

## RESUMEN

La violencia de género es una problemática aún muy patente en la actualidad. Internet ha propiciado un nuevo modo de comunicación sin precedentes, con unas características únicas, por medio del cual los jóvenes y adolescentes socializan y conforman su identidad. Los mundos *online* y *offline* confluyen e interaccionan, por lo que se debe entender Internet como un continuo de la vida *offline*.

Por tanto, la ciberviolencia de género es la entendida como una continuo de la violencia de género *offline* pero realizada mediante las distintas plataformas virtuales. Así pues, la hipótesis del presente trabajo es que debido al surgimiento de las nuevas tecnologías la violencia de género ha encontrado nuevas formas en las que manifestarse y se ha exacerbado debido a las propiedades únicas de estas plataformas.

En el cuestionario que se realizó se observó que las redes sociales en las cuales se había presenciado más violencia de género fueron: *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* y *Facebook*. Las propiedades de las redes sociales tales como el efecto contagio, el efecto audiencia, la permanencia del contenido digital, el anonimato, la facilidad y accesibilidad de la información o la posibilidad de subir fotos sin censura suponen facilitadores para que los agresores ejerzan violencia de género, que se puede manifestar de diversas formas: cibercontrol, ciberacoso, pornovenganza, sextorsión, *hacking*, cibermisoginia o ciberviolencia simbólica. Estos actos tienen unas consecuencias muy graves para la víctima, tanto psicológicas y sociales como virtuales. La poca percepción a la hora de discernir estas conductas como ciberviolencia de género dificulta que se tomen medidas entorno a ellas.

Por tanto, se ha comprobado que las redes sociales han propiciado el surgimiento de nuevas formas de violencia de género así como un aumento de ésta, debido a la tolerancia, los mitos del amor romántico o la poca percepción de riesgo, entre otros.

## ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence is still a very obvious problem today. The Internet has brought about a whole new form of communication with unprecedented characteristics, through which young people and teenagers socialize and shape their identity. The online and offline worlds converge and interact with each other, so the Internet must be understood as a continuum of offline life.

Therefore, gender-based cyberviolence is understood as a continuation of offline gender-based violence but carried out through different virtual platforms. Thus, the hypothesis of this study is that due to the emergence of new technologies, gender-based violence has found new ways to manifest itself and has been exacerbated due to the unique properties of these platforms.

According to the questionnaire carried out, the social networks on which most gender-based violence had been witnessed, were: *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* and *Facebook*. The properties of social networks such as the social contagion, the audience effect, the persistence of digital content, anonymity, the ease and accessibility of information or the possibility of uploading uncensored photos are facilitators for aggressors to perpetrate gender-based violence, which can manifest itself in various forms: cyber control, cyber harassment, revenge porn, sextortion, hacking, cyber misogyny or symbolic cyber violence. These acts have serious consequences for the victim, both psychological and social as well as virtual. The lack of awareness when it comes to discerning these behaviours as gender-based cyberviolence makes it difficult to take actions around them.

Therefore, it has been proven that social networks have favoured the emergence of new forms of gender violence as well as an increase in it, due to tolerance, myths of romantic love or low perception of risk, among others.

# NEW FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND TEENAGERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is defined as any act of violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm to women (United Nations, 1995) by their partner or former partner. In 2019 alone, it cost the lives of 55 women in Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2020) so it is still a very obvious problem in society that can present itself in different ways.

There is no denying that the Internet and new technologies have brought about a whole new form of communication with unprecedented characteristics. According to the INE (2019), 99.2% of men and 99% of women between the ages of 14 and 26 made use of the Internet in 2019, which suggests that the various virtual platforms represent an essential part of the everyday life of young people and teenagers, who use them to socialise and shape their identity.

Social networks, in this way, can involve both inclusion and exclusion mechanisms that have an impact on real life and vice versa. Therefore, the Internet and social networks should not be understood as something separate from real life, but rather as a continuation from it, since the online and offline world converge and interact with each other.

Thus, it is not surprising that something as deep-rooted as gender-based violence has found ways of expression through social networks, enabling perpetrators to find new ways of exercising violence against women. Cyber violence against women is defined as a new form of gender-based violence that is perceived as a continuation of real life violence (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017) but through different digital platforms.

Consequently, the **hypothesis** is that as a result of the use of new technologies, there has been an increase in attitudes and behaviours of violence against women, and that this has allowed perpetrators to find new ways to perpetuate gender asymmetry through these platforms.

PREDISPOSING FACTORS FOR ACTING AS AN ONLINE PERPETRATOR	VULNERABILITY FACTORS FOR BECOMING AN ONLINE VICTIM
The very fact of being a man	The very fact of being a woman
Having been a perpetrator in real life (Southworth et al. 2007)	Having been a victim in the past (Learned helplessness T.) (Seligman, 1975)
Internalisation of traditional gender roles and myths of romantic love	
Hostile/benevolent sexism (intermittent reinforcement) (Glick & Fiske, 1996)	Internal locus of control towards the negative, external locus of control towards the positive (Domingo, 2014)
Low self-esteem, emotional dependency	
Jealousy, lack of empathy	Economic dependency, social isolation
Having witnessed an abusive relationship during childhood (González-Ortega, Echeburúa & Corral, 2008) (Learning: modeling. Seeing violence as an "option")	Having witnessed an abusive relationship during childhood (Pygmalion Effect) (Acosta, 2012)
Peer group: developing social-emotional skills (Caro, 2018)	Low risk perception: engaging in risky behaviour (such as sexting, public profiling) (De Frutos & Marcos-Santos, 2017)
Personality traits: compulsivity	Personality traits: lack of assertiveness, sensation seeking
Unaware of the consequences of their behaviour	Failing to distinguish such behaviour as a form of gender-based violence

## FACILITATORS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to Torres, Robles y de Marco (2013), the unique properties of the Internet encourages the perpetrator to commit acts of cyber violence against women even though he would never do so offline. Three key features that enable the perpetration of gender-based violence online (West, 2014):

**1. Anonymity and the ease to create false profiles:** this encourages perpetrators to engage in behaviour in which they would probably not involve if they knew that their actions would be public and visible. Toxic online disinhibition effect (Zhong, Keibell & Webster 2020).

**2. Ease and accessibility of information:** Tendency to show a large part of personal life on the Internet (part of the identity process and socialisation of young people and teenagers) which enables the perpetrator to have access to a great deal of information about the victim and thus the possibility of reducing the distance between them.

**3. Persistence of the content published online:** even when the user deletes the content published online, it never disappears completely and can keep circulating on the Internet.

## SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED

According to the questionnaire carried out on a sample of 123 people mainly between the ages of 18-21 (48.8%) and 22-25 (47.2%), the social networks on which most gender-based violence had been witnessed, were, in order: WhatsApp (78.5%), Instagram (71%), Twitter (23.7%) and Facebook (12.9%). Only 2.2% were victims or witnesses of cyber violence against women on YouTube or Snapchat.

SPECIFIC FEATURES	SOCIAL NETWORKS
Ease of transmission between people (social contagion) and the availability to send messages at any time (Peris & Magnato, 2018)	on any social network, but especially on WhatsApp, as it is the leading messaging system, and Facebook
Amplification of the scope of the aggression (audience effect) (Torres et al., 2013)	especially on Instagram and Twitter if you don't have a private account (protective factor) but also on the others
Thinking that the content will be deleted (false sense of security)	especially on Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook, which have the so-called "stories" (content that "disappears" from the profile within 24 hours)
Uncensored photos in private conversation	on all social networks
Uncensored photos of public access	on Twitter (which has led to the emergence of platforms such as OnlyFans) and WhatsApp

## CONSEQUENCES, REACTIONS, PERCEPTION AND ACTION REGARDING CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

According to Torres et al. (2013), unlike offline violence, online violence has a double dimension: on the one hand, the psychological effects that would result from offline gender-based violence (fear, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem or even suicide) and on the other hand, digital exclusion, by limiting the virtual freedom of the victim. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that the social consequences of cyber violence can have even a greater impact than those resulting from offline violence (limitation of the victim's social contacts, social exclusion, truancy or work absenteeism).

The most frequently observed **reaction** among the victims of online violence was to ask the perpetrator to stop (33.3%) and the least frequent were to block the account that sent the message (12.7%) and to report it (1.6%).

This may be due to the **little perception** of these behaviours as forms of gender-based violence. According to Donoso, Rubio and Vilà (2018), although there are some forms of gender-based violence that are perceived as such, the least perceived are those carried out by the partner/ex-partner. This may be due to the fact that the myths of romantic love and gender roles are still intrinsic to the collective imagination and are perceived as "signs of love" and "interest".

This makes it difficult to **take action** against cyber violence against women:

In the European Union: cyber violence against women has not yet been conceptualised or acted upon (EIGE, 2017).

In Spain there is no specific law but several articles of the Penal Code include it and some practices are punishable with imprisonment.

In the Valencian Community, measures concerning cyber bullying are mentioned in the "Pacte Valencià contra la Violència de Gènere i Masclista" (Generalitat Valenciana, 2017).

## FORMS OF CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (García, 2016)

<b>Cyber Control</b>	control behaviours (knowing who she is with, demanding location, spying on her phone).
<b>Cyber Harassment</b>	repeated and sustained actions against the victim's will (persistent or humiliating messages, creating false accounts to keep in contact with the victim).
<b>Revenge porn</b>	spreading or threatening to spread intimate photos of the victim to third parties with the aim of harming the victim, as a "revenge" for some behaviour carried out by the victim.
<b>Sextortion</b>	coercion of the perpetrator towards the victim to send him intimate photos against her will.
<b>Hacking</b>	password theft to have full control of the victim's privacy.
<b>Cyber Misogyny</b>	online insults and defamations of women for the fact of being female.
<b>Symbolic Cyber Violence</b>	hypersexualisation, commodification of women on social networks.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, it has been proven that violence against women has found its way through social networks and is now perpetuated in new forms. It has even been magnified through the distance shortening to the victim and the amplification of the impact of the aggression that virtual platforms allow.

It is important to highlight **the difficulty in identifying the behaviours** carried out by perpetrators as cyber violence against women. This makes it complicated to take appropriate action to eradicate them and to know how to detect them. Both the myths of romantic love and traditional gender stereotypes, which can be precipitating as well as sustaining of gender-based violence online, play a significant role in this issue.

At the same time, **the low perception of risk** around social networks encourages the adoption of risk behaviours in the virtual world, which can be mediated both by the subjective norm and by the normalisation of social networks in daily life. In addition, **the lack of awareness about the consequences of these acts** leads to a higher number of aggressions carried out by perpetrators, and the fact that these are standardised behaviours leads to most of the victims not taking any action and the consequent greater tolerance towards these acts.

**In conclusion**, it is necessary to take actions in order to alleviate this problem, not only after the aggression, but also on a preventive level, by teaching what kind of behaviours constitute cyber violence against women, the consequences of these acts (both at a legal level and for the victim), how to proceed when they happen or how to make a safe use of social networks, among others.

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