young adults consume on social media.

To examine how the pandemic altered young adults' perceptions of death through social media content in terms of emotional and psychological responses.

The hypotheses formulated below are based on the third third objective, as they involve variables that were measured quantitatively for statistical purposes:

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H1. Significant differences exist between young adults in Spain and Mexico regarding the visibility of death on social media.

H2. Measurable differences exist in psychological responses triggered by exposure to death-related content on social media.

H3. The pandemic has significantly changed how young adults perceive death before, during, and after the pandemic.

Method

This study involved the development of a standardized online questionnaire to explore young adults' perceptions of death, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemi and social media content.

Questionnaire design

A Spanish self-administered questionnaire was used, adapted to the participants' context and theoretical framework. It included customized scales with open-ended questions and was pretested by 12 experts in media and psychology. The questionnaire was divided into five sections: (1) opinions on death, (2) personal experiences with death, (3) the impact of education on the perception of death, (4) the impact of the pandemic on the perception of death, and (5) the visibility of death on social media.

The instrument initially included 25 Likert-scale items and four sociodemographic questions, with scales ranging from "1–Not at all" to "4–A lot" or "1–Strongly disagree" to "4–Strongly agree," alongside open-ended prompts for detailed responses. After expert validation, the final version comprised 23 items and five sociodemographic questions (see full questionnaire: https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22663876). Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded $\alpha = .987$, indicating a very high level of internal consistency and confirming the questionnaire as a valid tool to assess young adults' perceptions of death and social media.

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Participants

The study employed purposive and convenience sampling, using the latter due to participant accessibility and resource limitations (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza Torres, 2018). To reduce bias, data were triangulated across Spain and Mexico. Four co-authoring professors led data collection via their academic networks and collaborations with educational institutions, three in Spain and one in Mexico, allowing a comparative sample of young adults. Students were encouraged to share the questionnaire with eligible peers, while purposive sampling ensured representation across sociodemographic variables such as education, region, and religious belief (Flores-Limo & Mora-Santiago, 2023).

Participants had to be Spanish or Mexican nationals aged 18–35, reflecting broader definitions of young adulthood in Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.; Perovic, 2016). Data were collected between October 2022 and February 2023. The final sample included 636 participants: 430 women, 203 men, and 3 non-binary individuals. There were 322 Spanish (50.6%) and 314 Mexican (49.4%) participants. Most were aged 18–21 (67.5%), followed by 22–25 (22.2%), 26–30 (5.85%), and 31–35 (4.6%).

Educational attainment was predominantly higher education (66.7%), followed by secondary education (17.5%), vocational training (15.1%), and basic education (0.8%). Regarding religious affiliation, 51.4% reported no belief, 32.7% identified with a religion, and 15.9% were unsure. Differences emerged by country: in Spain, 64% were non-religious, 27% religious, and 9% unsure; in Mexico, 39% were religious, 38% non-religious, and 23% unsure.

Qualitative and quantitative data analysis

To analyze the two open-ended qualitative questions corresponding to objectives 1 and 2, ATLAS.ti 24 software, together with the Intentional AI Coding tool (based on GPT models), was used to conduct an inductive thematic analysis. AI-assisted approach enhanced the speed and accuracy of the coding process by systematically identifying recurring patterns and themes. Subsequently, a co-occurrence analysis was performed to examine how themes co-occurred, thereby providing deeper insight

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into participants' perceptions and their engagement with death on social media. For the quantitative analysis related to objective 3, hypothesis testing began with Levene's test for equality of variances." When variances were unequal, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied; otherwise, Student's t-test was used. These procedures ensured robust mean comparisons and statistically reliable results across different analytical conditions.

Results

Objective 1. Young adults' understanding of death

By analyzing young adults' responses regarding their understanding of death, we identified a diverse array of interpretations that converged into key emergent themes (Figure 1). The code "understanding of death" comprised several distinct subcodes: "end of life", "surreal", "deep perception", "reincarnation", "inevitability", and "eternal memory". These thematic patterns indicate that participants perceived death through a variety of lenses, including biological, emotional, social, cultural, and philosophical perspectives, among others, thus highlighting a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the concept.

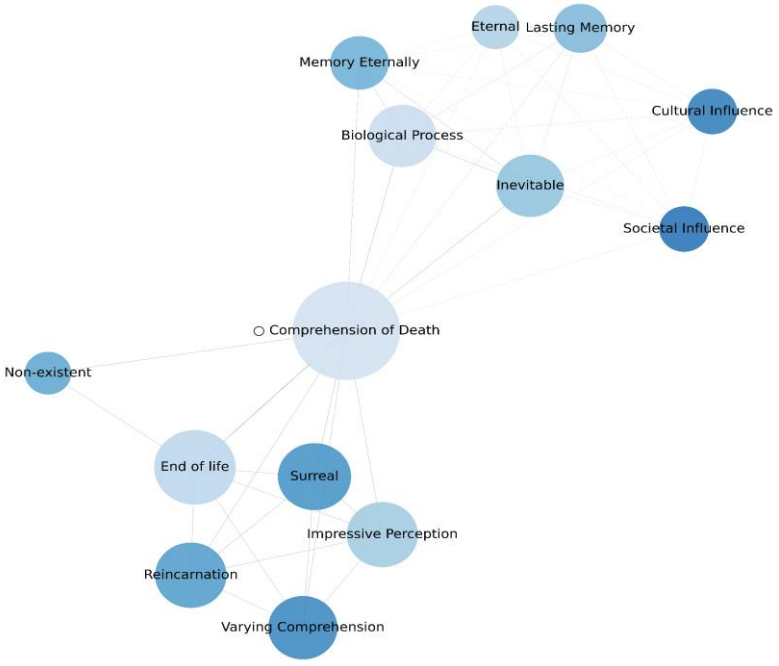


Figure 1. Thematic map illustrating young adults' perceptions of death.

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Young adults' perceptions of death reveal diverse and multifaceted understandings that are shaped by biological, spiritual, emotional, and cultural frameworks. The dominant theme Conceptualizes death as a biological process and the end of life, emphasizing the cessation of bodily functions and the inevitability of mortality (An_288; An_216). Many participants described death as the definitive end of consciousness or earthly existence (An_11; An_30; An_70), reflecting an acceptance of its universality and inevitability.

A less frequent but nevertheless notable perspective relates to eternity or spiritual continuity, where death is understood as a transition rather than an end, often linked to reincarnation or the enduring presence of the soul (An_99; An_252; An_314; An_436; An_53). In this regard, the memory theme highlights symbolic continuity through remembrance, allowing the deceased to persist emotionally even after physical death (An_314). In contrast, the "non-existence" code reflects a nihilistic perspective, in which death is perceived as the complete cessation of existence (An_61; An_584; An_560). Other themes reveal the abstract and overwhelming nature of death, with participants describing it as surreal or incomprehensible (An_19; An_636), as well as its emotional impact, including fear, sadness, or anxiety about one's own mortality or that of loved ones (An_430; An_113; An_401).

The varying comprehension theme shows that understanding of death shifts with age, experience, and personal context (An_9). Finally, cultural and societal influences strongly shape perceptions, including family taboos, religious beliefs, and societal norms (An_630; An_35; An_517). Spanish and Mexican young adults often integrate cultural or religious frameworks, such as Catholicism, into their understanding of death, illustrating the significant role of social and cultural environments in shaping mortality concepts.

Objective 2. Types of death-related content consumed by young adults on social media

The analysis of young adults' self-reported consumption of death-related content on social media reveals a high degree of thematic diversity. This engagement reflects the influence of both global events, such as the pandemic, and personal factors

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including usage patterns, emotional responses, and the cultural dynamics that shape interactions on social media. Figure 2 illustrates the clustering of death-related content most frequently reported by participants, underscoring the prominence of these themes within their digital experiences.

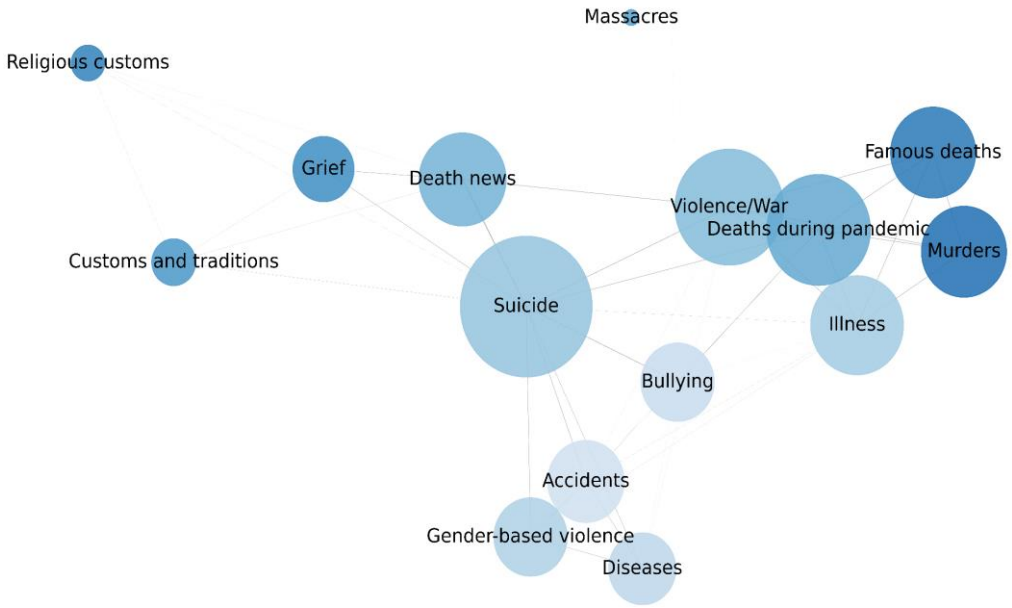


Figure 2. Thematic map of death-related content consumed by young adults

Suicide was a central topic in participants' discussions, with many reporting, exposure to content on suicide prevention and anti-suicide campaigns (An_31; An_342). Violence and war were also commonly encountered, including graphic depictions of armed conflicts and massacres. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly shaped perceptions of death, with constant media coverage of death tolls, restricted farewells, and isolated grieving turning mourning into a mediated, collective experience (An_68; An_632). Celebrity deaths were frequently noted, as were suicides linked to bullying, highlighting the emotional impact of social media portrayals (An_3; 68; An_23; 29; 37; 143; 386).

Deaths from terminal illnesses, such as cancer, were often shared online by patients or families, fostering empathy and solidarity while exposing users to emotional content (An_51; An_581; 430; 452). Violent deaths, including murders, also appeared in digital narratives, often blending real events with entertainment formats, raising

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concerns about the social effects of consuming macabre content. Grief and coping were prominent themes, with participants engaging with posts offering psychological or religious guidance, as well as influencers' personal grieving journeys, which contributed to creating digital spaces for reflection, empathy, and collective mourning (An_2; An_403).

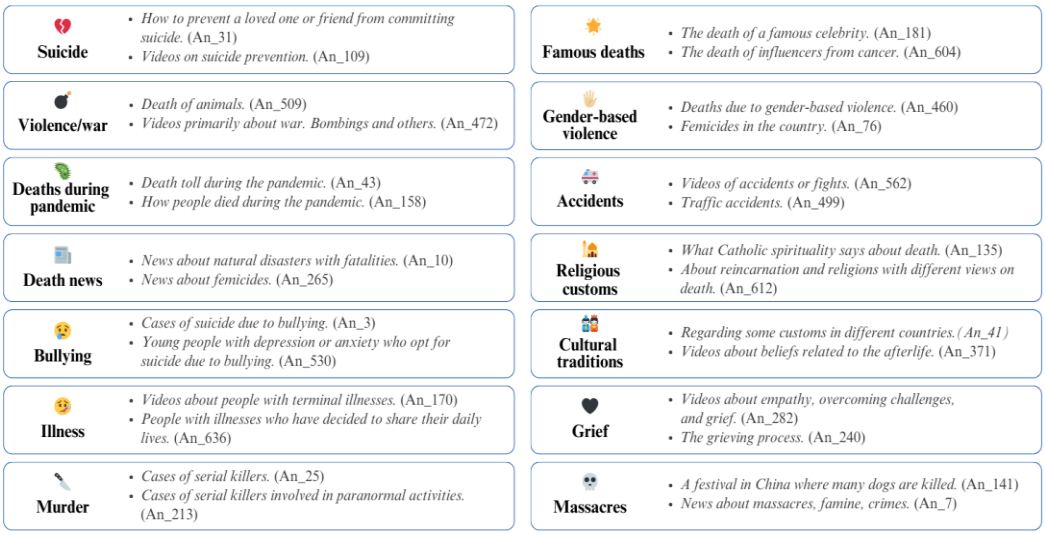


Figure 3. Excerpts from young adults' responses categorized by themes.

In addition to primary themes, young adults engaged with less prevalent but meaningful death-related content. Some explored thanatology, focusing on the scientific and humanistic study of death, grief support, and the dying process (An_332). Social media also featured memes, viral trends, and dark humor related to death, such as motivational quotes, dedications to deceased individuals, and humorous challenges like "when will you die" (An_320; 308; 458; 447). These forms of humor serve as coping strategies for existential anxiety. Participants shared personal anecdotes of loss and grief, fostering collective empathy and emotional expression (An_317; 351).

Philosophical reflections on death, ranging from biological processes to existential theories, also emerged, reflecting a deliberate search for meaning and a deeper understanding of life and the afterlife (An_371; 188). Finally, some expressed a fascination with the aesthetic aspects of death, engaging with imagery of cemeteries,

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funeral rituals, and myths, which allowed a reflective and visually engaging interaction with mortality (An_387).

Objective 3. Impact of social media content on the concept of death among young Mexican and Spanish adults

H1: Differences *regarding the visibility of death on social media platforms*

The results indicate differences between Spanish and Mexican young adults in how they perceive death on social media, including its visibility, content, associated emotions, and platform use. Descriptive analysis showed that social media increases the visibility of death (M = 2.58), though with high variability (SD = .892). Homogeneity of variances was confirmed (F(1, 634) = .992, p = .320), allowing for a t-test comparison. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups: Mexican young adults perceived death as more visible on social media than their Spanish counterparts.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of country levels in the variable "Visibility of death in social media" and results of *t*-tests

Variable	Country	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
Visibility of death in social media	Spain	2.51	.869	-2.081	634	.038
	Mexico	2.66	.909			

Regarding the perception of death-related content on social media, it appears that young adults consider the content to range between "little" (X=2) and "quite a bit" (X=3). This encompasses content related to death trends, sharing experiences on this topic, the ability to express feelings, perceptions of initiatives to prevent premature death, participation in challenges that may endanger an individual's integrity, and fostering empathetic conversations among users. However, a high standard deviation indicated data dispersion (Table 2).

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Table 2

Means and standard deviations of content about death on social media

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Contents about death on social media.	636	2.67	.796
Trends for sharing experiences about death.	636	2.34	.920
Expression of feelings.	636	2.63	.861
Initiatives to prevent premature death.	636	2.48	.945
Participation in challenges that may threaten people's integrity.	636	2.41	.957
Creation of empathetic conversations among users.	636	2.34	.888

Variance equality was assessed for all variables related to perceptions of death on social media. Homogeneity was not met for "Contents about death on social media" ($F(1, 634) = 4.189$, $p = .041$) and "Creation of empathetic conversations among users" ($F(1, 634) = 10.269$, $p = .001$), so the Mann-Whitney U test was used for these, while Student's t-test was applied to the remaining variables.

Results indicate significant differences between Spanish and Mexican young adults for most variables, except "Participation in challenges that may threaten people's integrity" ($F(1, 634) = .039$, $p = .844$). Mexican participants reported higher perceptions of death-related content, trends for sharing experiences, initiatives to prevent premature death, empathetic conversations among users, and the ability to express feelings about death compared to Spanish participants.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of country levels in each of the variables of perception of content about death on social media, and results of Student's *t*-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests

Variables of perception of content about death on social media	Country	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
Trends for sharing experiences about death.	Spain	2.23	.909	-2.978	634	.003
	Mexico	2.45	.921			

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Variables of perception of content about death on social media	Country	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
Expression of feelings.	Spain	2.55	.850	-2.357	634	.019
	Mexico	2.71	.867			
Initiatives to prevent premature death.	Spain	2.21	.890	-7.427	634	.000
	Mexico	2.75	.924			
Participation in challenges that may threaten people's integrity.	Spain	2.35	.962	-1.713	634	.087
	Mexico	2.48	.950			
				U	*df*	*p*
Contents about death on social media.	Spain	2.54	.797	40928.5	634	.000
	Mexico	2.81	.771			
Creation of empathetic conversations among users.	Spain	2.23	.838	44175.5	634	.003
	Mexico	2.45	.92			

H2. Differences in psychological responses triggered by exposure to death-related content on social media

On the other hand, as observed in Table 4, it appears that Mexican and Spanish young adults consider various psychological states associated with death on social media to range between "little" (X=2) and "quite a bit" (X=3), with "Depression" being the highest-rated variable.

Table 4

Means and standard deviations of the different psychological states associated with death on social media

Variables related to psychological states	N	Mean	SD
Humor	636	2.23	.944
Empathy	636	2.60	.863
Loneliness	636	2.51	.911
Fear	636	2.72	.942
Depression	636	2.91	.932

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In the process of verifying equality of variances, the following results were obtained: “Humor”: F(1, 634)=10.691, *p*=.001; “Empathy”: F(1, 634)=.178, *p*=.673; “Loneliness”: F(1, 634)=.042, *p*=.837; “Fear”: F(1, 634)=.005, *p*=.943; and “Depression”: F(1, 634)=.671, *p*=.413. Homogeneity of variances was not assumed only in the variable “Humor”. From the values shown in Table 5, it is inferred that there is a significant difference between Spanish and Mexican participants in the variables “Loneliness”, “Depression”, and “Humor”. Mexican young adults perceived death to be more associated with these psychological states on social media than Spanish participants (Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of country levels in variables of psychological states associated with death on social media, and results of Student’s *t*-test and Mann-Whitney U test.

Psychological states associated with death in social media	Country	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
Empathy	Spain	2.59	.857	-.174	634	.862
	Mexico	2.61	.870			
Loneliness	Spain	2.32	.897	-5.292	634	.001
	Mexico	2.70	.887			
Fear	Spain	2.70	.940	-.367	634	.714
	Mexico	2.73	.946			
Depression	Spain	2.76	.929	-4.236	634	.001
	Mexico	3.07	.911			
				U	*df*	*p*
Humor	Spain	2.09	.929	42504	634	.001
	Mexico	2.37	.011			

Based on the analyses conducted, hypothesis 2 was supported, as significant differences were identified in young adults’ perceptions of death on social media between Spain and Mexico.

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H3. Perceptions of death-related social media content across pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic periods

Spanish and Mexican young adults reported that the portrayal of death during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced their perceptions of mortality (M = 2.56; SD = .936), thereby supporting hypothesis 3. Mexican participants experienced a stronger impact than Spanish participants. Differences were especially pronounced among those previously exposed to death-related content on social media before the pandemic, while no significant differences were observed in relation to engagement with such content during or after the pandemic.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of country levels in the variable "perception of death after the pandemic" and results of *t*-tests

	Country	Mean	SD	*t*	*df*	*p*
You consider that the pandemic has changed the way you think about death.	Spain	2.44	.917	-3.420	634	.001
	Mexico	2.69	.938			
Before the pandemic, you have observed death-related content on social media.	Spain	2.06	.754	-2.259	634	025
	Mexico	2.20	.828			
During the pandemic, you have observed death-related content on social media.	Spain	3.00	.893	.044	634	965
	Mexico	3.00	.904			
After the pandemic, you have observed death-related content on social media.	Spain	2.70	.847	-1.213	634	226
	Mexico	2.78	.931			

The study analyzes how young adults in Mexico and Spain conceptualize death, revealing both cultural continuities and differences influenced by socio-historical contexts and digital consumption patterns. It concludes that although death remains a universal theme, its representation and emotional processing are deeply embedded within digital cultural frameworks that shape social interactions, belief systems, and collective memory. One of the main findings concerns the variety of ways in which young people understand death, ranging from biological interpretations such as the

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end of life to metaphysical and spiritual views that conceive of death as a transition or a form of continuity. These conceptions reflect the tension between rational perspectives and cultural or religious beliefs, reinforced by family norms and institutional teachings (Reyes-Ruiz, 2011; Morales-Aguilera, 2021).

The study also highlights the central role of social media as a space where users engage with death-related content. Young people frequently encounter topics such as suicide, violence, and war, raising ethical and emotional concerns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, exposure to mortality increased, fostering a form of collective mourning (Campos & López-Pérez, 2023; Caci & Giordano, 2024) and greater awareness of mental health issues. Additionally, phenomena such as the deaths of public figures (Martínez-Taboas, 2020) or dark humor expressed through memes illustrate the complexity with which youth process the topic-balancing sadness and irony (Banna et al., 2019).

Regarding cultural differences, Mexican participants reported greater exposure to death-related content, more empathetic digital interactions, and more comfort in expressing mortality-related emotions. However, they also associated death with feelings of depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Hossain et al., 2020; Fontana & Velázquez, 2023). Although social media can intensify these emotions, it also provides opportunities to promote resilience and reduce the stigma surrounding death (Seltzer et al., 2019; Nerghes & Lee, 2019).

Finally, the study confirms that the pandemic intensified engagement with death-related content, particularly among Spanish youth, leading to increased anxiety and avoidance behaviors (Campos & López-Pérez, 2023). It underscores the need to critically examine how digital narratives, from personal testimonials to algorithmic curation, shape perceptions of death, emotional coping mechanisms, and patterns of media consumption (Patton et al., 2017; Selfridge & Mitchell, 2021).

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