Chapter 10
Spanish Youth Perceptions About Cyberbullying: Qualitative Research into Understanding Cyberbullying and the Role That Parents Play in Its Solution

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10.1 Introduction

Studies on cyberbullying have been a recurring theme in psychological research over the past 10 years. These studies, as previously occurred with school bullying, have attempted to know the nature of this phenomenon and lower its prevalence, considering the negative consequences for both victims and perpetrators. However, given the epidemiological approach of initial studies, cyberbullying research has predominantly used a quantitative approach where surveys have been the most widely used methodology to evaluate cyberbullying.

Research from this quantitative methodology has been devoted to analyze cyberbullying prevalence and risk and protective factors related to this phenomenon. Less attention has been paid to the meanings that youth confer to cyberbullying, considering the social nature of such interactions as well as the role that socialization agents (e.g., the family) play in cyberbullying. In this sense, qualitative research offers new ways to know youth's perspectives about cyberbullying, not only their own definitions about this type of aggression but also what role they believe that adults have to play in preventing and intervening in cyberbullying. Indeed, during the past few years, qualitative research has been increasingly fruitful. Several studies have analyzed the way children and adolescents from different countries perceive cyberbullying, the behaviors that they include as part of it, the impact of cyberbullying on those who suffer it, the reasons why youths engage in cyberbullying, and the coping strategies they use to stop cyberbullying (Ackers 2012; Agatston et al. 2007; Bryce and Fraser 2013; Cassidy et al. 2009; Compton et al. 2014; Frisén et al.

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2014; Kofoed and Ringrose 2012; Mishna et al. 2009; Naruskov et al. 2012; Wilton and Campbell 2011). As a whole, these studies have provided crucial information to know youths' perspective about these interactions and have been determinant for planning and implementing actions against cyberbullying by teachers, parents, and policy-makers.

Given the importance of qualitative research, this chapter presents an analysis of the meanings that Spanish youths aged 10–16 years confer to cyberbullying. We offer a study based on focus groups during which, and according to former research, we asked males and females about what they understand by cyberbullying, if there were any differences between cyber and school bullying, the reasons that motivate people to such action, and the role that adults play in prevention and intervention actions. We believe that the direct information obtained from those who suffer, observe, or participate in these interactions will help us learn more about a conduct whose translation into other languages like Spanish is not always clear. We consider that this chapter can be of much interest to learn about some barriers and difficulties that psychological research and education practice on cyberbullying must face to advance in its cross-cultural analysis and also in its prevention.

10.1.1   Cyberbullying Definition

Many people believe that they know well what cyberbullying is and think that they can easily recognize it when they come across it. However, reality shows that the cyberbullying definition is extremely varied, even in the scientific community (Sabella et al. 2013). Generally speaking, cyberbullying is described as a type of indirect traditional bullying because it occurs more than once, continues over time, is intentional, and is a form of psychological violence (Dehue et al. 2008). Cyberbullying comprises many aggressive strategies, which include sending threatening messages, posting false information on social networks or blogs, seizing digital identities, or deliberately excluding people from Internet groups. Cyberbullying has been defined as any conduct done via digital or electronic media by an individual or group that intends to harm or bother others (Tokunaga 2010). Yet cyberbullying has some specific characteristics that distinguish it from traditional bullying. These include the fact that cyberbullying goes beyond barriers in the school setting and takes place wherever victims connect to the Internet. Perpetrators can remain anonymous, and the digital means in which their conduct takes place makes it difficult for perpetrators to be aware of their victims' emotional reactions. Repetition occurs when perpetrators constantly send harmful or threatening messages but also when they resend the messages or pictures they use to other people to make them aware of the harassment the victim suffers (Smith 2012).

Despite the existence of these different characteristics, the cyberbullying definitions that researchers employ vary, as does the behavior they measure to know prevalence. Apart from this problem, there is no equivalent word to bullying in many languages other than English, which makes its study and comparing data among countries difficult. For instance, it has several translations in Spanish, which em-

ploys terms such as *acoso* (harassment), *victimización* (victimization), and *maltrato* (mistreatment). In order to find the terms that schoolchildren employ to describe victimization among peers, researchers have conducted cross-cultural studies to determine equivalent terms to the English term *"bullying."* The results obtained in Spain demonstrate that the most widespread term was *meterse con alguien* (teasing, for both direct and indirect physical and verbal aggressions), followed by *maltrato* (mistreatment) and *abuso* (abuse), where *maltrato* comes closer to the English term *bullying* (Smith et al. 2002). More recently, Spanish adolescents have reported that the Spanish term that they would use to indicate cyberbullying would be *acoso* (harassment; Nocentini et al. 2010). Therefore, in Spanish-speaking countries, it is still important to know what people understand by cyberbullying exactly, what characteristics they attribute it, and what type of behaviors these interactions comprise.

10.1.2 Cyberbullying and Traditional Bullying as an Overlapping or Divergent Phenomenon

Recent research has analyzed to what extent cyberbullying is a phenomenon that is independent of traditional bullying or if they are part of the same aggressive pattern (in this same volume, see Giumetti and Kowalski 2015). Some researchers have suggested that cyberbullying forms part of the same block of aggressive behaviors, but people use different methods to hurt their victims (Dooley et al. 2009). To support this hypothesis, some studies have found that perpetrators and victims of school bullying tend to also be cyberspace perpetrators and victims (Cassidy et al. 2009; Cross et al. 2015; Hinduja and Patchin 2008; Juvonen and Gross 2008). This would suggest that both bullying types overlap. Other studies that support that cyberbullying and traditional school bullying are converging phenomena are those that demonstrate that the psychological and social consequences that victims suffer, and the problems that perpetrators face, are similar in both forms of aggression (Juvonen and Gross 2008; Kowalski and Limber 2013; Låftman et al. 2013). There is further evidence to help sustain the overlapping hypothesis in those studies that found similarities among the reasons that lead males and females to engage in both forms of bullying, for example, wishing to obtain a better status and more power among peers, fun-seeking, and wanting release from boredom (Ackers 2012; Compton et al. 2014).

However, some studies indicate the need to distinguish between both forms of aggression. These include those which show that both forms of bullying barely overlap. For example, several studies have found that many victims and perpetrators of school bullying do not engage in cyberbullying (Kowalski and Limber 2013; Kubiszewski et al. 2015). Other studies that support the hypothesis of divergence are those which find that psychosocial adjustment of victims differs according to the type of bullying suffered. For example, some studies demonstrate that school bullying has a stronger impact on victims (Ortega et al. 2009), while others indicate that the impact is stronger on cyberbullying victims (Hay et al. 2010). Additionally, studies that have analyzed the reasons why perpetrators engage in both bullying

types indicate certain differences. For example, while cyberbullying involves reasons like avoiding punishment/retaliation, revenge, and anonymity, school bullying is more motivated by perceived differences in various attributes such as race, weight, or academic abilities and also for anger/frustration at having been a victim of bullying (Compton et al. 2014; Wilton and Campbell 2011; Dooley et al. 2009).

Although several studies have already explored the overlap between school bullying and cyberbullying, the results are often divergent and require qualitative analyses to confirm these results. For this reason, the present study attempts to learn if youths perceive cyberbullying or bullying as clearly different phenomena, or if, conversely, they believe that cyberbullying is a type of bullying that employs some form of technology.

10.1.3   Prevention and Intervention Efforts

There is still little empirical evidence for the efficacy of the efforts made to intervene in cyberbullying (Sabella et al. 2013). Researchers have argued that we should draw upon experience from traditional bullying to prevent online bullying (Campbell 2005). Anti-bullying policies, peer helper programs, or social skills development strategies have proved successful in traditional bullying (Ttofi and Farrington 2011). To reduce possible risk factors and to prevent online bullying, these responses may be effective together with parental monitoring and education in cybersafety (Perren et al. 2012). Consequently, it is necessary to take a holistic approach in developing responses to deal with traditional and online bullying, which involves teachers, parents, and, of course, students.

Regarding students, previous research has shown that instead of encouraging youths to turn off or to avoid technology, students should be educated with adequate skills to respond effectively to cyberbullying. These skills include talking with a trusted adult, get additional assistance, block harassing messages, and remove hurtful content after archiving it (Bryce and Fraser 2013; Sabella et al. 2013). Other responses expressed by students are to report the website where the messages and images appear, report to the police, ignore messages, and confront the perpetrator in person or to do the same to him/her (Frisén et al. 2014; Giménez-Gualdo 2014). So, it is not just important to know what strategies youths think are more effective to stop cyberbullying but also their willingness to help those who suffer it; and if, for example, this willingness depends on the existence of some kind of friendly relationship with the victim.

Regarding parents and teachers, previous research has shown that trust and open communication among parents, teachers, and youths is a protective factor against cyberbullying (Elgar et al. 2014; Navarro et al. 2013). Therefore, parents need to be prepared to respond to technology issues. They should be aware of their children's activity online and work to understand the technology that they use. Sabella et al. (2013) stated that teachers and parents are obliged to help children become knowledgeable about technology use and teach them to police themselves. It is especially important to educate children about how to protect their personal data, and so, it

is important to know to what extent youths perceive their parents or other adults as a source of suitable support and the role they play in solving problems like cyberbullying.

10.1.4   Aims of the Present Study

The general aim of this work is to learn how a group of Spanish youths understand and interpret problems like cyberbullying, especially when we consider that no equivalent term exists in Spanish. We are actually interested in knowing: (1) the differences they find between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, (2) what motivates perpetrators, (3) what concerns youths about a subject that entails considerable public alarm, (4) inquire into what a victim should do to stop cyberbullying, and (5) understand the role they think adults should play, especially parents, in intervening in these problems.

In short, the intention of this work is to go beyond merely describing this phenomenon by approaching the way we understand these relations from the perspective of those people who suffer this problem more. The youths' discourse allowed us to know about their attitudes to cyberbullying.

10.2   Method

10.2.1   Design

In accordance with the aims of the study, a qualitative methodological framework was followed that adopted a youth participation design. This approach allowed us to study cyberbullying from the perspective of children and adolescents who had experienced or observed it. The design took the form of a multiple case study (Yin 1984), which, apart from obtaining representative results, provided solid convincing results when combined with various analysis units (gender and age). We did not ask participants to disclose whether they themselves had ever been a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying in order to protect their confidentiality in the discussion groups.

10.2.2   Participants

We conducted the current study in a city of central Spain, whose approximate population was 60,000. The participants were 108 children and adolescents aged 10–16 years from two primary schools and two secondary schools. We selected the schools from each level of education with the help of the local education bureau and in accordance with the criteria that govern the geographical location: two centers on the

outskirts and two in the city center. We contacted principals by e-mail and phone. Once they gave consent to participate, students listened to a talk by the first author, and each student received a form for parental consent. We recruited those children whose parents agreed they could participate. Participants included 55 girls and 53 boys. All the participants were Caucasian and with a middle-high socioeconomic background.

10.2.3   Data Collection Procedure

We collected data from semi-structured focus groups through informal discussions held with a moderator to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest (Berg 2004). There were 18 focus groups, and each comprised 6–8 participants. Since the focal point of the discussion was not youths' personal experiences, the groups were either mixed or of the same gender. Twelve groups included homogeneous single-sex groups and six mixed-gender groups. The saturation point of the information justified the number of groups. We created all the groups after the first four-month period of the academic year. The moderators were the two authors of this chapter.

10.2.4   Focus Group Questions

Based on previous studies (Compton et al. 2014; Mishna et al. 2009; Navarro et al. 2013), the researchers devised questions to guide the discussion in each focus group. As this study was interested in determining how participants understood cyberbullying and what role they believed parents play in intervention, the questions focused on these key areas. We did not ask the participants about their own cyberbullying experiences in order to protect their confidentiality. The questions used to guide the discussion were:

1. What is cyberbullying?
2. What are the differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying?
3. Why do you think some people engage in cyberbullying?
4. Do you think that cyberbullying is a serious problem?
5. Does cyberbullying worry you?
6. What should cyberbullying victims do to stop it?
7. Would you help someone suffering from cyberbullying?
8. Would you look for help if it happened to you?
9. Do you think that cyberbullying victims should talk about it to someone?
10. Should victims tell their parents about it?
11. What can parents do to help victims?
12. Do your parents monitor what you do on the Internet? Do they teach you how to use social networks or other websites on the Internet?

Following the study by Compton et al. (2014), after participants had provided their insight into question 1, we handed out the cyberbullying definition by Tokunaga (2010) to them on a printed sheet. Providing this definition ensured that participants had a shared cyberbullying definition to guide their discussion for the other questions.

10.2.5   Analytical Process

Having finished the transcripts, we analyzed the content of the obtained information following a thematic approach. The codification process corresponded to what is called "field format" (Anguera 1994). We started by organizing work, which primarily consisted in the thematic blocks deriving from the main focus group questions, and we initiated an inductive process to create the categories and subcategories. We grouped the relevant conversational units together in accordance with those repeated aspects that we noted in the participants' conversational fragments. This process enabled us to modify the categorization of themes and subthemes according to the analysis done of the textual information. This afforded greater flexibility when it came to interpreting the information and the possibility of offering a description of the problems studied according to the opinions provided by the study participants. We used the ATLAS.ti program to assign the conversational fragments to each theme and subtheme according to its versatility to reorganize data throughout the analysis process.

10.2.6   Elements to Judge the Accuracy of the Research

We validated the scientific precision of this research by adopting the following criteria that also complemented the research (Guba and Lincoln 1989).

10.2.6.1   Credibility (Internal Validity)

We confirmed credibility by including various researchers in the study context, continuous assessments and exchange between the authors of this study, previous participation by researchers in qualitative research processes with similar samples, and the process of triangulation of results. We organized session groups to comment on and revise the results. The authors and other researchers who belonged to the psychology department participated in these sessions.

10.2.6.2   Transferability (External Validity)

We can define qualitative approaches by their flexibility and open character when it comes to tackling the unique character of the phenomenon under study. However,

the description of the provided methodology, together with the review of the different studies done in different contexts, will allow readers to judge the design and the way we conducted this research.

10.2.6.3 Dependability and Confirmability (Replicability and External Reliability)

We were able to validate consistency, thanks to the clear, concise way of explaining the data analysis process and the process of obtaining the results. Together with this, we used a field diary to make the researchers' position clear about the phenomenon under study, unify criteria during the research process, obtain more focus groups to compare the information, and explore new aspects.

10.3 Results

We organized the results into sections and subsections after bearing in mind the thematic blocks, themes, and subthemes that we grouped the different conversational fragments into. Despite dividing the sample according to age and gender, which we did with the focus groups, to prepare this report, we opted to consider all the transcriptions together as a global discourse that drew together all the conversational fragments. However, within the comments, and more specifically in the section devoted to discussion, we indicated differences in discourses according to age and gender.

10.3.1 *Definitions and Views of Cyberbullying*

While forming groups with the 10–12-year-old participants, we found out that many were unaware of the term "cyberbullying." However, there was always at least one participant who said he/she knew what we meant and used names in Spanish to explain what cyberbullying was to the other group members. Some of these terms were *acoso en Internet* (Internet harassment), *acoso virtual* (Virtual harassment), or *maltrato en la red* (Internet abuse). Other participants said that it was a type of bullying, an Anglo-Saxon term that they knew, and they explained that cyberbullying was a form of bullying that took place on the Internet.

Among the definitions obtained in the group discussion, a 10-year-old boy stated that cyberbullying occurred when "a person teased someone else on the Internet and this person not only wanted to laugh at the other person, but wanted many people to laugh at them." A 14-year-old girl stated that cyberbullying takes place when "a person uses the Internet to insult someone else or to threaten them. They show them up. This person constantly teases others, blackmails them, or posts something on the Internet that can really hurt them." When we asked the participants to give

examples of the conducts they would include in the cyberbullying category, many participants resorted to the cases they knew from the media which had far-reaching international repercussions as a result of those who had suffered it, having committed suicide. Similarly, many participants talked about a case that had taken place in their city a few days before holding the discussion groups. This case involved an adolescent who murdered a classmate and previously sent threatening messages over the Internet and by mobile.

For the 10–12-year-olds, the number of conducts included in the so-called cyberbullying was much larger than for the older participants. This age group indicated that cyberbullying do not only include conducts among peers, like insults, threats sent in messages on social networks, and posting humiliating pictures and videos but also computing offenses like hacking websites, robbing personal data (bank details), or conducts that involve adults like grooming. The impression we got from the responses of the younger participants was that they were not certain about what is cyberbullying. From 12 years of age, the cyberbullying concept came over more clearly, and the participants spoke more specifically about it but limited it to those behaviors which take place among peers. Examples of cyberbullying were uploading personal photos, or writing false claims about harassed victims, using webcam recordings without the victim realizing, posting compromising photos of victims or in the nude, and also blackmailing, and stealing passwords and replacing identities on social networks. The behaviors that this age group discussed about the most frequently included compromising pictures, and, in many cases, this group linked cyberbullying with breaking off an affective relationship between those involved. For example, a 12-year-old girl told us about a case she had heard in which "a girl was taking a shower in a gym at her high school, and someone took a photo of her. Then they posted the photo on Internet forums and in WhatsApp groups. This victim did not want to go to institute because people laughed at her." A 15-year-old female explained that she knew another female "who sent naked photos to her boyfriend. One day she discovered that her boyfriend was seeing other girls and she left him. Then he took revenge by posting the photos of her in the nude on Facebook and he laughed at her. She had to report the case at the local police station."

10.3.1.1 Characteristics of Cyberbullying and Differences with Traditional School Bullying

When describing what characterizes cyberbullying, people compare it with traditional bullying. However, it is important to consider that although the participants established some differences between cyberbullying and bullying (especially those characteristics linked to the context in which either one or the other took place), they mainly talked about both bullying types forming part of the same phenomenon. From the participants' view, bullying and cyberbullying are in the same continuum where people are sometimes victims of traditional bullying and victims of cyberbullying other times. When describing these two phenomena, they did not always bear in mind the characteristic criteria that research has indicated, for example,

imbalance of power, repetition, or the desire to harm victims. Some participants even considered that these conducts are not intentional in all cases, but there are times when they form part of jokes for which imbalance of power is not at all clear. Likewise, some participants saw cyberbullying as the consequence of a previous conflict that had shifted from a real setting to a virtual one, where those involved suffer and harass differently. Table 10.1 shows the various themes we can classify as the participants' responses to the questions: What is cyberbullying? What are the differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying?

The participants stressed the possibility of perpetrators remaining anonymous, which is much more difficult for traditional bullying. Yet many participants thought that victims are aware of who their perpetrators are, and if they are not sure who they are initially, they discover their identity if the cyberbullying continues with time. In any case, they pointed out that the anonymity perceived by perpetrators makes cyberbullying a potentially more dangerous conduct because the people who play this role believe it is very difficult to find them out. Therefore, they use a more much higher degree of aggressiveness because they think that this would have no consequences for them. In line with this, they thought that technology helps place a distance between perpetrators and victims because it is hard to know victims' emotional reactions. Although some participants believed that, emotionally, the separation between perpetrators and victims is wider, they did not consider it a relevant aspect because they stated that perpetrators know very well what victims could feel, but they do not care. Along these lines, a 14-year-old girl said that "it's true that perpetrators can't see how the people who read what they write about them on social networks, or who send them an email threatening them, can react, but they know very well that they'll not laugh about the situation, they'll feel bad. They simply don't care because they want them to suffer."

The older participants mentioned the repetition criterion more frequently. The younger participants included more sporadic conducts in cyberbullying, such as having received some insult or negative remark in a posting on social networks. It is necessary to point out that for these participants, repetition takes place when the same fact occurs many times, for example, some constantly received messages with insults or threats. They did not think that the repetition criterion arises when, for instance, someone posts a compromising photo on the Internet and resend it to many other people. They believed that repetition involves posting several photos. Despite this notion, they considered that cyberbullying entails much wider public exposure since the information exposed on the Internet reaches a much larger audience. This aspect was most important for the 12–16-year-old group of participants, and they pointed that if other people are not aware of this information, they would not consider it cyberbullying. In line with this, they believed that if someone insults somebody using text messages or WhatsApp, and only the people directly involved are aware of these facts, they would not consider it cyberbullying, rather it would form part of traditional bullying, not even when the means used is a mobile or the Internet.

Finally, they were of the opinion that cyberbullying not only causes psychological harm to victims but also hurts those with access to this information, like family members and friends. During much of their discourse, they did not link the harm

Table 10.1 Themes formed from participants' answers to the question "What is cyberbullying? What are the differences with bullying?"

Theme	Theme description	Illustrative quotation
Anonymity	Exposing victims to cyberbullying performed by known and unknown people	"Bullying takes place between people who know each other, while you might, or might not, know them on the Internet. It's dangerous if the people you don't know can insult or harass you." —13-year-old boy
	Perpetrators' feeling of anonymity can make the victimization suffered more dangerous since they think that no one can discover them, so they are more daring than when they physically face someone	"Not being known makes it easier for some people to be more daring than when faced with their victim. People feel more freedom to do what they want because they think they can hide their identity." —14-year-old girl
Repetition	In order to consider an aggressive behavior to bullying and cyberbullying, it must take place over a considerable period of time	"I don't think that cyberbullying involves someone insulting you once or twice, but it continues for a long time. It must be repetitive and last a long time. If you receive emails for many days and for a long time, then it's cyberbullying." —15-year-old girl
Public exposure	Unlike bullying, cyberbullying can involve greater public exposure as many people access the information published on the Internet	"Cyberbullying is more dangerous because it involves intimate aspects. It can reach many people, and they can make you feel a bigger fool." —13-year-old girl
Psychological harm	In school bullying, harm can be physical and psychological, while cyberbullying only involves psychological harm	"Cyberbullying can really hurt you inside; it can make you feel depressed, you don't want to leave home, etc." —12-year-old-girl
Social repercussion	The repercussions of cyberbullying go beyond the harm it causes victims because what people post on the Internet can also affect family members and friends	"Cyberbullying harm can affect your family and friends. For example, your friends can think that what they publish about you is true, and don't want to be with you anymore." —13-year-old-boy
Separation from victims	Cyberbullying places a greater distance between perpetrators and victims because technology makes knowing victims' emotional reactions difficult	"If I harm someone by cyberbullying, I can't see their expression. I mean her father could be sat next to her reading what I'm saying about her, but you keep doing it. You keep keying the words in. You don't care about her feelings." —15-year-old-girl
Continuity between bullying and cyberbullying	Although both types of bullying can take place in an isolated fashion, they often represent a continuous phenomenon in which harassment occurs both online and offline	"Sometimes bullying turns to cyberbullying, or the other way round. I think that it's much more dangerous when cyberbullying later becomes physical aggression." —14-year-old-boy

caused with the fact that family relations and friends empathize with victims' suffering but with further harm because it is possible that those who saw the information posted on the Internet actually believe it, so they could negatively react to the victim. They also explained that when cyberbullying shifted to the real world and took the form of traditional bullying, it was much easier that the latter took the form of more severe physical aggression with worse consequences for victims. About this, one 15-year-old boy said that "cyberbullies begin by posting small insults on the Internet, which then become more and more intense, and then they get angrier. If they meet the victim in person, they cannot control themselves and cause more harm because they got angrier on the Internet."

10.3.1.2 Reasons for Cyberbullying

When listening to the discourse on what would motivate cyberbullies' conduct, we classified the reasons given into themes, which Table 10.2 provides. Specifically, youths considered that cyberbullies take it to be a form of fun and that it forms part of jokes in some cases. If it is a joke, the participants did not think it is very important, but considered it a trivial aspect, and not one that could harm the person who is the target of the joke. The participants also believed that cyberbullying could be a means to blackmail to obtain something from the victim or to somehow change their behavior. They understood cyberbullying to be a manifestation of a former conflict between victims and perpetrators, and cyberbullying would be the way to continue it on the Internet. Therefore, they did not examine cyberbullying to be a conduct that addresses people who cannot defend themselves, rather a strategy that both parties can adopt.

The other reasons referred to the characteristics attributed to perpetrators, for example, they have a bad personality and enjoy making their victims suffer. They also linked aspects with social status in peer groups and the desire to be in a higher position than victims are and to feel superior to them. In line with this, they also described jealousy as an emotion that leads perpetrators to behave as they did, although their behavior could also stem from a former episode of aggressive behavior or not feeling motivated by school, which could encourage them to engage in such conducts at school and virtually.

10.3.1.3 Concern About Cyberbullying

When we asked the participants to what extent they thought that cyberbullying is a serious problem, some pointed out that it is something to which everyone can be exposed to and should, therefore, be a matter of concern. A 12-year-old boy said, "it is something that was becoming more and more usual. People mention an increasing number of cases or you can see someone talking about it on TV, and you think it could be you someday." Other participants said that insults on the Internet are so normal that they do not consider them all that important and that people

Table 10.2 Themes formed from participants' answers to the question "What motivates cyberbullying?"

Theme	Theme description	Illustrative quotation
Fun	They see cyberbullying as a form of fun for perpetrators to laugh at others and to make them look fools	"The only thing cyberbullies want is to make fun of others." —13-year-old-boy
	Sometimes youths perceive cyberbullying as a joke where the perpetrator wants to entertain others and it should not be taken seriously	"It's not always a case of hurting someone. It might be part of a joke, something entertaining, and it's not dangerous." —14-year-old-boy
Revenge	The fact that a former conflict or confrontation existed between those involved can motivate cyberbullying. So, people view cyberbullying as a form of revenge for something the victim did to the bully in the past	"It can happen because of a fight or some bad vibe between these people. This happens a lot; you don't like someone because of what they did to you, and you criticize them, and things like that. Most people do this." —15 year-old-girl
Blackmail (obtaining something)	Cyberbullying can be a means for blackmailing, to obtain something in exchange for not telling secrets or private information. Cyberbullies want something that the victim has or the victim must do something that benefits them	"They threaten other people by saying things about them on the Internet so they do their homework for them." —12 year-old-boy "I know a boy who threatened his girlfriend to post some of her photos if she left him." —14-year-old-girl
Bad personality	People describe cyberbullies as evil people whose only motivation is to enjoy inflicting harm on others	"As they are bad people, you don't need a reason. They enjoy hurting the feelings of others, and don't care how they feel. I think they enjoy harming others." —15-year-old-girl
Feeling superior	Perpetrators wish to show feelings of superiority by overpowering classmates. Therefore, cyberbullying can be a means to manage social status in peer groups and to occupy leadership positions	"Many people try to become popular with these things, like sending a message so people clearly understand that they are superior to all the others." —13-year-old-girl
Feeling jealous	Youths perceive cyberbullying as a reaction to perpetrators feeling jealous about the way their victims behave and act	"I know a girl who they teased because she was very pretty and was a good student. They said things about her because they were jealous of her. They tried hurting those who they want to be like." —12-year-old-girl
School maladjustment	Youths describe bullies to be people who have school maladjustment problems, like not feeling motivated to study	"They are people who feel bored when they come to the Institute. They just want to spend some time there, and don't study or do anything." —14-year-old-boy
Psychosocial maladjustment	Youths describe bullies as people with psychosocial maladjustment problems who always get into trouble or have internal conflicts that lead them to harass other classmates	"They do all this because they feel frustrated. For some reason, they're not happy and don't want others to feel happy." —13-year-old-girl

were unaware of real cyberbullying cases because they tended to trivialize them. Likewise, others thought that it was not a problem to worry about because the cases that appeared on the media were isolated and extreme. One 13-year-old girl told us, "people make a big issue of it than it really is. People see cyberbullying everywhere, but it's not as bad as all that. Quite often it is part of jokes that don't last long." Other participants pointed out that considering such conducts to be cyberbullying or not depended on how the people receiving this aggression interpreted it. One 13-year-old girl said, "someone can be playing a joke, but the person on the other end of the joke can take it to be cyberbullying and what they do hurts them."

The participants stated that concern for these problems is more social than personal. The information broadcast on the media and the talks they received on the subject at their schools made them think that adults are more concerned. An 11-year-old boy said, "the police came and gave us some talks about us being careful what we do on the Internet. I think it's a matter of concern."

The participants seemed more concerned when they are the victims or people close to them are; otherwise, they considered it a distant problem. Yet when they personally knew a case, it makes them think on what they do on the Internet. A 14-year-old boy explained, "with the cases you know, you think more about what you do on the Internet. You start thinking about what others can do with the information you post on the Internet and you try to be more careful." It was interesting to verify that they worried more about traditional bullying than cyberbullying because the former can be immediately more dangerous because it can end up in physical aggression. An 11-year-old boy said, "they can hurt you over the Internet, but I'm more worried about coming across someone and them hitting me." The older the participants, the more importance they attached to cyberbullying because it could affect their social reputation more. They were particularly concerned about information uploaded on the Internet reaching a larger audience. Despite all this, they were also worried about cyberbullying shifting from a virtual setting to a real one and physical aggression taking place. They took cyberbullying to be a very serious worrying fact when someone had suffered it and committed suicide, or if someone became depressed, or had to change school or move to a different city/town.

10.3.2 Intervention Strategies

10.3.2.1 Coping Strategies

When we asked them what cyberbullying victims should do about stopping it, most participants assumed that it would be complicated to leave this situation behind them and were quite unaware how to solve it. They believed that victims should tell someone and seek help but also pointed out that a priori, they would try to solve it themselves before seeking help. Besides, most students believed that confronting cyberbullying implied the victim losing the right to access the network because they considered the best solution was to be less active on the Internet to avoid insults or

threats. They also considered that suitable Internet account management is vital to raise the level of privacy in social networks, as is restricting information that others could view as much as possible by, for example, making Instagram accounts private. Another important form of action was, on the one hand, not responding to aggressions to make perpetrators' conduct less relevant and, on the other hand, not giving the perpetrator reasons to continue. However, they believed that the solution might not prove effective. In this case, they said that the victim should save everything the cyberbully had sent them or had posted on the Internet about them and must report it. A 15-year-old boy said, "the most important thing to do is to eliminate the perpetrator from all the social networks you participate in, you must block this person. If the problem is serious and continuous, you should report it because you will always be able to know who is behind it all."

Reporting to the police was an aspect that many participants said that they would do, and yet, they were unaware how this type of bullying could be reported and punished. They thought that remaining anonymous on the Internet provided perpetrators with protection. At this stage, they thought it important to seek help but pointed out that they would more likely tell a friend before telling an adult. A 13-year-old girl told us, "a friend can help you. If you tell your parents about it, they can't help because they don't feel the same way you do. But your friends feel the way you do and they see this situation as something normal." Therefore, as in school bullying, social support was extremely important because it buffered the effect of aggression. Friends could offer advice about directly confronting harassment and about improving computer skills by, for example, better managing social networks.

When we asked them if they would help someone suffering cyberbullying, most of the participants said they would help their friends and the people they know. An 11-year-old boy said, "I don't like them hurting other people, but I'm not that worried about people I barely know. Yet if victims are my friends, then of course I'd try to do something as they hurt me too because the victims are my friends." Yet when we asked them what they would do to help friends if they needed them, many of them acknowledged that they did not know how they would act. They said they would offer them advice about making accounts private, managing personal data, and restricting people who could view profiles on social networks (Table 10.3).

10.3.2.2   Telling Adults

As we previously mentioned, many of the participants explained that they would first attempt to solve problems with peers themselves, and if that failed, they would seek help. However, they also stated that they would do this because the problem they faced had become more serious. Yet they also stated that if they told someone about this situation, an adult would not be their first option. When we asked them why they thought that cyberbullying victims did not tell teachers, a 14-year-old girl explained that "telling a teacher something personal is embarrassing," and a 12-year-old boy told us, "if you tell a teacher, your parents are more likely to find out about it. Besides, if you tell a teacher, the whole school will find out, and the

Table 10.3 Themes formed from the participants' answers to the question "What should the victim do to stop cyberbullying?"

Theme	Theme description	Illustrative quotation
Managing personal data	Everyone must correctly manage their personal data on the Internet to avoid placing any personal or compromising data that someone could use to harass them with	"First you must be careful with the personal data you place on the Internet. It is important to think what you post on the Internet or what photos you upload"—15-year-old girl
Avoidance: less Internet activity	Avoiding technology or disconnecting for a lengthy period of time	"You have to somehow do what you do when you are out of the Internet. If someone picked on you in a given place, you avoid going to that place. It's the same on the Internet; you have to avoid being present as much as possible so it's more difficult for them to pick on you than if you're updating information everyday."—14-year-old boy
Internet account management	Emphasizing the need to learn how to manage different Internet profiles, to restrict access to strangers, and to make content private	"They can still call you queer or whatever, but when you limit access to your social networks, it makes it more difficult for them to send you messages directly. For example, I don't understand why some of my friends have public Instagram accounts when having private ones makes it more difficult for these people to reach you."—15-year-old boy
Not responding to any form of aggression/ Ignoring aggression	Youths do not consider confronting a bully online or offline to be a good solution since it can intensify cyberbullying. They perceive ignoring messages or threats from bullies to be a better solution	"Just don't go on the attack. If you read a message that says "If I see you, you queer, I'll kill you", you mustn't answer. It might be unpleasant and worrying, but you have to learn to just ignore it, because if you answer, you're giving them more chances to carry on getting at you."—13-year-old boy
Importance of social support	Youths perceive that support and help from those close to them is important to withstand cyberbullying consequences and to manage personal data to moderate cyberbullying or to prevent it	"Being supported by the people you are with and appreciate you is very important, and they can help you to be more practical. Before my accounts weren't private and everyone could see my photos and comments. Now only my friends can see them. At least now they can't write anything on my wall like they did before."—15-year-old boy

problem can get worse if the bully finds out." Other students stated that there are trained people to help you at the institute; people trained to deal with this matter confidentially. They said that if anyone is a victim, they should visit the counselor or a teacher they could trust and tell them what was happening to them to stop it.

When we asked them if they thought that victims should tell their parents, most said they should. However, many believed that victims did not usually tell their parents because they did not often know how they would react and because they thought their parents do not possess a competent level of technology and could not help them. A 13-year-old boy added, "victims can think that their parents won't take them seriously, or might not know what to do, or even punish them by taking away their mobile." A 15-year-old girl also said that "victims might feel embarrassed by their parents knowing what they face, and also because they don't know how to stop it." Other students explained that a bully could threaten some victims, so they would not tell anyone, while others pointed out that they would not wish to worry their parents. A 13-year-old boy explained that "my parents have enough problems anyway, and I wouldn't want to worry them with these things."

10.3.2.3   Parental Mediation and Family Communication

The participants perceived that creating a climate of trust and, therefore, good communication between parents and children is fundamental when communicating this type of problems. A 13-year-old girl told us that "it all depends on trust. The same happens to parents and to your friends: if there's not enough trust, you don't tell them anything." They generally expressed that the younger they are, the more they talk with their parents, and that they feel less open to talk with them the older they are. A 14-year-old boy explained, "the younger you are, the more you tell your parents, but as you grow older, some personal things form part of your privacy and you don't share them." When talking about cyberbullying, the older participants were more reluctant to talk about it because they did not think that their parents could do anything about certain problems. A 15-year-old girl said, "I wouldn't tell my parents because then they would say: why didn't you tell us about it all when it first began? Imagine if some compromising photos or videos have been sent. What would your parents do with them if other people already had them?" The participants were generally reluctant to talk with their parents about aspects that they thought were part of their intimacy, especially aspects relating with their interactions on the Internet. However, they acknowledged that there are some important things they would tell their parents before they find out elsewhere or before the problem become worse. A 14-year-old girl said, "although we don't talk to our parents about all this, we should. I always thought it best they find out from me and not from other people, but it's true that I tell them very few things." At this point, some participants said that it is much easier to tell siblings as they perceive them as more technologically competent than their parents and that siblings can be more direct speakers when they face problems on the Internet. A 12-year-old boy explained, "my brother is

older than me, so if he has experienced some form of harassment, or something like that, he knows what to do. So he can tell me and help me."

Regarding family communication, we asked the participants if their parents monitored their Internet activity in some way and if they gave them advice about the pages they can visit or how to manage personal data on the Internet. Here the intention was to check what value the participants conferred to parental mediation on Internet use. As the themes that arose from these questions demonstrated (see Table 10.4), parental mediation was poor and with limitations in most cases to monitor the times spent using the Internet and certain contents or employing certain devices. Such monitoring was greater, the younger participants were, and very few participants mentioned doing joint Internet activities with their parents or receiving advice about managing personal data. They perceived that such aspects depended on their parents' knowledge of technology which, as the participants explained, is quite poor or they do not perceive it as sound knowledge. The participants generally judged parental mediation as poorly effective because, as they themselves indicated, they can deceive their parents or using mobile phones could make parental monitoring of such activities difficult.

When we asked what parents could do specifically to help them if they suffered cyberbullying, the participants answered that it would depend on their knowledge of technology. Thus, younger participants better trusted their parents' skills to solve some problem on the Internet. Some participants feared that their parents' reaction would be to limit their Internet use by confiscating their mobile. They were also afraid that parental intervention would make the problem worse when parents inform educational agents, like teachers, or attempted to talk with perpetrators. However, a considerable number thought that their parents could help deal with the problem by talking with their perpetrator's parents, helping them manage their Internet accounts (for example, taking measures with Internet providers), going to the police if necessary, or simply reassuring them. Many participants spoke about the need for parents offering them advice about how to manage their information on the Internet or what to do if someone teased them, but they did not always talk about such matters with their parents. One 13-year-old boy said, "I know I'm not old enough to use Facebook or Twitter, but I have accounts on them, and my parents know this. I'd like to sometimes ask them things about configurations and such, but I can't because my parents don't use these networks, and they don't know how they work."

10.4 Discussion and Implications for Practice

The discourse obtained during the discussion groups allowed us to conclude that Spanish youths' vocabulary includes the Anglo-Saxon term bullying. However, not all the participants were clear about its meaning, which we found when they had to tell us what cyberbullying was and what conducts they would relate with it. For both age groups that participated in the discussion groups (primary and secondary education students), it clearly came over as a form of harassment (*acoso* in Span-

Table 10.4 Themes formed from participants' answers to the questions "Do your parents monitor what you do on the Internet? Do they teach you how to use social networks and other Internet websites?"

Theme	Theme description	Illustrative quotation
No parental monitoring	Many parents do not monitor what their children do on the Internet. We can attribute lack of parental monitoring to reciprocal trust, and sometimes to carelessness	"Parents trust us. I don't check their mobiles and they don't check mine." —14-year-old girl
Limited technological competences	It is not infrequent to find that parents possess less technological knowledge than their children, who do not perceive them as competent enough to help them with their problems	"My mother does not use a computer, and let alone Facebook. She doesn't know how it works nor what people place on it" —13-year-old boy
Spying parents	Some parents watch their children's activities using their own accounts in social networks and check the list of the sites they browse or attempt to access their cildren's accounts	"I know my mother opened a Twitter account with no photo to see what I placed there, but no matter how much I look for her, I can't find out who it is." —14-year-old boy
Controlling times in relation to the time spent studying	Sometimes parental mediation is limited to control the time we use technological devices or the time spent on the Internet	"In my case, I have to spend 4 hours studying one day, 3 hours another day … They take away my mobile during these hours and they give it me back when I finish studying and I can have it whenever I want." —14-years-old girl
Making contents private	Some participants consider that their activity on the Internet is private and parents must not control it because it is their personal life	"If they ask me, I don't mind telling them which social networks I use or why I use the Internet, but some things are private and you don't want your parents to ever see them, and there are other things I'm sure they wouldn't want to know." —15-year-old girl
Resisting parental control	Many participants admit that their parents keep an eye on them, or can even feel worried, so they keep asking questions about their Internet activities. However, they admit that they can deceive them because they fear they will restrict their Internet use	"They can keep an eye on you, ask you things, but you can deceive them. I've no idea how they might react if they find some things out." —12-year-old boy

ish), which coincided with previous research on the terms employed in Spain to talk about cyberbullying (Nocentini et al. 2010). However, the cyberbullying concept for the 10- and 12-year-old participants was much broader and included conducts such as grooming, which would not form part of cyberbullying as research defined it. The term became more accurate among the older participants that described cyberbullying as aggressive interactions between peers but did not always appear to follow research definition criteria, such as intention, repetition, harm, and imbalance of power. For example, most participants included sporadic conducts in cyberbullying, which contradicts the repetition criterion indicated by research (Smith 2012). Similarly, they did not always mention that imbalance of power formed part of cyberbullying. They often said that cyberbullying could form part of a conflict between peers where both parties used the Internet to continue mutual confrontation by sending messages or threats.

As argued by Sabella et al. (2013), there is a wide variability in the way we define cyberbullying, which includes any form of conflict between peers, and even when the aforementioned defining criteria are unmet. For this reason, we believe that educational action is still necessary to help understand what cyberbullying is and to distinguish between the conducts included in this form of harassment and those that are not. The fact that the information offered by the media affects youths' opinions does not always help them to form a suitable idea of what conducts form part of cyberbullying. In any case, teachers and parents should employ the cases they know from TV and the facts they have witnessed to explain what cyberbullying is and is not.

Although the participants stated that someone can suffer cyberbullying without ever suffering school bullying before, and vice versa, most participants seemed to understand that both forms of aggression were interrelated phenomena rather than different conducts. In line with previous results reported in other countries (Cassidy et al. 2009), some works have often described cyberbullying as a reaction to an incident that took place offline at school and which later took an online form. The participants thought that the combination of both forms of harassment was potentially more dangerous because we can add physical damage to the psychological harm caused by cyberbullying. Cyberbullying, however, for the participants involved certain differences due to the means it occurred in, such as a greater possibility for the perpetrator remaining anonymous; more difficult to empathize with the victim as there is no physical contact between the parties involved; and a wider public repercussion since more people can view the insults, threats, or images about the victim on the Internet.

Academics and researchers have described these differences with school bullying to be specific characteristics of cyberbullying (Wingate et al. 2013). However, many participants pointed out that many victims knew who their bully was, given the continuity between both forms of bullying. They also mentioned that cyberbullying took place between classmates and even friends as a previous research work demonstrated (Fenaughty and Harré 2013; Jackson et al. 2013). The older participants even said that cyberbullying was a reaction to effective relationships ending. Although there is more work available on this matter with university students, some studies have indicated that they can often identify their "ex" as the bully and also

as the cyberbullying victim (Crosslin and Crosslin 2014). These results must attract the attention of teachers, parents, and policy-makers about the need to intervene and that these interventions must simultaneously deal with both forms of bullying, given the relation between both forms. Then, there is also the matter of working on aspects linked to affective relationships since cyberbullying can act as a means by which to harass and control a partner (Burke et al. 2011). Preventing such conducts could mean having to do parallel preventive work into another type of mistreatment relations in adult relationships (Diaz-Aguado and Martinez 2014).

As for what motivates cyberbullying, it is interesting to note that youths understood it as a form of fun, and even a joke, where the idea was not to harm the person to whom these actions are targeted. If this were so, such conducts would not fulfill with the intention criterion that characterizes actions like cyberbullying, but in fact, these remarks could form part of the arguments that perpetrators could offer to justify their conduct. Yet previous studies have found this very result (Compton et al. 2014) and have related it with the fact that perpetrators do not witness victims' reactions and are not aware of the harm they cause. Many of our participants believed that perpetrators were well aware of the harm they caused but did not care. They even described them as evil people who enjoyed harming others. Yet we can link the fact that they viewed cyberbullying as part of a joke with lack of social keys in online contexts, which makes classifying them as a true threat, or not, more difficult (Bryce and Fraser 2013). In any case, these results suggest the need to implement measures that improve empathy to others and not only for perpetrators but also for all other peers who are aware about what goes on but do nothing because they consider it is not a serious matter (Ackers 2012).

In line with this, and despite some clashing views, many participants did not take cyberbullying seriously and even believed that existing public alarm does not match the real situation. Our participants often stated that cyberbullying involved isolated events or events that form part of reciprocal aggression among those involved. They generally viewed it as a problem that does not cause much concern, especially when it does not affect them. This view relates with their willingness to help someone suffering cyberbullying. They would help their friends but not their classmates or people they did not meet much. This outcome indicates just how important it is to work to change these attitudes to intervene in bullying episodes. While youths experience these problems as a distant aspect that does not directly affect them, they are not likely to engage in any form of intervention taken from institutes or other organizations that plan them (Price et al. 2014; Rigby and Bortolozzo 2013).

Other reasons that participants gave about why people are involved in cyberbullying coincided with former research, such as instilling fear, inflicting harm, feeling superior, or obtaining something from victims (Compton et al. 2014; Wilton and Campbell 2011). People have also viewed cyberbullying as a way to get revenge (Law et al. 2012). This may relate to those studies that have indicated how victims of school bullying can use cyberbullying to harm their perpetrators (Dooley et al. 2009). Our participants indicated that this aggression stemmed from a previous conflict between those involved. In such interactions, the perpetrator and victim roles are not clear, and both parties participate with reciprocal harassment. This fact once again indicates that what youths perceived

about cyberbullying did not always respond to the criteria set by researchers and indicates the need to consider how they use the term as they do not always use the imbalance of power criterion in their definitions.

Regarding coping strategies, many participants admitted that they did not know what to do, nor what advice they could give to someone who was a victim of cyberbullying. As in former research studies, our participants said that it is important to manage the personal data they uploaded to the Internet; to make sure that social networks are private; to block perpetrators; and to quickly eliminate all the remarks, insults, or threats in order to minimize the public repercussion that cyberbullying could have (Giménez-Gualdo 2014). When harassment continued for long periods, they recommended reporting it to the police, although they were not very clear about how to report harassment as many believed that perpetrators' assumed anonymity protected them from legal actions. They were not always aware that it was necessary to save any evidence of harassment in order to report it. Hence, parents and teachers should know what legal consequences cyberbullying can have and should teach youths that the Internet does not protect perpetrators.

A fundamental element in the prevention of and intervention in cyberbullying is social support. However, our participants admitted not seeking help when they had a problem. They found it much easier to seek help from a friend than from an adult. Therefore, peer helper programs might prove most useful. Through these programs, cyberbullying victims, or any other young person, can find help from classmates who have received training about responsible technology use, and the risks faced, which include cyberbullying and strategies to cope with it (Sabella et al. 2013). Research also needs to analyze in more detail the role that siblings can play in coping with cyberbullying because the participants perceived them as more technologically competent than adults and think that youths can better cope with cyberbullying given their age and similar use of technology.

Adults were not their first option when seeking help. Indeed, they seemed reluctant to tell adults about their problems, especially adolescents, because they find it hard to admit that they are unable to solve the problem themselves. So, they could find telling them what happened quite embarrassing or they do not view adults having enough technological competence to suitably intervene in cyberbullying. Indeed the value they conferred to parental mediation of cyberbullying was low. Yet we found differences between younger and older participants. Both age groups considered that a climate of trust and good communication with parents are fundamental for them to talk to parents about what they experienced on the Internet, but such trust and communication are apparently lacking more among adolescents than the 10–12-year-old participants are. Recovering communication is fundamental if we wish parents to play a relevant role in solving cyberbullying (in this same volume, see Buelga et al. 2015). However, it is also important to train parents to be technologically competent, so youths can positively view them when they have to face problems like cyberbullying. Parents need to know what their children do online and how they can help them with the risks they face. Previous works have reported that parental mediation in cyberbullying is effective when establishing joint rules between parents and offspring (Navarro et al. 2013). We must make par-

ents aware that they are obliged to teach about responsible technology use, so they themselves must learn to manage personal data and offer their children advice about how to make accounts on social networks private to protect against cyberbullying. Similarly, parents must show their children that they are willing to help them with any challenge they may face, and together, parents and children will seek the best solution to the problem without this entailing restricted technology use. Parents must understand that technology has become an essential element for young people to start and sustain relationships (Korchmaros et al. 2015), so it is no good making them not use it or ignoring what others say about them on the Internet. Parents need to be active in cyberbullying intervention and recover the trust that youths seem to have lost in the parental role to help solve online and offline problems.

10.5 Conclusions

The present work has attempted to present how Spanish youths perceive cyberbullying, when they do not have a similar term in their own language to define such aggressive online conducts. First, the results indicate that they have started to include the Anglo-Saxon term cyberbullying in their vocabulary, but their understanding of this phenomenon presents some differences with the definition used by researchers. Therefore, we need more research efforts to understand how youths approach a phenomenon like cyberbullying and to know to what extent research covers all the meanings that youths confer to this problem. Likewise, research has evidenced that not all youths know what cyberbullying is. Therefore, educational actions are still necessary to help them identify the conducts that make up cyberbullying and to improve their coping strategies. The youths' discourse in the present study reveals that it is necessary to reinforce parents' role in intervening in cyberbullying, improving their technological competences and their image as a source of social support for the risks that youths face on the Internet. This study evidences the necessity to train youths and adults in responsible technology use and in acquiring skills to manage personal data in order to prevent cyberbullying.

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