CYBERBULLYING: MOTIVOS DA AGRESSÃO NA PERSPETIVA DE JOVENS PORTUGUESES

Engl. transl.: Cyberbullying: motives of aggression from the perspective of young Portuguese

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## Topics

## Sample

Part of the study Cyberbullying project - a diagnosis of the situation in Portugal (attached), in which a questionnaire has been applied to 3,525 adolescents in the 6th, 8th and 11th levels of education. More precisely, it's the second part of that project, an extensive study with the application of a questionnaire with mixed answer questions.

# Abstract

This article presents part of the study Cyberbullying project - a diagnosis of the situation in Portugal, in which a questionnaire has been applied to 3,525 adolescents in the 6th, 8th and 11th levels of education to understand the incidence of the phenomenon and to analyze the processes associated with it, including the motives of the bullies, specific object of this article. As regards the reasons identified, the most relied on by bullies to justify their behavior are hedonistic reasons of joke, fun, escape from boredom as well as motives of affiliation and retaliation. Those who identify themselves as victims attribute to their aggressors motives of affiliation, hedonism and power, with emphasis, in descending order, to envy, fun, immaturity, jealousy, lack of respect, lack of affection and feelings of superiority.

# Outcome

Young people in the role of victims and aggressors differ when pointing out the importance and incidence that various motives have in the experience of cyberbullying.

There is a disparity between the motives of the aggressors recognized by themselves and the victims, some significant differences according to sex and level of education and, also, some significant relationships between emotions and motives of the aggressors.

In the data provided by those who recognized themselves as aggressors, hedonistic and selfish motives related to play, fun and escape from boredom stand out, involving not only situations of face-to-face aggression, but also issues of reactive aggression, revenge and retaliation from previous aggression. Relational and affiliation issues are another category of relevant reasons for pre-teens who simultaneously combined the role of aggressor in traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Issues of power and social protagonism are less frequent, contrary to what happens in studies of aggression face to face when evaluating the explanations of victims and observers for the behavior of aggression (MARTINS, 2013).

The strong presence of hedonistic motives and the justifications for reactivity based on retaliation seem to point to self-centered thinking and moral disengagement strategies (blaming the victim, shifting his responsibility and euphemistically labeling his behavior as fun) - an idea reinforced by the analysis of the relationship between motives and emotions of the aggressors.

Reflection that extrapolates the data (broader social and cultural factors in addition to the reasons invoked): “The prevalence of hedonistic reasons, associated with emotions of pleasure and fun, and the possible processes of moral disengagement are consistent with a consumer society, dominated by a liberal ideology and a globalized capitalist economy, based on maximum short-term profit. Society in which young people, on the one hand, experience the illusion of unlimited abundance associated with the provision of multiple stimuli and pleasures, and, on the other, feel powerlessness to find a place where they can make a difference and envision societal alternatives. (...) The new generations of technological natives (...) spend most of their time immersed in social networks, often looking for immediate pleasure, pleasure for pleasure, instant happiness, cultivating superficiality (...) . Although, by contrast, movements and structures for the participation of young people in society in favor of social causes are increasing, much remains to be done ”(Caetano, A .; Amado, J .; Martins, M .; Simão, A .; Freire, I .; Pessôa, M., 2017: 1030).

Publication conclusions: Victims tend to emphasize instrumental, affiliation and power reasons, such as envy, jealousy, lack of respect and feeling superior, and personal reasons, such as immaturity. For their part, and in comparison, the aggressors emphasize, more than the victims, reactive motives, such as revenge and retaliation for aggression, and amusement motives, such as play and escape from boredom.

“Differences in perception between aggressors and victims may mean that they have difficulty in understanding their motives; victims observe dimensions that the aggressors do not identify in themselves; agressors apologize, attributing to them amoral emotions such as envy and jealousy; or that victims excuse agressors, considering them immature. They can also mean that aggressors find it difficult to judge themselves or to socially assume their instrumental motives, failing to recognize the premeditated character and the desire to harm others. These data can be associated with moral dimensions, with disengagement from those who attack and moral judgment from those who are attacked. On the other hand, insecurity and the desire to avoid are very present when the victims attribute the aggression to the breaking of friendships and the divergence of opinions. In any case, the suffering of the victims stands out, and indifference is only significantly associated with the attribution, by the victims, to reasons such as play and annoyance of the aggressors ”(Caetano, A .; Amado, J .; Martins, M .; Simão, A .; Freire, I .; Pessôa, M., 2017: 1031).

Regarding sex, the data points to significant differences in favor of girls in instrumental reasons of affiliation, and in favor of boys in reasons related to fun.

With regard to the level of education, the study highlights reactive and affiliation reasons, such as envy, in the younger ones, while the reasons related to fun are significantly more mentioned by the older ones.

Thus, the results suggest that the division between reactive and instrumental aggression, as differentiated functions of aggression in face-to-face contexts, is also a classification pertinent to “virtual” contexts.

It is important to “raise conscientious, ethically responsible citizens, capable of transmuting their negative emotions into motivations and transformative actions. Born in the relationship, cyberbullying also needs to be worked on in the relationship, especially when they themselves feel that together they have the ability to control situations ”(Caetano, A .; Amado, J .; Martins, M .; Simão, A. ; Freire, I .; Pessôa, M., 2017: 1032). Quotes translated by the coder.