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Between the Bully, the Victim, and the Witness: The Romanian Adaptation of the Bullying and Cyberbullying Questionnaire (the Short Form)

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ABSTRACT

Bullying and cyberbullying behaviours can vary from physical and verbal bullying to behaviour like online sexting and cyberstalking that are easily perpetuated online. What is truly serious about this problem is the fact that most of the parents don't even know about this type of behaviours or about the impact it has on their children, even if they are bullies, victims or witnesses to those behaviours. Thereby, this study aims to validate on a population of Romanian young people, aged between 18 and 30, the Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviours Questionnaire (Short Form) in order to identify in a timely and adequate manner this type of behaviours. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between bullying, cyberbullying and moral decisions while offering a deeper understanding on how to prevent this type of behaviours. For testing both convergent and divergent validities, variables such as belligerence and personality were added to the study. Albeit the models proposed in the confirmatory factor analysis didn't show a good fit, the internal consistencies and the convergent and divergent validities indicated acceptable values. It is important to mention however that this study contributes to present literature by introducing a third way of view, more specifically the witness view, a fact that should be considered in the future when it comes to the validation and construction of bullying and cyberbullying scales..

Keywords: *bullying, cyberbullying, validation, moral decisions, belligerence, personality*

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying has been a ubiquitous problem in schools for several decades in many countries around the world (Coelho et al., 2016; Currie et al., 2012; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Li, 2006; Olweus, 1993). According to Olweus (1993), it is characterized by: (a) repetitiveness - the bully or bullies will repeatedly cause injury or discomfort to another child (the victim), (b) the existence of a power imbalance - the bully or bullies are either stronger, or are perceived as stronger than the victim, and (c) intentionality - the abuser or abusers carry out these negative actions and intentionally establish this unbalanced relationship.

As it was mentioned for bullying, cyberbullying behaviours are also intentional, aggressive, and repeatedly perpetuated by one person against another through the use of information and communication technologies (Kowalski et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010; Ybarra et al., 2014). However, unlike traditional bullying that occurs between colleagues and takes place in a physical space (Olweus, 1993; Smorti et al., 2003), cyberbullying takes place through the Internet or telecommunication methods (Del Rey et al., 2015; Slonje et al., 2013). Thus, cyber aggressions that lead to cyberbullying can be perpetuated and reproduced at any time and in any place (Kowalski et al., 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Slonje et al., 2013) and are difficult to erase from cyberspace, a fact that makes this behaviour more serious than traditional bullying, a study published by Bitdefender (Palade, 2017) stating that four out of five teenagers under 18 have been the target of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can take many forms, from online fighting, harassment, and cheating, to exclusion, impersonation, cyberstalking, and sexting (Willard, 2007). The most popular forms of cyberbullying are threats or harassment, followed by making fun of the victim and spreading rumors (Huang & Chou, 2010). A possible explanation of these behaviours can be found in the psychology of groups, while in the case of traditional bullying, the behaviour is generally repeated by only one person, when cyberbullying takes place publicly, the repetition can happen implicitly, with any witnessing user being able to add comments or share a post, thus multiplying the initial act of cyberbullying (Peter & Petermann, 2018). Such situations specific to the online environment led to the proposal of two new attributes of cyberbullying, namely anonymity and public character (Leduc et al., 2022). It appears that users who act anonymously show low levels of personal responsibility and commitment to their own actions (Spears, 2017). Also, recent studies have emphasized the fact that social norms and moral disengagement allow the appearance of cyberbullying (Lazuras et al., 2013; Paciello et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019), interventions at the level of social norms acting as a possible factor in the prevention of cyberbullying behaviours (Vlaanderen et al., 2020).

Another implication of cyberbullying is roasting behaviour, according to Steer et al. (2020), one of the reasons mentioned by online aggressors being that they were just “joking” or “wanting to have fun”. At the same time, the study also showed the fact that online aggressors aim to derive pleasure from the misfortune and helplessness of their victims. Thus, it seems that humour plays an important role in the degree of cyberbullying perpetuation more than in the case of traditional bullying (Dynel, 2021). Moreover, some research conducted on preadolescents (ages between 10 and 12) showed that it was difficult for them to distinguish cyberbullying behaviours from pranks and teasing among friends and that although intent and repetition played an important role in identifying behaviours, they had difficulty judging intent in the online environment (Baas et al., 2013).

Consequences of bullying and cyberbullying

As consequences, bullying and cyberbullying are associated with depression, suicide or suicidal ideation, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Boca-Zamfir & Turliuc, 2019; Erdur-Baker & Tanrikulu, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), school problems (suspension, school aggression, and lower academic performance) and other deviant behaviours (alcohol abuse, substance abuse) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007) for victims. In the case of abusers, there are associations with depression, suicide attempts (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), alcohol and substance abuse, antisocial behaviour, and poorer quality of life (Foody et al., 2015). In addition, cyberbullying predicts low self-esteem and psychological distress in adolescents relative to other bullying experiences, either at school or outside of school (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2018; Cenat et al., 2014). Regarding the emotional impact, bullying and cyberbullying present high levels of negative emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, shame, loneliness, and embarrassment (Quintana-Orts et al., 2021; Ortega et al., 2009).

Another consequence of bullying and cyberbullying explained by Rambaran et al. (2020) refers to exposure to bullying both online and offline, which increases the risk of becoming a person who perpetuates such behaviours. Adolescents who have been victims of cyberbullying are more inclined to perpetuate cyberbullying behaviours six months later (Wright & Li, 2013).

On the other hand, exposure to bullying is not a one-way event, which can also lead to the risk of becoming a victim. For example, people who have perpetuated such behaviours and engage in verbal and physical bullying are likely to become victims in high school (Stubbs-Richardson & May, 2020). Similarly, students who had peers who were

victims of bullying were more likely to become victims themselves compared to those who did not have such peers (Stubbs-Richardson & May, 2020).

Unfortunately, as far as Romania is concerned, cyberbullying has reached and continues to reach worrying levels, with Romania being the country with the highest rate of bullying among European states. The EU Kids Online II study (Haddon & Livingstone, 2012) shows that 41% of Romanian children were victims of bullying or cyberbullying, and 13% declared that they were cyber-victims. Also, among European parents, Romanian parents tend to underestimate their children's negative experiences on the Internet: "while 21% of children say that they have been disturbed by something on the Internet, only 7% of their parents are aware of this fact" (Haddon & Livingstone, 2012). In addition, parents also underestimate their children's exposure to online sexual harassment ("sexting"), with only 6% declaring that this happened to their child, and 52% of parents actually not even knowing about the existence of these events.

Measuring bullying and cyberbullying

Although there are numerous scales with self-report measurements for bullying, the most popular method of identifying and measuring it remains the scale developed by Olweus (1978), modified over time (Olweus, 1996, 2012b), and from which new scales have been developed by other researchers (Shaw et al., 2013; Coelho et al., 2016). However, Shaw and his collaborators (2013) pointed out that none of the existing scales at that time was recognized as a universal tool for measuring bullying, some scales measuring only victimization (Felix et al., 2011; Hunt et al. ., 2012; Mynard & Joseph, 2000) or just the perpetuation of bullying (Espelage & Holt, 2001). There are also problems with the measurement of cyberbullying, which has a more recent history than bullying.

Regarding measurement and scale construction, a systematic review by Berne et al. (2013) reported that out of 44 instruments examined, only 12 had conducted confirmatory and exploratory analyses. Regarding the frequency of publication and development of scales internationally, a systematic review by Chun et al. (2020), in which 64 studies published between 2002 and 2020 were investigated, observed that the highest frequency of publication of studies related to bullying and cyberbullying was in 2015, only two of the 64 being published in 2020. This fact once again emphasizes the need to study this subject because, although studies on this subject seem to be decreasing, bullying and cyberbullying behaviours are being increasingly perpetuated as a result of technological development and the increased use of social networks. Also, in this analysis, it was also observed that only 28 studies out of the 64 were scale validation studies and that out of the 17 countries mentioned, 25 of the 64 studies were carried out in the United States, followed by 9 studies in Spain, 7 in Canada, 4 in Australia and only 5 per Asian population (Chun et al., 2020).

Bullying and cyberbullying behaviours questionnaire (short form)

As for the questionnaire used in the present study, this short form is abbreviated to the Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour Questionnaire (BCBQ; Coelho et al., 2016), which is a self-report questionnaire containing 34 items that measure bullying (verbal, physical, material, ethnic, sexual, defamation, threats) and cyberbullying (denigration, defamation and cyberstalking), and is based on the revised Olweus questionnaire (Olweus, 1996). The original version of the BCBQ (Coelho et al., 2016) was validated on a sample of 1039 students from grades 6-8, the completion time was approximately 15-20 minutes, and the statistical analyses showed that the subscales had acceptable internal consistency values (Cronbach α with values between .77 and .81), except for the victimization subscale in the case of cyberbullying, which had an α of .56.

As a limitation of this scale, it must be stated that until now it has only been validated on the population of Portugal. Also, the scale investigates only the perspectives of the aggressor and the victim, the perspective of the witnesses being excluded.

Last, but not least, as previously mentioned, there is the possibility that students have difficulties in perceiving bullying and cyberbullying behaviours (Leduc et al., 2022; Baas et al., 2013), which may raise suspicions about the validity of certain scales. Thus, the present study aims to validate the short form on a population of young people between the ages of 18 and 30, adding the witnesses' perspective and adapting it to the population of Romania, as the scale used is among the few that can surprise in a quickly and more accurately manner both behaviours related to bullying and cyberbullying.

Moral decisions

Although according to Garrigan et al. (2018), the terms moral judgment, moral cognition, and moral reasoning are terms that can be used interchangeably, in a more comprehensive definition moral decisions refer to any decision, including judgment, evaluation, and the chosen response, involving principles such as justice, fairness, protecting or harming someone (Smetana et al., 2012; Turiel, 1983). A moral decision can be a response related to a way of behaving in a real or hypothetical situation to a moral dilemma, the dilemma being defined as that conflict resulting from dissociable psychological processes (Cushman & Greene, 2012), or it can be a judgment or evaluation related to the moral acceptability of actions, even about the morality of certain characters, including judgments of individuals, groups or institutions (Garrigan et al., 2018). However, it is important to state that when making a decision about how to act, a person must first recognize the situation

as having moral rules attached, so that they can then access specific cognitive schemas from memory, store and interpret the details relevant to that situation, and ultimately generate and evaluate possible moral response options (Garrigan et al., 2018).

The most prominent theory in the field of moral decisions is the dual-process theory (Greene et al., 2008; Greene et al., 2004; Greene et al., 2001). This perspective holds that deontological and utilitarian responses can be explained in terms of two separate mental processes, namely Type 1 processes, and Type 2 processes. Type 1 processes are evolutionarily older, intuitive, and have an unfolding automatic, while Type 2 processes are evolutionarily more recent, analytical, controlled, and based on a judgment that precedes the decision. Type 1 processing can be thought of as default, automatic, while Type 2 processing often involves more energy to manage automatic processes (Evans & Stanovich, 2013; Frederick, 2005; Kahneman, 2011; Morewedge & Kahneman, 2010).

Regarding the link between moral decisions, bullying, and cyberbullying, although studies in this field are few, according to Arsenio and Lemerise (2004), bullying and cyberbullying behaviours can be investigated through the lens of moral reasoning and affect theories because aggressive behaviours are clear moral transgressions. Moral development plays an imperative role in the regulation of behaviour because it provides information about how behaviour is rationalized and controlled (Turiel, 1998). Thus, interdisciplinary perspectives on theories of moral affect and reasoning can provide a coherent account of how socio-moral reasoning connects with intentional victimization behaviour (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Malti & Krettenauer, 2013), both in an offline, as well as an online setting. It was shown in some studies that bullies experience less shame and guilt compared to non-bullies (Gini, 2006), which may explain why they are less likely to inhibit morally transgressive behaviour. Accordingly, the moral emotions of guilt, shame, and pride can be considered along a possible continuum: at one extreme, guilt and shame are morally responsible emotions that express disapproval of one's harmful behaviour, while pride is at the opposite end, representing emotions of disengagement from the negative effects that one's harmful behaviour has on others (Menesini et al., 2003), moral disengagement being identified as a central mechanism of moral-cognitive processes that is strongly associated with bullying (Menesini et al., 2013; Pornari & Wood, 2010).

The present study

The main objective of this research is to validate the short form of the bullying and cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire on a population of young people aged between 18 and 30 in Romania. In addition to this main objective, the exploration of the possibility of a relationship between moral decisions and cyberbullying is also added, the expectation being that there is a high correlation index between the two variables. Regarding validity, we expect to obtain significant correlations with the aggression scale for testing convergent validity, and with personality for both divergent and convergent validity.

2. METHODOLOGY

Participants and procedure

The participants in this study were young people aged between 18 and 30. According to Nunnally (1978), for validating a scale there is requested a minimum of ten participants for each item of the scale. Thus, the short form of the questionnaire of bullying and cyberbullying behaviours has 36 items, which meant a minimum number of 360 participants. However, the total number of participants in the study was 112, of which five were eliminated due to the eligibility criterion of being between 18 and 30 years old, those five being outside the age range. Thus, there remained a number of 107 participants (M = 22.9, SD = 3.07), 81 of them being female and 26 males.

Regarding the area of origin, 42 of the participants are from the rural area and 65 from the urban area. Participation in the study was voluntary, they were given consent in advance in which they were informed about the objective of the research. It was also specified that they have the right to withdraw at any time they want and that participation in the research does not involve any risk.

The participants were initially given the consent, in which they were informed that the collected data were confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. It was also stated that they can withdraw from the study at any time without this aspect affecting them. Thus, the instruments described below were completed. First, the participants filled in the short form of the questionnaire about bullying and cyberbullying behaviours, then the set of moral dilemmas by Clifford et al. (2015), and to establish the validity, the participants also had to fill in the Romanian adaptation of the belligerence scale component of the Multidimensional Questionnaire of Tellegen's Personality (Iliescu et al., 2015) and the Romanian adaptation of the five facets of the NEO-PI-R Inventory (Iliescu et al., 2015). Completion of these questionnaires was done through an online form, and the average completion time was approximately 30 minutes. At the end, the participants were thanked for their participation.

Instruments

Bullying and cyberbullying were measured with The Bullying and Cyberbullying Behaviour Questionnaire - short form (BCBQ-SF). Te instrument contains 16 items and was developed by Coelho and Sousa (2020) to measure two perspectives: the victim perspective and the bully perspective. The 16 items are organized into two subscales: bullying and victimization, each with eight items scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The short form contains items such as: "I had money or other things taken from me" for the victimization subscale, and "I placed photos or videos of other students online without permission." for the bullying subscale. This scale has a Cronbach alpha index for victimization α = .79 and for bullying α = .82. In addition to the initially proposed scale, in the present study, it was also decided to add a third perspective, namely that of witnesses, the items for this sub-scale being formulated as follows: "I was a witness when my peers spread rumours or doubtful stories about other colleagues" or "I was a witness when colleagues sent threats or mean messages through the internet". For this subscale, the Cronbach alpha index obtained was α = .93.

Moral decisions were measured with Clifford moral dillemas set. Clifford et al.'s (2015) set of moral dilemmas contains 90 moral scenarios measured on a scale from 1 to 5, for each subscale the instruction being to respond to how morally acceptable they think the behaviour exhibited in each of the scenarios is. This set of moral dilemmas is divided into six subscales: the first subscale is *care* and contains 27 dilemmas such as: "You see a woman commenting out loud about how fat another woman looks in her jeans."; the second subscale is *correctness* and contains 12 items such as: " You see a student copying a classmate's answer sheet on a makeup final exam."; the third subscale, *freedom*, contains 11 dilemmas such as: "You see a man telling his fiancé that she has to switch to his political party."; the fourth subscale is *authority* and has 14 dilemmas such as: "You see a girl repeatedly interrupting her teacher as he explains a new concept."; the fifth subscale is *loyalty* and contains 16 dilemmas such as: "You see a mayor saying that the neighbouring town is a much better town.", and the sixth scale, *sanctity*, contains 10 dilemmas such as: "You see a man searching through the trash to find women's discarded underwear.". This scale was used to observe if there is a relationship between bullying, cyberbullying, and moral decisions. Cronbach alpha coefficients reported in the literature for these scales are .95, .89, .94, .93, .90, and .90, respectively.

Personality was measured with The Romanian adaptation of the five facets of the NEO-PI-R Inventory from the International Set of Personality Items (Iliescu et al., 2015). The instrument contains 50 items scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 and was used to test convergent and divergent validity. This scale contains items such as: "Often feel blue." for neuroticism; "Feel comfortable around people." for extraversion; "Believe in the importance of art." for openness to experience; for agreeableness: "Have a good word for everyone." and for conscientiousness: "Pay attention to details.". For these scales, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for extraversion was α = .80, for neuroticism α = .82, for openness α = .65, for agreeableness α = .73 and for conscientiousness α = .73.

Belligerance was measured with The Romanian Adaptation of the Belligerence Scale from the Tellegen Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire (MPQ). The Romanian adaptation of the belligerence scale from the International Set of Personality Items (Iliescu et al., 2015) contains 10 items scored on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 and was used to investigate the convergent validity of the bullying and cyberbullying scale. This scale contains items such as: "Get back at others.". For this scale, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was α = .75, which represents a good internal consistency.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

For testing both validity and fidelity and Confirmatory Factor Analysis the software we used was Jamovi, Version 2.0 (The jamovi project, 2021). Thus, below can be found the Table 1 with the descriptive statistics and the internal consistencies of the scales, and also Table 2 with the variables correlations.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics*

	Mean	SD	α
Bullying	54.2	19.6	.94
Cyberbullying	13.7	5.66	.82
Bully	17.5	6.79	.90
Victim	23.6	10.1	.91
Witness	26.7	11.6	.93
Moral decisions	150	58.9	.98
Belligerence	24.2	6.17	.68
Extraversion	30.8	8.92	.88
Neuroticism	28.7	8.09	.83
Openness	41.1	6.54	.82
Agreeability	39.5	6.26	.79
Consciousness	33.6	7.6	.83

Table 2. *Variables correlations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	-											
2	.69***	-										
3	.74***	.64***	-									
4	.84***	.69***	.53***	-								
5	.87***	.68***	.51***	.57***	-							
6	.33***	.35***	.33***	.29**	.28**	-						
7	.36***	.27**	.45***	.28**	.23*	.26**	-					
8	-.25*	-.21*	-.06	-.32***	-.20*	-.09	-.01	-				
9	.32***	.20*	.10	.41***	.22*	-.09	.31**	-.48***	-			
10	.01	-.19*	-.28**	.03	.07	-.11	-.30**	.14	-.04	-		
11	-.28**	-.35***	-.42***	-.26**	-.17	-.32***	-.69***	.09	-.14	.51***	-	
12	-.32***	-.23*	-.22*	-.33***	-.24*	-.20*	-.23*	.33***	-.28**	.27**	.32***	-

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
1. Bullying, 2. Cyberbullying, 3. Bully, 4. Victim, 5. Witness, 6. Moral decision, 7. Belligerence, 8. Extraversion, 9. Neuroticism, 10. Openness, 11. Agreeability, 12. Consciousness

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test three models of the BCBQ-SF, two of which are those proposed by the original scale validation study (Models 2 and 3), and Model 1 based on the literature, but to which the third subscale is added regarding the perspective of the witness. Thus, Model 1 consists of a model with all items loading in three factors (aggressor, victim, and witness), Model 2 is a model in which the items load in the aggressor and victim factors, and Model 3 is the one in which the items load in bullying and cyberbullying factors. As can be seen from Table 3, the CFI, TLI, SRMR and RMSEA indices have poor values for all three models, thus they are rejected, although in the case of Model 2 better indices were obtained than in the case of the other two models (χ^2= 768, df = 251, p < .001).

Table 3. *Fit indices for the three models*

	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	χ^2	df
Model 1	.65	.62	.10	.13	1572	591
Model 2	.68	.65	.10	.14	768	251
Model 3	.55	.51	.13	.16	974	251

Internal consistency

Regarding the internal consistency of the bullying and cyberbullying scale, it can be seen from Table 1 that for bullying the coefficient obtained was α = .94, and for cyberbullying α = .82, these representing very good internal consistency coefficients. In addition to these two mentioned coefficients, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were also calculated for the three subscales, namely: the aggressor's perspective, α = .90; the perspective of the victim, α = .91 and the perspective of the witness, α = .93, coefficients that also indicate a very good internal consistency of the subscales.

Divergent and convergent validities

Convergent and divergent validities were analyzed by means of correlations between variables. Thus, convergent validity was investigated through the lens of the relationship between bullying and cyberbullying and belligerence (for bullying and belligerence: r = .36, p < .001; for cyberbullying and belligerence: r = .27, p < .01), but also of the relationship between bullying and cyberbullying and moral decisions (for bullying and moral decisions: r = .33, p < .001; for cyberbullying and moral decisions: r = .35, p < .001), these results indicating an acceptable convergent validity.

On the other hand, divergent validity was analyzed through the relationship between bullying and cyberbullying and the 5 facets of the NEO-PI-R Inventory. The correlations thus obtained were the following: negative and significant correlations with extraversion (for bullying and extraversion: r = -.25, p < .05; for cyberbullying and extraversion: r = -.21, p < .05); positive and significant correlations with neuroticism (for bullying and neuroticism: r = .32, p < .001; for cyberbullying and neuroticism: r = .20, p < .05); positive and insignificant correlation with bullying (r = .01, p > .05) and negative and significant correlation with cyberbullying (r = -.19, p < .05); negative and significant correlations with agreeableness (for bullying and agreeableness: r = -.28, p < .01; for cyberbullying and agreeableness: r = -.35, p < .001); negative and significant correlations with conscientiousness (for bullying and conscientiousness: r = -.32, p < .001; for cyberbullying and conscientiousness: r = -.23, p < .05). Therefore, even in the case of divergent validity, it can be said that the obtained results indicate an acceptable discriminative validity.

4. DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the psychometric properties of the BCBQ-SF on a population of young people in Romania between the ages of 18 and 30. Although, in terms of the internal consistency index, very good values were obtained, as well as acceptable values of the convergent and divergent validities, for the models within the confirmatory factor analysis, weak indices resulted. Thus, it can be stated that for this population the proposed models are not supported by the data. The possibility of a relationship between bullying, cyberbullying, and moral decisions was also investigated, the results of the correlation analysis supporting this relationship.

As mentioned in the introduction, the BCBQ-SF was constructed and validated only on a population of students in Portugal (Coelho & Sousa, 2020). Thus, this is probably one of the first studies that tried to validate this questionnaire on another population, a fact that makes the psychological interpretation of the results obtained in the confirmatory factor analysis rather difficult. However, a possible explanation for why the 3 models were not supported by data on the chosen population can be deduced from the gender differences that exist in terms of bullying and cyberbullying described in the literature. More specifically, boys tend to be more involved in physical bullying, while girls tend to spread various rumours or resort to exclusion from the group (Olweus, 1993). This is even more important for this study as most participants were female, items such as "I have hit or pushed someone in a violent manner." or "I threatened or forced someone to do something unwanted." not being necessarily applicable to a predominantly female population, as is the case of this study. It should be mentioned, however, that in this study no analysis was carried out to investigate whether there are differences according to gender since the number of male participants is much lower than the number of female participants.

The internal consistencies obtained in this study were much better compared to those described by the authors of the original scale (α with values of .94 and .82 compared to the α coefficients reported by the authors of .82 and .56). This may suggest that the scale could be used on the Romanian population, but with some reservations generated by the non-confirmation of the previously detailed factorial models. Also, although the model in which the perspective of the witness was included did not show very good values, the α index obtained for this subscale was .93, which suggests that this perspective should also be taken into account in the future in the construction and validation of scales for bullying and cyberbullying behaviours, as witnesses can be key factors in the perpetuation of these behaviours, in turn becoming aggressors or victims themselves (Stubbs-Richardson & May, 2020).

Regarding the relationship between bullying, cyberbullying, and moral decisions, it can be observed that there are good correlations between them. Of the three perspectives described, namely aggressor, victim, and witness, the strongest correlations were identified between the perspective of the aggressor and moral decisions. A

possible explanation for this can be given by the term moral disengagement, which is closely related to both bullying and moral decisions, as well as aggression. More specifically, moral disengagement is defined as the cognitive tendency to minimize the harm one person causes to another, helping them to reduce the tension they feel when they feel they are not living up to moral standards (Yang et al., 2010; Bandura, 1999). Moral disengagement thus helps the aggressors to justify, rationalize and perpetuate their aggressive and bullying behaviours (Jiang et al., 2022).

The results obtained in the case of the relationship between bullying, cyberbullying, and personality are aligned with the literature, more interesting to emphasize being the links observed between the three perspectives involved in bullying and cyberbullying and the personality traits. First, the highest correlation was observed between the perspective of the aggressor and agreeableness, this correlation being negative, which may indicate a lack of empathy towards the suffering of other people (Costa & McCrae, 1997), but also the fact that these people resort to aggression, especially in situations where there are interpersonal problems (Slee, 1993). Another good and positive correlation identified was between the victim's perspective and neuroticism. In the case of this relationship, however, conscientiousness is also important because, according to the literature, victims who tend to have high neuroticism scores and low conscientiousness scores encounter difficulties in regulating their behaviour in conflict situations and tend to be much more insecure and anxious (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2015).

Limitations and future research directions

A first possible limit of this study can be given by the sensitive nature of the topic addressed, since some of the participants may have given desirable answers for fear of not having various repercussions following their participation in the study. Beyond the assurance of confidentiality, this fact resulted also in a low number of participants. Besides, the age group chosen may be a limitation because according to the developmental perspective, an increase in bullying behaviours is observed during preadolescence, a trend that decreases during high school (Nansel et al., 2001; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000).

Last but not least, the fact that the decision time of the participants for the moral dilemmas was difficult to measure makes it rather difficult to generalize certain data, as well as their interpretation. More precisely, it is difficult to say whether the participants who tended to have deontological responses really had more intuitive answers, implicitly a shorter decision time.

As future directions, the studies that will investigate the validity of the BCBQ-SF scale should also consider the investigation of the time that people spend on the Internet since this can represent a signal for moral disengagement, and implicitly for the possible appearance of some behaviours of cyber bullying. It is also recommended to pay more attention to the gender differences that may exist, with an equal number of male and female participants being preferable, but also a larger number of participants compared to the number in this study. Another future direction may be to conduct a longitudinal study investigating how bullying and cyberbullying can influence moral decisions made in adulthood. Finally, more studies could be carried out in the future on students and adults in order to observe how bullying and cyberbullying behaviours evolve in the workplace and in other environments.

Conclusions

Therefore, the present topic is of great importance due to the rapid development of technology, and implicitly of new methods of cyberbullying that may appear, the investigation of this topic helping to prevent these behaviours. The present study can add to the existing literature through this validation of a short and faster form to fill in and can help to detect both victims and abusers more quickly, as well as the possible effects on witnesses.

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