

This is the author-created version of the following work:

De Fazio, Laura, Krause, Amanda, and Sgarbi, Chiara (2020) *Italian adolescents' experience of unwanted online attentions: Recognizing and defining behaviours*. *European Journal of Criminology*, 17 (5) pp. 647-660.

Access to this file is available from:

<https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/62734/>

© The Author(s) 2018.

Please refer to the original source for the final version of this work:

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818819689>

Note: This is an accepted manuscript (“author accepted” version) of an article published in *European Journal of Criminology*, available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818819689>

This paper is not the copy of record and may not exactly replicate the final, authoritative version of the article. Please do not copy or cite without authors’ permission. The final article is available via its DOI: [10.1177/1477370818819689](https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818819689).

You may download the published version directly from the journal (homepage: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/EUC>).

Published citation:

De Fazio, Laura, Krause, Amanda, & Sgarbi, Chiara (2020). Italian adolescents’ experience of unwanted online attentions: Recognizing and defining behaviours. *European Journal of Criminology*, 17(5), 647-660. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370818819689>

Italian adolescents’ experience of unwanted online attentions: Recognizing and defining behaviours

Corresponding author:

Laura De Fazio, Department of Law, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Via San

Geminiano 3, 41121 Modena, Italy. Email: defazio.laura@unimore.it

Abstract

For young people, in addition to positive experiences, there are risks and negative consequences in the usage of the Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), such as forms of online harassment. At present, there is an open debate regarding the definition and issues concerning the nature of cyberspace, given the different ways that the scientific community and the general public express this phenomenon (for example, cyber-bullying, cyber-aggression, cyber-harassment). The present research surveyed 585 Italian students via an online questionnaire regarding unwanted online attentions (UOA), an umbrella category of online behaviours directed at harassing, offending or attacking someone. Two exploratory factor analyses examined the experiences of self-identified victims and perpetrators in order to better describe and identify UOA. The findings identify six dimensions, namely, for the victims: harassment, impersonation, denigration and ordering goods, physical threats, hacking, and disseminating private information and audio-video material without permission; and, for the perpetrators: disseminating private information and material without permission, physical and social threats, hacking and stealing identity, harassment, denigration and ordering goods, unwanted emails and spying, and impersonation – thus illuminating more specific categories of UOA. These findings will make it easier to recognize these expanding and potentially very dangerous behaviours, leading to the development of better prevention and intervention strategies.

Keywords Cyber-bullying, cyberspace, cyber-stalking, new technologies, unwanted online attentions, young people

Introduction

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and electronic devices in general, represent a fundamental aspect of today's society, influencing habits and lifestyle and improving new communication, interaction and knowledge (De Fazio and Sgarbi, 2016; Li, 2007; Mitchell and Ybarra, 2007; Phillips and Spitzberg, 2010; Spitzberg and Cupach, 2007). Online activities are increasingly present, making it impossible for most people to avoid becoming cyber citizens. The online space is one where potentially everyone is free to express themselves, contact everyone in real time, explore the world without moving, and purchase all sorts of goods without physically going to a shop (De Fazio and Sgarbi, 2016).

In particular, today young people, described as “digital natives” having been born and raised in a digital world (Prensky, 2001), are among the most involved in this revolution. Almost 90% of US adolescents (Lenhart, 2015) and 60% of the European adolescents are online daily (Livingstone et al., 2014), due in part to the use of social media platforms. These technologies have many positive outcomes, providing many opportunities for young people to explore their identity and build interpersonal connections (De Fazio and Sgarbi, 2016; Sgarbi, 2016).

In addition to the positive outcomes, however, younger users, who lack awareness and experience, show a spontaneous and un-mediated approach to the new informatics media, putting themselves at risk for experiencing the dark side of technology (Alvarez, 2012; De Fazio and Sgarbi, 2012; Pereira and Matos, 2016; Pereira et al., 2016; Phillips and Spitzberg, 2010). Often, they can suffer the negative consequences of wrong or improper online behaviors (Calvete et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2010). Features, such as anonymity and easy access, along with a constant online presence, absence of rules, scarce education and limited safety skills, increase the occurrence of events that are not only annoying or harassing, but also aggressive and/or illegal in nature (Antoniadou and Kokkinos, 2015; Calvete et al.,

2010; Hinduja and Patchin 2009; Ybarra and Mitchell 2007; Sgarbi, 2016). Such behaviors belong to a large category of cyber aggression, which can include an unlimited number of online activities, aimed at harassing, insulting, humiliating, intimidating, threatening and attacking others. These include various forms of communicating and contact, attempts to invade someone else's privacy by spying and controlling, abuse of personal data and information, spreading of rumors or false and embarrassing materials to destroy the reputation or isolate the victim (Menesini et al., 2012; Schrock and Boyd, 2011; Smith et al., 2014; Willard, 2007; Wolak et al., 2006).

The varied nature of cyber aggression activities, makes them complex, and results in issues with regard to its definition and conception. Indeed, the scientific community has, at different times and in different places, used different semantic terms, which has had the consequence of affecting the detection, and prevention, of the phenomenon, as well as the protection of the victims (Del Rey et al., 2015; Calvete et al., 2010; Menesini et al., 2012; Schrock and Boyd, 2011; Tokunaga, 2010; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008). Therefore, depending on the components considered to define such behaviors and the broader cultural context in which the behaviors occur, multiple labels have been used to describe these behaviors. Indeed, such labels are sometimes vague and imprecise: examples include online/Internet harassment, online/Internet bullying, mobile/virtual bullying, cybermobbing, cyberbullying, cyberharassment, cyber fighting or arguing, cyberstalking, electronic/cyber aggression (Aboujaoude et al., 2015; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008).

Definition Limits and Issues

While cyber aggression (and electronic harassment in general) has rapidly attracted the interest of the scientific world, one consequence of this emerging research is the lack of clarity surrounding the phenomena and its associated definitions. Sometimes definitions are billed as

online variants of pre-existing face-to-face behaviors, like bullying, without identifying the different strategies and devices or considering the nature of cyberspace (Patchin and Hinduja, 2015; Slonje et al., 2013; Zych et al., 2015). While in most cases the starting model is real life bullying (Olweus, 1993), other definitions have been developed to account for specific cyber features inherent to electronic forms of aggression, such as the consideration of the technological environment, anonymity and potential large audience.

Moreover, multiple operating definitions are used; some more general and others more rigid and detailed. Starting from a more general approach, cyberbullying has been defined as the use of Internet or other digital communication devices to insult or threaten someone (Junco and Gross, 2008). However, more specifications can be added so that it is considered as any intentional and repeated aggressive act, perpetrated by individuals or groups through Internet, computers and electronics communication media (Hinduja and Patchin 2008; Patchin and Hinduja, 2006/2015; Rafferty and Vander Ven, 2014; Tokunaga, 2010) toward a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (Langos, 2012; Smith, et al., 2008). In some cases, instead, cyberbullying is considered an electronic variation of traditional bullying, with effects in both the online, virtual environment and offline, physical school space (Li, 2007; Mishna et al., 2012; Shariff and Hoff, 2011). However, the applicability of some offline criteria to an online version has been debated, as the translation is not so clear in the technological world (Slonje et al., 2013). One example concerns repetition and imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993). From one side a single cyber act can automatically be replicated infinite times, according to the snowball or chain effect when materials are posted or spread in cyberspace. From the other side, even with absence of physical strength difference, technology knowledge and anonymity can produce power imbalance, as well as the impossibility for the victims to remove or ignore information available on the Internet may improve powerless and helpless feelings (Slonje et al., 2013; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008).

The example of considering school bullying and cyberbullying illustrates different opinions, expressed as three main positions: (1) a complete overlap of the two phenomena, even if expressed through different media; (2) a partial overlap, recognizing similarities but only for some aspects and under specific situations; and (3) no overlap, that they are two separate phenomena, considering new technologies specific features together with subjects involved and reasons under behaviors (Antoniadou and Kokkinos, 2015). With regard to the third position, the differences that emerge, can also demonstrate how online activities can be more dangerous than offline activities. These elements concern: technological expertise; anonymity and indirect expression of aggressive behaviors; a more complex role of bystanders, not easily recognizable and not necessarily related to the perpetrator or involved among peers; no need of a physical expression of power; the large size and potential limitlessness of the audience; the greater difficulties with respect to coping and surviving strategies (Smith, 2012). Moreover, the online behavior may also be the result of different dynamics and reasons, also without a real harassing intent acting under a desire of entertainment or fun (Antoniadou and Kokkinos, 2015; De Fazio and Sgarbi, 2016; Law et al., 2012), and producing particular, and sometimes greater, consequences and effects on the victims (Slonje et al., 2013). Additionally, cyber perpetrators can present specific characteristics, different to offline perpetrators, such as moral disengagement, disinhibition and lower self-esteem, facilitated also by anonymity, absence of time and space limits and lack of perception of victims emotional impact (Kowalski et al., 2014; Kubiszewski et al., 2015; Wachs, 2012).

For all these reasons, the literature also suggests additional definitions and categories of this cyberaggression, beyond that defined as cyberbullying. For instance, broader expressions such as cyber aggression or online harassment, are used as they include different situations aimed at harm, disturb and offend someone (regardless of age) by the use of ICT and electronic means (Grigg, 2010; Smith et al., 2014). In this manner, this description covers a large number

of acts connected to the fast, ever-evolving technology.

However, what is not under critique or doubt is the unlimited number of actions included by all these various definitions. Indeed, the phenomenon, when considered broadly, is constantly growing and changing following the evolution of cyberspace and technologies. Indeed, new forms of unwanted online behaviors are continuing to emerge; and this makes it very difficult to understand and recognize both what constitutes these behaviors and how people (both victims and perpetrators) are involved. Indeed, examining UOA via a direct question asking individuals to identify as victims and perpetrators is completely different to asking about specifically defined negative online experiences that they could have suffered or perpetrated, according to their different perception (Hopkins et al., 2013; Patchin and Hinduja, 2015; Slonje et al., 2013; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008): it is expected that the first methodology would result in lower prevalence rates when compared to the second one, mainly among juveniles samples, suggesting a need of working on single specific cyber activities and categories.

Cyberactivities and actions: Types and categories.

Considering cyberspace's nature and evolution, the many variations of cyber aggression strategies are not always easy to recognize and detect. However, some experts and researchers have made efforts to identify and classify different types of expressions of electronic assault and cybervictimization, based on different elements, such as the media employed, type of actions, aims and effects obtained (Langos, 2015; Menesini et al. 2012; Slonje et al. 2013; Willard, 2007).

Behaviors can be separated by the media involved, such as using the Internet, mobile phone, picture/video, Instant messaging, email, chat, social networks, and websites (Al Mazari, 2013; Dehue et al., 2008; Hinduja and Patchin, 2010; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Smith et al.,

2008). However, as technologies are changing and evolving, it is unlikely that this approach can be comprehensive (Slonje et al., 2013).

Other approaches have focused on the specific online activities perpetrated. For instance, Willard (2007) classified seven categories of cyberbullying, defined as: flaming (angry and vulgar comments), harassment (repeated nasty and offensive messages), denigration (spreading rumors or false information to destroy someone else's reputation), outing and trickery (sharing private or embarrassing information or images), impersonation (pretending to be someone else and sending/posting materials to put that person in trouble or to damage him/her reputation), exclusion (intentionally and nastily excluding someone from an online group) and cyberstalking (repeated harassment and threats to create fear). Several researchers have responded to Willard's classifications, adapting or adding new categories: for example, Maher (2008) identified flooding (sending nonsense comments or pressing enter key in order to not allow the victim to participate to the conversation), and Langos (2015) introduced other categories such as happy slapping (filming physical aggressions and disseminating the video to humiliate the victim) and indirect threats (single indirect physical harm made in public online context). Nocentini et al. (2010) reduced Willard's (2007) list to just four types of behaviors: written/verbal, including verbal ways of acting (e.g. emails, texts, phone calls); visual, including activities involving the use of images or videos (e.g. posting private or embarrassing images or videos); exclusion, as the situations in which the only aim is to put someone outside of a group or context (e.g. excluding someone from an online conversation on Whatsapp or from a Facebook group); impersonation, meaning the actions to steal someone else's identity (e.g. using private information, pretending to be someone else online).

In other cases, researchers have preferred to focus on the content and aims of the actions. Rivers and Noret (2010) introduced 10 different forms of abusive contact via texting and e-mails, distinguishing between: physical threats, death threats, family members threats,

destroying actual relationships threats, hate expressions, insults, sexual acts, excessive demands, and threatening chain messages. When considering behaviors on Facebook, Pabian, De Backer and Vandebosch (2015, p. 43), identified the most popular and prevalent cyber-aggression activities: “sending repeatedly insulting Facebook messages/comments to someone”, “spreading rumors about someone on Facebook to damage the person’s reputation”, “saying things about someone to make the person a laughing stock”, “hacking into someone’s Facebook account”, “pretending to be someone else on Facebook and spreading personal/sensitive information about that person”, “posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone else on Facebook”, “deliberately excluding someone from a Facebook group to make him/her feel excluded”, “sending threatening images/reactions to someone” (see also Kwan and Skoric, 2013; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2009). While these behaviors were identified with regards to Facebook, it is evident that they pertain to the broader classifications of behaviors identified by the other researchers.

Given the existing discrepancies about the conceptualization of the unwanted online behavior phenomena, the present study aimed to specifically address this problem concerning the various definitions of cyber activities. De Fazio and Sgarbi (2016) proposed the term, Unwanted Online Attentions (UOA), as the most inclusive semantic expression covering all the different “behaviors carried out through the internet and technological devices to annoy, disturb, offend, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, harass, harm or attack others” (p. 220). However, even this approach shows several limitations, as it risks being general and vague, without the consideration of how young people perceive and report the phenomenon. Starting from this consideration, a measure including 20 different UOA behaviors was used to describe the experiences of both victims and perpetrators in order to help to better identify and recognize electronic intrusions and consequently improve prevention and intervention opportunities.

Method

Participants

A sample of 585 Italian students from two public secondary and three high schools (26 classes) in the Modena area of Italy participated: 366 males and 219 females, aged between 12-19 years ($M = 14.50$, $SD = 1.04$). Most of the participants were white (86.7%), living with both parents (77%), attending high school classes (61.6%), with school grades usually above average (58.9%), and highly involved in organized activities in their free time (73% - mostly sports).

Materials and Procedure

Data was collected as a part of a larger study aimed at exploring technological habits and the presence of the phenomenon of UOA among the students of Modena area [reference removed to facilitate blind review]¹. Via administration of an online questionnaire, the present research specifically concerns a measure of 20 UOA behaviors, with regards to how they are experienced by those participants identifying as victims and/or perpetrators of UOA.

Participants answered demographic questions, including sex, age, ethnic background, family status, school classes attended and grades. Then a general definition of UOA was presented as ‘online behavior that is persistent, unwanted, and potentially harassing, annoying, or otherwise aggravating to you or someone else’, asking individuals to indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to two questions in order to identify themselves as victims (i.e., I have experienced unwanted online attentions) and perpetrators (i.e., I have engaged in unwanted online attentions).

Individuals then responded to a series of 20 UOA behaviors as to how often they experienced each one (separately with regard to their experience as victims and perpetrators)

¹ Investigating the phenomenon of UOA amongst a North Italy sample of students, other components of the large study consider the sample’s technology habits relative to experience of UOA, the perception of UOA conduct, as well as reactions to UOA and help-seeking behaviors.

using a three-point scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *one time*, 3 = *more than one time*). The 20 behaviors are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Results

Of 585 participants, 69 individuals (12%) stated that they were a victim of UOA and 303 (52%) stated that they had been perpetrators of UOA. Thirty-nine people (7%) identified as being both a victim and perpetrator.

Factor analysis for victims

Responses to the 20 UOA behaviors from those participants who had experienced UOA as victims were entered into an exploratory principal axis factor analysis with promax rotation. The KMO value was .84, Bartlett's Test was significant ($p < .001$), all MSA values were above .67, and most items demonstrated reasonable communality values. Based on eigenvalues greater than 1, visual inspection of the scree plot, and item loadings, six factors were retained. These six factors accounted for 41.07% of the total variance (detailed in Table 1). The six factors were labelled as 1) Harassment, 2) Impersonation, 3) Denigration and Ordering goods, 4) Physical threats, 5) Hacking, and 6) Disseminating private information and audiovideo materials without permission.

-Table 1 here-

Factor analysis for perpetrators

In order to consider the pattern of UOA behaviors as experienced by the perpetrators, an exploratory principal axis factor analysis with promax rotation was performed on the responses to the 20 UOA behavior items. Bartlett's Test was significant ($p < .001$), the KMO value was

.83, all MSA values were above .75, and all items demonstrated reasonable communality values. Six factors, accounting for 55.91% of the total variance, were retained based on eigenvalues greater than 1, visual inspection of the scree plot, and item loadings (detailed in Table 2). The six factors were labelled: 1) Disseminating private information and audiovideo materials without permission, 2) Physical and social threats, hacking and stealing identity, 3) Harassment, 4) Denigration and ordering goods, 5) Unwanted emails and spying, and 6) Impersonation.

-Table 2 here-

Discussion and Conclusions

While Unwanted Online Attentions (UOA) are gaining research interest, issues with defining the associated behaviors (especially in relation to the experience of young people) exist which limit the perception, prevention, and intervention efforts. By using a broadly defined umbrella term (UOA), the present study sampled students in North Italy about the actions experienced as a victim and perpetrator. The results of the exploratory principal axis factor analyses concerning 20 UOA behaviors demonstrate that UOA can be categorized into six underlying categories with regard to the behaviors experienced by victims as well as by perpetrators. For victims, the factors were labelled as Harassment, Impersonation, Denigration and Ordering goods, Physical threats, Hacking and Disseminating private information and audio-video materials without permission. For perpetrators, the factors included Disseminating private information and audiovideo materials without permission, Physical and social threats, hacking and stealing identity, Harassment, Denigration and ordering goods, Unwanted emails and spying, Impersonation.

When considering the results for both types of people involved, the categories are similar with some overlap, but they are not exactly the same. Therefore, the results demonstrate a difference in UOA experiences, so the types of actions a perpetrator might do together are not necessarily the ones suffered in combination by the victims (and, of course, people can experience multiple types of behaviors). There are several explanations we might consider. Firstly, perpetrators and victims are not limited to experiencing only one type of behavior. Rather, young people may perpetrate and experience any number of these specific acts and categories of UOA behavior. Secondly, it is possible that both perpetrators and victims may not perceive their experiences in the same manner. Indeed, such experiences may not even be recognised as UOA, but unfortunately might simply be considered regular consequences of being online. Future research might consider perceptions of these UOA categories with regard to the severity of offensiveness and illegality. Nonetheless, the nuanced differences highlighted by these categorisations indicate that more accurate and inclusive definitions are needed.

With regard to previous research, the groups of behaviors emerging from the present study reflect other existing classification schemes. In general, the categories are more aligned with approaches that grouped behaviors considering the type of activities perpetrated (Langos, 2015; Maher, 2008; Willard, 2007), as opposed to those based on the media used (Al Mazari, 2013; Hinduja and Patchin, 2010) or the way of occurring (Nocentini et al., 2010). In particular, the present study's categories of harassment, denigration and impersonation match Willard's (2007) categories. Moreover, disseminating private information and audio-video materials without permission corresponds to what Willard defined as outing and trickery, and physical and social threats partially overlap with cyberstalking (Willard, 2007). Additionally, the threats categories appear to be similar to that of Indirect threats as defined by Langos (2015) as well as Rivers and Noret's (2010) ten different Threats categories, when perpetrated through emails. Then, even though the approach was different, a comparison can be made to some of Nocentini

et al.'s (2010) types – in particular, visual activities, intended as ones based on dissemination of images/videos, and impersonation.

To return to the issues surrounding the definition of these behaviors raised earlier in this paper, the present findings concerning victimization and perpetration defined help to refine the academic understanding of what constitutes UOA. By researching the 20 online behaviors with Italian teens, we have a better idea of their personal UOA experiences, emerging differences respect to the answers in front of a general definition, expressing a problem concerning awareness and perception of the interviewed, as well as possible limitations and difficulties of UOA description and identification. Indeed the refined measure could improve upon previous work in that it provides a balance in between the too-general descriptions and a too-detailed list of single acts.

As UOA is still a quite new phenomenon, a more precise definition and understanding of categories of behaviors is useful to improve the assessment and management of the prevention and intervention strategies. The findings highlight the need for a conceptualization consistent with the perceptions and experiences of respondents. In doing so, not only will the academic definition improve, but the general public, including importantly youth, will become more familiar with the concept and realities of UOA. Given the complexity of these types of harassment, as well as the virtual context in which a multiplicity of actions occur, asking for (and offering) assistance and protection assumes both a certain level of awareness and information with respect to what is happening. Thus, more clearly defined UOA behaviors have implications in promoting lay awareness of UOA, as well as appropriate responses and preventative measures. However, while the present findings help create a more detailed definition and understanding of the categories of UOA behaviors, to ensure their validity and reliability, further testing and amendments are needed. It falls on future research to continue this line of research.

The present study is not without its limitations. Firstly, working on school based self-report survey can present risks of distortion or insincere data alongside limits to external validity and the absence of other perspectives (e.g., those of teachers and parents). Secondly, we recognize that this study was conducted in one location. Thus, cross-cultural aspects should be addressed in future research, as to determine any national and cultural dimensions to UOA. Similarly, while the sample purposefully focused on youth, UOA occurs without age restrictions; therefore, additional work must consider whether the characteristics of victim and perpetrator experiences as categorized in the present study apply to older internet users. Additionally, while this study identified six categories pertaining to 20 behaviors, the total percentage of variance was 41% and 56%, suggesting that additional behaviors might also be included to further refine the categorizations. Indeed, while the examination of 20 exemplar UOA behaviors advanced the consideration and understanding of UOA beyond that by previous research, it would be naïve to consider these results as final.

Defining nature and dynamic of UOA in a standardized way is crucial for assessing and managing them, but this aim has to be pursued with consideration of the rapid evolution of technologies, cyber space, and even the phenomena itself. In this path, the conceptual adjustment through six behavioral categories obtained with this study, albeit not resolving the definitional issues and limitations, offers a good level of accuracy and effectiveness. Starting from here, new research challenges on UOA could be addressed, contributing to improve the scientific discourse on this topic and going further on the side of young people awareness, education and information.

The existence of a clear and congruent definition of abusive online behavior is central for their recognition and detection and consequently for the building of early and operative prevention strategies, intervention projects and protection tools.

References

- Aboujaoude E, Savage MW, Starcevic V and Salame WO (2015) Cyberbullying: Review of an Old Problem Gone Viral. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 57: 10-18.
- Al Mazari A (2013) Cyber-Bullying Taxonomies: Definition, Forms, Consequences and Mitigation Strategies. *International Conference on Computer Science and Information Technology*: 126-133.
- Alvarez AR (2012) “IH8U”: confronting cyberbullying and exploring the use of cyber tools in teen dating relationships. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 68(11): 1205-1215.
- Antoniadou N and Kokkinos CM (2015). Cyber and school bullying: Same or different phenomena?. *Aggressive and Violent Behavior* 25: 363-372.
- Calvete E, Orue I, Estévez A et al. (2010) Cyberbullying in adolescents: Modalities and aggressors' profile. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26: 1128-1135.
- Calvete E, Orue I and Gàmez-Guadix M (2016) Cyberbullying Victimization and Depression in Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Body Image and Cognitive Schemas in a One-year Prospective Study. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 22(2): 271–284.
- Chandrashekar AM, Muktha GS and Anjana DK (2016) Cyberstalking and Cyberbullying: Effects and prevention measures. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(3): 95-102.
- De Fazio L and Sgarbi C (2016) Unwanted Online Attentions Among an Italian Students Sample. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 22(2): 219-234.
- De Fazio L and Sgarbi C (2012) Nuove prospettive di ricerca in materia di atti persecutori: il fenomeno del cyberstalking. *Rassegna Italiana di Criminologia*, 4(3): 146-159.
- Dehue F, Bolman C and Völlink T (2008) Cyberbullying: Youngsters' experiences and parental perception. *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 11(2): 217–223.

- Grigg DW (2010) Cyber-Aggression: Definition and Concept of Cyberbullying. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 20(2): 143-156
- Hinduja S and Patchin JW (2008) Cyberbullying: An exploratory analysis of factors related to offending and victimization. *Deviant Behavior*, 29: 129-156.
- Hinduja S and Patchin JW (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hinduja S and Patchin JW (2010) Bullying, cyberbullying and suicide. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 14: 206-221.
- Hopkins L, Taylor L, Bowen E et al. (2013) A qualitative study investigating adolescents' understanding of aggression, bullying and violence. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(4): 685-693.
- Juvonen J and Gross EF (2008) Extending the school grounds? – Bullying experiences in cyberspace. *Journal of School Health*, 78(9): 496-505.
- Kowalski RM, Giumetti GW, Schroeder AN et al. (2014) Bullying in the digital age: a critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4): 1073-1137.
- Kubiszewski V, Fontaine R, Potard C et al. (2015) Does Cyberbullying overlap with school bullying when taking modality of involvement into account? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 43: 49-57.
- Kwan GC and Skoric MM (2013) Facebook Bullying: An extension of battles in school. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(1): 16-25.
- Langos C (2012) Cyberbullying: the challenge to define. *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour and Social Networking*, 15: 285-289.
- Langos C (2015) Cyberbullying: The Shades of Harm. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 22(1): 106-123.

Law DM, Shapka JD, Hymel S et al. (2012) The changing face of bullying: an empirical comparison between traditional and Internet bullying and victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28: 226-232.

Lenhart A (2015) *Teens, Social media and Technology Overview 2015*. Pew Research Center – Internet, Science and Tech. Resource document, available at: http://www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/04/PI_TeensandTech_Update2015_0409151.pdf. (accessed September 2017).

Li Q (2007) New bottle but old wine: A research of cyberbullying in schools. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(4): 1777-1791.

Livingstone S, Mascheroni G, Olafsson K et al. (2014) *Children's online risks and opportunities: comparative findings from EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile*. London, UK: EU Kids Online, LSE. Resource document, available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60513/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_EU%20Kids%20Online_EU%20Kids%20Online-Children%27s%20online%20risks_2014.pdf (accessed September 2017).

Menesini E, Nocentini A, Palladino BE et al. (2012) Cyberbullying definition among adolescents: a comparison across six European countries. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 15(9): 455-463.

Mishna F, Khoury-Kassabri M, Gadalla T et al. (2012) Risk factors for involvement in cyberbullying: Victims, bullies and bully-victims. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34: 63-70.

Nocentini A, Calmaestra J, Schultze-Krumbholz A et al. (2010) Cyberbullying: Labels, Behaviours and Definition in Three European Countries. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 20: 129-142.

Olweus D. (1993) *Bullying in school: what we know and what we can do*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Pabian S, De Backer JS and Vandebosch H (2015) Dark Triad personality traits and adolescent cyber-aggression. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 75: 41-46.
- Patchin JW and Hinduja S (2015) Measuring cyberbullying: Implications for research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 23: 69-74.
- Pereira F and Matos M (2016) Cyber-Stalking Victimization: What Predicts Fear Among Portuguese Adolescents?. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 22(2): 253-270.
- Pereira F, Spitzberg B and Matos M (2015). Cyber-harassment victimization in Portugal: Prevalence, fear and help-seeking among adolescents. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62: 136-146.
- Phillips M and Spitzberg BH (2010) Speculating about Spying on MySpace and Beyond: Social Network Surveillance and Obsessive Relational Intrusion. In: Wright KB and Webb LM (eds) *Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships*. NY: Peter Lang, pp. 344-367.
- Prensky M (2001) Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5): 2-6.
- Rafferty R and Vander Ven T (2014) 'I Hate Everything About You': A Qualitative Examination of Cyberbullying and On-Line Aggression in a College Sample. *Deviant behavior*, 35: 364-377.
- Rivers I. and Noret N (2010) "I h8 u": findings from a five-year study of text and email bullying. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36: 643-671.
- Schrock AR and Boyd D. (2011) Problematic youth interactions online: solicitation, harassment, and cyberbullying. In: Wright KB and Webb LM (eds) *Computer-Mediated Communication in Personal Relationships*. NY: Peter Lang, pp. 368-396.
- Sgarbi C (2016) La violenza contro le donne e il fenomeno dello stalking. In: Rescigno F (ed), *Percorsi di Eguaglianza*. Torino: Giappichelli, pp. 133-153.
- Slonje R and Smith PK (2008) Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying? *Scandinavian*

Journal of Psychology, 49(2): 147–154.

Smith PK (2012) Cyberbullying and cyber aggression. In: Jimerson SR, Nickerson AB, Mayer MJ and Furlong MJ (eds) *Handbook of school violence and school safety: International research and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 93-103.

Smith PK, Thompson F and Davidson J (2014) Cyber safety for adolescent girls: bullying, harassment, sexting, pornography, and solicitation. *Current Opinion in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 26(5): 360–365.

Smith P, Mahdavi J, Carvalho M et al. (2008) Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49(4): 376–385.

Spitzberg BH and Cupach WR (2007) Cyberstalking as (Mis)matching. In: Whitty MT, Baker AJ and Inman JA (eds) *Online Matchmaking*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 127-146.

Tokunaga RS (2010) Following you home from school: A critical review and synthesis of research on cyberbullying victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(3): 277–287.

Vandebosch H and Van Cleemput K (2008) Defining cyberbullying: A qualitative research into the perceptions of youngsters. *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 11(4): 499–503.

Wachs S (2012) Moral disengagement and emotional and social difficulties in bullying and cyberbullying: Differences by participant role. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 17: 347-360.

Willard N (2007) *Cyberbullying and cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social aggression, threats and distress*. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 5-10.

Wolak J, Mitchell K and Finkelhor D (2006) *Online victimization: 5 years later*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Ybarra ML and Mitchell KJ (2007) Prevalence and frequency of Internet harassment instigation: Implications for adolescent health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41(2): 189-195.

Zych I, Ortega-Ruiz R and Del Rey R (2015) Scientific research on bullying and cyberbullying: Where have we been and where are we going. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 24: 188-189.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/ or publication of this article: The data were collected through a larger survey that received a grant from a private foundation (Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Modena).

Note 1.

Investigating the phenomenon of UOA among a North Italian sample of students, other components of the large study consider the sample's technology habits relative to experience of UOA, the perception of UOA conduct, as well as reactions to UOA and help-seeking behaviours.

Table 1. Results of the Principal Axis Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation about Victim Experiences (N = 585)

Unwanted Online Attention Item	Factor					
	Harassment	Impersonation	Denigration and Ordering goods	Physical Threats	Hacking	Disseminating private information and audiovideo materials without permission
Sending you unwanted invitations or suggestions	0,764					
Sending you unwanted sexually oriented images or messages	0,582					
Sending you unwanted needy or overly affectionate messages	0,562					
Advising or guiding others to contact you in an unwanted way	0,447					
Receiving unsolicited and unwanted text messages	0,349					
Posting false information on your social networks (e.g. MySpace, FB, Twitter, etc.)		0,561				
Stolen your online identity		0,520				
Breaking into or stealing some electronic information (hacking)		0,428			0,395	
Harassing by deceiving you or pretending to be someone else	0,331	0,405				
Threats to harm you socially (e.g. ruining your reputation, insulting you, gossiping/spreading rumours via internet or mobile phone)		0,384				
Sending messages in your name		0,376				
Building defamatory websites about you			0,816			
Ordering goods or subscribing you to unwanted services in your name			0,626			
Sending or posting publicly pictures/videos/audiotapes that you consider threatening			0,391			
Spying on you through GPS or other electronic devices		0,319	0,360			
Threats to harm you physically through Internet or mobile phone				0,905		
Deliberately forwarding computer viruses or spyware					0,825	
Receiving unsolicited and unwanted e-mails					0,324	
Disseminating/sharing your private or protected information with others without your permission						0,639
Sending or posting publicly pictures/videos/audiotapes that are private or embarrassing you						0,474
Eigenvalue	4,550	1,211	0,734	0,697	0,577	0,439
% of Variance	22,774	6,056	3,671	3,485	2,885	2,197
Cronbach's Alpha	0,689	0,703	0,630		0,537	0,590

Note. Loadings < .30 were suppressed.

Table2. Results of the Principal Axis Factor Analysis with Promax Rotation about Perpetrator Experiences (N = 585)

Unwanted Online Action Item	Factor					
	Disseminating private information and audiovideo materials without permission	Physical and social threats, hacking and stealing identity	Harassment	Denigration and Ordering goods	Unwanted emails and spying	Impersonation
Sending or posting publicly pictures/videos/audiotapes that someone else might consider threatening	0,964					
Sending or posting publicly pictures/videos/audiotapes that are private or embarrassing to someone	0,686					
Posting false information on others' social networks (e.g. MySpace, FB, Twitter, etc.)	0,444					0,352
Disseminating/sharing someone else's private or protected information with others' without permission	0,434				-0,356	
Threats to harm someone physically through Internet or mobile phone		0,371				
Threats to harm someone socially		0,354				
Deliberately forwarding computer viruses or spyware		0,809				
Breaking/stealing some electronic information (hacking)			0,783			
Stolen another person's identity		0,702				
Sending unwanted sexually oriented images or messages (e.g., pornographic or obscene materials, etc.)			0,865			
Sending unwanted invitations or suggestions (e.g., sexual proposals)			0,718			
Sending unwanted needy or overly affectionate messages			0,579			
Sending unsolicited and unwanted text messages				0,439		0,312
Building defamatory websites about someone else				0,962		
Ordering goods or subscribing unwanted services in someone else's name				0,745		
Advise or guide others to contact someone else in an unwanted way				0,635		
Sending unsolicited and unwanted e-mails					0,614	
Spying on another person through GPS or other electronic devices (e.g., camera, location devices, etc.)					0,407	
Sending messages in someone else's name						0,867
Harassing by deceiving someone or pretending to be someone else						
Eigenvalue	6,123	1,927	1,045	0,815	0,678	0,554
% of Variance	30,817	9,636	5,224	4,073	3,389	2,769
Cronbach's Alpha	0,768	0,735	0,655	0,783	0,334	

Note. Loadings < .30 were suppressed.