

Cyber dating abuse in affective and sexual relationships: a literature review

Abuso digital nos relacionamentos afetivo-sexuais: uma análise bibliográfica

Abuso digital en relaciones afectivo-sexuales: un análisis bibliográfico

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Abstract

Cyber culture with its related e-commerce, expanded since the 2000s through the advent of social network platforms, incites participants to engage in hyper-exposure and spectacularization of their private lives, with inherent consequences for personal image and privacy, publicizing private matters (especially those pertaining to sexuality and corporality) in the digital media. This raises the need to understand how the phenomenon of cyber dating abuse in affective and sexual relationships is conceptualized and characterized in scientific studies, which health problems are associated with it, and which social technologies are suggested for intervention. This form of abuse is a new expression of intimate partner violence that involves, among other practices, posting embarrassing photos and videos and intimate messages without prior consent, with the purpose of humiliating and defaming the person. The current study is an integrative systematic review, including 35 articles, with a predominance of studies in the United States (22). Types of cyber dating abuse range from direct aggression to stalking. Despite the high prevalence, especially among adolescents and youth, the literature highlights that this type of cyber abuse is often taken for granted. The suggested interventions are mostly for prevention and awareness-raising concerning relationship abuse, action by school counselors, and family orientation. The high reciprocity of cyber dating abuse between males and females indicates that future studies should attempt to elucidate how the dynamics of gender violence are reproduced or subverted by it.

Intimate Partner Violence; Social Networking; Internet; Adolescent

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Introduction

Contemporary sociability has been radically transformed by the virtualization of relationships, mediated by communications cyber-technologies, allowing new spaces for commercial, informational, aesthetic, sexual, and affective-amorous exchanges and political activism ¹. The social relationships achieved by the worldwide web (Internet or cyberspace) establish a peculiar culture. As defined by Lévy ², cyber culture is the set of techniques (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, mindsets, and values that develop together with the growth of cyberspace.

As in any techno-scientific process, the successively incorporated transformations produce qualitative leaps in the modes of operating and reproducing technologies. Popularization of the Internet began in 1980 and has expanded exponentially since the 2000s. This phase, called “web 3.0”, involves platforms focused on social networks, backed by a new category of devices (smartphones, tablets) allowing faster connection, wireless remote access (wi-fi and wi-max), home networks, and Bluetooth and self-updating technologies ^{3,4}. They allow not only instant connection, but also personal mobility, so that anyone has the freedom to express, produce, distribute, and share data, photos, videos, and text messages anytime, anywhere.

In cyber culture, the ubiquity of information, interconnected interactive documents, and reciprocal and asynchronous telecommunications within and between groups make cyberspace the vector of an open universe ².

Still, just as it allows the “free expression” of ideas and lifestyles that allow all manner of human association and democratic access to information, the development of technologies capable of tracking personal data, attitudes, and tastes provides a unique opportunity for insistent marketing by diverse companies; this function is the backbone of cyber culture, establishing a kind of unprecedented “market panoptic” ⁵.

Cyber culture’s critics also contend that it uses its own logic and grammar to urge participants to engage in hyper-exposure of their identities and spectacularization of their private lives, with inherent consequences for personal image and privacy ^{3,6}. In this context, individuals routinely take for granted the practice of posting all kinds of information to a multitude of spectators, including accidents, demonstrations, trips, requited or unrequited affairs, falling into and out of amorous and sexual relationships, and intimate photos and videos.

It is thus possible to associate cyber culture with the concept of “society of the spectacle”, coined by Debord ⁷. Still, it is no longer a matter of appropriation of the real through representation of the world via use of the mass media. In cyber culture, simulation is a path to the appropriation of the real (virtual reality). We change from mere observers marveling at the work (society of the spectacle) to agents of the work itself, as navigators, explorers, and actors (society of simulation) ⁴.

On-line virtual communities allow rallying around common interests, regardless of borders or fixed territorial demarcations, establishing a symbolic territory of belonging and sharing ⁸.

On-line social relationships are based on “hyper-visibility” of personal life on the media, posting private, intimate affairs in the digital media, especially related to sexuality and the body ⁵. If being left out of on-line social networks is tantamount to exclusion and viewed as antisocial behavior, participating in these same networks is hardly synonymous with the expansion of real ties of solidarity or face-to-face contact.

“...paradoxically, our experience of global connectedness is not turning us into more ‘social’ persons. There is little evidence that networks such as Facebook, Skype, Instagram, or Twitter is making us more compassionate or tolerant; on the contrary, such spaces are commonly used for disrespectful, violent, or discriminatory practices against certain social groups, showing that the discourses that feed prejudices are not static, but are updated and reproduced at the same speed with which we incorporate such technologies into our daily practices” ⁶ (p. 198).

On-line interactions can also serve as conduits for practices of discrimination and violence, especially between close persons such as peers and intimate partners. The violence occurring in teenage affective and sexual relationships began to draw more attention from the scientific community in the United States and Europe in the late 1990s and is acknowledged to have serious repercussions on the lives and health of those that experience it ^{9,10,11,12,13}. According to recent studies, 20% to 50% of American teenagers have already experienced some situation of violence during intimate relationships ¹⁴, thus attracting the scientific community’s attention to cyber dating abuse.

Such episodes range from threats to insults in on-line social media and even the posting of photos, videos, intimate messages without prior consent, with the aim of humiliating and defaming the person, as well as controlling the person's posts and communications^{15,16,17}.

We concur with Dick et al.¹⁸, Lucero et al.¹⁹, Zweig et al.²⁰, and Schnurr et al.²¹ that cyber dating abuse is a new form of intimate partner violence and not merely a form of cyberbullying. However, as some studies have demonstrated, this does not rule out an association between these phenomena, i.e., persons that have suffered bullying or cyberbullying have higher odds of also suffering cyber dating abuse²².

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that is limited to peer relationships^{23,24} and also constitutes a recent phenomenon, whose studies and first publications date back only about five years, especially in Europe and the United States^{25,26,27,28}. There is thus no consensus on its definition, even among the authors that have attempted to define the phenomenon^{24,29,30}.

Cyber dating abuse also uses digital media to communicate, but it is not limited to peer relationships (for example, there are lovers with wide age differences), besides also appearing in adult relationships (which rarely occurs in cyberbullying). Audience (exposure to witnesses) plays an important role in the power dynamics and humiliation in cyberbullying, which does not necessarily occur in cyber dating abuse. This form of cyber abuse occurs specifically between amorous and sexual partners or ex-partners (which does not apply to bullying) – which implies relationships of intimacy and trust of a different order than those involving peers, classmates, or friends. As emphasized by Zweig et al.²⁰, the capacity to readily share private information and intimate sexual matters concerning the partner can intensify a qualitatively different experience for the person that lives it.

The way the contents of cyber dating abuse are posted on the Internet makes it difficult to identify authorship, hold the perpetrators accountable, or prevent on-going reproduction of the same material in other digital media, accessed around the globe, even months or years later.

As reported in previous studies, teenagers are extremely vulnerable to these modalities of violence. On-line sociability is particularly appealing to teenagers, whose identity-building incorporates the Internet into their daily routine, where they use it to express and expose themselves³¹. On-line technologies incite teenagers into engaging in hyper-exposure of their image, voluntarily and without any critical or protective filters. Thus, postings with intimate contents can be replicated successively to others³².

Knowing the state of the art on cyber dating abuse can foster a better understanding of this rather opaque phenomenon, supporting measures to empower young people to reflect critically on the hyper-visibility of intimacy in on-line relationships, as well to reflect on new forms of intimate partner violence, now also mediated by the Internet.

This study aims to elucidate how the scientific literature on cyber dating abuse has defined the phenomenon, the terms used for it, the implications for health, and proposed social intervention technologies.

Methodology

The current article is based on an integrative literature review. This form of systematic review includes studies performed with widely differing methodologies, aiming to analyze the accumulated knowledge from previous research on a given topic and allowing the generation of new knowledge³³. An integrative review thus shows the state of the art on a theme and contributes to the development of new theories³⁴.

We adopted the six phases described by Botelho et al.¹². The first was the elaboration of the research question, which orients the article search and description of the sources. This study's research questions were the following: "Which concepts and terms are attributed to cyber dating abuse?"; "How do the studies characterize cyber dating abuse (types, experiences, and consequences)?"; "What health implications are cited for those involved?" and; "What types of social intervention technologies are proposed?"

The second phase was the definition of inclusion criteria for the articles: presence in the databases of the Virtual Health Library (BVS), MEDLINE, PubMed, and Capes Periodicals; any publication year

up to and including 2016; any nationality; any language; and availability for printout. The descriptors were: *Cyber Dating Abuse* (CDA); *Cyber Dating Abuse* (AND) *Revenge Porn* (CDARP); *Cyber Dating Abuse* (AND) *Sexting* (CDAS); *Cyber Dating Aggression* (CDAgg); and *Teen Dating* (AND) *Cyber Abuse* (TDCA). Articles that did not meet the respective study objectives were excluded.

The third phase involved a careful reading of the titles, abstracts, and key words for all the selected articles. After reading each article and eliminating the duplicates, 35 articles were selected (Table 1).

The fourth phase was the elaboration of a summary matrix of the selected studies based on the following variables: source/year, reference, country, key words, and database and source, objectives, and methodology of the study.

In the fifth phase, the articles were classified according to the established categories: conceptualization/terminology, characterization, and social intervention technologies. The sixth phase was the synthesis of all the knowledge according to the categorization.

Results and discussion

Characterization of the collection of articles

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, studies on cyber dating abuse are very recent, the oldest dating to 2010, and were mostly conducted by institutions from the United States (22), followed by Spain (6), Belgium (4), United Kingdom (1), Italy (1), and Czech Republic (1).

The largest share of the articles were cross-sectional studies (12), followed by literature reviews (5), surveys (5), longitudinal studies (3), case-control studies (2), quantitative studies (2), an essay (1), and an analysis of a quantitative and qualitative database (1), and only 4 articles adopting an exclusively qualitative methodology.

Importantly, the literature search focused intentionally on the phenomenon of cyber dating abuse and excluded the usual forms of cyberbullying, thus highlighting cyber dating abuse as a new expression of intimate partner violence. Table 4 shows the wide variety of terms in the scientific analysis of the phenomenon, where cyber dating abuse is described as follows: cyber dating violence/abuse (the most frequent term); on-line dating abuse; cyber aggression; cyber harassment/cyber stalking, intimate partner cyber harassment, technology-based abuse, electronic dating aggression/cyber-stalking, technology, and dating conflict, technology-assisted adolescent dating violence and abuse (TAADVA), digital forms of dating abuse, socially interactive technologies (SITS) abuse/violence, and partner cyber abuse, showing that the phenomenon has still not been sufficiently acknowledged and explored scientifically, and that researchers are still identifying its characteristics.

Since the phenomenon has still not been sufficiently defined in the scientific literature, as shown in Table 4, cyber dating abuse – based on the reviewed literature – can be described as follows: a new expression of intimate partner violence; an emerging phenomenon with specific characteristics and elements that are different from the violence that takes place in face-a-face amorous exchange and cyberbullying, perpetrated through Internet and digital technologies with no geographic or temporal barriers to its expression, intended to harm the partner, and with relevant consequences for the victims' mental health.

As further shown in Table 4, the following types of cyber abuse are identified: (1) direct aggression and control; (2) association with other traditional types of intimate partner violence; and (3) interaction between cyber abuse and sexting.

Direct aggression involves deliberate behaviors through the use of technologies that allow access to the social media, intended to harm the partner through threats, insults, dissemination of private information, including personal photos and videos, and identity theft through the creation of a false profile for the current or former partner on a social network, and control/monitoring or stalking or invasion of the current partner or former partner's privacy in order to track the last connection or use the partner's password without their consent to check their e-mail, messages, phone contacts, social network, or even to monitor their location with a global positioning system (GPS), through insistent phone contacts, or posting photos and videos intended to humiliate and embarrass the partner or ex-partner^{19,22,35,36,37,41,42,43,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56}.

Table 1

Characterization of articles according to databases, search key, and number identified, excluded, and selected.

| Database | Duplicate identification | | | | | Excluded * | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | CDA | CDARP | CDAS | CDAgg | TDCA | CDA | CDARP | CDAS | CDAgg | TDCA |
| Capes Periodicals | 186 | 16 | 59 | 61 | 153 | 177 | 10 | 24 | 57 | 108 |
| BVS | 20 | Zero | 2 | 8 | 3 | 2 | Zero | Zero | 1 | Zero |
| Medline | 23 | Zero | 2 | 10 | 14 | 4 | Zero | Zero | 3 | 2 |
| PubMed | 19 | Zero | 2 | 12 | 12 | 3 | Zero | Zero | 3 | 2 |

| Selected | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Found in one database | Found in two databases | Found in three databases | Found in all the databases |
| 19 | 2 | 1 | 13 |

BBVS: Virtual Health Library; CDA: Cyber Dating Abuse; CDAgg: Cyber Dating Aggression; CDARP: *Cyber Dating Abuse (AND) Revenge Porn*; CDAS: *Cyber Dating Abuse (AND) Sexting*; TDCA: *Teen Dating (AND) Cyber Abuse*.

* Excluded all articles that did not discuss "cyber dating abuse" and/or "teen dating & cyber abuse", duplicate articles, and those published in 2017.

According to Borrajo et al.³⁶ on the dynamics of such dissemination, more than 50% of the reported cases of cyber dating abuse were practiced via message services or message apps like Whatsapp, 40% via social networks like Facebook, and 7% via e-mail. This distribution also shows young people's preference for certain social media⁵.

Concerning cyber dating abuse and the association with traditional forms of intimate partner violence ("off-line violence"), the scientific findings suggest that victims of violence in the context of face-to-face amorous exchanges are also more prone to victimization by their partners in the on-line setting^{37,40,42,43,44,47,48,49,52,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62}. However, there is no consensus on which forms of face-to-face violence are determinant for cyber dating abuse in the relationship. The authors define "traditional forms of dating violence" as face-to-face relationships involving a range of violent and coercive behaviors, including verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, harassment, and stalking in the context of a past or current relationship^{37,40,42,43,44,47,48,49,52,54,55,56,57,58,59,60,61,62}.

Considering the ease and immediacy afforded by new on-line technologies for the dissemination of abusive content, young people can experience up to 23 different incidents of cyber dating abuse in less than 6 months³⁶, with a predicted increase in the occurrence of such abuse given its indirect nature, the lack of geographic-temporal boundaries, and the frequent reciprocity of these acts^{19,35,36,37,39,41,45,54,55,56,61}.

Although acknowledging this high prevalence, the literature has emphasized that cyber dating abuse among adolescents is often taken for granted and confused with "proof of love" and caring, where abusive behaviors involving control and intimidation are justified by a romanticized view of love^{35,36,37} or as "just a joke"³⁶. Adolescents generally do not view the various forms of on-line emotional abuse and cyber control as violence, but as "annoying" behaviors by partners¹⁹.

Other studies also show high prevalence of cyber dating abuse victimization and perpetration in both males and females, but with distinct gender characteristics³⁷, since women tend to practice "control and monitoring"^{19,36,55,61} while men tend to practice "direct aggression" by sharing the partner's images and sexting messages^{19,22,45,52,53,55,56,58,62,63,64} after the relationship ends, making revenge porn "viral"^{19,35}.

Another issue that apparently affects girls and boys differently is the intensity³⁵ with which girls experience the emotional consequences of cyber dating abuse, although there are no significant gender differences in the justifications offered for it (jealousy, "joking", payback, or anger and the desire to cause harm)³⁶.

In a study of teenagers by Lucero et al.¹⁹, for girls, "monitoring" is a crucial component of the amorous relationship, and they often create false profiles in social networks in order to monitor

Table 2

Characterization of sources according to country, key words, and database, 2010-2016.

| Source/Year | Country | Keywords | Database |
|---|---------------|------------------------------|---|
| Borrajó et al. ³⁵ /2015 | Spain | CDA CDAS CDAgg TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals |
| Borrajó et al. ³⁶ /2015 | Spain | CDA CDAS CDAgg TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Borrajó et al. ³⁷ /2015 | Spain | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| Dank et al. ³⁸ /2014 | United States | CDA CDAgg TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Periódicos Capes Periodicals MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Dick et al. ¹⁸ /2014 | United States | CDA CDAS TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Durán & Martínez-Pecino ²² /2015 | Spain | CDA | Capes Periodicals |
| Foshee et al. ⁵⁷ /2015 | United States | CDA TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Jackson et al. ⁴⁶ /2015 | United States | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Sánchez et al. ⁵⁸ /2015 | Spain | CDAS TDCA | Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals |
| Johnson et al. ⁶⁷ /2015 | United States | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Lucero et al. ¹⁹ /2014 | United States | CDA CDAS CDAgg TDCA | Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals |
| Marganski & Fauth ⁶³ /2013 | United States | CDAgg | Capes Periodicals |
| Marganski & Melander ⁴⁷ /2015 | United States | CDA CDAgg | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed |
| Martínez-Pecino & Dúran ⁴⁸ /2016 | Spain | CDAgg | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed |
| McDonald & Merrick ⁵⁹ /2013 | United States | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Melander ⁴⁹ /2010 | United States | CDAgg | MEDLINE/PubMed |
| Miller & McCauley ⁵⁰ /2013 | United States | CDA | BVS/Medline |
| Miller et al. ⁴¹ /2015 | United States | CDA CDAgg TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed PubMed MEDLINE/PubMed |
| Morelli et al. ⁶⁴ /2016 | Italy | CDARP TDCA | Capes Periodicals Periódicos Capes |
| Murray et al. ⁵¹ /2016 | United States | CDAS TDCA | Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals |
| Patton et al. ⁶⁰ /2014 | United States | CDA CDAgg TDCA | Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals |
| Reed et al. ⁵² /2016 | United States | CDA CDAS CDAgg TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals/BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed Capes Periodicals |
| Rueda et al. ⁵³ /2015 | United States | CDAS TDCA | Capes Periodicals Capes Periodicals |

(continues)

Table 2 (continued)

| Source/Year | Country | Keywords | Database |
|--|----------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Stonard et al. ⁵⁴ /2014 | United Kingdom | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Taylor et al. ⁵⁵ /2015 | United States | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Temple et al. ⁵⁶ /2016 | United States | CDA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed |
| | | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | MEDLINE/PubMed |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴² /2016 | Belgium | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴³ /2016 | Belgium | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴⁴ /2016 | Belgium | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Walrave et al. ⁴⁵ /2015 | Belgium | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDARP | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Wolford-Clevenger et al. ⁶¹ /2016 | United States | CDA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed |
| | | CDAgg | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Wright ⁶² /2015 | Czech Republic | CDA | Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDAgg | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | Capes Periodicals |
| Yahner et al. ³⁹ /2015 | United States | CDA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDAgg | PubMed |
| | | TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Zweig et al. ⁴⁰ /2013 | United States | CDA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDAgg | PubMed |
| | | TDCA | BVS/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| Zweig et al. ²⁰ /2014 | United States | CDA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |
| | | CDAS | Capes Periodicals |
| | | TDCA | BVS/MEDLINE/PubMed/Capes Periodicals |

BVS: Virtual Health Library; CDA: *Cyber Dating Abuse*; CDAgg: *Cyber Dating Aggression*; CDARP: *Cyber Dating Abuse (AND) Revenge Porn*; CDAS: *Cyber Dating Abuse (AND) Sexting*; TDCA: *Teen Dating (AND) Cyber Abuse*.

photos, e-mail, messages, and whatever they can find out about what their boyfriends have been doing in cyberspace. Just as they believe that sharing passwords is a sign of trust, love, and commitment to the relationship, in this context, erasing other girls' messages from the boyfriend's cellphone is quite common ¹⁹. Meanwhile, boys reported that they were aware of their girlfriends' monitoring them constantly in the social networks and that they do not like to reveal their passwords, which they only do when the couple has already established mutual trust ¹⁹.

Thus, control and jealousy by girls is not viewed as abusive behavior, but as a positive and normal way of protecting the relationship, as a demonstration of love ¹⁹.

Considering the interactions between different forms of cyber dating abuse and sexting, it is important to note that the latter term first appeared in the United States as the combination of two words, "sex" and "texting". Sexting consists of sending text messages, photographs, and videos with sexual connotations and nudity to a given person or crowd ^{32,65}. While sexting as a consensual practice is not considered a form of violence, unconsented posting of it as a form of revenge porn is a kind of cyber dating abuse.

Revenge porn is most common following the termination of an amorous and sexual relationship – as the literature shows – when one or both ex-partners use the Internet to share intimate photos

Table 3

Characterization of sources according to study objectives and methodology, 2010-2016.

| Source/Year | Objective | Methodology |
|---|---|---|
| Borrajó et al. ³⁵ /2015 | Analyze the relationship between beliefs that justify violence and myths on love in two types of cyber dating abuse: control and direct aggression. | Cross-sectional study (656 young people, 18-30 years). |
| Borrajó et al. ³⁶ /2015 | Determine the extent and sexual differences in cyber dating abuse victimization, and the context in which it occurs and the relationship with psychological and physical aggression perpetrated in face-to-face relationships. | Cross-sectional study (433 young people, 18-30 years). |
| Borrajó et al. ³⁷ /2015 | Analyze the psychometric properties of the questionnaire on cyber dating abuse and conduct an initial analysis of the prevalence and incidence of this type of abuse. | Cross-sectional study (788 young people, 18-30 years) |
| Dank et al. ³⁸ /2014 | Examine experiences of physical, psychological, and sexual violence and cyber dating abuse among young lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, compared to heterosexual young people, and explore variation in the likelihood of seeking help and particularly the presence of risk factors in these two types of victims of dating violence. | Cross-sectional study (3,745 young people, 12-19 years). |
| Dick et al. ¹⁸ /2014 | Estimate prevalence of cyber dating abuse in young people 14 to 19 years of age seen at a school health center and associations with other forms of teen relationship abuse, sexual violence, and sexual and reproductive health indicators. | Cross-sectional study (1,005 young people, 14-19 years). |
| Durán & Martínez-Pecino ²² /2015 | Analyze cyber abuse practiced with smartphones and Internet, in which young people are seen in their amorous relationships. | Qualitative study (336 university students, 18-30 years). |
| Foshee et al. ⁵⁷ /2015 | Assess the efficacy of the <i>Moms and Tees for Safe Date</i> project for prevention of dating abuse, specifically focused on teens exposed to domestic violence. | Case-control (409 adolescents 12-15 years and 409 mothers). |
| Jackson et al. ⁴⁶ /2015 | Not stated clearly. | Essay. |
| Sánchez et al. ⁵⁸ /2015 | Investigate the risks of teen cyber dating abuse, defined as all behaviors and attitudes of a sexual nature that adolescents have displayed in the on-line environment in their interactions with peers and partners and that may result in something aggressive or unpleasant. | Cross-sectional study (268 adolescents, 12-18 years). |
| Johnson et al. ⁶⁷ /2015 | Understand the degree to which training programs in psychology include contents on teen dating abuse in their curricula; examine the knowledge and practices of psychology in the prevention of teen dating abuse and forms of intervention. | Cross-sectional study (representative sample of American universities). |
| Lucero et al. ¹⁹ /2014 | Explore how teens perceive the potential risk and benefit of technology in their social interaction in dating and how these perceptions vary by gender. | Qualitative study (23 sophomore students). |
| Marganski & Fauth ⁶³ /2013 | Investigate characteristics and cultural differences in the nature of modern dating relationships, focusing on deviant dating behaviors among young adults. | Survey (648 participants, 18-30 years). |
| Marganski & Melander ⁴⁷ /2015 | Explore the extent of cyber dating abuse and co-occurrence with face-to-face experiences of psychological, physical, and sexual violence from partners. | Survey (540 students, 18-25 years). |

(continues)

Table 3 (continued)

| Source/Year | Objective | Methodology |
|---|---|---|
| Martínez-Pecino & Dúran ⁴⁸ /2016 | Examine the involvement of university students in cyberbullying in the context of their dating relationships and explore the impact of sexism in men's cyberbullying of their girlfriends. | Survey (219 students, 18-28 years). |
| McDonald & Merrick ⁵⁹ /2013 | Not stated clearly. | Literature review. |
| Melander ⁴⁹ /2010 | Explore the role of technology in partner violence in the university. | Qualitative study (39 interviewees, 18-23 years). |
| Miller & McCauley ⁵⁰ /2013 | Analyze the literature on adolescent relationship abuse with a focus on girls. | Literature review. |
| Miller et al. ⁴¹ /2015 | Assess the efficacy of education and counseling in school health services on relationship abuse | Case-control study (1,011 students, 14-19 years). |
| Morelli et al. ⁶⁴ /2016 | Investigate the relationship between amount of sexting, psychological distress, and dating violence among teens and young adults. | Survey (1,334 participants, 13-30 years). |
| Murray et al. ⁵¹ /2016 | Produce a set of guidelines and counseling on teen dating abuse. | Quantitative and qualitative database analysis of studies on individuals that experienced intimate partner abuse. |
| Patton et al. ⁶⁰ /2014 | Analyze the results of existing studies on the most common types of youth violence in social media. | Literature review. |
| Reed et al. ⁵² /2016 | Examine cyber dating abuse victimization and perpetration among university students. | Quantitative study (365 students, 17-22 years). |
| Rueda et al. ⁵³ /2015 | Conduct an exploratory study on how romantic conflict is experience through information communication technology in Mexican teens 15 to 17 years of age. | Qualitative study (132 participants, 15-17 years). |
| Stonard et al. ⁵⁴ /2014 | Review and systematize the literature on prevalence and impact of <i>Adolescent Dating Violence and Abuse</i> (ADVA) with a focus on evaluation of the relevance of technology in teen romantic relationships teens and relationship abuse. | Systematic literature review. |
| Taylor et al. ⁵⁵ /2015 | Examine the relationship between individual and class norms justifying dating abuse and the perpetration of physical and psychological violence in dating. | Longitudinal study (2,022 sixth-grade students in a 6-month period). |
| Temple et al. ⁵⁶ /2016 | Examine the relationship between traditional dating abuse (physical, sexual, and psychological violence) and cyber dating abuse perpetration and victimization according to gender, age, ethnicity, and parents' schooling. | Longitudinal study (1,042 sixth-year students in a six year period). |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴² /2016 | Highlight factors that could increase the risk of young people being controlled by their romantic partner using digital technology. | Quantitative study (466 students, 16-22 years). |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴³ /2016 | Provide an overview of the recent research on the context and consequence of cyber dating abuse and design various suggestions for prevention and intervention. | Literature review. |
| Van Ouytsel et al. ⁴⁴ /2016 | Analyze associations between substance use, sexual behaviors, and cyber dating abuse victimization. | Survey (1,187 students, 16-22 years). |
| Walrave et al. ⁴⁵ /2015 | Investigate how involvement in sexting is influenced by teens' image of their peers involved in this type of relationship. | Cross-sectional study (217 students, 15-19 years). |

(continues)

Table 3 (continued)

| Source/Year | Objective | Methodology |
|--|---|--|
| Wolford-Clevenger et al. ⁶¹ /2016 | Examine structural factors and convergent validity in cyber dating abuse and examine prevalence and gender differences in this victimization. | Cross-sectional study (502 university students). |
| Wright ⁶² /2015 | Provide a view of the impact of on-line technologies on teen relationships. | Longitudinal study (600 high school seniors). |
| Yahner et al. ³⁹ /2015 | Identify the specific combined rates of violence in dating and intimidation in relation to physical and sexual, psychological, and cyber abuse. | Cross-sectional study (5,647 young people, 12-19 years). |
| Zweig et al. ⁴⁰ /2013 | Examine the extent of cyber dating abuse in teen relationships and how it relates to other forms of violence in teen dating. | Cross-sectional study (3,745 young people, 12-19 years). |
| Zweig et al. ²⁰ /2014 | Identify how the experience with cyber dating abuse relates to individual teen behaviors and experiences (e.g. substance use, sexual activity), psychosocial adjustment, and relationship to school, family, and romantic partners. | Cross-sectional study (3,745 young people, 12-19 years). |

and videos recorded during the relationship without the other partner's consent, intended to defame, humiliate, blackmail, and/or take revenge ⁶⁶.

As regards associations between cyber dating abuse and the mental health of the teenage victims, the literature reports high rates of posttraumatic stress disorder ^{36,54}, substance abuse ^{20,38,43,44,56,60,64}, anxiety ^{20,36,38,43,54,62,64}, aggressiveness/hostility ^{20,38,43,54}, sleep disorders ⁵⁴, depressive symptoms ^{20,36,38,43,46,54,56,61,62,64}, self-inflicted violence ⁴⁶, and suicidal ideation and suicide attempts ^{54,56}.

Factors associated with sexual and reproductive health ^{18,20,40,41,43,44,46,50,60,64} are reported by Jackson et al. ⁴⁶ and Miller & McCauley ⁵⁰, highlighting that cyber dating abuse and reproductive coercion are the most recent forms of intimate partner abuse. Dick et al. ¹⁸ found that girls with recent exposure to cyber dating abuse showed 2 to 4 times higher odds of failure to use any form of contraception and 3 to 6 times higher odds of reproductive and/or "sexual risk behaviors" when compared to those who had not been exposed to cyber dating abuse, indicating again the synergy between the dynamics of violence in on-line and face-to-face relationships.

Other possible harmful outcomes for teen victims of cyber dating abuse are low school performance ^{20,38,56} and delinquent behaviors ^{20,38}.

Concerning social intervention technologies, all the studies analyzed here acknowledge the need for approaches that prioritize confronting this new modality of intimate partner violence.

Borrajo et al. ³⁵ recommend preventive programs targeting preteen boys and girls and that challenge the justifications cited by teenagers for relationship abuse, such as "jealousy", "aggression as a game", or "payback", in cases where one partner commits violence because the other partner already did.

Two articles emphasized that certain groups should be prioritized because of their increased vulnerability. Dank et al. ³⁸ suggest preventive studies and professional interventions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, based on their study showing a higher prevalence of cyber dating abuse in LGBT teens when compared to heterosexual teens. Foshee et al. ⁵⁷, based on an evaluation of the efficacy of the *Moms and Teens for Safe Dates* project, suggest prevention programs specifically targeted to adolescents exposed to domestic violence, since they are potentially vulnerable to dating violence. Adding to these proposals is the suggestion by Sánchez et al. ⁵⁸ and Walrave et al. ⁴⁵ reinforcing the need for measures to raise young people's awareness concerning sexual risk behaviors and the legal consequences of sexting.

The suggestion of including professionals trained in identification, orientation, prevention, and intervention in cases of abuse in the approach to families and schools was highlighted by Dank et al. ³⁸

Table 4

Characterization of cyber dating abuse according to conceptualization, terminology, and suggested intervention technologies, 2010-2016.

| Categories | Source | Summary of results |
|--|---|--|
| Conceptualization and terminology Conceptualization | 35 | Attempts to control partner or ex-partner using on-line media; sending insults and threatening messages. |
| | 36 | Posting embarrassing photos and videos on the Internet without partner's consent or intended to embarrass them; use partner's password to spy on their Internet and e-mail social networks; constant control of partner using on-line technologies. |
| | 37 | Surveillance and monitoring of partner or ex-partner; posting rude and humiliating comments; sending threatening e-mails or messages; posting photos intended to humiliate partner. |
| | 38 | Pressure for partner to send photos of private parts or nude photos of both; unconsented posting of such photos; texting threatening messages; use of the partner's social network account without their permission. |
| | 18 | Use of technology to control, harass, threaten, or stalk another person in the context of dating. |
| | 22 | A form of intimidation, harassment, and abuse by an individual or group involving the use of technological media as a channel for aggression, practiced by smartphone and Internet by young people in their dating relationships. |
| | 46 | Use of social media like e-mail, texting, Facebook and/or Twitter to commit abuse against the actual or intended dating partner. |
| | 58 | All behaviors and attitudes of a sexual nature practiced by teens in their on-line interactions with peers and partners and that may result in aggression. |
| | 19 | Use of any form of on-line social networking technology to threaten, harass, humiliate, or control the dating partner. Characterized by behaviors of coercion and control, commonly viewed as a form of psychological abuse. |
| | 50 | Use of on-line technology to control and abuse boyfriend/girlfriend. |
| | 64 | Exchange of sexually explicit or provocative content via smartphone, Internet, or social networks, characterized as risky and aggressive behaviors. |
| | 51 | Abusive behavior perpetrated via technology such as e-mail, texting, and social networks. |
| | 52 | A behavior pattern that controls, pressures, or threatens a dating partner by smartphone or Internet. |
| | 54 | Psychologically and sexually abusive behavior. |
| | 56 | Monitoring, control, stalking, or other forms of abuse practiced by partner via digital technology. |
| | 42 | Control, harassment, stalking, and abuse by partner via technology and social media. |
| | 43 | Same definition as Van Ouytsel et al. 42. |
| | 44 | Same definition as Van Ouytsel et al. 42. |
| | 61 | Harassment, stalking, monitoring, humiliation, or verbal abuse by a partner using such technologies as smartphone, social networks, or e-mail. |
| | 62 | Sending unpleasant messages, invasion of privacy, or anonymous messages to partner using text, audio, images, or video stored in mobile devices or computers. These behaviors are alarming because the perpetrators are capable of connecting constantly to their partners, making them feel hopeless. |
| 39 | Pressure for partner to send photos of private parts or nudes of both; texting threatening messages, e-mail, and chats aimed at making the partner feel insecure; writing unpleasant texts on partner in their social network profile (Facebook and MySpace). | |
| 40 | Control, harassment, stalking, and abuse by one of the partners via technology and social media. A form of psychological abuse. | |
| 20 | Same definition as Zweig et al. 40. | |

(continues)

Table 4 (continued)

| Categories | Source | Summary of results |
|--|--|---|
| Terms | 18,20,35,36,37,38, 39,40,41,42,43,44, 50,51,52,56,58 35 47,59,62 22 48 49 50 64 60 53 54 43 45,63 61 | Cyber dating violence/abuse. On-line dating abuse. Cyber aggression. Cyberacoso. Cyberbullying. Intimate partner cyber harassment. Technology based abuse. Sexting. Electronic dating aggression/cyber-stalking. Technology and dating conflict. Technology assisted adolescent dating violence and abuse. Digital forms of dating abuse. Socially interactive technologies abuse/violence. Partner cyber abuse. |
| Characterization Types of cyber abuse | 19,22,35,36,37,41, 42,43,46,47,48,49,50, 51,52,53,54,55,56 37,40,43,44,47,48,49, 52,54,55, 56,57,58,59,60,61,62 19,22,43,45,52,54, 58,63,64 | Direct aggression and control/monitoring. Association with other traditionally defined types of intimate partner violence. Interaction between cyber dating abuse and sexting. |
| Associations between cyber dating abuse and mental health | 36,54 20,38,43,44,56,60,64 36,38,43,46,54,62,64 20,38,43,54 54 20,36,38,43,46, 54,56, 61,62,64 46 54,56 | High levels of posttraumatic stress disorder. Psychoactive substance abuse. Anxiety. Aggressiveness/hostility. Sleep disorders. Depressive symptoms. Self-inflicted violence. Suicidal ideation and attempted suicide. |
| Associations between cyber dating abuse and reproductive health | 18,20,40,41,43,44, 46,50,60,64 | Failure to use contraception, sexual coercion, and sexual risk behaviors. |

(continues)

Table 4 (continued)

| Categories | Source | Summary of results |
|--|--------|--|
| Social intervention technologies | 35 | Create programs for teen cyber dating abuse prevention. |
| | 38 | Create awareness-raising programs on cyber dating abuse for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. |
| | 38,51 | Inclusion of counselors in schools and orientation for families. |
| | 22 | Create evaluation tools that allow gathering qualitative information that provides better explanations for cyber dating abuse. |
| | 57 | Dating abuse prevention program targeted to teens exposed to family violence. |
| | 58 | Include sexual risk behaviors in the development of prevention programs (sexting). |
| | 67 | Include the theme of cyber dating abuse in the academic curricula for school psychologists. |
| | 50 | Prevention of adolescent relationship abuse and intervention in the context of promotion of gender equality. |
| | 43 | Implement programs in schools for the prevention of dating abuse. |
| | 45 | Raise young people's awareness of the risks and legal consequences of sexting in dating. |

and Murray et al.⁵¹, who emphasize the relevant role of family and school counselors in orienting families and students as to the risk of dating abuse in adolescence, aimed at demystifying this form of abuse, often played down by the teenagers' parents as harmless. Miller & McCauley⁵⁰ also suggest training physicians and other health professionals to identify various forms of dating violence, including cyber dating abuse. Another study suggests school programs aimed at the prevention of dating violence⁴³.

Johnson et al.⁶⁷ also cite the need to restructure the training curricula for school psychologists to include not only general knowledge on teenage dating violence, but also assessment and intervention in cases of cyber dating abuse.

Finally, the literature also points to the need for further studies focusing on cyber dating abuse. They suggest in-depth qualitative studies that attempt to elucidate the experiences of cyber dating abuse perpetrated by intimate partners in the modern technological world, aimed at prevention and intervention efforts^{19,22,47,49,52,53,60,63} concerned with distinguishing youth with heterosexual orientation from those with homosexual orientation^{38,46}, and that relate sexting, alcohol use, sexual risk behaviors, depression, and anxiety to cyber violence in the context of dating^{44,62,64}.

Final remarks

This review reiterates evidence of differences between cyber dating abuse and cyberbullying, considering the three main types of cyber dating abuse (control/monitoring; revenge porn, including unconsented sexting; and direct aggression) addressed in this article.

The first difference involves the issue of audience (posts aimed at public humiliation in a peer collective), central to cyberbullying but not necessarily present in cyber dating abuse. In the latter, tracking and monitoring target the amorous/sexual partner and are done discreetly, without public knowledge or that of the partner. The anonymousness and secrecy of abusive practices in intimate relationships are crucial for their reproduction. For example, there are dozens of mobile phone apps (Android and iPhone) that allow remote control of the mobile devices, simple, easy, and without the partner's knowledge, of all the acts done with the phone, including posts, chats, moves (via GPS technology), calls, photos, and videos, among others.

Harassment or control/monitoring in cyber dating abuse is known to the literature on gender violence/intimate partner violence, i.e., aimed at controlling behaviors and social contacts, to monitor

friendships and possible amorous betrayals³⁵. The power relationship and power imbalance are thus associated with the idea of controlling the partner and are linked to a gender perspective.

Meanwhile, revenge porn, which includes the widespread practice of unconsented sexting and direct aggression, also appears in cyberbullying. Unconsented sexting is not even limited to amorous and sexual partners. Direct aggression involves acts that aim to cause harm to the partner, like threats, insults, slander, and defamation³⁵. Even these points of convergence involve different social representations: cyber dating abuse is often interpreted by victims as proof of love and jealousy (which is not true for cyberbullying) and is characteristic of intimate partner violence.

Cyber dating abuse is not limited to teenage amorous and sexual relationships, since it also occurs in adults, but young people are potentially more vulnerable to its effects⁶⁸. The harms to the identity, self-esteem, integrity, and privacy of victims of cyber dating abuse leave psychological scars, the extent of which is still unknown, potentially leading to withdrawal, depression, anxiety, poor school performance, and even suicide attempts and suicide itself^{69,70}.

Such consequences highlight the importance of a careful approach by health professionals when analyzing and addressing these issues with teenagers, as well as the professionals' contribution to the identification of such situations. Although cyber dating abuse is a recent issue due to its on-line and technological characteristics, the theme of intimate partner violence has already accumulated experience in health and education, and suggests that discussing teenagers' amorous relationships with them is a strategic and still insufficiently met demand, given this age group's vulnerability to suffering and practicing various forms of violence.

In an age of relationships with on-line hyper-exposure, cyber dating abuse represents damage to the individual's public image, which is essential capital in the field of on-line social relationships^{5,71}. Cyber dating abuse is also a new modality of intimate partner violence, challenging studies to better elucidate whether there is basically a continuum of acts between partners that are already violent in their face-to-face exchanges, or if the digital environment encourages those who would not otherwise practice such acts without such means. The high level of reciprocity in cyber dating abuse further indicates that future studies should seek to understand how gender dynamics are reproduced or subverted in this form of cyber violence.

We contend that interventions should focus less on the idea of controlling the use of technologies (since they are a central thrust of contemporary teen sociability) and more on a critical discussion of how different forms of violence are routinely taken for granted in relationships since they are first experienced by youth.

Contributors

R. M. D. Flach and S. F. Deslandes contributed equally to the article's elaboration.

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Resumo

A cultura digital e sua rede de comércio, expandida a partir dos anos 2000 com o advento das plataformas de redes sociais, incita seus partícipes à (hiper) exposição e espetacularização das intimidades, com consequências inerentes à imagem pessoal e à privacidade, publicizando nos meios digitais questões de foro íntimo, especialmente os relativos à sexualidade e corporalidade. Nesse contexto, busca-se compreender como o fenômeno do abuso digital nas relações afetivo-sexuais é conceituado e caracterizado nos estudos científicos, quais agravos à saúde são associados e tecnologias sociais de intervenção são sugeridas. Essa forma de abuso digital é uma nova expressão da violência entre parceiros íntimos que envolve, dentre outras práticas, a disseminação de fotos e vídeos constrangedores e mensagens íntimas sem o consentimento prévio, com o intuito de humilhar e difamar a pessoa. O presente trabalho constitui uma revisão sistemática integrativa, incluindo 35 artigos, predominando os estudos norte-americanos (22). Dentre os tipos de abusos digitais se destacam as formas de agressão direta e controle/monitoramento. Apesar da alta prevalência, especialmente entre adolescentes e jovens, a literatura destaca que a prática desse tipo de abuso digital é muitas vezes naturalizada. As intervenções sugeridas são majoritariamente de prevenção e conscientização acerca dos relacionamentos abusivos, atuação de conselheiros na escola e para a orientação às famílias. A alta reciprocidade da prática do abuso digital nas relações afetivo-sexuais entre homens e mulheres indica que análises futuras devem buscar compreender como as dinâmicas de violência de gênero são aí reproduzidas ou subvertidas.

Violência por Parceiro Íntimo; Rede Social; Internet; Adolescente

Resumen

La cultura digital y su red comercial se expandieron a partir de los años 2000 con el advenimiento de las plataformas de redes sociales, incitando a sus partícipes a la (hiper) exposición y espectacularización de sus intimidades, con consecuencias inherentes a la imagen personal y a la privacidad, publicitando en los medios digitales cuestiones de carácter íntimo, especialmente las que son relativas a la sexualidad y corporalidad. En este contexto, se busca comprender cómo es concebido y caracterizado el fenómeno del abuso digital en las relaciones afectivo-sexuales en los estudios científicos, qué daños a la salud están asociados al mismo y qué tecnologías sociales de intervención se sugieren. Esta forma de abuso digital es una nueva expresión de la violencia en pareja que involucra, entre otras prácticas, la difusión de fotos y vídeos comprometedores y mensajes íntimos sin consentimiento previo, con el fin de humillar y difamar a la persona. El presente trabajo constituye una revisión sistemática integradora, incluyendo 35 artículos, donde predominan estudios norteamericanos (22). Entre los tipos de abusos digitales se destacan las formas de agresión directa y control/monitorización. A pesar de la alta prevalencia, especialmente entre adolescentes y jóvenes, la literatura destaca que la práctica de este tipo de abuso digital está considerada muchas veces natural. Las intervenciones sugeridas son mayoritariamente de prevención y concientización sobre las relaciones abusivas, actuación de orientadores en la escuela y en las familias. La alta reciprocidad de la práctica del abuso digital en las relaciones afectivo-sexuales entre hombres y mujeres indica que los análisis futuros deben buscar comprender cómo se reproducen y subvierten las dinámicas de violencia de género en este contexto.

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