A PSYCHOSOCIAL ANALYSIS OF CYBERBULLYING: KEYS TO A MORAL EDUCATION

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The aim of this paper is to review the processes that occur in cyberbullying at the interpersonal, intrapersonal, group and contextual levels, analyzing the most significant components in the profiles of those involved in this type of abuse. Moreover, these situations are placed in context in relation to the moral values that come into play. Thus, the paper highlights the educational conditions that can favour prevention and intervention initiatives from the educational community in relation to cyberbullying. Finally, suggestions are made for educational agents about lines of work on moral education issues that can help eradicate these behaviours.
Key words: Cyberbullying, Moral education, Prevention, Internet, Education in values.

En el artículo se revisan los procesos que se dan en el cyberbullying en los planos interpersonal, intrapersonal, grupal y contextual, analizando los componentes más significativos en los perfiles de sus participantes. Por otra parte, se relacionan con los valores morales que ponen en juego. Por ello, se destacan las condiciones educativas que favorecen tareas de prevención e intervención en el cyberbullying por la comunidad educativa. Igualmente se sugieren líneas de trabajo para tratar los contenidos de la educación moral por parte de los agentes educativos para erradicar estas conductas.
Palabras clave: Ciberbullying, Educación moral, Prevención, Internet, Educación en valores.

Abuse between peers via mobile devices and Internet (cyberbullying) has emerged as a problem of considerable complexity among adolescents, and one that tends to have undesirable repercussions in the school context.

Bullying and cyberbullying are two sides of the same coin, sharing some basic components of peer abuse (Olweus, 1998; Ortega, 1992). Cyberbullying represents a metaphorphosis of the bullying concept, having taken advantage of the communications and information technologies, and the social networks they support, which have emerged since around the turn of the century, and especially over the last ten years. Nevertheless, it is still important to identify the components of these phenomena which are common and those which are specific, and to determine their consequences. The challenge for preventive and intervention initiatives in the educational community is to analyze these common and specific components of bullying and address those which characterize cyberbullying by means of effective measures in the contexts where they take place.

The aim of this article is to make a thorough analysis of the specific features of cyberbullying and highlight the basic processes it has in common with traditional bullying as a form of abuse. Moreover, some lines of work are proposed regarding educational approaches for promoting the internalization of moral perspectives in virtual interaction with peers, and also regarding mediation in the process of building structures that can lead to moral autonomy (Kolhberg & Kramer, 1969).

Peer bullying, be it direct and physical, or virtual, via social networks or other media, aims to undermine the victim's dignity. Most bullying is deliberately intended to hurt and is recurrent, and takes advantage of the power gap between bully and victim. The arguments used to justify it are unacceptable; it is gratuitous and without moral foundation. Such behaviour reflects an absence of moral perspective, and bullies neither recall, nor possess, nor construct the appropriate moral referents that would make them conscious of the wrong they are doing; hence, they look for other referents, tending to be unaware of social and moral behavioural norms. They fail to meet either the *moral* criterion of 'should do' or the *ethical* criterion of 'want to do" (Tognetta, 2009), directing their behaviour towards negative and undesirable goals, towards aggression and abuse. Hence the close relationship between bullying and processes of moral development, and the need for educational initiatives of prevention and intervention.

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In situations of cyberbullying, the different profiles involved reveal their degree of moral development in the kinds of moral reasoning they use and the moral behaviour they perform, as well as in how these two aspects are linked, on showing their moral identity in a context of social values. This can be seen in the positions taken up, in the decision-making and in the emotions of each profile in the dynamics of cyberbullying, be they victims, perpetrators or witnesses: when the bully attacks someone whom they know is weaker, when people join in the bully's attacks, when people defend the victim even at their own risk, or when they feel unable to challenge the bully even though they know they should do.

Educational intervention must therefore focus on these aspects if it is to address the core of peer abuse and get to its roots, regardless of whether there is a need for other action depending on the case and the nature of the abuse. Moral education and its application in the cognitive (moral judgements), emotional (moral emotions) and behavioural (moral behaviour) fields should constitute the basic content of school programmes, in which the students themselves must be the main protagonists. Cases of cyberbullying involve specific features (Avilés, 2009 and 2010) that lend them diversity and make them more difficult to approach – and which will be the object of analysis here.

Cyberbullying, as a form of peer abuse perpetrated via mobile devices and Internet, has particular connotations for the general construct of bullying and abuse, in terms of how it works and its consequences for all the actors involved.

Victims of cyberbullying are easier targets for the bully's attacks. First and foremost because of the medium through which they are targeted: as long as they are connected, or as soon as they go online or activate their phone, they are exposed to the bully, who assaults them via their e-mail inbox, social media or voicemail; their suffering is intensified. Moreover, the possibilities for using strategies of control, avoidance and/or evasion are more limited than in the case of face-to-face bullying.

In fact, in this context bullies have the advantage of not having to expose themselves as they do in the case of traditional bullying, and yet have more opportunities for perpetrating the abuse, which tends to take more sophisticated and often more hurtful forms.

Another crucial difference between cyberbullying and traditional bullying is the context in which it takes place. The virtual medium facilitates the generalization of the harm and its durability, and widens the audience of the bullying It even reduces spectators' need to take up a moral stance, so that they are less inhibited about simply letting the abuse continue; they receive no direct feedback on the suffering of the victim, who becomes the invisible target of the bullying.

Furthermore, the relationship between teaching staff and bullies may differ in the case of cyberbullying. Cyberbullies can have an apparently good relationship with their teachers, and maintain a lower profile than traditional bullies, who are typically conflictive and undisciplined (Olweus, 1998). Indeed, cyberbullies often even do well academically (Avilés, 2010), and this is another essential difference with regard to old-style bullies.

Thus, it is more difficult for adults to detect virtual abuse. This, and the technological difficulties for establishing causal links and responsibility, as well as for finding reliable proof, raise serious issues in relation to the moral development of many students when it comes to their acknowledging involvement in cases of cyberbullying.

The differences outlined here between cyberbullying and traditional (face-to-face) bullying are certainly useful for guiding prevention and intervention initiatives for the moral education of students in relation to bullying, and modulate their consequences in those involved in such situations. I shall now consider these consequences based on the analysis of the specific components of cyberbullying.

COMPONENTS OF CYBERBULLING

Among the components of cyberbullying we can identify four areas for analysis: interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup and contextual. In these four areas or levels we can recognize processes that occur in cyberbullying, even if some of them are common to face-to-face bullying.

By components we understand (Avilés & Alonso, 2008) the processes that characterize and are inherent to the observed behaviour, and which sustain it. These components are constant and essential, and underlie the various forms in which such behaviour can be displayed. Hence, they are indicators and references which educational agents should use as the basis for the identification, assessment and prevention of bullying behaviours and the intervention initiatives they require.

Interpersonal level

This level refers to processes that derive from the relationship between the individuals concerned. In the

case of cyberbullying it is a question of who perpetrates the abuse and who receives it. The three dimensions of interaction that characterize this level are: the exercise of power, the level of security and the degree of control (see Figure 1).

The exercise of power: Dominance – Submission

In cyberbullying the bullies feel in a position of power, and exercise such power unrestrainedly on the person they consider to be their victim. Moral judgement and moral behaviour go hand in hand. The bully justifies the abusive exercise of power and believes the victim to be inferior. The context in which this type of bullying takes place and the distance involved means that the power imbalance has some peculiarities: less possibility of escape for the victim, and greater anonymity (and sometimes better technological knowledge) for the abuser (Smith, Salmivalli, & Cowie, in press). Those who bully within the virtual community have the 'power' to do so. This power resides in the bully him/herself, in the group that accepts the victim's weakness (moral atmosphere of the group), in the context of invisibility, and in the at-risk position of the victim, who can feel bewildered and confused.

Nevertheless, the contextual conditions of the virtual environment may also make it easier for the victim, who typically would not respond in situations of face-to-face bullying, to fight back. Shielded by the distance the Internet provides, victims may feel emboldened to react aggressively and challenge the bully's power, even though this can lead to more pressure and more victimization. This tends to aggravate the victim's position and escalate the aggression.

The power imbalance tends to involve social, psychological and/or technological aspects.

Level of security: Exposure – Accessibility

There is also an imbalance of security between victim and bully, which manifests itself in the exposure-accessibility dimension, increasing the imbalance between the two protagonists. The bully obtains 'more for less'. The virtual environment of cyberbullying reduces the exposure level of abusers when they attack, and maximizes the accessibility of victims, constantly available as targets.

As regards the cyberbullies' cost-benefit analysis (Avilés, 2010), they achieve their goals with practically no risk, having instant access to their victim via e-mail, voicemail or social network site; on the other hand, victims'

helplessness and vulnerability are increased, given that they can be attacked by the bully at any time.

Thus, there is a considerable imbalance of power, security and capacity for reaction between bully and victim, characterized by the dominance-submission model: "You're going to be mine, just how and when I want you, you trash" (to quote from a cyberbully's message sent via *Tuenti*, a social network site popular among Spanish adolescents).

Degree of control: Distance – Vulnerability

The relationship between victim and bully has been described as a 'chewing gum relation' (*relación chicle*), in which contact is made, in general, whenever and however the abuser wants, and in which the victim's vulnerability (easy target) and the distance involved play a fundamental role in the exercise of control over the situation. Many victims do not know the identity of the bully, and the bully hides behind the supposed anonymity of the web to perpetrate the abuse remotely. The bully may well be quite close (classmate, acquaintance) to the victim, who may even consider him or her a friend. But the distance and the concealment work together, and are indicative of how much the bully is in control of the situation and protected by it. He or she manipulates the situation – like a piece of chewing gum – in terms of frequency and intensity; meanwhile, the vulnerability of the victim as a visible and easy target exacerbates his/her lack of control and feelings of helplessness, generating a bewilderment that increases the imbalance of power vis-à-vis the bully even more. From an educational point of view, such situations demand at the very least an analysis and intervention on the judgements, emotions and moral behaviours they involve.

FIGURE 1
DYNAMICS IN CYBERBULLYING: INTERPERSONAL LEVEL
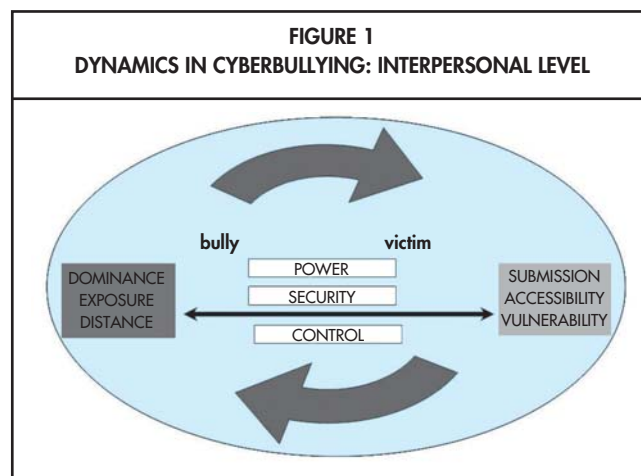
As mentioned above, cyberbullying is generally perpetrated by someone in the social circle of the victims, even in their immediate social circle (Smith, Salmivalli, & Cowie, in press). Some victims are unaware of the position they occupy or may come to occupy in the group when the balance of power changes or the bully decides on a whim to strike against them.

Power, security and control are exponents of the manifest disequilibrium between abuser and victim in cyberbullying, even though the power imbalance, in particular, is also an essential feature of face-to-face bullying (Avilés, 2006).

Intrapersonal level

Various studies (Mason, 2005; Shariff, 2008; Willard, 2006) have highlighted the emotional, social, and cognitive processes that can affect those involved in cyberbullying, either as victims or abusers. Such processes are considered in this section that addresses the intrapersonal level (see Figure 2). Many of them are common to face-to-face bullying (Olweus, 1998), but I identify some that are especially characteristic of cyberbullying.
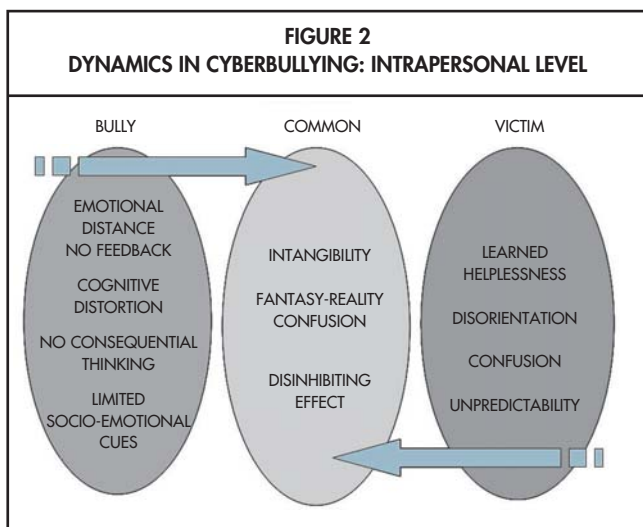
Emotional processes

There is a *disinhibiting effect* in cyberbullies (Mason, 2005), facilitated by the feeling of distance and supposed anonymity. Being on the other side of the keyboard and not having the victim in front of them means there is no sensation of immediate judgement, together with a lack of concern about what others think, and about what they say or do. This involves features of emotional risk for the development of the

personality in those who habitually interact in this way, if we are talking about children and adolescents:

✔ Absence of feedback: cyberbullies do not witness the reaction to their attacks, to what they say or do on the Internet, so that they have no opportunity for self-correction and self-regulation.

✔ Lack of empathy: failing to see the emotional reactions of the victim can accustom the bully to the cold and cruel exercise of abuse, without provoking feelings of guilt, regret or emotional distress. In the absence of information about what victims feel, on how they react, on their gestures and expressions, the bully can develop a psychopathic profile of lack of empathy and compassion in the face of others' suffering. The whole situation facilitates disassociation from the consequences of cyberbullies' acts, and may make them believe that in the virtual world "anything goes", since there are no restrictions or consequences.

✔ Relaxation and satisfaction with regard to the abuse: bullies may experience pleasant feelings about the attacks, since they have no adverse effects on them. They come to understand that this is a way of achieving objectives. They may even internalize this kind of behaviour as a form of treating people they consider inferior, different or objectionable.

✔ Resistance to frustration: obtaining what one wants and when one wants it, without resistance or feedback, does nothing to educate frustration in bullies. Mechanisms for channelling anger are not internalized, and more aggression may be generated when bullies fail to achieve what they want.

For the victims of cyberbullying there is an aggravation of suffering and insecurity due to the unpredictability of the attacks, resulting in anticipatory anxiety, stress and depression (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). There is a risk of escalation towards learned helplessness on their being unable to effectively defend themselves. In victims who react, their response usually increases the intensity and frequency of the abuse, thus aggravating their position as victims. Moreover, the disinhibiting effect of the virtual context (Siegal, Dubrosvsky, Kiesler, & Maguire, 1986) means that some victims who would not respond aggressively in face-to-face situations do so in cyberspace (loss of social shame).

Some of the moral emotions involved in these two profiles (cruelty, lack of compassion and moral disconnection in the abuser; helplessness and shame in the victim), and those that are not involved but should be

FIGURE 2
DYNAMICS IN CYBERBULLYING: INTRAPERSONAL LEVEL

BULLY — COMMON — VICTIM

EMOTIONAL DISTANCE NO FEEDBACK

COGNITIVE DISTORTION

NO CONSEQUENTIAL THINKING

LIMITED SOCIO-EMOTIONAL CUES

INTANGIBILITY

FANTASY-REALITY CONFUSION

DISINHIBITING EFFECT

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

DISORIENTATION

CONFUSION

UNPREDICTABILITY

(empathy, guilt or remorse in the bully), give rise to a demand for intervention from a moral perspective.

Cognitive processes

The fact that adolescents spend most of the day connected to the virtual environment, together with the focusing of their interpersonal relations in social networks, can lead to some risks. The cyberspace context makes it easier for individuals to try out different identities (Mason, 2005), as virtual scenarios. Such opportunities, which can be beneficial in periods such as adolescence, must not, however, lead to the wrong type of *imbalance between the fantastic and the real*. If such an imbalance develops, and the person in question shows a certain predisposition, the risks that ensue may be numerous, and mainly affect the bullies:

✔ Risk of depersonalization and reification. Other individuals may be seen as objects to manipulate and attack; bullies may even simulate the language and actions of videogames. These types of risk are fostered by the emotional distance and lack of interpersonal feedback (Suler, 2004).

✔ Confusion of reality and fantasy: a focus on the content, language and dynamics of the virtual environment and its intensive use may bring about some confusion in potential bullies and lead them to mix fantasy with reality.

✔ Cognitive distortion: the illusion of invisibility in cyberspace and the non-physical presence of those with whom one interacts can increase the tendency for false perceptions about one's identity and what one does, and about how one sees and considers others.

✔ Normalization of the aggression or abuse: the lack of consequences of the negative actions (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004) may lead abusers to perceive the abusive behaviour and make it understood as appropriate and, in turn, as acceptable for the achievement of objectives (Tattum, 1989).

At the cognitive level, victims are often *confused* and *disoriented* about the source of what is happening to them and about the *decisions* they should make to resolve the situation of cyberbullying. Such confusion can be exacerbated by their ignorance of why this is happening and about the anonymous nature of the abuse, so that their everyday life and social context are plagued by uncertainty and paralysis.

The risks at the cognitive level, as described here, facilitate the construction of erroneous moral judgements

in cyberbullies, so that it becomes essential to implement educational initiatives for guiding their appropriate moral development.

Social processes

Social relations are also constructed at the intrapersonal level, in the image of ourselves we construct and others have of us, and in the interpersonal relations we have with others (Fritzen, 1987).

At this level the individuals involved in cyberbullying are marked by the actual *technological medium* through which the interaction is established, as well as by the *intangibility* of the relationship itself.

The intangibility and invisibility of the relationships mean that in the social context many individuals come to interact with some of their peers largely, or exclusively, via technological devices and remotely, eschewing face-to-face or group contact. It is not uncommon, moreover, for them to interact in this way even in physical group situations, through WhatsApp and/or text messages. This facilitates different levels of association between members of social groups; indeed, virtual abuse may even occur between individuals while they are present in a physical group situation.

Consequently, the influence of the virtual world on the social context means that there is a tendency to avoid direct and physical contact in relationships with peers (Lenhart, 2005), and hence a reduction of reciprocal cues for the interpretation of such relationships. Moreover, and as in face-to-face bullying, dyadic social relationships of dominance and control may be established, even though the rest of the group is physically present. The potential risks for those involved in cyberbullying are therefore related to:

• *Deficit in social cues of control*: In traditional social interaction the participants use social cues (individual and group-based, verbal and non-verbal) transmitted reciprocally. Such cues are absent or minimal in cyberbullying, resulting in a lack of social feedback:

✔ Absence of the beneficial influence of others' judgements and social pressure for rebalancing behaviour and individual positions. This results in less critical assessment of one's own acts.

✔ Tendency to 'rationalize' and 'justify' one's behaviour in the absence of feedback. The behaviour is 'imagined' to be acceptable, since it is much more difficult for peers and others to intervene and rectify. Moral authority figures

(teachers, parents) – important potential providers of corrective guidance – are also absent. Abusers receive no alternative version of what they do, think or say, because it is physically impossible.

- *Lack of cues for distinguishing between fantasy and reality*. This follows from the above, and is fed by a socialization that is predominantly or exclusively online.
- *Social disinhibition*: This faciliates the perpetation of aggressive/abusive behaviour that would not generally be perpetrated in the real world.
- *Risk of contradictory behaviour*: the intangibility of the relationship and the illusion of anonymity can facilate antagonism between what one does in Internet and in real life.
- *Social and personal risk behaviours*: Resulting from the person becoming accustomed to the content and suggestions found in forums and sites that endorse inappropriate and dangerous behaviours (e.g., related to disordered eating or suicide).

The negative moral climate established by cyberbullying in the peer group affects the individual moral development of those who perpetrate this kind of bullying and those who witness it without challenging it.

Intragroup level

The processes outlined here occur within the group involved in the cyberbullying. They refer to the group's power network, its culture vis-à-vis abuse, the pressure of group control codes and rules, and the positive actions of spectators in relation to bullying (see Figure 3). Among the most significant variables would be the following:

✔ *Group identity versus individual identity*: affiliation to and membership of forums or social networks that

usually restrict participation to their members foster a sense of collectiveness (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995, cited in Mason, 2005). Moreover, members are more or less rigidly bound to a group norm, adherence to which serves to regulate behaviour. This facilitates 'unanimity' and discourages 'answering back' to attacks, to ridicule or to abuse, especially if the abuser has power in the group. As occurs in face-to-face bullying (Olweus, 1998), the sense of individual responsibility is reduced.

✔ *Less involvement of witnesses*: the virtual medium facilitates interconnection and immediacy and aids the sharing of ideas and the formation of relations. It should also be easier to respond to attacks via this medium (Ortega & del Rey, 2011). Nevertheless, and contrary to what might be assumed, witnesses to virtual abuse feel less disposed to intervening in the case of cyberbullying than in that of face-to-face bullying (Shariff, 2008), precisely because of the collective identity referred to above. They find themselves subject to the influence and behavioural regulation of the group norms. The sensation of invisibility, the anonymity and the intangibility involved facilitate their inhibition and complicity, making them reluctant to intervene. A relevant line of intervention would be one whose aim was to change such attitudes so that they favour the victim and counteract the negative moral climate that establishes itself in the group and favours the bully.

Contextual level

The context in which cyberbullying takes place offers situational cues regarding the development of the abuse, which affect individuals at the personal, group and interpersonal levels. Indeed, it characterizes cyberbullying

FIGURE 3
DYNAMICS IN CYBERBULLYING: INTRAGROUP LEVEL

FIGURE 4
DYNAMICS IN CYBERBULLYING: CONTEXTUAL LEVEL
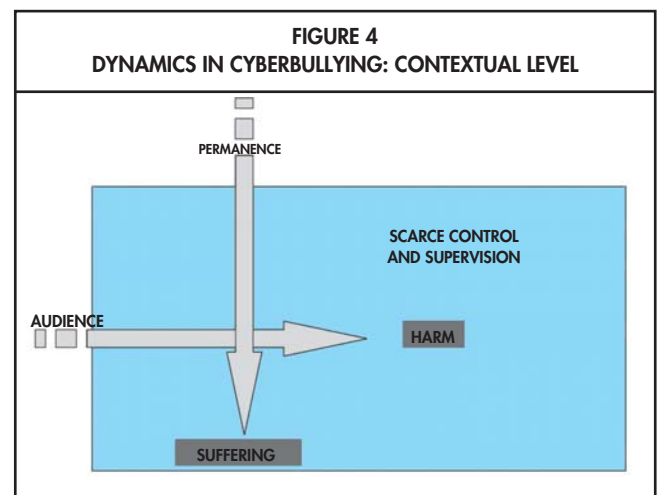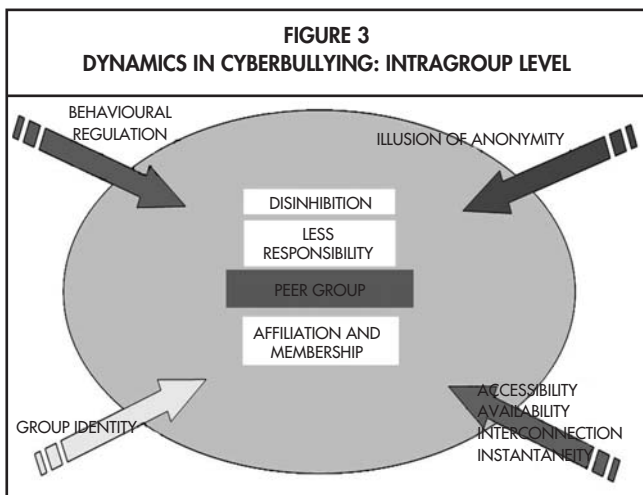
itself: the medium through which the information is disseminated, the instantaneity of the communication, the immediacy of the responses, the ease with which any target of the abuse can be reached, the sensation of anonymity, invisibility or ability to disguise one's identity, emotional coldness, the absence of close contact or the captivity of the words written or the images uploaded.

At the contextual level, the most characteristic components are marked by three relevant factors (see Figure 4): the *audience*, broader than in face-to-face bullying; the *duration* – in the case of cyberbullying the offending elements may be permanently on display; and the *scarce control and/or supervision* over the information, given that educational agents and parents are often absent from the immediate context of the cyberbullying or unaware of it.

✔ *Audience – Harm*: The audience is directly related to the harm inflicted. While in face-to-face bullying it is those who witness the abuse that constitute the real audience, in cyberbullying the audience extends beyond those individuals who know, take an interest in or are related to the people directly involved. Even total strangers or people completely unrelated to bully and victim can witness the events. This enlargement of the audience magnifies the harm done to the victim.

✔ *Permanence – Suffering*: The duration of the abuse is often longer in the case of cyberbullying, since the abusive material may remain accessible on websites or in social networks until its author modifies it, and this is a difference with respect to face-to-face bullying that may increase the victim's suffering.

✔ *Extent of control and accompaniment*: The degree of *control and/or supervision* by educational agents and parents over children's and adolescents' use of new technologies is generally inadequate; likewise, adults rarely spend sufficient time accompanying youngsters when they use virtual devices and media (Avilés, Irurtia, García-López, & Caballo, 2011), especially early on, when the youngest begin familiarizing themselves with them. This may be due to lack of knowledge, given the often huge technological gap between adults and children; or to simple neglect, stemming from permissive or contradictory parenting styles; or indeed to lack of parental availability, given the mothers' and fathers' working hours, broken families, and so on.

Intervention in this particular aspect, for purposes of prevention and of raising awareness, is a pressing need, to help families avoid the risks lurking in cyberspace.

Indeed, various authors have highlighted the fact that the majority of parents do not know what their children are doing when they are on Internet (Lenhart, 2005; Rosen, Cheever, & Carrier, 2008).

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Prevention and intervention initiatives in the educational community in situations of cyberbullying must go beyond the provision of information and/or training about risk situations, good and healthy practices in the realm of new technology or the appropriate management of responses to bullying. Genuine prevention should have as its ultimate aim the raising of awareness about the problem, help with the management of one's feelings and guidelines in relation to the moral decisions involved in these situations. Moral education should constitute the backbone of prevention and intervention, regardless of the disciplinary models that may be operating in a particular educational community and/or the legal consequences of cyberbullying. If the objective is to educate, we need to work on the internalization and management of moral standards in these situations, taking into account all the profiles involved.

Given that any intervention in cyberbullying must address the factors described above, it is imperative for such initiatives, on the one hand, to ensure that the key prerequisites for their effectiveness (necessary conditions) are met, and, on the other, to take into account the essential content of appropriate moral development, which clearly excludes the components of cyberbullying. It will be necessary to help students with the resolution of moral dilemmas, the management of their feelings and emotions and the regulation of their own behaviours.

Below, I consider first of all some conditions that favour the implementation of prevention and intervention initiatives, going on to outline the content of the work necessary so that each individual can find a way of resolving the situations which may otherwise lead to cyberbullying.

Conditions that favour prevention and intervention

✔ Involving and focusing on the students themselves. This applies particularly to prevention, guidance and tutoring regarding access to and management of new technologies. Approaches or programmes such as Help Teams (Avilés, Torres, & Vián, 2008), Student Tutors (Sullivan, 2001), Elder Siblings, Volunteers (Trianes,

2005), Cybermentors (Avilés, 2012) or Telehelpers (Cowie & Fernández, 2006) can be of great value in this line of work.

✔ Working with the relevant peer group, not only on an individual basis, but also as a group. This involves addressing the social network of power within the group, and how it employs virtual channels; looking at the group culture and how it considers "snitches" or "telling"; addressing the question of anti-cyberbullying norms (modifiable) within the group; and setting up stable support structures in the group for those who need them (Avilés, 2012).

✔ Drawing up agreements between schools, communities and families in support of educational initiatives. This would apply particularly to cooperation between teaching staff and families. Such institutional agreements would legitimize educational intervention even though the events might occur outside school, since they still affect the atmosphere and level of social harmony at school (Comunidad de Madrid, 2010).

✔ Employing institutional instruments to combat bullying and cyberbullying. The Antibullying Project (Avilés, 2005), endorsed and promoted in the educational community, is a highly effective tool addressing both decisions and initiatives for dealing with abuse and bullying.

✔ Educating relevant groups in healthy self-protection habits and good practice in virtual spaces. Management of personal information, maintaining privacy, risks to avoid, etc. How to protect and regulate one's own use of social network technology.

✔ Helping students learn to value the content of virtual contexts (communication, interaction, websites, forums, documents, proposals, etc.) according to the established moral criteria: truthfulness, honesty, balance, sustainability, reciprocity, empathy, respect for differences, altruism, friendliness, harmony, and so on. Encouraging them to identify, value and practise these moral values.

✔ Drawing up a curriculum that includes work on values for the promotion of social harmony, with a view to highlighting the wrongs of cyberbullying and fostering the features of positive moral development (justice, respect, generosity, rights, honesty, cooperation, coherence, acceptance and criticism of authority, and so on). School programmes should include emotional education and teach the values necessary for autonomous moral development (Tognetta, 2009).

✔ Organizing the school for addressing cyberbullying.

This would involve features such as the following: forming a working group for analyzing and managing cases, designating tutors for supervising each group, organizing students in groups that favour social harmony and mutual help among peers, measures for the supervision of computers that ensure good levels of feedback and control, secure channels of communication for the reporting of concerns or fears, automatic and standardized mechanisms for initial responses to adverse situations that may arise, structures involving "cyberhelpers" or "cybermentors", and so on.

✔ Reaching a consensus on a response protocol that sets out clear steps, with well-defined responsibilities for management and supervision.

✔ Disciplinary models that endorse, wherever possible, the application of restorative justice as a priority measure in attempts to resolve cases, in pursuit of the moral education and equilibrium of those involved.

Working on content related to moral education

Making educational policy decisions about the intention to combat cyberbullying, organizing schools accordingly and creating the necessary conditions and tools will make it possible to implement educational strategies for addressing moral content with some guarantee of success.

The content of work on basic moral education in relation to the components of cyberbullying will involve educational initiatives that should be shared by all agents of the educational community:

✔ Carefully selecting and organizing the topics to be worked on with a view to the students' achieving genuine moral autonomy (Justice, Respect, Generosity, Rights, Honesty, Cooperation, Equality, Solidarity, Acceptance, and Criticism of authority). Contrasting this moral content in each context – cognitive, affective and behavioural – with the more negative values that characterize cyberbullying.

✔ Activating in individuals (by encouraging observation, practice and independent construction) a disposition to act ethically and according to minimum universal values, as opposed to the negative values inherent to bullying.

✔ Helping students to learn about how to find appropriate moral solutions in diverse situations. Working on individual and group standpoints in response to moral dilemmas and doing exercises on alternative thinking and awareness of consequences.

✔ Helping students to achieve moral balance in different areas: situational (context), social (group) and individual, with a view to ensuring coherence between the cognitive (what I think), emotional (what I feel) and behavioural (what I do) levels.

✔ Using a framework of restorative justice as a guide for making decisions and implementing measures (Aviles, 2012; Cowie, Hutson, Jennifer, & Myers, 2007), respecting its elements and processes: reciprocal respect, acknowledgement of the abuse, restitution of harm, and asking for and receiving forgiveness.

✔ Giving primacy to the respectful management of the feelings and emotions that arise as a consequence of cyberbullying, and which are directly related to the aspects inherent to the construction of moral autonomy.

✔ Helping to raise students' awareness of the linear relationship between the processes involved in cyberbullying, their moral content and the emotions and feelings that are at stake.

CONCLUSION

Working proactively on issues of moral education has some clear prerequisites: political disposition on the part of the educational community, specific training that permits educational agents (families, teaching staff, peers, the media) to address the issues in question, and organizational and educational structures that facilitate such work. While it is true that many schools fall short of meeting these requirements, this should not discourage efforts to design effective strategies in this direction, especially those addressing values, emotions and behaviours that often go unnoticed by students, teachers or families, such as those involved in cyberbullying.

This article has highlighted the most relevant processes involved in cyberbullying at the interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup and contextual levels. From the consideration of these processes we can identify the most important moral values and their counter-values and address the need to construct collective and consensus-based strategies for working with students, providing them with renewed guidance in the area of interpersonal relations within the normative framework of the school and conditions of social harmony.

Only concerted efforts involving educational initiatives for learning about, managing and practising the moral values that can counteract abuse will serve to act directly on the roots of bullying, be it face-to-face or virtual. Implemented on the basis of consensus, such initiatives will provide individuals with a constructive itinerary to guide them in making decisions and moral positioning vis-à-vis the situations experienced by the different protagonists in bullying scenarios and by the peer group in accordance with its dynamics.

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