Chapter 2
Gender Issues and Cyberbullying in Children and Adolescents: From Gender Differences to Gender Identity Measures

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2.1 Introduction

Slightly more than a decade ago, when the first psychological research with child and adolescent samples into cyberbullying was done, gender played a key role in analyzing cyberbullying prevalence. The term "gender," in addition to recognizing the influence of biological factors, includes cultural and experiential factors to explain aggressive behavior. Thus, gender not only implies the categorization of people into male or female groups but also refers to the gender-typing process in which they acquire those motives, values, and behaviors viewed as appropriate for males and females within a given culture (Diamond 2002). Regarding cyberbullying research, the principal aim was to know if this form of aggression is a gender-specific behavior or if, on the contrary, both genders are involved and whether they develop different behavior patterns in their involvement (Connell et al. 2014). To meet this objective, research has analyzed differences in boys' and girls' implication in it by considering that if such differences existed, they would be linked to learning that derives from gender socialization. Nevertheless, most studies have limited their analysis of gender to classifying participants in accordance with sexual dimorphism, and have not analyzed how acquired gender-related beliefs can be linked to cyberbullying. Therefore, from our point of view, it is necessary to review the way in which gender has been included in research and to consider the need to examine how the gender norms that operate in peer groups can contribute to cyberbullying being manifested. An examination of these trends may serve as a reference for gender research in cyberbullying and might help enhance our understanding of the way in which gender-typing processes are related to these negative cyberinteractions.

Based on this notion, this chapter reviews gender research on cyberbullying and presents data never published before in order to present new ways to advance in

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R. Navarro et al. (eds.), *Cyberbullying Across the Globe,*
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-25552-1_2

gender studies into this aggressive phenomenon. The objectives are none other than generating debate on the state of the art of research in this area and helping researchers to also identify new directions in international research. First, we present studies that examine gender differences in roles and forms within cyberbullying. To this end, we offer an up-to-date literature review. Second, we review the gender identity concept, understood as private experience of the gender roles and traits learned during the socialization process, and present a preliminary study on the influence of gender identity on cyberbullying. We have examined the way in which the gender standards adopted or violated in peer groups can protect from or trigger cyberbullying. Finally, as the youths who move away from the social expectations for their gender are more exposed to various forms of aggression, studies that examine the victimization suffered by sexual and gender minorities are reviewed and new qualitative data on their exposure to cyberbullying are offered. Throughout this chapter, we accompany theoretical presentations with not only a description of the studies done in different countries but also with new data that allow us to extend the gender perspective to study cyberbullying.

2.2 Gender Differences in Cyberbullying

Analyses into gender differences in cyberbullying took the results found in traditional bullying as a starting point. In general, research has reported that boys tend to get involved in direct forms of physical or verbal aggression to a greater extent than girls (Griezel et al. 2012; Pereira et al. 2004). Conversely, however, girls have been reported to use indirect aggression to a greater extent, where the victim is excluded from the peer group or his/her personal and social reputation is attacked (Björkqvist et al. 1994; Crick et al. 2002; Owens et al. 2004). These results have supported the idea that direct aggression is more prototypical of the male gender, while indirect aggression is more prototypical of the female gender. Several factors have been used to explain this division between more masculine or feminine forms of aggression, including biological reasons (e.g., physically, girls have less strength) and interpersonal reasons (e.g., the social structure of groups of girls as these groups are smaller and more intimate if compared with groups of boys, which would make indirect aggression a more effective strategy). Finally, there are gender socialization factors, for example, adults being less tolerant about girls getting involved in physical aggression, which would mean them having to adopt subtler and less visible forms (Kistner et al. 2010).

These explanations, along with results from many studies, have generated a considerable generalized consensus about girls using more indirect forms of aggression within traditional bullying (Kowalski et al. 2014), which makes them the center of attention when it comes to analyzing the prevalence of cyberbullying. This starting point is not at all surprising if we consider that cyberbullying has been described as a type of psychological and emotional abuse, carried out through gossip or diffusing information on the Internet where the aggressor attacks victims' privacy and inti-

macy but remains anonymous (Beran and Li 2008). Similar characteristics to traditional indirect bullying led preliminary research on cyberbullying to assume that girls were implied to the same extent, or even to a greater extent, than boys were. However, empirical evidence has not always been available to back this premise. In fact, far from finding a clear gender pattern in being involved as aggressors or victims, research has provided quite contradictory information.

Generally speaking, some researchers have encountered that boys act more as aggressors than girls, but girls are more victimized than boys (Walrave and Heirman 2011). Other studies have reported that boys act more as aggressors, but found no significant differences in victimization (Smith et al. 2012). Some other studies have indicated that girls act more as both aggressors and victims than boys (Mark and Ratliffe 2011), or that boys act more as aggressors and victims (Fanti et al. 2012). Numerous studies have found no gender differences in victims and aggressors (Griezel et al. 2012; Hinduja and Patchin 2008), while some research has suggested that gender differences depend on the analyzed forms of cyberbullying (Monks et al. 2012).

These mixed results could be put down to differences in the theories and methodologies used to characterize the studies conducted on cyberbullying. For instance, definitions of cyberbullying have varied from one study to another; different cyberbullying types have been examined, for example, by means of mobile phones (e.g., phone calls and text messages) or through social networks (e.g., Facebook and Twitter); different measurement instruments have been used, and distinct procedures have also been followed, when categorizing victims and aggressors. However, yet even in the studies that we conducted only a few years ago in Spain, which followed an identical measuring instrument, and the same cyberbullying definition and the same procedure to categorize subjects, mixed results were also obtained as one study showed that gender differences did not exist (Navarro et al. 2012), while another study indicated that girls were more victimized than boys (Navarro et al. 2013). Lack of consistency among studies has led some authors to conclude that research on gender differences in cyberbullying is a fruitless research area (Tokunaga 2010), and has downplayed the importance of the analysis of gender in cyberbullying.

2.2.1 Is Cyberbullying a Gender-Specific Behavior?

In order to check whether more recent studies on cyberbullying still provide mixed results for gender differences, we did a systematic literature review, using PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Google Scholar, of the studies published while this chapter was being written. The criteria adopted to include studies in the review were as follows: (a) the search was not limited to specific countries or cultures, but had to include international representation, although only those articles published in English were reviewed; (b) year of publication: The table below indicates that the search was limited to the years 2013 and 2015 (including in-press articles) in order

to include only the most recent studies; (c) articles had to contain empirical studies, and no reviews on the subject were included; (d) for a study to be selected, it had to analyze gender differences in both aggressors and victims, and no articles that centered on only one of these roles were included; and (e) articles had to be published in peer reviewed journals. As the scope of our review is broad, we do not claim having been able to include a complete review of all existing topic-related publications.

Table 2.1 shows the studies we reviewed, along with the main results found for gender differences in cyberbullying. These studies were arranged by considering the similarity of the results obtained. As a whole, six different results categories appeared. There were more articles with similar results in the first category, after which the number of coincidences progressively lowered. The studies that found no gender differences in victimization and perpetration within cyberbullying are first presented. Those showing that boys acted more as aggressors and girls as victims are presented in the second place. Those studies indicating that boys are more involved as both victims and aggressors come third. Studies which revealed that boys act more as aggressors than girls are the fourth category, but they found no gender differences in victimization. In the fifth place appears the research which indicated that no gender differences appeared in perpetration, but stated that more girls were cyberbullying victims. Finally, there is a group of studies which reported that more girls acted as both aggressors and victims than boys.

As the systematic review indicates, the results are still mixed. However, far from not contributing to research on cyberbullying, these results may indicate that we have analyzed gender difference from an unsuitable viewpoint as we have looked to seek that certain gender trends found in research on traditional bullying are fulfilled. Trends may have become stereotyped. According to these stereotyped gender trends, cyberbullying has been seen as a more concealed psychological and emotional strategy, which entails greater planning and more premeditation, and it has been more stereotypically related with girls. On the contrary, boys would continue using direct forms of aggression, which are clearer, simpler, and more visible than those employed by girls. This stereotyped view has continued, even when some years ago international research denied that indirect aggression is a more prototypical conduct of girls and pointed out that such strategies are used by both genders and to the same extent (Archer 2004; Artz et al. 2008; Card et al. 2008). Indeed, some studies have even demonstrated that boys employ more indirect aggression than girls. Specifically, the transcultural study by Artz et al. (2013), conducted with 5789 adolescents from six countries including Canada and Spain, found that more boys (46.8%) than girls (31.7%) employed indirect aggression with peers. As the authors concluded, this result goes against generalized beliefs as indirect aggression was more of an issue among girls than it was for boys, and the same may be said of cyberbullying.

Yet, available data do not let us to state that cyberbullying is merely a girls' issue. Indeed, many studies have shown that boys stand out as aggressors. Likewise, a recent meta-analysis on the aggressor role by Barlett and Coyne (2014) concluded that males were more likely to be cyberbullies than females. However, this difference was moderated by age; indeed, females were more likely to report

Table 2.1 Cyberbullying and gender: Overview of studies (2013/2015) that analyzed gender differences in cyberbullying perpetration and victimization

Country	Study	Sample	Main results
Greece	Lazuras et al. (2013)	355 students aged 13–17 years	There were no gender differences in either experiencing or reporting cyberbullying
South Korea	Park et al. (2014)	1200 students aged 12–15 years	No gender differences were found in perpetration and victimization
Colombia	Mura and Diamantini (2014)	360 students aged 14–19 years	No gender differences were found in cyberbullying perpetration and victimization
Canada	Bonanno and Hymel (2013)	399 students in grades 8–10	No significant gender differences were found in cyberbullying victimization and perpetration
Switzerland	Sticca et al. (2013)	First assessment: 835 students in 6th grade. Second assessment: 820 students	No significant associations were found between gender and cyberbullying perpetration or victimization
USA	Kowalski and Limber (2013)	931 students in grades 6–12	No significant main gender effects were observed in perpetration and victimization
Spain	Navarro et al. (2015)	1058 students aged 10–12 years	No statistically significant differences were found between boys and girls in cyberbullying victimization and perpetration
South Korea	Shin and Ahn (2015)	1036 students aged 12–18 years	There was no gender effect on the classification of victims and bullies
Israel	Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2015)	507 students in grades 7–10. (242 typically achieving students, 149 LD students in general education classes, 116 LD comorbid in special education classes)	Girls were more likely to be cyberbullying victims than boys
			Boys were more likely to be cyberbullying perpetrators
			Girls in special education classes were at higher risk of being cyberbullying victims
USA	Navarro and Jasinski (2013)	1500 students aged 10–17 years	Girls were at higher risk of cyberbullying victimization than boys
			Boys engaged significantly more in cyberbullying perpetration
Sweden	Låftman et al. (2013)	22,544 students aged 15–18 years	Girls tended to be cyberbullying victims more often than boys, while boys were more often perpetrators

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	Study	Sample	Main results
Germany	Festl and Quandt (2013)	408 students aged 12–19 years	Boys were more frequently perpetrators, whereas girls were more frequently victims
Israel	Tarablus et al. (in press)	458 junior high students aged 11–13 years	Girls were more likely to be cybervictims than boys and that boys were more likely to be cyberbullies than girls
Israel	Heiman et al. (2015)	480 students aged 12–16 years. (342 typical achieving students and 140 students with ADHD)	Significantly more girls were cybervictims than boys
			Boys reported more involvement as cyberperpetrators than girls
			No significant interactions were obtained among gender, groups (ADHD/Non ADHD) and the two cyberbullying involvement types
Multiregion: six European countries	Schultze-Krumbholz et al. (2015)	6260 students aged 11–23 years	More often girls were victims and more often boys were perpetrators
Germany	Wachs et al. (2015)	1928 students aged 11–18 years	Boys were more likely than girls to be cyberbullies and girls were more likely than boys to be cybervictims
USA	Pelfrey and Weber (2013)	3403 students in grades 6–12	Male students were more likely to be perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying than females
China	Wong et al. (2014)	1917 students aged 12–15 years	Boy participants reported having significantly more frequent cyberbullying perpetration and victimization than their female counterparts
South Korea	Yang et al. (2013)	1344 students in grade 4	Male students reported being more involved as perpetrators and victims than female students
China	Zhou et al. (2013)	1483 students in grades 10–12	Boys were more likely to report being involved in cyberbullying as perpetrators than girls
			Boys were also more likely to be cybervictims than girls
Taiwan	Chin Yang et al. (2014)	837 students in grades 5–12	Boys were more likely to be perpetrators and victims than girls
Israel	Lapidot-Lefter and Dolev-Cohen (2015)	465 students in grades 7–12	No gender differences were found for victimization
			Boys reported being perpetrators more than girls did

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	Study	Sample	Main results
Mexico	Gámez-Guadix et al. (2014)	1491 students aged 12–18 years	Perpetration was significantly higher for males than for females, whereas no differences were found for victimization
Italy	Baroncelli and Ciucci (2014)	529 students in grades 6–8	Males obtained higher scores for cyberbullying perpetration
			No differences were found in cyberbullying victimization
Greece	Kokkinos et al. (2013)	300 students aged 10–12 years	Boys reported more frequent involvement in cyberbullying perpetration, while no significant gender differences were found in cybervictimization terms
Canada	Cappadocia et al. (2013)	1972 students in grades 9–12	Boys and girls reported similar rates of cyberperpetration
			Girls reported more involvement in cybervictimization than boys
Sweden	Beckman et al. (2013)	2989 students aged 13–15 years	No significant gender differences were found for cyberbullies.
			Girls were significantly more likely to be cybervictims than boys
USA	Connell et al. (2014)	3867 students in grades 5–8	Girls were more likely to report having engaged in cyberbullying perpetration than boys
			Girls reported higher levels of cybervictimization than boys

ADHD Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, *LD* is Learning Disabilities

cyberbullying in early adolescence, while males were more likely to be cyberbullies in later adolescence. Similarly, other studies have found that in middle childhood, cyberbullying is more of a girls' issue in both aggressor and victim roles (Connell et al. (2014). Thus, age could be a key factor when it comes to analyzing gender differences.

However, the previous systematic review presented in this chapter shows that recent studies conducted with different aged samples have found no gender differences. The examined results as a whole led us conclude that far from cyberbullying corresponding to the female dominion, it is an issue that concerns both genders and that both gender can sometimes be involved as aggressors or victims.

The results obtained by international researchers and the data provided herein do not allow us to conclude that a clear gender difference exists in cyberbullying behaviors. However, they allow us to draw some conclusions. First, contrary to the results found in traditional bullying, there are no clear differences between males and females in cyberbullying. The absence of differences may indicate that more females are actually victims of cyberbullying than traditional bullying (Kowalski et al. 2012). Second, past research has reported that more males apparently tend to exercise and suffer the form of cyberbullying that employs humiliating images or contains physical aggression than females. Males also tend to send more sexual or pornographic images, which is a form of cyberbullying to which females are more exposed (Cassidy et al. 2012). These new forms of sexual and gender harassment require more research efforts, which could be essential to understand the role that gender plays in cyberbullying. Third, researchers need to explore the role of gender in moderating the effects of different factors that may be related with cyberbullying victimization and perpetration (Wong et al. 2015). Finally, future research should also analyze differences in what behaviors are considered to be cyberbullying by each gender, as well as in the level of awareness about behaviors related to cyberbullying. These differences might influence their responses to cyberbullying measures (Akbaba et al. 2015).

2.2.2 What Do We Do Now with Gender?

The conclusion that cyberbullying is not a clearly gender-specific behavior must not lead us to believe that gender analyses are not useful and necessary. In fact, quite the opposite is true as these analyses are still a key dimension for understanding the cyberbullying phenomenon and, in particular, for comprehending which aspects linked to social pressures on gender learning can make boys and girls more vulnerable to cyberbullying, irrespective of the greater or lesser extent of their implication. In order to know more about the role that gender plays in cyberbullying, it is important that research goes beyond merely analyzing mean scores and measure how the internalization of gender-related beliefs and peer pressures toward gender norms are risk factors for involvement in cyberbullying.

From this perspective, research must be reinforced in methodological terms by including new measuring instruments of gender typification. Research also needs to be reinforced theoretically by adopting different gender development approaches that allow us to hypothesize about its relation with cyberbullying, and help to interpret the results obtained. Along these lines, some studies have already included gender theories in the analyses of their results. One example is the work of Navarro and Jasinski (2013), which adopted the cyberdystopian feminist perspective as a standpoint that girls are inherently more at cyberbullying risk because of their already disadvantaged position in society. However, as far as we are aware, no studies have examined the way in which beliefs, gender roles, or identities are risk or protection factors against cyberbullying. Studies that have adopted a qualitative methodology

by questioning youths about these matters are also scarce. For this reason, the following sections present new data as an attempt to illustrate the predictive value of gender in cyberbullying beyond analyzing gender differences.

2.3 Cyberbullying and Gender Identity

Gender identity has been analyzed as an indicator of children's and adolescents' psychosocial adjustment and well-being in peer groups (Carver et al. 2003), and cyberbullying may be associated with gender identity in different ways. Traditionally speaking, gender identity is defined as an individual feeling of belonging to one gender and not to the other (Kohlberg 1966). Subsequently, gender identity has been defined as the extent to which people see themselves as being masculine or feminine when compared to the cultural stereotypes for their own gender (Bem 1981; Spence 1993). In line with this definition, gender identity will vary from one person to another according to the degree of adherence to culturally marked standards that offer different personality traits and conduct repertoires in accordance with gender. This "private or personal" identification with patterns and systems of beliefs that are considered appropriate for one sex or another also has a public expression, gender roles, which communicate the degree of adhesion that someone has or some people have to social prescriptions (Bem 1981).

Self-identification with socially prescribed stereotypes and gender roles has been more recently considered to be only one of the factors involved in constructing gender identity (Egan and Perry 2001). These authors argued that gender identity must be conceptualized as a multidimensional variable for whose knowledge we must contemplate five components: (1) membership knowledge in a gender category (the traditional view of gender identity), (2) gender typicality, self-perceived similarity with other members of the same gender category, (3) gender contentedness, an individual's satisfaction with his/her own gender, (4) felt pressure for gender conformity, and (5) intergroup bias, the belief that one gender is superior to the other gender. After developing a self-report measure to evaluate the last four of the above components, the authors found that gender typicality and gender contentment were related with a favorable psychosocial adjustment in boys and girls (in terms of greater self-esteem and peer acceptance), while felt pressure and intergroup bias were sometimes found to be negatively related with good psychosocial adjustment. Despite a few differences, these findings have been replicated in other samples (Carver et al. 2003) and in distinct cultures (Yu and Xie 2010) to show that identity development includes various components that go beyond self-identification as male or female. These studies also underline the importance of gender identity components on different personal and social adjustment indices in peer groups.

We will now review the studies that link bullying, understood as an indicator of a negative psychosocial adjustment, with both types of gender identity approaches. First, some studies that analyze gender identity as self-perceived similarity to gender stereotypes are presented. Second, there are studies that use the multidimension-

al gender identity model of Egan and Perry (2001). In our view, Egan and Perry's proposal more accurately and completely captures the elements that constitute gender identity. However, since studies into bullying have examined its relationship with the internalization of what we call from now gender-typed personality traits, we believe that it is relevant to continue considering them as part of gender studies in bullying behaviors. This review allows us to offer a comparison between both perspectives in the analysis of gender identity and its relationship with bullying. After reviewing these studies, the study conducted about the influence of components of gender identity, on the one hand, and the internalization of gender-typed personality traits, on the other hand, on cyberbullying victimization and perpetration is presented.

2.3.1 Gender-Typed Personality Traits and Bullying Behaviors

Past research has proposed that differences in aggressive conduct can derive, to some extent, from learning instrumental (masculine) traits or expressive (feminine) traits. Such traits determine that men must be assertive, aggressive, brave, and independent, while women must be sensitive, emotional, friendly, and concerned about looking after relationships. Although everyone differs insofar as the personal integration they make of these masculine and feminine traits, it has been hypothesized that those people who construct their identity on masculine traits, like dominance, intransigence, or self-expansion, can behave aggressively more easily in order to exert control over others or to affirm these masculine traits (Phillips 2007). Conversely, constructing identity on female traits that emphasize self-sacrifice, concern for others, and even passiveness might be related with a less hostile interaction style, inhibited aggression, or using indirect forms of aggression (Underwood et al. 2001). Following this argument, aggression could be a way of demonstrating adaptation to gender schemes to comply with social expectations (Eagly et al. 2004).

Young and Sweeting (2004) were the first to analyze the relationship between internalization of gender traits and school bullying among secondary school students. They found that masculine traits and the perpetrator role were positively related. Nonetheless, they did not find any relationship between feminine traits and bullying in both the perpetrator and victim roles. Later, Gini and Pozzoli (2006) encountered the same relationship between masculine traits and the role of aggressor in a sample of primary school students. Crothers et al. (2005) analyzed the relationship between feminine traits and bullying led by girls, based on the premise that feminine traits could also be related stereotypically with the relational aggression associated with females. And so it was that they found that adolescents who described themselves as having more feminine traits were more aggressive relationally. Unlike previous studies, they did not find any type of relationship with masculine traits. However, it should be stated that their study sample was integrated only by females and, perhaps, the masculine traits internalization results would have differed if the sample had included males.

http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-25550-7

Cyberbullying Across the Globe
Gender, Family, and Mental Health
Navarro, R.; Yubero, S.; Larrañaga, E. (Eds.)
2016, XIV, 281 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-25550-7