

Digital abuse among dating partners: perspectives and experiences of adolescents from two Brazilian capitals

Abuso digital entre namorados: perspectivas e experiências de adolescentes de duas capitais brasileiras

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Abstract *The conceptions, values, and experiences of students from public and private high schools in two Brazilian state capitals, Vitória-ES and Campo Grande-MS, were analyzed regarding digital control and monitoring between intimate partners and the unauthorized exposure of intimate material on the Internet. Data from eight focus groups with 77 adolescents were submitted to thematic analysis, complemented by a questionnaire answered by a sample of 530 students. Most students affirmed that they do not tolerate the control/monitoring and unauthorized exposure of intimate materials but recognized that such activity is routine. They point out jealousy, insecurity, and “curiosity” as their main reasons. They detail the various dynamics of unauthorized exposure of intimate material and see it as a severe invasion of privacy and a breach of trust between partners. Their accounts suggest that such practices are gender violence. They also reveal that each platform has its cultural appropriation and that platforms used by the family, such as Facebook, cause more significant damage to the victim’s reputation.*

Key words *Digital abuse, Intimate partner violence, Adolescent*

Resumo *Foram analisadas as concepções, valores e experiências de alunos de escolas públicas e privadas de ensino médio de duas capitais brasileiras, Vitória-ES e Campo Grande-MS, quanto ao controle e monitoramento digital entre namorados e a exposição não autorizada de material íntimo no Internet. Os dados de oito grupos focais com 77 adolescentes foram submetidos à análise temática, complementada por um questionário respondido por uma amostra de 530 alunos. A maioria dos alunos afirmou não tolerar o controle/monitoramento e exposição não autorizada de materiais íntimos, mas reconheceu que tal atividade é rotineira. Eles apontam o ciúme, a insegurança e a “curiosidade” como seus principais motivos. Eles detalham as várias dinâmicas de exposição não autorizada de material íntimo e veem isso como uma grave invasão de privacidade e uma quebra de confiança entre parceiros. Seus relatos sugerem que tais práticas são violência de gênero. Revelam também que cada plataforma tem sua apropriação cultural e que plataformas utilizadas pela família, como o Facebook, causam danos mais significativos à reputação da vítima.*

Palavras-chave *Abuso digital, Violência entre parceiro íntimo, Adolescente*

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Introduction

The social interactions produced on the Internet mediate the different types of social communication among adolescents and redefine their affective-sexual socialities^{1,2}. Intimate messages, photos, and videos are exchanged daily, sometimes composing a digital collection of great magnitude.

However, discrimination and violence can occur in these new digital interactions, especially between intimate partners and ex-partners. Digital abuse practiced by intimate partners ranges from threats and insults in digital media to the dissemination of intimate material without the prior consent of the partner or ex-partner with the intention of humiliating, defaming the person, and includes other forms of violence, such as controlling and monitoring posts and communications³⁻⁶.

Intimate abuse has expanded in the online affective-sexual dynamics and their relations of power, jealousy, and confrontations, especially among adolescents and young people.

In general terms, the “unauthorized dissemination and circulation of intimate or erotic content” on the Internet, also called “revenge porn”, is a strategy to humiliate and defame people⁷. It was popularized by the expression “leaking nudes”, and this practice may also include sextortion (“sex + extortion”), that is, threats and blackmail made so that the material is not published, requiring payment of a sum or submission to the blackmailer⁸⁻¹¹.

Unauthorized exposure of intimate material involving partners or former partners defines a form of symbolic and psychological violence, with a clear affiliation of gender-based violence^{12,13}, whose harmful consequences on emotional health have been widely recognized in the literature, and the damage to the social persona, its identity, and reputation^{14,15}.

Another type of violence perpetrated in the online environment between affective-sexual partners is monitoring and control. Harassment or control/surveillance is recognized as another type of digital abuse. It involves monitoring social contacts and behaviors for the control of friendships and possible love betrayals and can be performed with the support of several applications or even hijacking the password of the partner’s social media^{3,16}.

Both unauthorized exposure of intimate material and digital control are part of the phenomenon known as cyber dating abuse. This phe-

nomenon has been little studied in Brazil^{4,16-18}. However, international research has already brought evidence of the impacts of these types of violence on adolescents’ physical and mental health¹⁹⁻²³.

This paper aimed to identify and analyze the conceptions, values, and experiences of adolescents, public and private high school students in two Brazilian capitals (Vitória-ES and Campo Grande-MS), about digital control and monitoring between partners and unauthorized exposure of intimate material on the Internet.

Methods

The results presented in this paper are part of a larger study entitled *Violence in digital communication: analysis of the discourses and practice disseminated on the Internet about homophobia, self-perpetration of violence, cyber dating abuse, and cyberbullying*, which conducted in 2019, a cross-sectional quantitative descriptive and qualitative study on a representative sample of high school second graders of public and private schools in Vitória-ES and Campo Grande-MS. These capitals were selected because they have recorded high percentages of bullying in the country, 6.8% and 7.9%, respectively¹⁸. To obtain a deeper understanding of the research problem, convergent parallel mixed methods were used²⁴.

In quantitative terms, the sample was sized to obtain proportion estimates, with an accuracy of 5%, a 95% confidence level, and assuming a proportion (P) of the occurrence of victimization by cyberbullying of adolescents of 20% and a deft of 2. It employed multi-stage conglomerate sampling, with selection in three stages: 1st stage - stratum (public or private) selection; 2nd stage - school selection, with the probability of a selection proportional to the number of second graders; 3rd stage - random selection of a class within the school to apply the questionnaire to all students. The estimated sample size was 242 students in Campo Grande and 238 in Vitória, distributed across the school’s strata (public and private). It is important to highlight that in Brazil the type of school (public or private) often indicates belonging to different socioeconomic strata.

In Campo Grande, 247 students answered the questionnaire (124 from public schools and 123 from private schools) and, in Vitória, 284 (126 from public schools and 158 from private schools), totaling 531 questionnaires, which lead us to a representative sample of second graders

from public and private schools in each of the cities. The instrument contained six blocks, organized as follows: sociodemographic profile; adolescent relationships and school performance; use of the Internet and social networks; affective-sexual relationships; self-esteem, psychological distress, alcohol/drug use, self-mutilation, and suicidal ideation; and violence between parents/legal guardians; school and community violence. This paper employed data related to profile, Internet use, and sexual affective relationships.

We employed some Cyber Dating Abuse (CDA) scale items developed by Zweig *et al.*²⁰. The CDA consists of 16 questions with scores ranging from 0 to 3 (Likert scale, with options: never, rarely, sometimes, and always/often), totaling a maximum score of 48 points. The score value indicates the level of involvement with the event: the higher the score, the greater the involvement. The cross-cultural adaptation of the scale to the Portuguese language followed the operative system proposed by Herdman *et al.*²⁵ and published by Reichenheim and Moraes²⁶ and found a Cronbach's alpha = 0.865. The scale items used were had social media accounts used without their permission, received repeated intrusive messages from their partner, have been pressured to send a photo with sexual or nude content, have photos or other embarrassing images posted on social networks, received unwanted photos of sexual content, a partner has already made a video of them and sent it to friends without their permission.

The mask for entering quantitative data was built in the Epidata 3.1 program, and the database was analyzed in the SPSS 24.0 program. It involved calculating the CDA scale scores, constructing the frequency distributions of the variables, and performing a bivariate analysis, using Pearson's chi-square test, with Rao-Scott second-order correction to incorporate the sample design.

Eight focus groups were staged (four in Campo Grande and four in Vitória; two in public schools and two in private schools in each city) to understand digital communication violence in its external dimensions and its deeper meanings and social relationships that provide them, including 77 students in a convenience sample, 39 in Campo Grande and 38 in Vitória from some of the schools and classes selected for the research. The sessions lasted about 90 minutes and were transcribed in full. They identified only the gender of the interlocutor, whether public/private school, municipality, and each individual by a letter.

A focus group script was adopted with some guiding questions for the discussion: "Do you know of any cases of teenagers who have already had their cell phone or their social networks monitored by their partner or ex-partner?"; "Do you know of any cases of teenagers who have been humiliated, persecuted, harassed by a partner or ex-partner?"; and "Do you know of any cases of teenagers who have already had a video, photo or intimate file published on the internet, by a partner or ex-partner?"

The focus groups were done in private rooms, with mixed genders/sexual orientation volunteers from the same school class. This can be a limitation to how honest young people chose to be around those who know them, but on other hand teenagers were comfortable among known peers. The groups are facilitated by two female researchers.

The thematic analysis proposed by Barrera *et al.*²⁷ was applied to qualitative data. We adopted the thematic analysis recognizing that the reported experiences manifest structures of relevant meanings attributed by the subjects explained by the interpretation in frameworks and typologies. Successive readings of the collection were undertaken to familiarize with the text, identify themes, codify, define, and name the themes, perform groupings, and produce a descriptive report²⁸. The coding process was done by two researchers separately and then discussed with a third researcher to achieve a consensus and improve the trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

This study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council, which regulates research involving human beings in Brazil.

Results

Brief profile of the participants and their use of social networks

Approximately 57.6% of the students who answered the questionnaire were female, with a mean age of 16.2 years (standard error (SE) = 0.04) and brown self-reported skin color (41.8%). Most belonged to the highest social strata (A+B=61.6%). A total of 57.1% said they lived with a father and mother, and 27.3% with only one of the parents. A significant percentage (69.1%) indicated practicing a religion, and the Roman Catholic and Evangelical were the most cited.

Table 1 shows some sociodemographic characteristics of the students, by city and school type. As can be seen, the distribution of adolescents regarding various features is similar in both cities. Female students predominate, and most of them reported having a religion. However, some differences are observed, such as the highest percentage of students aged 17 years in private schools in Campo Grande. Skin color with the social class variable gather students with white skin color and from A+B social classes in private schools and those with black/brown skin color from C+D+E social classes in public schools. This differentiated distribution occurs in the two cities. Although most students reported that they have a family structure composed of father and mother and with religion, it is worth mentioning that, in Campo Grande, more than one-third of those attending public schools reported only having one parent and not having a religion, resulting in a pattern different from that observed in Vitória.

Table 2 shows the use of the Internet by students, by city, and school type. The data show that students access the Internet always/often mainly by cell phone and computer, regardless of the city and school type. Around 40% of students stated that they know other adolescents on the Internet and meet them in person, and this percentage is slightly lower in Vitória's public schools. In Campo Grande, public school students seem to meet more with adults they know on the Internet, and, regardless of the school type, the percentage of meetings with adolescents and adults is higher than in Vitória.

Digital control/monitoring in affective-sexual relationships: moral ambiguities

Approximately 80% of the students reported having already started to hook up/date, with a mean age for the onset of "hookup" of 12.9

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the adolescents surveyed by city and school type.

| Characteristics | Campo Grande | | Vitória | |
|--|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| Gender | | | | |
| Female | 56.1% | 62.4% | 58.1% | 56.5% |
| Male | 43.9% | 37.6% | 41.9% | 43.5% |
| Age in years | | | | |
| 13 | | | 0.9% | |
| 15 | 27.7% | | 2.4% | 8.4% |
| 16 | 41.1% | 34.7% | 55.2% | 82.6% |
| 17 | 18.9% | 56.6% | 36.9% | 9.0% |
| 18 | 8.7% | 7.7% | 4.7% | |
| 19 | 1.0% | 1.0% | | |
| 20 | 1.0% | | | |
| 21 | 0.8% | | | |
| Skin color | | | | |
| White | 39.6% | 60.1% | 30.3% | 61.8% |
| Black/Brown | 55.8% | 35.7% | 68.1% | 35.8% |
| Yellow/Indigenous | 4.6% | 4.1% | 1.6% | 2.4% |
| Social class | | | | |
| A+B | 51.1% | 91.9% | 51.4% | 91.1% |
| C+D+E | 48.9% | 8.1% | 48.6% | 8.9% |
| Family structure | | | | |
| Father and Mother | 51.7% | 68.3% | 53.5% | 69.4% |
| Father and Stepmother or Mother and Stepfather | 12.3% | 11.9% | 22.7% | 8.0% |
| Only one parent | 36.0% | 19.7% | 23.9% | 22.6% |
| Religion | | | | |
| Yes | 62.2% | 82.2% | 70.0% | 73.7% |
| No | 37.8% | 17.8% | 30.0% | 26.3% |

Source: Authors.

Table 2. Internet use by adolescents by city and school type.

| Characteristics | Campo Grande | | Vitória | |
|--|--------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| Internet access | | | | |
| Cellphone (always/often) | 96.0% | 99.1% | 98.3% | 97.6% |
| Computer (always/often) | 45.6% | 52.0% | 55.3% | 76.0% |
| Tablet (always/often) | 9.2% | 10.2% | 13.4% | 16.9% |
| Internet access time | | | | |
| Not accessing | | | 2.5% | |
| Up to 1 hour | 5.6% | 1.6% | 3.1% | 1.1% |
| 2-3 hours | 22.8% | 29.5% | 17.6% | 23.0% |
| 4-6 hours | 30.3% | 43.6% | 35.1% | 50.1% |
| 7 hours and over | 41.4% | 24.2% | 40.1% | 25.2% |
| Most used internet item | | | | |
| Stories | 79.6% | 72.5% | 88.0% | 71.2% |
| Timeline posts | 20.4% | 27.5% | 12.0% | 28.8% |
| Activities | | | | |
| Searching for subjects of interest | 90.0% | 99.2% | 98.3% | 95.2% |
| Chat rooms | 66.9% | 68.6% | 62.7% | 57.4% |
| Sending and receiving email messages | 38.7% | 39.5% | 58.1% | 29.0% |
| Accessing networks | 98.5% | 97.7% | 94.4% | 94.0% |
| School assignments | 80.2% | 88.4% | 94.4% | 84.1% |
| Downloading music, movies, and programs | 80.1% | 84.0% | 83.9% | 78.5% |
| Playing online | 48.8% | 59.7% | 46.8% | 39.9% |
| Buying online | 25.1% | 33.4% | 33.4% | 25.0% |
| Searching for a boyfriend | 6.6% | 7.7% | 4.2% | 8.3% |
| Already found someone on the Internet and met personally | | | | |
| Yes, adolescent | 43.1% | 48.4% | 31.7% | 41.6% |
| Yes, adult | 22.4% | 6.2% | 3.2% | 1.1% |
| Yes, adolescent and adult | 34.5% | 45.4% | 18.5% | 12.0% |

Source: Authors.

years (SE=0.12) and a mean number of people with whom they hooked up 21.70 (SE=2.88). The mean age at which they started dating was 14.2 (SE=0.12), and the mean number of people the teenager dated was 2.52 (SE=0.33). The data from the two capitals studied, and the two education networks (public and private) are similar. Girls reported a slightly higher age at the onset of these relationships (hookup and dating) and a smaller number of people they hooked up with/dated.

In a first approach, adolescents understand it as an abusive practice to tamper with their date's cell phone without consent to monitor and control their communications on social networks. However, this conception is gradually relaxed when invited to talk about the reasons for such an act. On the one hand, such an act is understood as an invasion of privacy, lack of respect and trust in the relationship. On the other hand, some respondents also justified it due to the emo-

tional insecurity and "childishness" of partners, enhanced by jealousy. Jealousy is understood from two dichotomous perspectives, one that associates it with the notion of proof of love ("feels jealous, because he/she likes me"), assuming an acceptable and even positive character. In another, "jealousy" comes with an adjective ("possessive jealousy"), with a negative connotation.

Or he/she can also... may be suspicious of what the individual may have done [...] He/she starts to be possessively jealous. This is not good (E (M), Public network, Vitória).

From a quantitative viewpoint, approximately 18% of students mentioned that they already had social media accounts used without their permission, with a higher value for those from the public network in Vitória (24.3%) and lower for the public network in Campo Grande (13.1%). Almost 30% of young people who answered the questionnaire stated that they had al-

ready received repeated intrusive messages from their partner, which caused them insecurity, and this item was reported by students from private schools (Campo Grande = 35.4%; Vitória = 33.5%). However, while 'possessive', these young people also justify this jealousy by considering that it could be related to having already suffered a previous betrayal, generating emotional marks that hinder a new relationship.

[...] When you are too jealous, you are insecure. You don't even trust yourself, which ends up harming not only you but the relationship and the other individual (B (H), Public network, Vitória).

When inferred about what they mean by 'betrayal', there was no consensus in the group, and the meanings varied between wishing someone out of the relationship and that of betraying trust, breaking with expectations. Gradually, disagreements on 'tampering with the partner's cell phone without his/her consent' emerged. Part of the young people participating in the focus group of Vitória's private network uses an argument that 'naturalized' this practice, justifying it by the bias of the impulsiveness associated with insecurity.

It's like ... Not even I suspect it. I have nothing to suspect of him, but ...

INTERVIEWER: But you, in this story, do you catch him lying, or do you catch him this way...?

So, sometimes it is... In front of him, I am afraid of catching him and having a fight. So, when he goes to take a shower or do something...

INTERVIEWER: Then you take a look.

Yes (D (M), Private network, Vitória).

The ambiguous discourse emerged in several groups, including among homo-affective partners. Interestingly, 'curiosity' applies in a one-way street, where only one of the couples has the prerogative to invoke it to justify invading the other's privacy, minimizing its consequences by categorizing it as an unmalicious act. However, when they suffer the invasion mentioned above, they reveal difficulty in empathizing, and this behavior is re-signified, becoming an "abusive" act, a direct offense, represented by the lack of trust in that individual.

I think this is wrong, but at the same time, I also think that this is very normal. You start suspecting something and say, "I'm going to poke, I'm going to see what he's saying", and stuff [...] just out of curiosity. I don't think it's necessarily in the meanness. However, I think it is a massive invasion of privacy. If it were on me, I would be distraught [...]" (D (M), Private network, Vitória).

Abusive experiences in intimate relationships

These young people classified the relationships based on exercising control over a partner as abusive, possessive, or toxic. They believe that an "abusive relationship" involves attitudes that include everything from controlling the dress to the need for proof through cell phone screen prints and the list of conversations seen on WhatsApp as constant proof of innocence.

[...] He did it all the time. I had to send print-outs of my WhatsApp, my latest conversations, and the ones on file too. So, it was not satisfactory for me to be talking to him. [...] I had to send him a print [...] to make sure that I am not talking to anyone besides him (C (M), Public network, Campo Grande).

Young people also detail the behavioral mechanisms for accepting domination. Some youth reports revealed a relationship between being emotionally insecure and suffering different types of abuse in the intimate relationship, voicing a sense of guilt, as if the victim were responsible for the partner's violence.

At some stage in this abusive relationship, the victim ends up thinking that it is her fault for everything that happens (I (M), Public network, Campo Grande).

There was no consensus when participants were asked whether girls or boys were more frequently involved in acts of control/monitoring in the intimate relationship. However, adolescents find that the patriarchal perspective still prevails and have used the term "submission" to express asymmetric gender relationships.

I believe that the girl becomes, for example, more obedient to the man than vice versa (D (M), Public network, Campo Grande).

"Unauthorized exposure of intimate material"

In all the groups, in public or private schools, the adolescents had their own experiences or acquaintances about having their nude spread without consent, asserting that such an experience is quite common among these young people. The experience of having photos or other embarrassing images posted on social networks was mentioned by 5.7% of the students who answered the questionnaire. A higher percentage (10%) reported that a partner has already made a video of them and sent it to friends without their permission.

Comparing quantitative data by gender showed a statistically significant difference only regarding two items: having been pressured to send a photo with sexual or nude content (more prevalent among girls; $p=0.009$); and having had embarrassing pictures posted online (more prevalent among boys; $p=0.031$). Also, about 40% of students reported that they had received unwanted photos of sexual content, and the highest percentage was for public schools (Vitória=43.8%; Campo Grande=40.6%).

Exchanging intimate materials over the Internet is a common practice by adolescents in the new love grammar. However, with the disclosure about the experiences of having a leaked nude, many add to the initial representation the perceived risk and fear. Only a young woman in one group debated this cultural practice and said that it is “unnecessary” to send digital images when there is the possibility of seeing the partner’s naked body directly. This pragmatic reasoning is not consensual among peers and ignores the demand for representational and imaginary production of the erotic body and the discursive production of intimacy.

I believe that a girl should not [...] even if it is about her boyfriend. I don't know. Guys, you can see each other and get naked in front of each other. What are you going to send a photo for? If you don't know if it will last? We don't know what he's going to do next (B (M), Public network, Campo Grande).

In this moral map of amorous behavior, boys and girls consider nude leak a “betrayal of trust”, an immature, unreliable, and even ungrateful character test in the face of what was possible to enjoy in the relationship. It was also designated a “crime” by some students who even invoke experiences of the perpetrator’s judicialization and criminal liability. According to then, parents supported such legal interventions for filing a police report.

The adolescents map four native conceptions of the possible dynamics and motivations of unauthorized exposure of intimate material in the context of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) from the set of experiences that they have already accumulated among their peers. The first and most well-known is when the former partner does not accept the separation, and because he/she is jealous, he/she discloses without consent the erotic materials formerly exchanged between both. One may assume responsibility for the act or not, but in general, such disclosure is accompanied by a discursive production of curses and accusations that aims to despise the victim’s character.

In the second, the former partner discovers that a new relationship is already underway. In this situation, the persona of the new partner has a more prominent agency, provoking or challenging the former partner on social networks. In this virtual confrontation, the former partner disseminates the erotic material, taking revenge on both (the former partner and the new boyfriend), believing that nudes will serve as “proof” of the former partner’s “reproachable” and “profligate” behavior, devaluing it publicly.

The group’s third dynamic speaks of the dissemination of this material by a new partner, who treats the audiovisual statement of the recent love conquest as a “trophy”. In this case, it can also be sent to pick on an overcome former partner.

Some people also start spreading these personal photos to show what they have achieved. [...] I took D's nudes and sent them to all the boys at school. Then, ... it got the point that everyone, all the boys, already having her nudes and she is missing school because of that [...] (J (H), Private network, Vitória).

Finally, the fourth possibility explains the dynamics of sextortion. Here the threat of disclosing the material works as blackmail so that the partner does not end dating.

He says: No, you will not break up with me or I will post your stuff. Photo or something intimate about her (C (M), Public network, Campo Grande).

The focus groups were unanimous in recognizing a clear gender bias in unauthorized exposure of intimate material, with different repercussions for boys and girls. Attacking the public image, reputation, and personal life of a girl whose nude is disseminated were cited by all respondents.

[...] because we also have the whole issue of objectifying the female body, because ... we see many famous cases. For example, when the man has a nude spread, it does not destroy his life. So, it can cause a temporary stain, but it doesn't ... it doesn't directly affect him. Not with girls. With girls ... You see, for example, the case of a young woman. A few good years ago, they spread her nude. She has been persecuted her whole life until she killed herself (F (M), Private network, Vitória).

Having her nudes disseminated without her consent, a girl suffering public exposure will not even have support from her friends and will start to be seen as “bad company”. Social isolation, changing schools, and even cities are measures reported by adolescents as ways to address public shame and humiliation. It is worth remembering

that this humiliation will be experienced individually and by the girl's entire family. The damage to the mental health of these girls is also quickly listed by the groups interviewed. They mention depression, ideation, and suicide attempts, loss of self-esteem, self-mutilation, stress, and behavioral changes.

INTERVIEWER: *Do you think... what can it do to a teenager?*

C (M): *Traumas.*

E (H): *Depression.*

D (M): *Self-mutilation, suicide.*

B (M): *Which leads to other things (laughing).*

C (M): *Yes. My friend tried to kill herself many times because of this.*

B (M): *She... or she can create a trauma... Such as dating other boys and...*

C (M): *She... doesn't... date anyone else, to the point of distancing herself even from me. Because we were really good friends and, out of nowhere, she wanted to be alone (Private network, Campo Grande).*

Other young people reported how difficult it was to address such attacks and misogyny between peers and non-peers and that the support of friends and parents minimized the 'pain' of humiliation. The lack of financial conditions to receive multidisciplinary care support, with a psychologist and psychiatrist, was also highlighted by young people from public schools. In these cases, spiritual support became essential for the restoration of those who were undergoing intimate exposure on the Internet.

[...] with the support of my friends, too. Yeah ... my mom helped me a lot. I didn't have ... I couldn't have medical support, because I cannot afford to pay a psychiatrist, a psychologist, but ... [...] I started going to church more, and it helped me a lot too ... to solve this problem (E (M), Private network, Vitória).

Another reported consequence was facilitated by the technological dynamics of the Internet, which is the capture and appropriation of this material by pornographic sites. Thus, this girl becomes twice a victim: first of unauthorized exposure of intimate material and international sexual exploitation networks.

Confirming the different social uses of each platform, the respondents indicate that Twitter is more often used for defamation and disclosure of intimacies after the breakup. However, this platform will be more accessed by people of your own generation in a "controlled" spread.

On the other hand, the spread of nude or erotic content on Facebook is devastating because the

audience will consist of family members, teachers, and older people, causing more significant damage to the adolescent's social figure and her network of relationships.

INTERVIEWER: *What about Facebook?*

C (M): *I don't access Facebook anymore.*

B (H): *It's falling a little out of use, I think. It's because Instagram is instead a social network to sell a product, which is you. Yes, you sell your image, your appearance.*

INTERVIEWER: *Is this what Instagram is, guys?*

H (H): *You put the things you do daily there.*

B (H): *You want to look your best. On Twitter, you just want to talk about your life or let off steam.*

B (H): *Facebook is more family, right?*

[...]

B (H): *Besides... Older people don't usually use Twitter. It is something more of young people today, right?*

B (H): *If you happen to post "I'm here, whatever, using drugs", your grandma won't see it. If you do that on your Facebook, your whole family will see it (Private network, Campo Grande).*

Discussion and conclusions

The results presented here have limitations as they only deal with two Brazilian capitals, including students only from the second grade of secondary education, therefore generalizations of another order are not possible.

Digital culture is sociability centered on the (hyper) exposure of intimacies from web 2.0, whose connectivity capital is acquired from sharing intimate content, corporality, and controversies²⁹. Adolescents, "digital natives", can be potentially more vulnerable, because they are less mature for a critical analysis of these relationships despite having high technological proficiency³⁰.

Adolescents also show that their affective relationships are mediated daily by the Internet. The control/monitoring and unauthorized exposure of intimate material through the Internet are recurrent practices in the relationships between partners and expand with digital technological advances³¹. Most of the boys and girls interviewed do not tolerate such practices and criticize what they identify as abusive behaviors. They also recognize a lack of "respect" for individualities and privacy, essential values in the definition of modern intimacy, that is, an attack on their social identity³².

However, like teenagers from UK and USA, many adolescents recognized control and monitoring as legitimate, pointing out jealousy, insecurity, “curiosity” or “just a joke” as the main reasons^{5,33,34}. Inserted in a society that gradually assumes, as Bauman³⁵ says, “fluidity and liquidity” as dictates of belonging in interpersonal relationships, a grammar of emotions that involves insecurity and transience is learned by young people and exercised in their technodigital relationships.

Concerning the activity of “leaking nudes” and other erotic materials, the groups interviewed were reflective and critical, analyzing their own experiences and positions. In the set of statements, control/monitoring practices and unauthorized exposure of intimate material have an unequivocal character of gender violence. They reaffirm patriarchal, misogynistic paradigms, especially concerning female behavior and the exercise of their sexuality^{13,17,36}. Those who dare to violate socially validated morality norms will suffer retaliation (revenge in the interpersonal sphere), which on the Internet is mediated by a variety of attacks on the figure, with insults and misogynistic expressions, which also exponentially intensify the damage already suffered by the victim.

Aggressive speeches against women are presented and model a negatively stereotyped image in the digital environment. These aggressive verbal messages can take on several facets such as attacking the character, competence, and appearance: tantalizing, ridiculing, threatening, using foul words, and generating unfavorable comparisons, reinforcing symbolic violence³⁷. That is, a subtle, euphemized, and invisible domination, but socially recognized, legitimized, and practiced, which uses feminine disciplining lines, socially validating verbal aggressions, and naturalizing the appeal to the victim’s responsibility¹².

Recognizing that unauthorized exposure of intimate material has a gender mark is a standard tonic in the statements of these adolescents. They accumulate enough experiences to ensure that consequences are more severe for girls and social reaction to the spread of nudes on social networks is equivalent to a “moral lynching”⁸. Comments will be brief if a boy has his nude leaked, and may have favorable effects on his sexual curriculum, except for when there is a very negative discursive production about his sexual performance or his body (especially his penis). On the other hand, public exposure of girls’ bodies and sexuality may have devastating effects on their honor and reputation. The circulating image will

be accompanied by moral labels of “slut”, “easy girl”, “whore”, a practice called “slut-shaming”¹⁷. In the patriarchal model, the dissemination of the female body in erotic action continues to be a reason for moral banishment. In other words, unauthorized exposure of intimate material has a clear sexist and misogynist content^{12,13,38}.

When digital abuse occurs in an intimate relationship, this exposure affects the victim emotionally. As found in other studies, the adolescents studied confirm that this kind of abuse can lead to various mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, panic syndrome, and even suicidal ideas/suicide, and the support and monitoring by health professionals are crucial^{9,10,15,31,36,39-41}.

The groups revealed an original and essential aspect in the social technique of using specific platforms for disseminating unauthorized exposure of intimate material. They refresh the maxim by Miller and Slater⁴² that each platform has its cultural appropriation, indicating the different meanings of digital technology use. As seen, the dissemination on platforms used by the family and older generations, such as Facebook, causes even more significant damage to the victim’s reputation.

The critical debate about the use of technologies and digital social media has matured among younger people. The literature highlights this issue through the ambivalent prism of the high technological proficiency in younger people versus the lack of maturity to “filter” potentially harmful contents and practices and the lack of digital literacy of parents and educators to accompany and guide them. Contrary to what was supposed, younger people have advanced in online activism and associations. They become leading figures of digital citizenship. We transcend the technophobic perspective where there are no limits to the “internet dangers” and embrace intergenerational dialogue, sensitive legislation, and pressure on responsibility of social media platforms to control discriminatory and violent content as crucial strategies to achieve digital sociability that ensures rights⁴³⁻⁴⁵.

Addressing the consequences of dating violence, especially in the digital environment, requires collective and interdisciplinary work to build prevention compatible with youth sociability and reduce the resulting harm. Discussing digital education, using the Internet, and fostering and ensuring rights, including sexual and reproductive rights in this environment, is one of the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Collaborations

SF Deslandes, LW Pinto, ER Souza and RMD Flach contributed equally to the article's elaboration.

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