

THE DIGITAL COEXISTENCE AND ITS PROBLEMS: A STUDY WITH ADOLESCENTS FROM SÃO PAULO STATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A CONVIVÊNCIA DIGITAL E SEUS PROBLEMAS: UM ESTUDO COM ADOLESCENTES DE ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS PAULISTAS

CONVIVENCIA DIGITAL Y SUS PROBLEMAS: UN ESTUDIO CON ADOLESCENTES DE ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS DE SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT: The forms of coexistence are crossed by multiple variables, so that the current technological apparatuses not only mark the interactions between people but also build different forms of relationships in contemporaneity. In this way, physical and virtual environments merge, configuring possibilities of real coexistence that impact on relationships between people, especially in pandemic times in which interpersonal relationships mediated by virtual platforms have been greatly enhanced. Recognizing this reality, it is urgent to reflect on: How does the coexistence between adolescents occur in virtual environments? What are the biggest difficulties of coexistence that does not include physical contact? Aiming to reflect on these questions, a descriptive study was conducted on cyber coexistence/cyber aggression seeking to identify how the behaviors and interactions occurring in virtual environments are characterized. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, containing 15 questions about the theme, applied virtually through a form via Google Forms. The participants of the study comprised a sample of 1,923 adolescents, students from two directorates of the São Paulo state public school system: the DRE "Leste 3" in the metropolitan region of São Paulo with 1,056 respondents and the DRE of Taquaritinga, in the countryside of São Paulo, with 867 adolescents. We found a sample of almost 40% of students responding that they had already been insulted in virtual interactions, experiencing pain and suffering in this form of coexistence.

KEYWORDS: Virtual interaction. Coexistence. Empathy. Pandemic. Internet.

RESUMO: *As formas de convivência são atravessadas por múltiplas variáveis, de modo que os atuais aparatos tecnológicos marcam não apenas as interações entre as pessoas como constroem formas diferenciadas de relações na contemporaneidade. Desse modo, ambientes físicos e virtuais se fundem, configurando em possibilidades de convivências reais que impactam nas relações entre as pessoas, sobretudo nos tempos pandêmicos no qual se potencializou sobremaneira as relações interpessoais mediadas pelas plataformas virtuais. Reconhecendo essa realidade, urge refletir: Como ocorre a convivência entre adolescentes nos*

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ambientes virtuais? Quais são as maiores dificuldades da convivência que não inclui o contato físico? Objetivando refletir acerca de tais indagações, realizou-se um estudo descritivo a respeito da ciberconvivência/ciberagressão buscando identificar como estão caracterizados os comportamentos e as interações ocorridas nos ambientes virtuais. O instrumento de coleta de dados foi um questionário estruturado, contendo 15 questões em torno da temática, aplicado de forma virtual através de um formulário via Google Forms. Os participantes do estudo compuseram uma amostra de 1.923 adolescentes, estudantes das duas diretorias da rede de ensino público estadual paulista: a DRE "Leste 3" na região metropolitana de São Paulo com 1.056 respondentes e a DRE de Taquaritinga, no interior paulista, com 867 adolescentes. Encontramos uma amostra de quase 40% das alunas e dos alunos respondendo já terem sido insultados nas interações virtuais, experimentando dor e sofrimento nessa forma de convivência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Convivência virtual. Convivência. Empatia. Pandemia. Internet.*

RESUMEN: *Las formas de convivencia están atravesadas por múltiples variables, de modo que los dispositivos tecnológicos actuales marcan no solo las interacciones entre las personas, sino que también construyen diferentes formas de relaciones en los tiempos contemporáneos. Así, los entornos físicos y virtuales se fusionan, configurándose en posibilidades de convivencia real que impactan en las relaciones entre las personas, especialmente en tiempos de pandemia en los que se potenciaron enormemente las relaciones interpersonales mediadas por plataformas virtuales. Reconociendo esta realidad, es urgente reflexionar: ¿Cómo se da la convivencia entre adolescentes en entornos virtuales? ¿Cuáles son las mayores dificultades de vivir que no incluyen el contacto físico? Con el objetivo de reflexionar sobre estas cuestiones, se realizó un estudio descriptivo sobre ciber existencia/ciber agresión buscando identificar cómo se caracterizan los comportamientos e interacciones ocurridos en entornos virtuales. El instrumento de recolección de datos fue un cuestionario estructurado, que contenía 15 preguntas en torno al tema, aplicadas virtualmente a través de un formulario a través de Google Forms. Los participantes del estudio compusieron una muestra de 1.923 adolescentes, estudiantes de las dos juntas directivas de la red de educación pública del estado de São Paulo: la DRE "Leste 3" en la región metropolitana de São Paulo con 1.056 encuestados y la DRE de Taquaritinga, en el interior de São Paulo, con 867 adolescentes. Encontramos una muestra de casi el 40% de los estudiantes que respondieron ya han sido insultados en las interacciones virtuales, experimentando dolor y sufrimiento en esta forma de convivencia.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Convivencia virtual. Convivencia. Empatía. Pandemia. Internet.*

Introduction

It is evident that the Internet is an important communication resource that can offer multiple positive aspects, such as convenience, access to information and culture, proximity between people, time saving, etc. Moreover, it can also favor the preservation of interpersonal relationships when face-to-face contact is not possible due to long distances or even some

extreme situations, such as the pandemic of COVID-19 which, due to its high lethality, deprived face-to-face interactions for a long time.

However, as the interactional contact favored by the connectivity does not happen, only, among people known and close to the face-to-face conviviality, it brings potentialities and dangers that differ from those that occur in face-to-face conviviality. Sometimes, due to the wide reach of the net, the relationship mediated by technology occurs among unknown people, offering risks to the lives and physical and emotional safety of children, adolescents, and young people, so that cyber coexistence must also be seen as a factor that increases the vulnerability of children and young people to various forms of violence.

That being said, we consider it urgent to reflect on the marks of cyber coexistence among children, adolescents, and young people, understanding the impacts of virtual interaction on the global development of these age groups. Thus, we corroborate with Lévy (2011, p. 11) recognizing the existence of "a general movement of virtualization that today affects not only information and communication between people, but also the bodies, the economic functioning, or the exercise of intelligence". With this, we emphasize that the wide form of virtualization of interactions enables risks as yet unknown for the interpersonal relationships of children, adolescents and young people, lacking, therefore, a careful look at this dimension that directly impacts the subjectivation of subjects.

Many of these risks are supported by the violent way in which relationships systematically occur in social networks. This is because the issues that mark the coexistence in the face-to-face also mark in virtuality (ALAMILLO; PÉREZ, 2018), and bullying, intimidation and other conflicts often present in social exchanges between peers enter cyber coexistence. Thus, we understand that different forms of violence that mark virtual coexistences today were not invented from digital technological relations, but rather, they have developed and multifaceted from the increase of the public on these networks and the different possibilities of interpersonal relationships.

Precisely because of this, considering the specificities of cyber coexistence, we understand that there are conflicts with their own characteristics of virtual relationships, expanding even more the scope of violence that make people vulnerable in contemporary times. With this, we mean that "the real, the possible, the actual and the virtual are complementary and have an equivalent ontological dignity" (LÉVY, 2011, p. 11), needing to be analyzed and perceived from their particularities.

This means that the violence that occurs in spaces of physical interaction is reconfigured to virtuality, assuming specific forms of aggression which, according to Dempsey et al. (2011), aims to generate intentional damage to a person, humiliating or ridiculing them through digital platforms. Due to their specificities, cyberbullying situations are very damaging to the psychological well-being of children, adolescents and youth, causing suffering and pain to those involved, negatively impacting several dimensions of development, including mental health. This is because, as Avilés (2013) points out, interpersonal violence has become common in digital environments, adopting more cruel and difficult to confront forms and spaces.

Some studies, among them those conducted by Garaigordobil *et al.* (2020), elucidate that the targets of aggression in the virtual environment may have feelings of loneliness, insecurity, unhappiness, sadness, helplessness, irritability, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, suicide, post-traumatic stress, fear, low self-esteem, anger and frustration, etc., and these consequences may be long-lasting in the medium and long term.

Understanding the severity of these impacts on the subjectivation of subjects, we further expand our concern when we recognize that the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has led to a significant increase in the time of use on networks, leading to hyperconnectivity (SIBILIA, 2016) and, consequently, greater impact of the quality of virtual interactions on people's health. This is because the high lethality of the coronavirus required a necessary social distance, changing the ways of living and coexistence in pandemic times, restricting interactions to cyber coexistence.

Recognizing the negative impacts of virtual violence on the subjectivation of children and adolescents, in this study we are interested in knowing the forms of violence that manifest themselves in cyber coexistence, analyzing their incidences, types, and even specificities. To this end, the research was conducted with the purpose of identifying how the coexistence between adolescents in virtual environments occurs, as well as what the greatest difficulties are when we think about cyber coexistence. To answer these questions, and in view of the need to point out the new dimensions of coexistence in pandemic times, questions on this theme were inserted in the diagnosis of the climate and coexistence. This is a descriptive research that counted on the participation of 1,923 adolescents, students of two directorates of the São Paulo state public school network: the DRE "Leste 3" in the metropolitan region of São Paulo with 1,056 respondents and the DRE of Taquaritinga, in the countryside of São Paulo, with 867 adolescents who answered the survey. The cyberbullying/cyberaggression dimension was

collected from an instrument that had 15 closed questions to verify the relationships and behaviors in virtual environments.

The data analyzed will be presented below, reflecting on the virtual violence and its effects on the coexistence between adolescents.

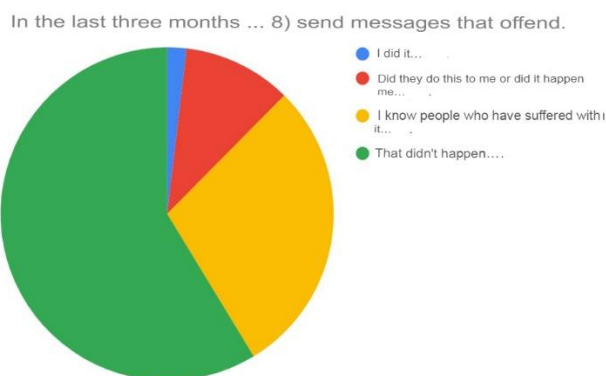
Cyber-coexistence: What does the research data show us?

There is no doubt that children and adolescents, in an increasingly intense way, live together online. With this, they are exposed to the benefits and dangers of the networks, and therefore need analysis and reflection. Based on this reflection, we undertook a survey conducted with adolescents, through which we found a sample of almost 40% of the students answering that they had already been insulted in virtual interactions, experiencing pain and suffering in this form of coexistence.

This is not a small percentage, and calls us to think about the welfare of boys and girls who, increasingly exposed to social interaction, experience negative emotions in their peer relationships. With this we are not advocating against the use of networks. We believe that, in a critical way, it is necessary to educate for the safe use of digital communication technologies, so that children and adolescents need to be aware of the risks of cyber coexistence, so that, when necessary, they are able to protect themselves and/or seek protection from suffering or even causing emotional damage to others. Therefore, it is urgent that we think of tools that can help boys and girls promote competencies that help them analyze situations of virtual coexistence, make decisions based on ethical coexistence in all interactional spaces, and also on the welfare of the entire community.

We argue that in addition to protection, boys and girls should also reflect on the way they themselves interact on the networks. This is because another fact from the same study draws our attention: when asked about the practice of offenses, respondents said that "it hasn't happened. Nevertheless, when we compare this data with other findings of the research, we find that 38.5% of the interviewed students have experienced these situations or know colleagues who have suffered from offensive messages, leading us to realize that the recognition of one's own actions as inappropriate or violent is something that also needs to be in the scope of mediations for a positive cyber coexistence.

Chart 1 - Teen Responses to Offensive Messages



Source: GEPEM

These numbers bring an alert to the issues of social networks, showing that, although we have a significant number of answers "It didn't happen", it is necessary to consider the answers of students who have already been through such a situation and/or know someone who has, since they bring suffering and consequences to those who experience these aggressions from a mental health point of view.

Considering the urgency in the construction of cyber coexistence programs, we asked the boys and girls about the main forms of conflicts that occur in the interactions mediated by the networks, asking them to highlight the violence that has already occurred to them. The data show that the practices of virtual violence are not distant from the general problems of coexistence between people, showing little tolerance for the maintenance of bonds and the ability to deal with differences (BAUMAN, 2008).

Table 1 – Absolute results and frequency of answers

They did this to me or it happened to me...	Absolute number	Frequency(%)
Sending hurtful messages	203	10,5%
Threatening someone through messages on the Internet, on social networks, or in online gaming situations.	175	9,1%
Creating pages or groups to badmouth someone.	72	3,7%
Deleting a person unwillingly from a social network or group because they are annoying or you don't like them.	173	9,0%
"Terminating" a person for having different behaviors or opinions.	114	5,9%
Posting or sending personal comments about someone you know to other people for them to know about (and that the person would not want known).	84	4,4%

Using intimate photos of a person to blackmail them.	38	2,0%
Sharing intimate videos/photos of a known person without their permission.	37	1,9%
Editing a photo or creating memes, creating a fake profile to ridicule or humiliate someone.	68	3,5%
Hack into someone else's account and send messages or post something pretending to be that person.	73	3,8%
Creating or participating in polls on social networks that mock or ridicule someone.	53	2,8%
Offend or tease someone online because of their sexual orientation or LGBT+ identity (homophobia, transphobia, etc.)	65	3,4%
Insult or tease someone online about their body type (thin, overweight, tall, short, redhead, black, blonde, etc.)	162	8,4%
Threatening your boyfriend/girlfriend via WhatsApp or social networking because he/she wants to break up with you.	39	2,0%
Offend or disrespect (not argue) someone on the Internet because of his/her political, religious, or ideological choice.	94	4,9%

Source: GEPEM

By analyzing the data above we can verify that the adolescents have already experienced several situations in which they were exposed, humiliated, defamed, disrespected. As we can notice, 175 adolescents said they had already gone through this situation: "Threatening someone through messages on the Internet, on social networks or online game situations.

Moreover, the absence of tolerance was evident when one notices that more than 100 students have already experienced situations of virtual cancellation. This is a way of showing indignation towards other people's behavior, however, it reveals little tolerance between interpersonal relationships and, above all, a heteronomous way of dealing with the problem, since the solution to a conflict involves the exclusion of others.

When we think about this issue from the point of view of moral development, we identify that the practices of cancellation become very harmful to interpersonal relationships, precisely because they annul the subject precisely in front of the other, making his social existence impossible. Moreover, cancellation also shows difficulty in coordinating points of view, in welcoming differences, and even denies dialogue with differences, ensuring rich possibilities of development for those involved in the conflict situation.

This is because, when canceling the other, many times, the subject argues from the adoption of mechanisms of Moral Disengagement (BANDURA, 1999), building moral justifications that explain the violence and the denial of people, often blaming them for the mistreatment suffered.

Besides virtual cancellation, we identified that disrespect is also very present in cyber coexistence. This is because we noticed the frequency of insults and cursing related to physical appearance. In the item "Insult or tease someone on the internet for their physical type (thin, obese, tall, short, redhead, black, blonde, etc.)", we found more than 8% of young people who suffer for this dimension, highlighting the importance of students to recognize the importance of respecting people, regardless of their appearance.

From the first descriptive analyses, more questions emerged: Is the fact that they have a computer at home a variable that interferes with these results? Similarly, does having your own cell phone make a difference for cyber aggression problems? Let's see the results found.

To answer these questions, we took for analysis the answers that pointed out the authorship of cyber aggression: those who marked the alternative "I did it" as authors of cyber aggression and those who did not mark that alternative ("I did it") as "not authors of cyber aggression". The percentages refer to the aggressions indicated at some point in the last three months, considering those who do not have a computer and those who do; those who do not have a cell phone and those who do. Let's see the results found with the help of the following table.

Table 2 – Correspondence between having or not having a computer at home and being an author

Variable	Is there a computer or laptop in your house?		P Value
	No(n=902)	Yes(n=1021)	
Sending messages that offend.	39 (4,32%)	28 (2,74%)	0,06
Threatening someone through messages on the Internet, on social networks, or in online gaming situations.	30 (3,33%)	22 (2,15%)	0,11
Creating pages or groups to badmouth someone.	50 (5,54%)	27 (2,64%)	<0,01
Unwillingly excluding someone from a social network or group because they are annoying or you don't like them.	124 (13,75%)	130 (12,73%)	0,51
"Terminating" a person for having different behaviors or opinions.	52 (5,76%)	47 (4,6%)	0,25
Posting or sending personal comments about someone you know to other people for them to know about (and that the person would not want known).	48 (5,32%)	28 (2,74%)	<0,01
Using intimate photos of a person to blackmail them.	29 (3,22%)	13 (1,27%)	<0,01

Sharing intimate videos/photos of a known person without their permission.	28 (3,1%)	15 (1,47%)	0,02
Editing a photo or creating memes, creating a fake profile to ridicule or humiliate someone.	42 (4,66%)	20 (1,96%)	<0,01
Hack into someone else's account and send messages or post something pretending to be that person.	39 (4,32%)	24 (2,35%)	0,02
Creating or participating in polls on social networks that mock or ridicule someone.	30 (3,33%)	25 (2,45%)	0,25
Offend or tease someone online because of their sexual orientation or LGBT+ identity (homophobia, transphobia, etc.)	28 (3,1%)	20 (1,96%)	0,11
Insult or tease someone online about their body type (thin, overweight, tall, short, redhead, black, blonde, etc.)	43 (4,77%)	27 (2,64%)	0,01
Threatening your boyfriend/girlfriend via WhatsApp or social networking because he/she wants to break up with you.	27 (2,99%)	17 (1,67%)	0,05
Offend or disrespect (not argue) someone on the Internet because of his/her political, religious, or ideological choice.	52 (5,76%)	43 (4,21%)	0,12

Source: GEPEM

Among the participants, 902 adolescents stated that they did not have a computer at home, while 1021 of them have this equipment in their residence. When we compared the aggression actions evidenced by the adolescents between those who have or do not have a computer at home, we found statistically significant differences ($p < 0.005$) between the two groups.

From the data, we found that 5.32% of the participants who indicated that they have already posted or sent personal comments from someone they know to other people to find out about (and that the person would not want it to be publicized) do not have a computer at home, while only 2.74% of them have such a device and this difference is statistically significant (p -value < 0.001).

Similarly, 3.22% of those who have used intimate photos of a person to blackmail them do not have a computer at home, while only 1.27% have such a device in their home and this difference is also significant (P -value < 0.01). Among those who have shared intimate videos/photos of a known person without her(his) permission, 3.1% have a computer at home, while 1.47% do not (with a significant difference of P -value < 0.02). Another 4.66% of those who have a computer at home have edited a photo or created memes or a fake profile to ridicule

or humiliate someone, compared to 1.96% of those who have done so who do not have a computer at home (significant difference, p -value < 0.01).

As for hacking someone else's account and sending messages or posting something pretending to be that person, 4.32% of those who have done so have a computer at home while 2.35% do not (with a significant difference of P -value < 0.02). Of those who have ever created pages or groups to badmouth someone, 5.54% have a computer at home while 2.65% do not (with a significant difference of P -value < 0.01); 4.77% of those who have insulted or "teased" someone on the internet for their physical type do not have a computer at home while 2.64% do not (with a significant difference of P -value < 0.01); and, finally, 2.99% of those who threatened their boyfriend/girlfriend on WhatsApp or social network because he/she wanted to break up the relationship have a computer at home compared to 1.67% of the aggressors who do not (with a significant difference of p -value < 0.05).

These results lead us to reflect on something very important: the fact that they do not have their own computers or cell phones does not guarantee that such situations do not occur. Not infrequently, we come across punishments in which mothers, fathers, or guardians forbid the use of these technological resources, aiming to help their daughters and sons to rethink their actions in the virtual environment and thus promote a more respectful space. However, the data makes it clear that not having such resources is not enough or a decisive factor to avoid situations of humiliation and mistreatment.

At the same time, it is evident that most of the virtual aggressions are not known by the adolescents' parents or guardians since they are not posted at home, which shows us, still, the need for guidance, but not deprivation for the use of technological devices. Precisely because of this, Avilés (2021) reflects on the importance of the protagonism of children and young people in effective educational programs to combat violence in cyber coexistence. According to this author, it is the role of educational programs to accompany and guide children and young people in facing the insecurities and difficulties experienced in cyber coexistence, favoring a real participation in experiences that favor reflection and, therefore, learning. The focus would be on adjusting the forms of coexistence using the conflicts themselves as opportunities to think about the forms of interaction experienced. Faced with the complexity of the virtual world, limiting the uses does not bring any security to young users, who, helpless, can even become more vulnerable to virtual coexistence and the violence that occurs in it.

What about the use of one's own cell phone? Would the perpetrators of cyber aggression use their own cell phones to do it? When we analyze the results we see that there are no

significant differences ($p < 0.005$) between those who have and those who don't have a cell phone, with the exception of one action: "excluding a person without their permission from a social network or group because they are bothersome or because you don't like them", for which the difference is significant ($p < 0.01$). Among the participants, 7.77% of the adolescents who have already acted this way do not have their own cell phone, while 13.86% of them reveal having their own cell phone. It seems evident that such action is much more common being performed by a cell phone since actions on social networks are accessed much more frequently on mobile devices.

In finding no significant differences between owning or not owning a cell phone and being the author of a cyber-aggression, our results show that teenagers send offending messages even if they do not own a cell phone. In addition, they threaten someone through messages on the Internet, on social networks or in online games, by posting or sending personal comments from someone they know to other people. In addition, even without their own cell phones they have insulted or "teased" someone on the Internet for their body type (thin, obese, tall, short, redheaded, black, blond, etc.) or hacked into someone else's account and sent messages or posted something pretending to be that person.

Here is an important question to think about in these new times: the fact of not having a cell phone is not an obstacle to intimidation in virtual relationships. Once again, this data reinforces that external control, whose prohibition of use is presented as a protective strategy, is ineffective. We emphasize, then, the role of school institutions in the formation of students about a digital education based on ethical principles that make use of real conflict situations to build protective reflections for an ethical coexistence.

It is in this sense that studies on the protagonism of children and teenagers are being defended, considering that the performance of real conflict situations and, also, the reflection among peers is a healthy and effective way to face cyber aggression. From this perspective, children and adolescents should be placed in their position of protagonism, helping their peers and becoming indignant at the violence they experience. According to Avilés (2021), the relational connection among peers should be the way to build more genuine values that support human rights, such as citizenship, justice, respect, solidarity, tolerance, equality, help, compassion, etc.

Seeking to understand the existence of gender differences between boys and girls involved in violence in cyber coexistence, we ask ourselves: are there differences between those who suffer or cause suffering in virtual coexistence in terms of gender?

From the results we see that only for one situation of cyber aggression between boys and girls there is a statistically significant difference: "Threatening someone through messages on the Internet, on social networks or online game situations. This is the action more present among boys (3.8%) than girls (1.67%) and this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Understanding that there are differences in the identity forms of boys and girls, and also that there is a toxic masculinity experienced in social relations, we analyzed this small difference as practices associated with the behavior of boys in online games, highlighted as more used by the male gender.

It also draws attention to the fact that among the 15 situations described to evaluate the frequency of actions by male and female students, the one that stands out with the highest percentage (12.5% among boys and 13.6% among girls) is "Exclude a person without him or her wanting to, from a social network or group, because he or she bothers you or because you don't like him or her.

Considering the results found, we can see that girls seem to suffer more disrespectful situations than boys, since there was a statistically significant difference in five of the 15 situations presented: girls (19.18%) receive more offensive messages than boys (12.27%) and this difference is significant ($p < 0.001$); they are more excluded from groups and social networks (14.55%) than boys (8.83%) with a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) and, furthermore, they have already had personal comments published or sent for other people to know without having authorized the disclosure (7.41% of girls and 5.03% of boys with a significant difference of $p < 0.004$). Similarly, girls experienced more situations in which they were targeted by pages or groups created especially to speak ill of them (5.93% among girls and 3.8% among boys with a significant difference of $p < 0.04$).

Finally, the results pointed out that girls (13.4%) also received more offenses for being too thin, obese, tall, short than boys (9.45%) who experienced this disrespectful situation (with significant difference of $p < 0.001$). As in the case of toxic masculinity, which explains the greater threat in games practiced by boys, we also find in this result a macho social pressure that gives women greater aesthetic responsibility, demanding perfect bodies in a world marked by ephemeral values such as beauty and power.

The data pointed out that in several situations of virtual aggression girls experienced more unpleasant moments of humiliation and disrespect in relation to boys, which also seems to help us understand the relationship between aesthetic values and violence directed at girls.

Not finding significant differences in the other 14 situations means that gender is not a variable that interferes in the fact that among the participants of this research are authors of cyber aggression. Both boys and girls do it, even though their actions have low occurrence among them.

Cyber-coexistence and the need for educational programs that address the problem

Pierre Lévy, in his acclaimed work "What is virtual?", invites us to think that contemporary interactions are equally impacted by the physical and virtual worlds, with these two dimensions being forms of interpersonal relationships that are possible in the real world. This is because, in an increasingly intense way, virtuality crosses the lives between people, marking the ways in which they coexist not only when they are connected.

In 2018, according to national data presented by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2018), the percentage of households using the internet rose from 74.9% to 79.1% in the span of just one year: between 2017 and 2018.

This data affects not only adults, but even children and adolescents. When we analyze data pointed out by the TIC KIDS ONLINE report (2019), we find information indicating that among Brazilians aged nine to 17 there is a large percentage of virtual interactions, so that 78% of the public between these ages say they send messages on apps without supervision from family members. In addition, 77% of children and adolescents are allowed to watch online videos and movies without any kind of guidance from adults; and, furthermore, 75% use the Internet alone.

We know that, as highlighted by Livingstone (2013) and the data presented here, safety on social networks is not characterized exclusively by adult control over the content built and accessed by children and adolescents. When we talk about supervision, we advocate cooperative practices that favor protagonism and guide boys and girls to think about the opportunities, dangers, and benefits of the digital world.

Evidently, in unknown spaces, it is necessary that someone more experienced is mediating new cyber coexistences. In this regard, Avilés (2021) calls attention to the fact that we urgently need to think about an educational accompaniment that provides children and adolescents with guidelines on how to behave on digital networks and in virtual relationships with other people. This is because, without prior reference or analysis, boys and girls are more vulnerable to cyber violence and dangers.

This point made by Avilés is even more important when we note other vulnerabilities of children and young people, so that 42% of respondents in our research have already had online contact with someone they did not know (27% of these communications were made through social networks and 21% through online messaging platforms). Finally, this same report evidences that 22% of the participants explained that they have personally met people they met on the internet, evidencing a risk that crosses virtuality, including physical safety.

This broad reach to virtualization in children and teenagers coexistence, and also the lack of guidance for a positive cyber coexistence by educators (parents and teachers) for children and adolescents, potentializes harmful forms of cyber coexistence, making boys and girls vulnerable to various forms of violence: sexting, shaming, virtual cancellation, cyberbullying, hate speech, lynchings, among others.

Avilés (2021) calls our attention to the fact that children and adolescents need help to structure a communication that they have not yet consolidated in a positive way, such as the one that occurs in virtual platforms. For this author, it is in the mediation that adults favor in new experiences that the youngest will be able to structure the construction of consistent and secure messages, conditions that they need to communicate assertively.

Such mediation, still according to the above-mentioned author, needs to consider the specificities of each subject. Children will have in adults the reference figures, while teenagers will find in their peers the references for cyber coexistence, being necessary, therefore, the formation of cybermentors.

That said, the mediation necessary for positive learning in cyber coexistence, far from being a strategy of coercion and control, needs to be configured as an analysis in collectivity and complexity, favoring trust and the expansion of new perspectives. This will help boys and girls build a safe narrative in cyber coexistence, being more protected from violence.

Final remarks

Considering that virtuality enhances the reach of coexistence and, consequently, vulnerabilities to dangers, we believe that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp, among others, can spread violent content, vehemently increasing the suffering of those who are exposed. This is precisely why they need to become objects of reflection by the users, so that they can develop tools to promote positive coexistence, being this demand a crucial preventive element to avoid the manifestation of violence and its reproduction in forms of abuse, harassment or imposition.

Given the data presented here, it becomes imperative to build coexistence programs that ensure effective possibilities for confronting the violence that occurs in cyber coexistence. Especially in scenarios like the contemporary ones, in which, due to the pandemic, virtuality has become even more intense, it is necessary to think of assertiveness possibilities in interpersonal relationships mediated by the networks, ensuring the boys and girls conditions to build moral autonomy.

The data presented here show, for example, that external control is not protective against the dangers of virtuality. This is because there is no greater protective factor among those who do not own cell phones and computers when compared to those who have free access to such digital equipment.

In an increasingly intense way, contemporary boys and girls find ways to access the networks, lacking, therefore, elucidative practices that favor the understanding of digital vulnerability, building paths for the critical confrontation of problems and dilemmas that we live in technological contexts.

That said, it is necessary to consider elements that favor the moral development of children and adolescents, helping them to analyze new situations based on values and principles that they already keep in their ethical personalities. This means to say that, more than ever, it is urgent that we build paths to moral autonomy, considering that many network problems are anchored in the fragility that a heteronomous thinking favors, attributing too much value to the other's view of ourselves.

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