




Addiction To Social Networks And Procrastination In Medical Students Of A Private University In Lima Metropolitana

Adicción a las Redes Sociales y Procrastinación en Estudiantes de la Carrera de Medicina de una Universidad Privada de Lima Metropolitana

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Abstract

The present study aimed to determine whether a relationship exists between social media addiction and procrastination, as well as to assess the levels of each variable. A quantitative approach was employed, using a non-experimental, cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of 349 medical students who responded to two questionnaires: the “Social Media Addiction Scale” and the “General Procrastination Scale.” The findings, analyzed using Spearman’s Rho statistical test, revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.521$ and a p -value = < 0.05 . These results suggest a direct and positive relationship between the two variables, meaning that students with higher levels of social media addiction tend to procrastinate more frequently on their academic responsibilities.

Keywords: Social media addiction, procrastination, medical students.

Resumen

En la investigación actual se consideró determinar si existe relación entre la adicción a las redes sociales y la procrastinación, así como los niveles de cada variable. En el aspecto metodológico se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo y se optó por el diseño no experimental de corte transversal. La muestra estuvo conformada por 349 universitarios de la carrera de medicina, quienes respondieron dos cuestionarios “Adicción a las redes sociales” y “Escala de procrastinación general”. Los hallazgos alcanzados mediante el proceso estadístico Rho de Spearman mostraron un $r = 0.521$ y un p valor < 0.05 . Esto indica una correlación directa y positiva entre ambas variables, lo que señala que aquellos estudiantes que presentan altos niveles de adicción a las redes sociales tienen una mayor tendencia a posponer sus responsabilidades académicas.

Palabras clave: Adicción a las redes sociales, procrastinación, estudiantes de medicinas.

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Introduction

At present, a constant growth in technological advances can be observed, placing us in a digital era where one of the most significant changes has been the continuous improvement of long-distance communication through the creation of “social networks”; this term will be referred to with the abbreviation “RR.SS.” throughout the study. “The most appropriate abbreviation for redes sociales is RR.SS.” (Real Academia Española, n.d.). These platforms have become fundamental tools for interaction among users, whether for entertainment, friendship, academic work, or professional purposes (Valencia y Cabero, 2019).

According to a publication by Peru’s “Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática” (INEI), from the age of 6 onward, 72.7% of people use the internet. It is highlighted that its use is prevalent across different demographic groups: 85.4% corresponds to ages 12 to 18, 92.7% to adults aged 19 to 24, and 86.1% to those aged 25 to 40 as well. In addition, it should be added that 92.8% use the internet for email and chat, 78.4% use it to obtain information, and 89.3% for entertainment activities (video games, music, and movies) (INEI, 2023). Furthermore, a study carried out by IPSOS, “Instituto de Encuestas de Opinión del Sector Público”, found that during quarantine periods 13.2 million people—78% of individuals between 18 and 70 years old—were connected and had profiles created on social networks (IPSOS, 2020). These data show the massive use of online socialization media in Peru, which can have positive and negative effects depending on their usefulness.

These virtual platforms are designed to keep users connected for longer periods, which can lead young people to develop procrastinating tendencies. Thus, high exposure to social networks can generate addiction in this population (Alblwi et al., 2020). In addition, Echeburúa and Requesens (2012) compare the abuse of these platforms to the use of stimulant drugs, as it causes physiological, behavioral, and cognitive changes, including an increase in dopamine, which is associated with the brain’s reward system. Consequently, excessive use can alter mood and cause symptoms such as withdrawal, mood swings, psychomotor restlessness, and difficulties concentrating.

In the digital era, although social networks offer benefits in terms of communication, their excessive use can have negative effects in the social, family, academic, and work domains (Alblwi et al., 2020). In particular, in the educational context, the uncontrolled use of these platforms can affect students’ personal and professional development, leading them to postpone their academic activities (IPSOS, 2020).

On the other hand, in the family context, although RR.SS. facilitate communication with distant relatives, they can also reduce communication among household members, generating conflicts and distancing. At the social level, young people may have difficulties establishing relationships in real life, preferring virtual interactions (Armaza, 2022). Regarding differences in social media use according to age, Loturco and Villamizar (2020) point out that emerging adults (18–40 years) believe that these platforms strengthen their interpersonal relationships, although they can be exhausting and distract them from their daily lives. In addition, middle-aged adults (40–60 years) balance face-to-face and virtual interaction, recognizing both the benefits and the limitations of social networks. Finally, older adults (60 years and older) prefer face-to-face interaction and devote little time to social networks..

Reference framework

1.1. Social media addiction

It is relevant to point out that, to date, the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association” (DSM-V, 2013) still does not describe specific diagnostic criteria for “social media addiction”. Although there is no official diagnosis, studies on this construct in relation to procrastination have shown that people may present various difficulties in cognitive flexibility, which can result in postponement, forgetting responsibilities, difficulty with attention and concentration, etc. (Valencia y Cabero, 2019). Regarding addiction, it is considered a risk indicator when it significantly interferes with a person’s essential activities, causing impairment in the process of personal development, manifesting high levels of irritability and anxiety, and a lack of development of social skills (Ecurra y Salas, 2014).



The construct of addiction to RR.SS. involves repeated behaviors that at first were satisfying; however, over time they became a habit and a need for the person. This can lead to a state of loss of control on the part of the user (Escurra y Salas, 2014). Research on what has been indicated began in 1996 with a case study that relied on the DSM-IV; with that version, it sought to diagnose pathological gambling (Young, 2015). Consequently, behaviors were identified such as the need to be constantly connected and the discomfort generated by interruption of the connection, excessive use of the device, abandonment of important activities, and a lack of time limits (Chóliz y Marco, 2012).

There are three dimensions that characterize addiction to RR.SS., according to Escurra and Salas (2014); first, “obsession with social networks”, which refers to the need to be constantly involved with RR.SS., which can generate anxiety and worry if one cannot access them. The second dimension is “lack of personal control in their use”, which is evidenced by neglecting other areas of life. Finally, “excessive use”, which is characterized by a lack of control regarding the time and frequency of use of these platforms

1.2. Procrastination

Procrastination, defined as the tendency to postpone a previously scheduled task, generates discomfort and involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects (Vargas, 2017). It should not be confused with postponement, which constitutes a strategy to prioritize other more relevant activities at a given time (Díaz-Morales, 2019). In addition, procrastination originates in deficiencies in self-regulation and in a lack of skills to manage time, manifesting through avoidance behaviors. This process is described in seven stages (Guzmán, 2014). First, the individual perceives that they have enough time to complete the task. As time decreases, anxiety levels increase. Subsequently, the person recognizes that they have avoided their responsibilities and faces the decision of whether or not to carry out the task. Finally, completing or not completing the task leads to emotions of discomfort or disappointment.

here are theoretical models that explain its causes. First, the psychodynamic model suggests that procrastination arises from fear of failure, often rooted in childhood (Atalaya y García, 2019). This model highlights that even when people can achieve their goals, fear of failure persists. On the other hand, the motivational model is based on belief in one’s own ability to successfully complete a task. According to this theory, when fear of failure is greater than hope of success, people tend to postpone complex tasks (McCown, Ferrari, and Johnson, 1991). In addition, the rational emotive behavioral theory, described by Ellis and Knaus (1977), attributes procrastination to irrational beliefs and low tolerance for frustration. This approach highlights that unrealistic goals can lead people to question their skills and abilities, fostering the postponement of tasks (Alvarez, 2010). Finally, the behavioral model holds that procrastination is reinforced if it has produced positive results in the past. According to Skinner (1977), present actions reflect the influence of past rewards, turning procrastination into a habitual behavior. Atalaya and García (2019) also emphasize that the repetition of procrastination is due to prior positive experiences, reinforcing this behavior.

With respect to both constructs, a correlational study was conducted in Nigeria: Nwosu et al. (2020) explored the relationship between procrastination and the use of socialization platforms among students in the Faculty of Education. The findings indicated that social media use does not directly impact academic procrastination. However, internet addiction had an indirect and significant effect on student procrastination. Likewise, in Mexico, a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational research study was carried out. The main objective was to evaluate the gender differences manifested in the variables of “academic procrastination” and “social media addiction.” It also explored their interrelationships, showing that there was a significant correlation between low self-regulation and postponement of activities in women ($\rho = 0.378^{**}$), and a positive and significant relationship between self-regulation and postponement in men ($\rho = 0.470^{**}$), which shows that men exhibited a lower capacity for academic self-regulation during virtual classes and women present greater difficulty in the use of RR.SS. (Ramirez-Gil et al., 2021).

In the Peruvian context, specifically in Lima, Matalinares et al. (2017) conducted a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational study to explore the relationship between “social media addiction and procrastination” in undergraduate and graduate students. The results showed a positive correlation between procrastination and social media addiction ($\rho = 0.379$). In addition, 13.6% of undergraduate students and 14.5% of graduate students showed high levels of procrastination.



Regarding social media addiction, 21.2% of undergraduate students and 9.1% of graduate students presented high levels in this variable; moreover, undergraduate students showed higher levels of social media use and procrastination compared to graduate students.

In Arequipa, Nuñez and Cisneros (2019) carried out a quantitative, correlational study with a non-experimental, cross-sectional design to determine the relationship between “social media addiction” and “academic procrastination” among university students. The results showed a positive and significant correlation between both variables ($r = 0.9778$), indicating that a greater degree of dependence on social networks is related to a higher level of academic procrastination.

López Recharte (2021) conducted a non-experimental, cross-sectional correlational study on addiction to social interaction platforms and procrastination with a sample of 119 students from the Lima Norte university. The results showed a significant relationship between social media addiction and academic procrastination, with two components: self-regulation and academic postponement ($Rho = -0.43$ and $Rho = 0.56$, respectively).

In the university setting, students face various factors that influence their management of social media and their tendency to procrastinate, varying according to the program they study. A study conducted in Mexico by Granados et al. (2020) confirms that medical students face greater academic demands compared to other programs. The results showed a higher incidence of depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior among medical students, suggesting that the significant challenges and high academic demands of their program negatively affect their mental health. These students are exposed to constant pressure and academic workload, which may lead them to use social media to avoid problems. According to Barahona et al. (2019), the determinants that favor addiction to the internet and social media include limited social interaction and the search to evade reality and difficulties. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore “social media addiction” in relation to task avoidance, known as procrastination. From what was mentioned above, the following objectives were proposed:

The primary objective of the study is to determine the relationship between “social media addiction and procrastination in medical students at a private university in Metropolitan Lima”. In addition, the following specific objectives were addressed: (i) To evaluate social media addiction. (ii) To evaluate procrastination.

Likewise, the following is presented as the general hypothesis: There is a statistically significant relationship between “social media addiction” and “procrastination” in the study sample.

Metodología

This study is descriptive-correlational, with a quantitative approach and a non-experimental design. In non-experimental studies, variables are not intentionally manipulated to observe their effects; instead, the phenomenon is observed as it occurs in an already existing situation. In addition, it should be added that this study is cross-sectional because the variables were described at a given point in time, and these transectional designs involve data collection at a single moment (Hernández et al., 2014).

On the other hand, a specific formula was used to calculate the required sample size, which consisted of 349 students enrolled in the Medicine program at Universidad Científica del Sur, who were selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, comprising participants of both sexes (70% women and 30% men), distributed from the 1st cycle to the 5th cycle with a representation of 70% and from the 6th cycle to the 12th cycle with a representation of 30%.

Likewise, the following instruments were used: the Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (ARS), which was created by the researchers Ecurra and Salas in 2014 and is intended to be used for the assessment or research of social networks. This questionnaire uses a Likert-type scale consisting of 24 items and covers three dimensions distributed as follows: the first is “Lack of personal control”, presented in 6 items; the second is “Obsession with RR.SS.”, consisting of 10 items; and the third is “Excessive use of RS”, consisting of 8 items. The items are evaluated according to the following ratings: (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) almost always, and (4) always. Finally, the reliability reported for the adaptation of the instrument in Peru is $\alpha = 0.85$. Likewise, factor analysis confirmed significant consistency

with a KMO index of 0.95. Both results indicated high consistency in measurement (Escurra y Salas, 2014). In a study by Mendoza (2020), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94 was obtained, indicating high reliability. Content validity was assessed using Aiken's V method, using the criterion of 10 judges, with values above 0.80 considered indicative of validity. A confirmatory factor analysis showed that factor loadings were greater than 0.30, evidencing optimal validity and reliability.

Likewise, the General Procrastination Scale was used, which in 1998 was developed by Busko to measure levels of procrastination, and was later adapted in Peru in 2010 by (Álvarez, 2010). This Likert scale is composed of 13 items and is unidimensional in its structure. The questionnaire includes items with direct and reverse scoring. The items will be rated on a five-point scale: (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) almost always, and (4) always. The instrument shows reliability, since the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient is greater than 0.87. In addition, a factor analysis was conducted that confirmed significant consistency with a KMO index of 0.82. Furthermore, in Correa's (2018) study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.901. To assess the validity of the instrument, item-test correlation analysis was used, finding significant correlations across all items, with values of (0.182) for item 5 and (0.831) for item 7, which confirms construct validity.

Regarding the procedure, the research was carried out in person during the second semester of 2022. The process began with the request for the corresponding permissions to administer the instruments at Universidad Científica del Sur. The established ethical guidelines were respected, and informed consent was used in order to ensure students' voluntary participation.

After the data collection phase, a database was built in Microsoft Excel and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS software, version 25. First, data normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, given that the sample exceeded 50 participants. The results indicated that the distribution was not normal, so Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between the variables.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the sample was composed mainly of women (70%) and, to a lesser extent, men (30%). This gender difference could influence the way levels of social media addiction and procrastination manifest, which will be explored in subsequent analyses. Regarding age distribution, most participants are in the 18–19 age range, representing 50.7% of the sample; in second place, participants aged 20–22 represent 41.3% of the sample. Likewise, ages 23–25 account for 8%. Finally, the distribution of students according to academic cycle is as follows: 70% of participants were in the 1st to 5th cycle, while 30% were in the 6th to 12th academic cycle.

Table N° 1.

Sociodemographic analysis of the sample

	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	104	30%
Female	245	70%
Age		
18-19	177	50,7%
20-22	144	41,3%
23-25	28	8%
Ciclo		
1-5	243	70%
6-12	106	30%

3.1. Descriptive Analysis and Normality Test

To examine the descriptive data of the study, Table 2 shows that the lowest mean is 11.38, observed in the “lack of control” dimension, and the highest is 41.19, present in the “Social media addiction” variable; the standard deviation ranges between 4.726 and 15.985, indicating moderate dispersion of the data around the mean. In addition, the morphology of the data distribution is identified through kurtosis and skewness, and it is defined that there is a slight pronounced tail to the right of the scores, showing positive skewness in all the variables studied except in the “excessive use” dimension, represented by (-0.067), which indicates a slight tail to the left in the distribution of scores. On the other hand, based on kurtosis, the “social media addiction” variable shows kurtosis close to zero (-0.128), suggesting a relatively normal distribution, and the “obsession with social networks” dimension presents positive kurtosis (0.261), indicating a more peaked distribution than normal. In contrast to the other variables, the distribution of the data is relatively less peaked than the normal distribution.

On the other hand, a normality test was applied, which identified that the “procrastination” variable has a non-normal distribution, since the significance p-value is $0.023 < 0.05$; however, the p-value for “Social Media Addiction” is $0.072 > 0.05$. Therefore, there is a “non-normal distribution” because it is sufficient that one of the variables to be correlated is < 0.05 . Likewise, the significance p-value for the dimensions present in the variable studied is below 0.05; consequently, they would also have a non-normal distribution. In view of this, non-parametric sample statistics will be used to test the hypotheses.

Table N° 2.

Sociodemographic analysis of the sample

Variables / Dimension	Mean	DE	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S
“Social Media addiction”	41,19	15,985	,287	-,128	,072
“Social Media obsession”	12,99	6,816	,695	,261	,000
“Lack of control”	11,38	4,726	,113	-,200	,003
“Excessive use”	16,82	6,022	-,067	-,372	,038
“Procrastination”	25,05	9,195	,246	-,151	,023

Note. The table shows Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Skewness, Kurtosis, and the K–S test: Kolmogorov–Smirnov.

3.2. Levels of Social Media Addiction and Procrastination

Table 3 presents the levels of social media addiction and procrastination. It is observed that 63% of students show a moderate level of addiction, while 27.2% reach a high level of procrastination. These data make it possible to identify a consistent pattern of problematic use and academic postponement. Regarding obsession and lack of self-control, the distributions show similar patterns: 53% and 64.5% of students, respectively, show moderate levels in these variables. On the other hand, 60.5% show moderate levels of excessive social media use, with 24.4% at a high level and 15.2% at a low level. As for procrastination, a varied distribution is observed, with 41% at a lower level, 31.8% at a medium level, and 27.2% at a high level.

Tabla N° 3.

“Levels of the social media addiction variable and procrastination”

Levels	“Social Media Addiction”		“Social Media Obsession”		“Lack of control”		“Excessive use”		Procrastination	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Low	104	29.8	185	53%	73	20.9%	53	15.2%	143	41.0%
Moderate	220	63.0	147	42.1%	225	64.5%	211	60.5%	111	31.8%
High	25	7.2	17	4.9%	51	14.6%	85	24.4%	95	27.2%
Total	349	100%	349	100%	349	100%	349	100%	349	100%

Table 4 details the results of the correlational analysis. Spearman's correlation coefficients reveal a direct and significant relationship between procrastination and all dimensions of social media addiction, with values ranging from 0.425 to 0.521. Across all dimensions, the calculated p-value was less than 0.05, which supported the existence of a direct correlation of moderate magnitude.

Table N° 4.

Inferential analysis: Correlation between variables

Procrastination		
	Rho	Sig.
“Social Media addiction”	0.521**	.000
“Social Media obsession”	0.425**	.000
“Lack of personal control”	0.503**	.000
“Excessive use of social networks”	0.496	.000

Discussion

Based on the results, the discussion of the data was initiated by comparing them with the background studies selected, where the main research purpose was to demonstrate the relationship between procrastination and social media addiction in medical students. In addition, the procrastination construct was related to the following dimensions: “obsession with social networks”, “lack of personal control in the use of social media”, and “excessive use of social networks”. For this reason, the discussion is presented according to the order of the proposed objectives.

According to the general objective, it was found that there is a direct and positive correlation between the two main variables: procrastination and social media addiction, evidenced by the values $r = 0.521$ and $p = 0.000$. This finding is consistent with what was reported by Matalinares et al. (2017), who noted that increased procrastination in undergraduate students influences a higher level of social media addiction. Likewise, the results are supported by what was identified by López (2021), who specified that an increase in social media addiction leads to a decrease in academic self-regulation. These findings are also related to the study by Núñez and Cisneros (2019), who indicated that the influence of social networks can alter university students' behavior, showing that as procrastination levels increase, levels of social media addiction also tend to increase.

Excessive use of social networks can foster academic procrastination and is generalizable to different student populations, according to Echeburúa and Requesens (2012). Although initially harmless, these activities can become repetitive behaviors that affect personal development, including the academic domain. In addition, it was observed that the dimensions of procrastination correlate moderately with social media addiction. Ease of access and uncontrolled use of social networks represent a high risk of dependence for students (Fernandez, 1996, cited in Echeburúa, 2012).

According to the specific objectives, it was identified that 63% of medical students present a moderate level of social media addiction, in contrast to 29.8% who show a low level and 7.2% who reach a high level. These results are similar to those found by Nicodemos (2018), who reported that most university students (87%) presented a moderate level of dependence on social networks, in contrast to 13% with a low level. Likewise, it was found that this dependence subsequently generated difficulties in the family, academic, and work domains, negatively affecting university performance. Consistently, the study by Clemente et al. (2019) showed that university students mostly presented a moderate level of addiction, while the high level was less frequent. The authors concluded that many students do not exercise adequate control over social media use, which translates into excessive use that can become a risk factor for their personal development, especially in young men.

In light of this, it should be clarified that young people at the university stage use RR.SS. or the internet to relate to or interact with other people and thus be able to connect in all social domains. Likewise, Gómez and Marín (2017) explain that this period will be crucial because the individual is more vulnerable in their relationships; they may develop unhealthy patterns that can affect the academic sphere (Echeburúa and De Corral, 2010). This study provides evidence for the theory of García et al. (2009), who explain that people are recognized as digital natives, that is, only those who were born during the era of the technological revolution from 1990 onwards show multitasking skills and tend to seek to minimize the time devoted to a specific activity. This can reduce productivity by decreasing the capacity for concentration, generating brief attention spans and an inclination to switch abruptly from one topic to another, rather than maintaining focus on a single task continuously. As a consequence, a greater tendency to develop dependence on social networks is observed, which, together with lack of control in their use, is associated with a decrease in attention and interest in everyday activities.

On the other hand, it was identified that most students (53%) have an absent or low level of “obsession with social networks”, in contrast to the moderate level presented by the “excessive use of social networks” dimension, represented by (60.5%), similar to the lack of control dimension (64.5%). These findings coincide with the research by Arteaga et al. (2022), who noted that university students in the health sciences mostly present moderate levels across all dimensions of social media addiction, with 38.8%. Consequently, it can be observed that both studies present similar results, which highlights the need to promote balanced social media use and to raise awareness about the negative consequences that its excessive and uncontrolled use can generate.

Regarding the study variable “procrastination”, it was determined that 59% of medical students present procrastination at a medium (31.8%) and high (27.2%) level. This reflects a considerable problem, since most of the studied population would be showing levels considered as procrastination. Likewise, these results are repeated in other studies, as in the case of the research carried out by Huamani and Llagueto (2022), where similar data were found, since it was determined that 53.6% of the sample exhibited a medium level and 10.5% showed a high degree of procrastination, more in males than in females among medical students. It should be clarified that the procrastination presented would not only be a lack of time management or lack of organization, but would encompass other areas, such as emotional, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects (Vargas, 2017). Likewise, it is known that the medicine program is characterized by academic workload and pressure. Therefore, those factors should also be considered.

For all the above reasons, the present study provides updated evidence on the relationship between social media addiction and procrastination in medical students. Unlike previous research, it addressed a highly demanding university population in the Peruvian context, using validated instruments and a solid inferential approach. The results show that dimensions such as excessive use and lack of personal control over social media maintain a significant correlation with task postponement, which not only makes it possible to confirm previous findings, but also provides original data that help to understand this relationship from a contextualized perspective. This contribution is essential to support future interventions aimed at promoting academic well-being and the responsible use of digital technologies in medical training.

Conclusions

The results obtained confirm the existence of a positive and direct correlation between the two variables studied. This suggests that, as social media addiction increases, the tendency to postpone academic activities also increases due to constant distraction and the search for instant gratification. In addition, procrastination becomes an escape mechanism, and self-regulation is affected, making it more difficult to fulfill academic responsibilities.

With regard to the social media addiction variable, it was found that most of those assessed show a moderate level, followed by low and high levels. This is due to the need to stay connected with their peers, obtain relevant information, avoid academic pressure through entertainment, and seek social approval. When analyzing its dimensions, it was determined that a large proportion of the participants show an absent or low level of social media obsession and a moderate level with respect to lack of control accompanied by high social media use..

Respecto a la variable de estudio “procrastinación” se observa grupo mayoritario que manifiestan nivel medio como alto. Estos hallazgos son similares a investigaciones previas que se realizaron con estudiantes de medicina.



Based on the above findings, educational institutions are recommended to promote training spaces that address the problems related to social media addiction and procrastination. It is suggested that awareness-raising talks and practical workshops be carried out to provide effective tools for dealing with these difficulties autonomously and in a sustained manner over time.

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Author contribution

Authors	Contribution
Giomara Maricruz Chipana Asparrin María Elena Huamani Collazos Alan Alcides Vega Jacome	All authors have jointly and equally carried out the conception, writing of the article, data acquisition, analysis and interpretation and revision of the article.

