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EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE DUE TO THE LOSS OF CONNECTIVITY RESULTING FROM A POWER OUTAGE

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study examines the emotional impact of the April 28, 2025 power outage across the Iberian Peninsula on young people aged 14 to 26 residing in or educated in Galicia. **Methodology:** An exploratory online survey was conducted with 151 participants using snowball sampling, with data collection immediately after the event. This study investigates how they experienced the loss of digital and electrical connectivity, their predominant emotions, and the strategies they employed to cope with the situation. **Results:** Most young people did not express intense emotional distress. The predominant emotion was tranquillity, especially among men and those under 20 years of age. The most frequent negative emotions such as worry, helplessness, or isolation, were linked to the interruption of communication and access to information and were more intense among women and those over 20. Social media was not perceived as a relevant loss during the crisis. The most common coping strategies were maintaining routines, maintaining face-to-face contact, and engaging in physical or creative activities, with differences according to age and gender. **Conclusions and Discussion:** Despite the strong presence of digital technology in their daily lives, young people demonstrated a capacity for adaptation to the forced disconnection, relying on personal and relational resources that cushioned the emotional impact of the blackout.

Keywords: young people; crisis; digital connectivity; forced disconnection; emotions; coping strategies; gender; social media.

1. INTRODUCTION

The power outage on April 28, 2025, on the Iberian Peninsula (Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2025) simultaneously interrupted the power supply and digital connectivity in Spain and Portugal, with the exception of the island territories, such as the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, the Azores, and Madeira. The phenomenon occurred at 12:33 p.m. Although the power generation recovery process began around 5:00 p.m., it was not until the early hours of the next day that power was fully restored. At 7:00 a.m., according to Red Eléctrica (the operator responsible for the electricity transmission system in Spain), 99% of the supply had been restored (2025). In today's digitalized society, where electricity supply and constant Internet access are part of everyday life, especially among the young population (Neira Placer & Visiers Elizaincin, 2023), such events can have a considerable emotional impact (Mota et al., 2021; Larrea Pazmiño et al., 2025). In the specific case of Galicia, the power outage lasted for more than twelve hours, with a staggered recovery that began at 6:00 p.m. on the 28th in Lugo, after 1:00 a.m. in A Coruña, at 2:00 a.m. in Vigo, and not before 3:00 a.m. in Santiago; areas such as Touro and Arzúa did not have service restored until 2:00 p.m. on the 29th (La Voz de Galicia, 2025). It is therefore important to analyze how this disconnection affected young people between the ages of 14 and 26, considering both their personal experiences and the strategies they used to manage the situation. A recent study by the Qustodio platform on digital use in childhood and adolescence indicates that in Spain, minors get their first cell phone around the age of 12 (Europa Press, 2025). The loss of access to electronic devices, social networks, and other communication platforms can be a source of anxiety, confusion, or even relief (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020), depending on multiple individual and contextual factors.

1.1. Digital connectivity in everyday life: patterns and risks among young people

Mobile connectivity shapes the daily lives of adolescents and minors by integrating leisure, relationships, and digital identity. Even during leisure time, technology is used to maintain relationships and manage emotions (Mota et al., 2021; Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Larrea Pazmiño et al., 2025), reinforcing its structural nature in the everyday experience of young people (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2024). This practice is part of a daily life deeply mediated by screens, where social networks and video games act as wide-reaching scenarios that allow identities to be constructed and personal needs to be satisfied that are difficult to achieve in face-to-face contexts (Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Early exposure to digital content, integrated into everyday life from childhood, can lead to dependence (Neira Placer, 2023). Digital dependence is a person's persistent inability to regulate their use of digital devices, on which they have become highly dependent (Gonçalves et al., 2023). According to the National Observatory of Technology and Society, 33% of Internet users between the ages of 12 and 16 and 11.3% of those between the ages of 15 and 24 are at high risk of compulsive use of

digital services (2023). The dysfunctional use of technologies can generate symptoms like those observed in other addictions (Soriano-Molina et al., 2025). In this context, the concept of Internet addiction or dependence is used to describe and understand the loss of control and harmful use of this technology, which has behavioral, emotional, and social consequences (Shi et al., 2023; Yıldırım et al., 2023).

Young people tend to normalize the use of digital technologies, integrating them into their daily lives as a functional and inevitable resource (Salepaki et al., 2025). However, problematic Internet use goes beyond connection time, as it involves a transformation in the way reality is faced (Berezovskaya et al., 2020). Likewise, adolescents who express greater emotional distress not only make intensive use of social media, but also show lower academic motivation and experience a more pronounced sense of loneliness (Larrea Pazmiño et al., 2025). In these cases, the digital environment, far from promoting autonomy, acts as an escape from stress or uncertainty and reinforces patterns of disconnection from the offline world, as well as an emotional dependence on connectivity. To strengthen psychological well-being in adolescence, it is necessary to promote a lifestyle that includes physical care and emotional intelligence. Key aspects include restorative rest, regular exercise, the development of skills to cope with adversity, the building of healthy relationships, and emotional self-regulation (Torrubia-Pérez et al., 2025). When these resources are compromised by the simultaneous presence of multiple risk factors such as difficult experiences, intense social demands, or the uncertainty associated with defining one's own identity, the negative impact on mental health tends to intensify (Torrubia-Pérez et al., 2025; Organización Mundial de la Salud[1], 2023).

1.2. Forced disconnection and crisis: emotional effects

The inability to access digital resources, such as during a power outage, can cause significant discomfort associated with anxiety or distress, especially when it hinders the achievement of everyday goals. This type of reaction can be interpreted as a sign of digital dependency, where symptoms such as nomophobia (the fear of losing access to digital devices or services) become representative manifestations (Gonçalves et al., 2023). Along these lines, Muñoz-Rodríguez et al. (2020) point out that digital culture has generated a strong emotional dependence on connectivity; losing it means breaking with a routine that provides security, social connection, and a sense of belonging.

The relationship between excessive Internet use and mental health in adolescents is manifested in a significant correlation with symptoms of anxiety and depression (González-Pascual et al., 2025). This link is mediated by factors such as social isolation, exposure to harmful content, negative social comparison, and disruption of circadian rhythms due to nighttime use of electronic devices. In terms of gender differences, it has been observed that girls tend to use the internet intensively (Malo-Cerrato et al., 2018), while boys show patterns associated with greater addictive use among intensive consumers (Malo-Cerrato et al., 2018; González-Pascual et al., 2025). Likewise, this digital dependence is manifested in the fact that a significant proportion of university

[1] World Health Organization

students prefer to communicate via social networks or instant messaging applications rather than face-to-face interaction (Barbed-Castrejón et al., 2024).

Young people experience digital disconnection as an interruption of their leisure and socialization routines, which can cause boredom, loneliness, and isolation (Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study of university students found that, in the event of a total Internet blackout, the main concern was not so much the overall social impact, but rather the effect on their emotional well-being and personal relationships due to the loss of immediate access to networks and applications, which are essential tools for managing their emotional state and maintaining social ties (Grandhi et al., 2020). Some see disconnection as an opportunity for psychological rest, although they fear that isolation will cause them to lose the relational immediacy necessary to avoid feeling excluded (Jupowicz-Ginalska & Kopecka-Piech, 2024). When this disconnection is forced, it can be perceived as a relief from the emotional overload generated by the digital environment (Elsayary et al., 2024).

The stress experienced by young people during the power outage on April 28, 2025, was not solely due to the loss of access to the Internet or social media. Although this digital disconnection affected their daily routines and sense of control, the unexpected power outage and lack of information further deepened the uncertainty of the moment. In similar crisis situations, such as the pandemic, youth mental health has been shown to be closely related to the use of the Internet to manage emotions and maintain social ties (Mota et al., 2021). In this context, gender differences were observed: while women reported a greater emotional impact and mainly resorted to introspective strategies and seeking social support, men tended more toward evasive strategies through intensive consumption of digital content.

Accordingly, Islam and Islam (2025) observed that forced digital blackouts during a sociopolitical crisis in Bangladesh intensified emotional distress among young people by depriving them of access to information, support networks, and daily routines. This loss of connectivity increased levels of stress, anxiety, and loneliness, thereby hindering active coping and promoting more intense emotional responses. These emotional effects of disconnection coincide with the findings of Jin et al. (2016), who argue that in critical situations, emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety function as key predictors in determining the coping strategies adopted. These emotional and behavioral responses also vary according to age and gender: among young people, the use of social media to manage the situation predominates, while women tend to show greater emotional involvement and a clearer tendency to follow instructions or protective measures than men. Based on these considerations, and with the aim of delving deeper into the youth experience during the power outage of April 28, 2025, the following research questions are posed: RQ.1. What were the predominant emotions among young people during the power outage on April 28? and RQ.2. Which elements of the power outage were perceived as most emotionally impactful?

1.3. Coping strategies in adolescents and young adults

When faced with stressful situations, adolescents deploy mechanisms to reduce discomfort or regain balance. These responses, called coping strategies, consist of actions in the face of demands that exceed their resources (Reyes et al., 2017). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguish between problem-focused coping, which seeks to modify the stressful situation, and emotion-focused coping, which aims to manage the affective response to stress. Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2016) point out that this coping becomes more differentiated and contextualized with age, although there are gender differences: girls tend to share their problems, seek support, and manage emotions, while boys more often resort to avoidance or distraction strategies (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2016; Reyes et al., 2017).

These strategies are particularly activated in situations of uncertainty, when the usual support resources are altered or suppressed. In this sense, family relationships play a key role in emotional regulation and the development of adaptive strategies for coping with stress (Jupowicz-Ginalska and Kopecka-Piech, 2024). The existence of functional family ties strengthens individual resilience and promotes more constructive responses to distress, thus confirming that coping has an important relational dimension, where the family acts as a protective resource in the face of adversity (Burgos-Gallegos et al., 2022). Each member holds a specific place and assumes a role within the family system, thus conditioning collective coping responses, which are organized around family norms and rules (Macías et al., 2013). This relational logic is not limited exclusively to the family sphere, but extends to the broader social context, where the support of meaningful networks, community cohesion, and specific interventions are essential to mitigate the negative psychological effects of critical situations (Padrón-Armas & Trujillo González, 2025).

These coping techniques also apply when digital connection becomes dysfunctional. Strategies for dealing with digital overconnection include temporary solutions such as disconnecting for a day or restricting access to certain times; restricted use at certain times; technological support through the removal of applications or the installation of control tools; seeking relational support from those close to them; and incorporating analog activities focused on self-care, such as reading, sports, or crafts (Jupowicz-Ginalska & Kopecka-Piech, 2024).

When digital use becomes intensive, young people may suffer negative digital experiences such as anxiety, stress, social isolation, loss of self-esteem, cyberbullying, or emotional fatigue that negatively affect their psychological well-being. In these situations, adolescents often activate coping strategies such as avoidance, emotional distancing, humor, seeking peer support, or positive cognitive restructuring (Elsayary et al., 2024). In this context, the final research question is posed: RQ.3. What coping strategies did participants deploy in response to the power outage, both in its initial phase and during its continuation?

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to conduct an exploratory analysis of the emotional impact of the power outage on April 28 on young people between the ages of 14 and 26 who live, study, or have studied in Galicia, focusing on their perceptions of the loss of electrical and digital connectivity and the strategies they used to cope with the situation.

3. METHODOLOGY

To address the research objective and questions posed in this exploratory study, a predominantly quantitative exploratory investigation was conducted using a self-completed online survey. The final sample consisted of 151 participants. Data collection took place between April 29 and May 8, 2025, using a non-probabilistic snowball sampling strategy among young people residing in Galicia or students who have received or are receiving their education in Galician institutions, and a campaign specifically targeting young Galicians through Instagram.

A key design feature of the study was the immediacy of data collection, which made it possible to record the emotional reactions and attitudes of participants shortly after the power outage. Specifically, 78.81% (n=119) of the surveys were completed within the first two days after the event, and the last one ten days later.

The sample consisted of 151 participants, divided into four age groups. The largest group was 20 to 23 years old, representing 47.02% of the total (n=71), followed by the 17 to 19 age group with 23.84% (n=36), and the 24 to 26 age group, which accounted for 22.52% (n=34). The least represented group was 14 to 16 years old, with 6.62% (n=10). In terms of gender, 63.58% of respondents identified as female (n=96), 34.44% as male (n=52), and 1.99% as other (n=3).

Table 1.

Number of surveys according to age and gender.

	14-16 age group	17-19 age group	20-23 age group	24-26 age group	Total
Male	3	14	24	11	52
Female	7	22	45	22	96
Other	0	0	2	1	3
Total	10	36	71	34	151

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The minimum age for participation was set at fourteen, as Spanish law allows adolescents of that age and above to consent to the processing of their personal data without parental authorization, which is a necessary requirement for registering on platforms such as Instagram (Jefatura del Estado[2], 2018). Although the Draft Organic Law for the Protection of Minors in Digital Environments (Congreso de los Diputados[3],

[2] Head of State

[3] Congress of Deputies

2025) proposes raising this threshold to 16 years of age, it was decided to maintain the previous criterion in order to ensure consistency with the current regulatory framework during data collection. Furthermore, in practice, many minors access social networks before reaching the established legal age. This reality, together with the significant increase in individual ownership of mobile phones from the age of 10, reinforces the relevance of addressing digital practices from the early stages of adolescence (Instituto Nacional de Estadística[4], 2023). The maximum age limit was set at 26, based on the proposal by Hochberg and Konner (2020), who place the end of emerging adulthood around that age, allowing for a generational range consistent with the transformations inherent in adolescent psychosocial development.

A structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions and one open-ended question was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The instrument included contextual items (age, place of residence, educational level, among others), as well as three closed-ended questions aimed at exploring emotional and behavioral aspects in the different phases of the power outage, formulated as single-choice nominal categorical variables. Eight items written in the first person were incorporated and evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "I strongly disagree" and 5 "I strongly agree." The first of these statements was "I felt calm during the blackout." An open-ended question was also added, asking participants to summarize their experience during the blackout using a single word, in order to grasp their subjective perceptions in a concise manner.

Table 2.

Correlation between research objectives, instrument items, and variables.

Research question	Related questionnaire items	Variables
RQ.1. What were the predominant emotions among young people during the power outage on April 28?	I felt calm during the outage	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt anxious about not being connected	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt bored without access to the Internet and networks	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt isolated by not being able to communicate	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt uncomfortable without access to information	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt worried that I didn't know what was going on	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt glad to spend face-to-face time with other people	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	I felt helpless not being able to notify my family	Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree).
	In one word, how would you describe the blackout?	Open-ended question (one word).
RQ.2. What elements of the power outage were perceived as most emotionally impactful?	What did you miss most during the blackout?	Categorical closed option: Electricity: Not being able to cook, not having hot water, etc.; Internet in general; Being able to make phone calls; Social

[4] National Institute of Statistics

		media; WhatsApp and messaging services; Everything together or Nothing.
RQ.3. What coping strategies did participants employ in response to the power outage, both in its initial phase and as it continued?	What was the first thing you tried to do when you realized there was a blackout?	Categorical closed option: Searching for a signal or Wi-Fi; Preventing my cell phone from running out of battery; Trying to get home or finding out how to get home; Calling someone; Going outside; Continuing with my usual habits; Other.
	How did you pass the time until bedtime while there was no electricity?	Categorical closed option: Drawing, reading, or writing; Studying or preparing work for my studies; Talking to friends or family face to face; Playing sports; Playing board games, or card games; I got bored and didn't know what to do; I rested or slept; I went out for a walk or spent time outdoors; Doing other things.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The predominant emotions among young people during the power failure

The results show that most young people did not express intense negative emotions. In relation to the statement "I felt calm during the power outage," 51.7% of respondents agreed strongly ("quite a lot" or "totally"), while 27.2% opted for a neutral position. Only 6.6% said they did not feel calm. The average score for this emotion was 3.44 on a scale of 1 to 5, reinforcing the idea that, for a significant majority, the situation did not cause emotional distress. When analyzing age groups, it can be seen that 40% of young people aged 14 to 16 expressed a high level of calm (level 5). When analyzing gender, women show a strong disagreement with this statement, with higher percentages at the low levels of agreement (8.33% and 17.71%) and lower percentages at the high levels (26.04% and 16.67%). In contrast, men concentrated their responses at high levels of agreement, especially at levels 4 and 5 (40.38% and 28.85%, respectively).

Levels of anxiety due to lack of connection were the lowest among all the emotions evaluated. More than half of the respondents (59.6%) disagreed somewhat or completely with having felt anxiety, and only 16.6% expressed high levels. The average was 2.32, indicating a tendency to disagree. When analyzing age, those over 20 years old had higher levels of anxiety, with approximately 20% of their responses concentrated in levels 4 and 5 (19.2% and 20.59%, respectively). By gender, the difference is clearer: 42.3% of men did not feel anxiety (level 1), compared to only 22.9% of women at that level; the latter are mainly concentrated between levels 2 and 3.

Similarly, the emotion of boredom obtained a very similar average (2.36) and showed an almost identical pattern: a 59.6% disagreed, and only a 22.54% reported feeling quite or totally bored. If the age variable is considered, the 17-19 age group has the

highest level of boredom, with 33.34% at levels 4 and 5. However, when gender is reviewed, no significant differences are apparent: both men and women are mainly grouped at levels 1 and 2.

On the other hand, emotions related to communication disruption or lack of information were expressed more intensely among participants. The feeling of isolation due to being unable to communicate was shared by 47% of respondents (levels 4 and 5), while 33.1% said they did not feel this way (levels 1 and 2). This distribution corresponds to an average of 3.18. In terms of age, the 17-19 age group reached 52.7% agreement at levels 4 and 5. With regard to gender, women stood out, with 52.8% rating their status as 4 and 5, which contrasts with a more homogeneous distribution among men.

Meanwhile, discomfort with the inability to access information was reported at high levels by 47% of participants and reached an average of 3.10, highlighting the importance of a constant flow of data in everyday life. Analysis of the data by age group reveals a significant increase in levels of concern from the age of 17 onwards. In younger age groups, levels 4 and 5 of concern remain at around 30%. In terms of gender, men seem to reflect higher levels of concern, with 51% of their responses concentrated in levels 4 and 5 on the scale.

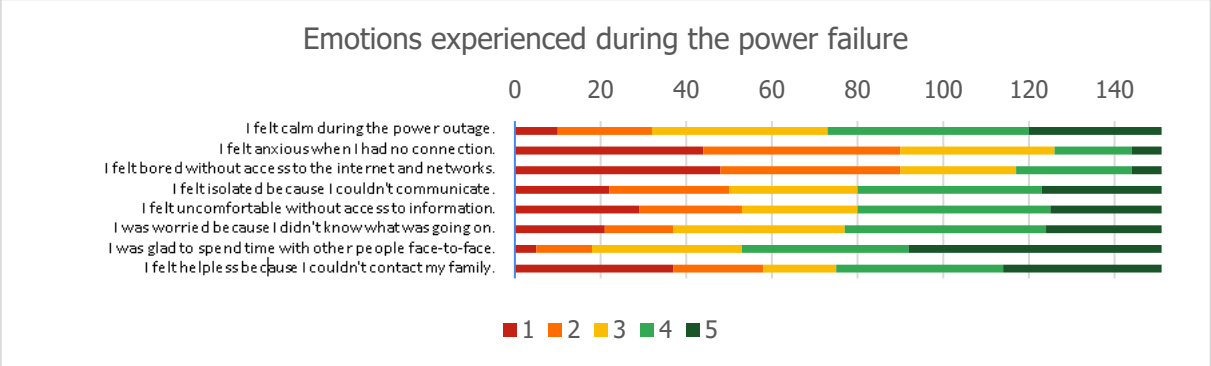
Concern about not knowing what was happening reached an average of 3.28, with 49% of respondents agreeing strongly and only 24.5% disagreeing. In terms of age, the highest levels of concern are found among those aged 20 to 26, with more than 50% accumulating at levels 4 and 5 (54.92% and 52.94%). From a gender perspective, women show higher levels of concern (58% indicate levels 4 and 5).

Similarly, helplessness at not being able to contact family was the most commonly shared negative emotion: a 50.3% expressed high levels of agreement and a 38.4% indicated the opposite, reaching an average of 3.12. From the analysis by age, the groups show no significant differences. When reviewing gender, a strong difference is evident: while the average for women is 3.45, men are almost one point below at 2.46.

Finally, the only emotion with a clearly positive predominance was the feeling of having enjoyed face-to-face time with other people. 64.9% of respondents agreed somewhat or strongly with this statement, and the average score was 3.89, the highest of all the emotions evaluated. The data by age indicates that, although the results show a great deal of similarity, as age increases, participants place less value on these variables (averages of 4.1, 3.9, 3.8, and 3.7, respectively). There are no significant differences in terms of gender, as the average is quite similar in both cases, 4.2 for women and 3.9 for men.

Figure 1.

Emotions experienced during the power failure.



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The responses to the open-ended question "In one word, how would you describe the power outage?" were consistent with the quantitative data obtained. However, they show a slight inclination toward negative emotions. Even so, the emotional average can be considered to be balanced, as 37.74% of the terms used reflected a negative connotation, 24.5% were emotionally neutral, and another 37.74% referred to positive emotions. Among the negative terms, expressions such as anguish, fear, overwhelm, and stressful stand out, associated with emotional distress; chaos, disaster, and madness, linked to loss of control; horrible and boring, which convey explicit negative judgments; and COVID-2, loaded with connotations of threat and collective crisis. The neutral terms mostly refer to a break with normal life (strange, unusual, weird), something unexpected (unforeseen, unexpected), or something illogical (surreal), without necessarily implying an emotional assessment. Finally, positive terms include relaxing, tranquility, peace, or relaxation, associated with states of calm; inspiring or better, linked to personal growth; and liberating, which refers to a feeling of relief or emotional disconnection.

Regarding variations according to age and gender, the results show significant differences in the emotional perception of the power outage. The 14-16 age group reported the most positive experience, with 60% of responses favorable, while among participants aged 24-26, they had a predominantly negative view (44.1%). In terms of gender, women expressed a higher proportion of negative responses (46.3%), especially in the 17-23 age group. In contrast, men in the older group (24-26 age group) were more positive (45.5%), with a higher proportion of favorable responses than negative ones.

4.2. Aspects of the power outage that were perceived as most emotionally impactful

When asked "What did you miss most during the power outage?", a total of 35.76% of the young people surveyed pointed to a general loss, expressed in terms such as "everything as a whole." A similar proportion, with 33.11%, identified the lack of electricity as the most significant aspect, associating it with the inability to perform basic activities such as cooking or having hot water. With 11.92%, the inability to make

phone calls was indicated as the main impact, highlighting the importance of direct communication in situations of uncertainty. This was followed by the absence of instant messaging services (7.95%), such as WhatsApp, and the disconnection of the Internet (6.62%). In contrast, social networks were mentioned by only 2.65%, suggesting less priority use in this type of context. Finally, 1.99% said they had not experienced any significant loss, constituting a minority response.

Table 3

What was the most significant loss you experienced during the power outage?

Variables	Absolute number	Percentage
Electricity: Not being able to cook, not having hot water, etc.	50	33.11%
Internet in general	10	6.62%
Nothing	3	1.99%
Being able to make phone calls	18	11.92%
Social media	4	2.65%
Everything together	54	35.76%
WhatsApp and messaging services	12	7.95%
Overall total	151	100.00%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Both the youngest participants (aged 14-16) and the oldest (aged 24-26) mostly pointed to the lack of electricity as the most impactful aspect of the blackout (50% and 38.24%, respectively), although the older group also strongly perceived a global impact (32.35%). In contrast, young people aged 17-19 (36.11%) and those aged 20-23 (39.44%) highlighted above all the experience of total disconnection, perceived as a disruption of the environment. In terms of gender, women showed a greater tendency to perceive this failure as a global loss, with 43.75% choosing the option "everything together," compared to 23.08% of men, who highlighted the loss of electricity in greater proportion (44.23%).

4.3. Strategies used by participants to cope with the power outage

Understanding the coping strategies involves observing not only rationalized responses after the event, but also the immediate actions that subjects instinctively take when faced with something unexpected. In this context, the question "What was the first thing you tried to do when you realized there was a power outage?" provides access to a first layer of spontaneous behavior that reveals how young people cope with uncertainty in an environment with strong technological dependence. For many, an instinctive response to the power outage seems to have been to preserve their routine: for 37.09%, they simply continued with their usual habits. In contrast, 24.5% chose

to try to make phone calls. Responses aimed at preserving access to mobile devices and their functionality also emerged: some 15.89% tried to prevent their phone battery from running out, and 13.25% searched for a signal or Wi-Fi, highlighting the role of the mobile phone as a key tool. To a lesser extent, some young people responded by physically moving: some 4.64% returned home, in many cases motivated by the inability to access public transport, while 3.97% chose to go out onto the street.

Table 4

What was the first thing you tried to do when you realized there was a power outage?

Variables	Absolute number	Percentage
Search for signal or Wi-Fi	20	13.25%
Prevent my cell phone from downloading	24	15.89%
Trying to get home or find out how to get home	7	4.64%
Call someone	37	24.50%
Other	1	0.66%
Going outside	6	3.97%
Continuing my usual habits	56	37.09%
Overall total	151	100.00%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When considering the age variable, no particularly significant differences were observed between the different groups, although a slight tendency among younger people (14-16 years old) to maintain their usual habits as the predominant coping strategy (60%) can be noted. With regard to gender differences, the data reflect different patterns. Women showed a greater tendency to activate connectivity-oriented responses: some 26.04% tried to call someone and 33.34% tried to find a Wi-Fi signal and conserve their cell phone battery, compared to lower percentages in the case of men (21.16% and 23.07%, respectively), who stood out above all in the option of maintaining their habits (48.08% compared to 31.25% of women).

In response to the question "How did you spend your time until bedtime while there was no electricity?", the strategies adopted by participants reflect a remarkable ability to adapt to the loss of connectivity. The majority of activities were oriented toward interpersonal contact and taking advantage of the immediate physical environment: 27.81% went for a walk or spent time outdoors, and 25.83% talked face-to-face with friends or family. Other relevant strategies included keeping up with academic obligations (10.6%) and engaging in creative activities such as drawing, reading, or writing (9.93%). Analog recreational activities (9.27%) also took center stage, as did resting (7.28%), possibly in response to the forced disconnection. The residual percentage that tried to maintain digital connection (0.66%) or expressed boredom (0.66%) was minimal.

Table 5

How did you spend your time until bedtime while there was no electricity?

Variables	Absolute number	Percentage
Looking for cell phone signal or trying to save battery life	1	0,66%
Drawing, reading, or writing	15	9,93%
Studying or preparing assignments for my studies	16	10,60%
Talking to friends or family face to face	39	25,83%
Playing sports	6	3,97%
Doing other things	6	3,97%
Playing board games or card games	14	9,27%
I got bored and didn't know what to do	1	0,66%
I rested or went to sleep	11	7,28%
I went out for a walk or spent time outdoors	42	27,81%
Overall total	151	100,00%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Coping strategies during power outages vary significantly depending on age. The 14–16 age group was characterized by an introspective and creative approach, with 40% drawing, reading, or writing. Among 17–19-year-olds, the dominant pattern was the search for social interaction (33.33%). In contrast, the 20–23 and 24–26 age groups showed a more active profile, with a preference for outdoor activities (33.8% and 23.53%, respectively). In terms of gender, differences were identified in how people coped with the event. Although in different percentages, both women and men prioritized outdoor activities (26.04% and 32.69%, respectively) and socializing (26.04% and 21.15%). However, while women then opted for studying and individual activities such as reading or drawing (both 13.54%), men leaned toward more recreational options, such as board games (11.54%) or resting (11.54%).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that most young people did not experience the power failure of April 28, 2025, as an emotionally negative experience. The predominant emotion was calmness, with more than 50% of participants reporting feeling this way, especially among younger people (aged 14-16) and males. The least prevalent emotions were anxiety and boredom, which challenges the idea of excessive dependence on digital connectivity among young people. This reassurance could be explained by the widespread disconnection, which nullified the individual pressure to be connected, in line with the results obtained by Jupowicz-Ginalska and Kopecka-Piech (2024) and Salepaki et al. (2025), who link digital anxiety to the perception that others remain connected while one is not. The analysis reveals that negative emotions were more related to lack of communication and uncertainty than to disconnection from entertainment or social media. Emotions such as concern about not knowing what was happening, helplessness at not being able to contact family, and isolation were the most intensely experienced, especially among women and participants over the age of 20. This suggests that the discomfort arose more from the interruption of communication and access to information, as suggested by Islam and Islam (2025), than from the lack of access to digital devices or platforms. The centrality of family ties as an emotional regulator is also evident, in line with Burgos-Gallegos et al. (2022), who highlight their protective role in crisis situations.

Although the quantitative data reflect a predominance of positive or neutral emotions during the power outage, such as reassurance and low levels of anxiety or boredom, the open-ended responses reveal a more ambivalent experience, especially among women, which is consistent with the findings of Mota et al. (2021). Terms such as distress, fear, overwhelm, or chaos were more frequent in their descriptions, indicating an emotional impact that is not always reflected in closed indicators. This contrast suggests the importance of complementing quantitative analyses with qualitative tools that capture subjective nuances, particularly in groups that are more vulnerable to uncertainty and lack of communication.

The emotional impact of the blackout was not exclusively associated with the loss of electricity or the internet, but with a broader experience of global disconnection due to the sudden cessation of daily routines. A significant number of young people interpreted the situation as a disruption of everyday normality. This perception was more common among women and young people between the ages of 17 and 23, while younger people and men more frequently cited the loss of electricity as the most disruptive element. The low importance attributed to social media reinforces the idea that, in contexts of uncertainty, priorities are reconfigured towards safety, close contact, and reliable information, and that disconnection can even be seen as an opportunity in the face of the emotional overload of the digital environment (Elsayary et al., 2024). In addition to emotional relief, this forced break may have facilitated cognitive rest and fostered more present and meaningful forms of connection.

A variety of coping strategies were observed, confirming that there is no single formula for digital disconnection (Jupowicz-Ginalska & Kopecka-Piech, 2024). Faced with initial surprise and unable to develop any strategies to solve the problem, they focused on

managing their emotions. Many young people chose to maintain their usual routines, while others tried to contact family members or save their cell phone battery, underscoring the importance of the phone as a key device in situations of disconnection (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). During the hours without electricity, responses were mostly adaptive: walking, talking, engaging in creative activities, studying, or simply resting. These types of reactions suggest a remarkable ability among young people to adapt to forced disconnection, spontaneously resorting to analog strategies that have been identified in the literature as effective forms of coping and emotional regulation in contexts of digital overexposure (Jupowicz-Ginalska & Kopecka-Piech, 2024; Elsayary et al., 2024). Gender differences in coping, in which girls prioritize connection, study, or introspective activities, while boys tend to maintain routines or choose recreational options, are consistent with previous studies that associate boys with a greater inclination toward distraction strategies (Reyes et al., 2017).

One of the research's strengths is the immediacy of data collection: a total of 78.81% of the surveys were completed within the first two days after the event, which allowed access to recent impressions and reduced memory bias. In addition, the combination of quantitative and qualitative tools facilitated a richer and more nuanced understanding of young people's experiences during the blackout. Among the limitations is the exclusive use of self-reports, which may involve biases derived from social desirability or the difficulty of accurately verbalizing emotional states. Likewise, although the sample is diverse in terms of age and gender, it is not statistically representative, so the results cannot be generalized to the youth population. Future research could incorporate long-term studies to see how coping strategies evolve in response to disruptive events. It would also be useful to explore the role of social and family networks in shaping emotional impact, as well as to dig deeper into gender differences through interviews or focus groups that better understand the subjective nuances that closed-ended questionnaires miss.

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