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Articles

Different Cyberbullying Experiences and Sensemaking Processes about the Sociocultural Context

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Abstract

Introduction: Cyberbullying represents one of the main current concerns of parents, educators and clinicians on youth. It consists of aggressive, offensive and injurious behaviors against a person by means of electronic device and sharing abusive content on the web. Previous studies have highlighted that cyberbullying is associated with individual factors, such as personality traits, age, sex and status, often disregarding the value attributed to one's own context of life. According to the Semiotic Dynamic Cultural Psychology Theory (SDPCT), the cultural context can be conceived as a net of interconnected trajectories of meanings, grounding the way of perceiving and experiencing a social environment, and enabling individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world.

Aims: The present research aims to explore the relation between directly acted, suffered and indirectly observed behaviors of cyberbullying, the fear to be victim, the awareness of its harmfulness and sensemaking processes of one's own context.

Method: Six hundred twenty-four high school students (Mean AGE = 16.10; SD = 1.60) participated in this study. Participants filled in a questionnaire, consisting of two parts. The former was composed by six scales constructed ad hoc to explore the experience of acted, suffered and observed cyberbullying, the fear of being cyberbullied and the awareness of cyberbullying's harmfulness. The latter the View of Context (VOC) questionnaire was used to map sensemaking processes through which people interpret their social context.

Findings: Results shows significant associations between acted and suffered forms of cyberbullying, between fear of cyberbullying and the awareness of its harmfulness. The acted cyberbullying and suffered cyberbullying are both associated with representation of the context as devaluated (family, schools, social institutions are considered not welcoming, useful or reliable) and deprived of opportunities for the future.

Conclusion: On clinical plan, the study suggests the importance of considering the relationships between bullying experienced and acted upon, as well as the role of meaning-making processes in understanding phenomena of social prevarication.

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1. Introduction

The terms "bullying" and "cyberbullying" include a range of youth's aggressive behaviors, such as interpersonal conflicts, forms of violence and both physical and psychological abuse. They often begin in childhood and spread up to high school and beyond (Athanasiaides & Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, 2010; Çikrici, 2017; Marchetti et al., 2018). In the last decades, an increasing number of youth's aggressive behaviors, have been performed by means of digital devices and on the web, defining a wide set of new modalities of bullying that has been called cyberbullying (Amendola, 2021). Some new elements of difference in regard to behaviors, modalities, means, and strategies deserve to be taken in consideration. One of the first definition of typical characteristic of bullying has been elaborated by Dan Olweus (1996), who defines bullying as an abuse of power. A student is bullied or victimized when she/he is repeatedly exposed to offensive actions by one or more classmates.

From this definition, a series of essential elements of bullying and cyberbullying are derived:

1. *Behavior of abuse, direct or indirect* (physical attacks, gossip, slander, defamation, etc.). The prevarications imply the intention to do harm and the lack of compassion, since there is no identification with the victim's moods.
2. *Actions repeated over time*. Usually, the acts are repeated over time and occur with a rather high frequency.
3. *Imbalance of forces or asymmetrical relationship* (both physically and personally) between bully and victim. One prevails and the other suffers, without being able to defend him/herself, experiencing a strong sense of helplessness. The constant inequality of strength and power may be due to physical strength, age, personality, while in the context of cyberbullying the imbalance can assume the form of the anonymity.
4. *Involvement of the same subjects*. One or some are always in a dominant position (bullies) and one or some are weaker and unable to defend themselves (victims).

Contemporary developments of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) have implied relevant transformation of daily human life, and bullying behaviors as well. Structural current elements of the interpersonal relations and web communications (i.e., increasing of spatial distance and decreasing of temporality, anonymity, speed of information transfer, spread and virality of news, etc.) are related with new phenomena of aggressive behaviors (e.g. the hate speech, the trolling, etc.).

Bullying and cyberbullying are currently experienced as real threats and represent a widely shared fear among young people. The data collected by the *Indifesa Osservatorio* in the 2022 (Centro nazionale di documentazione e analisi per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, retrieved on line, 2022) on a sample of young people aged 14 to 26 years in all Italy show that 1 out of 2 adolescents has been bullied. The two phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying are among the main risks perceived by adolescents. Seven out of 10 people say they don't feel safe surfing the net. The major concern is the risk of cyberbullying (68.8%), revenge porn (60%), identity theft (40.6%) and stalking (35%). Outside the network, 50% of adolescents also say they are afraid of psychological violence and bullying (44%).

Therefore, it appears important to highlight that bullying and cyberbullying cannot currently be distinguished as very different phenomena or one as a specific subclass of the other. Both are current, general and widely spread. They often can be co-occurring modalities of forms of social prevarication in the contemporary daily life of young people (Alamillo et al, 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Pichel et al, 2021; Dragone et al, 2022).

In recent years, cyberbullying has become a rapidly growing and widespread phenomenon based on communication channels of electronic devices, chats, instant messaging, social networks, video and photo sharing. Its detrimental effects may be even more pervasive than traditional bullying as the technical aspects related to new technologies (e.g., anonymity, unavailability, asynchrony, viral diffusion of content, ease of access to very large numbers of users, loss of control of your personal contents once they are online, etc.). The most typical forms of cyberbullying are: *flaming* (vulgar, violent, offensive and provocative online messages), *harassment* (repeated sending of messages with offensive content through e-mails, WhatsApp, Telegram, phone calls with the aim of causing discomfort to the victim), *online stalking* (threats, harassment, violence and denigration repeated over time with the aim of instilling terror and fear in the victim for her own physical safety or that of loved ones), *denigration* (insulting or defaming someone online by gossip, lies, rumors and cruel comments, offensive and derogatory through e-mail, SMS), *impersonation or identity theft* (the attacker - violating someone's account, or creating ex novo one belonging to the victim - replaces the same and starts sending messages or publishes deplorable contents in order to damage the victim's image and reputation), *exclusion* (intentional exclusion of a user from a group - social networks, chat, interactive games, forums, etc.), *outing* (conquering the victim's trust with the deception by receiving confidences or intimate images, and then later disseminating them online), *sexting* (sending messages, texts, photos and videos sexually motivated that are disclosed via smartphones and the Internet), *doxing* (public

dissemination of personal and private information or other sensitive data of the victim via Internet).

The acts of cyberbullying do not necessarily imply intentional malice, they are not always aimed exclusively at damaging the victim, or mortification while, on the contrary, they could be aimed at a form of “fun” or self-affirmation in front of others.

In the web, young people can make of experience of cyberbullying from different positions: they can directly perform it, or they can be indirectly implicated as observer, or they can directly suffer it as victims as well (Alamillo et al, 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Pichel et al, 2021).

It has been shown that bullying and cyberbullying behaviors - both acted out or suffered - generates maladaptive situations that tend to become chronic for both the bully and the victim (Houbre et al, 2006; Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). In fact, for the bully, paths characterized by aggression, poor self-control, conduct disorders in school age and deviant and antisocial behaviors in adolescence and adulthood are observed (Settineri et al, 2019); while for the victim, one can observe risk paths characterized by anxiety, insecurity, isolation social, low self-esteem in school age and psychological symptoms such as insecurity, low personal and professional satisfaction in adolescence and adulthood (Arseneault, 2017; Rubin et al., 1990; Santoro et al, 2019; Lianos et al, 2023; Ferrante & D’Elia, 2022).

In general, the victim struggles to defend herself or himself, she or he feels continuously exposed to danger, crushed by helplessness and anger for the violence suffered, alongside a dramatic experience of exclusion and persecutory anguish. In the context of bullying, very often - due to the state of alarm in which she or he is forced to live - the victim does not find the courage to report out for fear or shame, experienced in precariousness, exclusion and devaluation. The victim manifests signs of discomfort through forms of social withdrawal, refusal to go to school, depressive symptoms, self-harm, persistent physical ailments such as stomach pains and headaches, intense mood swings and sleep disturbances (Bernetti, 2015; Germani et al. 2023). In the context of cyberbullying, it has been observed a major fluidity of passage between the role of aggressor and victim, in reason of the element of anonymity, of distance and easy availability of electronic devices, all elements that reformulate the representation of unbalanced relation of power typical of the traditional bullying. The consequences for the victims of bullying and cyberbullying can be classified as short-term and long-term consequences: the former relates to moods of aversion and hatred towards the school environment, worsening of school performance, appearance of symptoms such as headaches, abdominal pains, nightmares, the manifestation of depressive and anxious symptoms (Myles et al., 2021; Myles & Merlo, 2022a,

2022b). While the long-term consequences refer to the structuring of depressive disorders and the onset of suicidal thoughts and the implementation of extreme behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). The impact of bullying and cyberbullying on young victims can persist even when the abuse is over (Arseneault, 2017). During adulthood, problems of various kinds may arise for those who have been bullied, such as difficulties in establishing serene sentimental and interpersonal bonds.

Cogent and necessary issues of research arise in order to understand and counteract the increasing spread of the cyberbullying, as one of the main and spread forms of aggressive behaviors against the other in the contemporary societies (Camia et al. 2021). Previous studies investigated variables related to the personality, age and sex of the bully and bullied person (Athanasiaades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2012; Pascual-Sánchez et al, 2012; Pontes et al., 2018; Merlo et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021; Scheithauer et al, 2006) in the search for specific profiles; however to understand the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying it is necessary to grasp its deep relational and cultural nature (Allison & Bussey, 2017; Souza et al., 2018). Therefore, we need to develop research perspective focusing not only on behavioral problems or on the traits of the single individual, but also on relational, contextual and cultural factors in order to grasp the relationship between the phenomenon and the cultural scenario of meanings and values, which are attributed to human relations.

1.1. The relevance of the socio-cultural and symbolic context for the development of interpersonal relationships

The aim of our research is that to enlighten the relevance of the contest and the symbolic frame within cyberbullying behaviors occur. Indeed, we must recognize that focus of research on bullying and cyberbullying are often on personal traits of engaged people, while less attention has been paid to the role of the sociocultural environment in increasing psychosocial malaise and in constructing the meaning of domineering and aggressive behaviors (Espelage, 2000). Following a semiotic dynamic and cultural psychology frame (Valsiner, 2021; Salvatore et al, 2022; Salvatore et al., 2021; De Luca Picione, 2021; 2021b; 2021c; Pascarella et al, 2022; Tateo, Marsico & Valsiner, 2021; Zittoun, 2021), we consider as fundamental the role of sociocultural environment. On one hand, the sociocultural environment acts as a source in itself of malaise when it constrains people's lives and lacks resources and opportunities essential for young people's growth, including supportive social networks. Sociocultural resources (as formative and professional chance) and recreational settings (as cinema, theatres, and cultural associations) can exert a deep influence on the development of people and their sense of being in relation each

other (Mannarini & Salvatore, 2020; De Luca Picione et al, 2020; Alaparone & Viviano, 2023). On the other hand, the cultural environment offers the semiotic resources to develop several ways of perceiving, experiencing and dealing with the social world (Foucault, 1981; Russo et al, 2020; Marinaci et al., 2021; Ferrante et al, 2022; Venuleo et al, 2016).

According to the *Semiotic Dynamic Cultural Psycho-Social Theory* (SDCPT), the cultural context can be conceived as a net of interconnected trajectories of meanings, grounding the way of perceiving and experiencing a social environment, and enabling individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world. It is reasonably foreseeable that starting from their own considerations about the social context (e.g., as devoid of opportunities and inhabited by selfish people, or as rich of resources and chances), people express different forms of social malaises. For instance, it is likely that a view of the social context as devoid of opportunities and inhabited by selfish people nourish different behaviors, compared to a view of the context as rich of resources and chances.

Framed within SDCPT, our research considers the need to highlight the strong interconnection between each subject and society in order to understand both acted and suffered cyberbullying forms. Starting from this point of view, we are led to investigate cyberbullying not as the result of an intrapsychic structure; rather it appears as the precipitate of a specific modality of relationship between the individual level and the meanings active within the semiotic context in which they are inscribed (Salvatore, 2013; Salvatore et al, 2022; Salvatore et al, 2021; De Luca Picione, 2020). Considering the individual level dynamically interacts with the sociocultural level can offer a contribution for the understanding of cyberbullying phenomena.

The point at stake is the centrality of sensemaking process in the daily lives of people in organizing one's own view and social domains. People give meaning to their life events in terms of symbolic resources (values, beliefs, knowledge, etc.) based on implicit, generalized world-views, made up by affect-laden basic latent dimensions of sense (LDSs) (Salvatore, 2018). The LDSs have typical bipolar structure, for example Salvatore and colleagues (Salvatore et al, 2018) mapped three LDSs: pleasant versus unpleasant, passivity versus engagement and demand for systemic resources versus demand for community bond.

LDSs are not individual property and do not emerge in a social vacuum, rather they are the by-product of a dynamic process (i.e., the sensemaking), where individuals, embedded in a specific system (e.g., family, school, workplace) and culture recursively interact with each other. Broader contextual dimensions (e.g., policies in the health and economic field, media communication,

scientists' and politicians' discourses) set boundaries on the attribution of meaning to the events, difficulties, challenges and conditions of their lives.

A metaphor can be useful for clarifying how LDSs work. Their role in a semiotic space is analogous to that of a point charge that generates an electric field in the space. The lines of semiotic force indicate the extent to which the generalized meanings affect the sensemaking trajectories in the semiotic space. As electric field lines of force point from positive to negative charges, so the lines of semiotic force produced by a LDS have an oppositional structure that connects very general antinomies (e.g., pleasure/anger, good/bad, foe/friend, active/passive; scary/calming). In such a perspective, an LDS provides an orienting of the sensemaking process and shapes (i.e., guides and orients) individuals' behaviors, fostering their decisions and reactions in any event of their life and in a variety of cultural contexts (e.g., politics, society, education, leisure time, etc.).

Generalized LDSs have showed themselves to be very useful in explaining differences in worldviews between different groups of individuals and to predict how individuals will react to in a given situation (Marinaci et al, 2021). Obviously, the lines of semiotic forces produced by a generalized meaning can change according to the specific scenario under study, as several studies have shown for example about the Brexit (Veltri et al, 2019), the lockdown of COVID-19 pandemics (De Luca Picione et al, 2021), problematic behaviors (as harmful drinking, smoking, gambling and internet addictions) (Venuleo et al, 2015; Venuleo et al, 2016) or the enrolling in a scholastic course (Testa et al, 2021; Testa et al, 2022a; Testa et al, 2022b).

It is worthy to discuss two aspects of LDSs related to their capacity to promote adaptive responses. According to SDCPT model (Salvatore et al, 2022), a first relevant aspect is represented by the variable degree of salience. When the interpretations of reality are characterized by a high salience, they acquire the form of rigid and polarized way of thinking. This produces the effect that objects and situations are homogenized (typically, organized by polarized schema of friend/enemy, pleasure/displeasure) without considering their contingent and particular nature. A relevant implication is that homogenizing interpretations of reality produce a reduced capacity to regulate thoughts and behaviors on the basis of social constraints and requirements. This occurs inasmuch if you generalize at extreme level, then you lose the possibility to accurately discriminate the contexts and to modulate more appropriately choices and behaviors. Conversely, if the interpretations of reality are characterized by a low salience, then they are associated with a way of thinking able to differentiate objects of experience.

Flexible forms of thinking can produce a plurality of meanings; they allow personal and/or community resources to be used differently and more effectively.

The second relevant aspect of the theory concerns the degree to which the beliefs, feelings and actions underpinned by LDSs are consistent with interpersonal and social tasks, rules and goals (Ferrante et al, 2022; Venuleo et al, 2016). As literature has highlighted (Dressler, 2017), levels of psychosocial distress and risks of harmful behaviors are often the result of low proximity with widely shared cultural models.

Based on the frame of semiotic dynamic cultural psychology and on the view of cyberbullying as current sociocultural phenomena, the present study aims to explore:

- a) The relationships between directly acted, indirectly observed and directly suffered cyberbullying;
- b) The relationship between the fear of being a victim, the awareness of the seriousness, and the different experiences of cyberbullying (performed, acted, observed)
- c) The emerging representations of the meaning attributed to one's socio-cultural context (LDS) and their relationship with the different types of cyberbullying experiences (performed, suffered and observed), the awareness of the seriousness and the fear of being a victim.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants and Procedure

The research was implemented in a medium town of the southern Italy during the month of May 2022. The dean of a public high school was contacted and one of the authors described the purpose of the study and instruments for data collection. Parental signed consent was required and collected for students under 18, while 18 and over years old students signed by themselves the consent. All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. According to the ethical code of the Italian Psychology Association (AIP) (<http://www.aipass.org/node/26>) and the Italian Code concerning the protection of personal data (Legislative decree No. 196/2003), participants were informed about the general aim of the research, the anonymity of responses and the voluntary

nature of participation and signed informed consent. No incentive was given. The research project was previously submitted and then approved by the Research Committee of Giustino Fortunato University (Benevento, Italy) with protocol of Academic Senate in date February 2nd, 2021.

In total, 624 high school students ($\text{Mean}_{\text{AGE}} = 16.10$; $\text{SD} = 1.60$) participated in this study. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' socio-demographic characteristics

<i>Variable</i>		n (%)	X ²	<i>p</i>
Gender ^A	Male	314 (50.3)	1.505	.220
	Female	284 (47.5)		
Place of living	Rural area	43 (6.9)	286.833	.000
	Town/Country	296 (47.4)		
	Peripheral area	65 (10.4)		
	City	220 (35.3)		
Year of attendance	First	139 (22.3)	3.244	.518
	Second	119 (19.1)		
	Third	131 (21.0)		
	Fourth	121 (19.4)		
Time spent alone ^B	Fifth	114 (18.3)	243.327	.000
	Never/Rarely	495 (81.7)		
	Often/Always	111 (18.3)		
Father's educational level	Elementary	10 (1.6)	349.385	.000
	Middle	76 (12.2)		
	High School	294 (47.1)		
	Bachelor's degree	244 (39.1)		
Mother's educational level	Elementary	10 (1.6)	354.244	.000
	Middle	71 (11.4)		
	High School	267 (42.8)		
Family status	Bachelor's degree	276 (44.2)	844.337	.000
	Living with both parents	549 (88.0)		
	Living only with mother	62 (9.9)		
	Living only with father	13 (2.1)		

A. 26 (4.2%) responses are missing.

B. 18 (2.9%) responses are missing.

2.2. Instruments

A questionnaire constituted by two main sections was administered. A final third part of the questionnaire consists of items on socio-demographic data as shown in Table 1.

1. The first section was composed by six scales constructed *ad hoc* to explore the experience of direct (acted), suffered and observed cyberbullying, the fear of being cyberbullied and the awareness of bullying's harmfulness. These scales have been purposely constructed taking into consideration both the scientific literature on the subject but also the research interests of the present study. The content validity of these scales is based on the literature review. For each scale, Person's correlation was performed in order to test the relationships between items. Results shown positive correlations for all items of each scale. Then, Cronbach alpha was performed to verify internal consistency.

- *Directly Acted Cyberbullying:* The Directly Acted Cyberbullying Scale was composed by 11 items designed to investigate direct bullying behaviors through Internet or using technology. Items are associated with a four-point Likert scale ('Never', 'Rarely', 'Often', 'Always'). Some examples of items are: "I use aggressive, violent and offensive language on the net in relation to other people's posts, photos and videos", "I purposely disclosed false and/or defamatory news", "On the net I have deliberately caused quarrels and incited people against each other". Sum of each item represents the total score. Higher score indicates higher engagement in cyberbullying behaviors. Cyberbullying scale shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$).
- *Suffered Cyberbullying:* The Suffered Cyberbullying Scale was composed by 14 items designed to investigate suffered bullying experience. Items are associated with a four-point Likert scale ('Never', 'Rarely', 'Often', 'Always'). Some examples of items are: "I happened to be offended", "I have sometimes been threatened or teased", "I happened to be at the centre of filming or photos of embarrassing and offensive situations then spread on the internet or with a mobile phone". Sum of each item represents the total score. Higher score indicates higher level of suffering (cyber)bullying. Suffered Bullying Scale shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$).

- *Indirectly Observed Cyberbullying:* The Indirectly Observed Cyberbullying Scale was composed by 19 items designed to investigate indirect bullying and cyberbullying behaviors (namely the experience of observing behaviors engaging other people). Items are associated with a four-point Likert scale ('Never', 'Rarely', 'Often', 'Always'). Some examples of items are: "I have witnessed on the web someone physically punch or kick an other"; "I have witnessed someone spreading defamatory stories about others"; "I happened to witness someone who spread videos or photos of embarrassing and offensive situations on the internet or with their mobile phone"; "I have witnessed someone ridiculing/teasing"; "I have witnessed someone excluding from groups and chats". Sum of each item represents the total score. Higher score indicates higher experience of indirect bullying. Experience of Bullying Scale shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$).
- *Fear of being cyberbullied:* Fear of Cyberbullying Scale was composed by 12 items designed to investigate fear of being bullied. Items are associated with a four-point Likert scale ('Not at all', 'Not very', 'Quite a lot', 'A lot'). Some examples of items are: "I am afraid of being the centre of gossip and nasty comments without my knowledge"; "It scares me if I am filmed/photographed being attacked or pranked on me and then this material is spread on the net"; "I'm scared of aggressive and brutal comments on the things I share on social networks". Sum of each item represents the total score. Higher score indicates higher level of fear. Fear of Cyberbullying Scale shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$).
- *Awareness about Cyberbullying Harmfulness:* Awareness about Bullying Harmfulness Scale was composed by 20 items designed to investigate awareness of the seriousness of problematic nature of bullying behaviors. Items are associated with a four-point Likert scale ('Not at all', 'Not very', 'Quite a lot', 'A lot'). Some examples of items are: "Offending is a grave action", "Threatening is a grave action", "Excluding from activities or groups is a grave action", "Harassing someone of the opposite gender is a grave action". Sum of each item represents the total score. Higher score indicates higher awareness about problematic nature of bullying. Nature of Bullying Scale shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$).

2. In the second section, the *View of Context* (VOC) (Ciavolino et al, 2017) questionnaire was used to map the LDSs through which people interpret their social context. Respondents are asked to report their opinions about the social environment, for instance by evaluating the place

where they live, or the degree of reliability of services (e.g., health services and schools), as well as to state the moral/social values in which they believe, for instance studying or respecting each other. The questionnaire is composed of 45 items associated with a four-point Likert scale ('not at all', 'not much', 'quite a lot', 'a lot'; or 'very unreliable', 'rather unreliable', 'quite reliable', 'very reliable'). The VOC proved to have satisfactory construct validity and internal consistency ($\alpha = .70$) (Ciavolino et al, 2017). An item analysis on data provided by the current study was performed. The inter-item shows a good internal consistency ($\alpha = .93$).

2.3. Data analysis

Three steps analysis was carried out:

a) Individuation of LDSs.

In order to detect the LDSs, a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) (Lebart et al, 1984), was applied to the responses to the VOC questionnaire. MCA allows to sum up the relations observed among nominal data by using a limited number of factorial dimensions. Each factorial dimension extracted describes the juxtaposition of two patterns of strongly associated (co-occurring) response modes. Insofar as the co-occurring responses have no reciprocal semantic linkage, their aggregation lends itself to being interpreted as the effect of a latent generalized meaning linking the response modalities independent from their specific content (Landauer et al, 1998). Accordingly, we consider factors as the markers of an oppositional dimension consisting of opposed generalized meanings, called Latent Dimension of Sense above (Mossi & Salvatore, 2011), which organize similarities and differences of the respondents in the interpretation of the social environment. We selected for further analysis the first two factors extracted from MCA (hereafter VOC1 and VOC2) as the ones that explain the largest part of the data matrix inertia. We adopted the subjects' scores (factorial coordinates) on the two factorial dimensions as measures of their LDSs. The higher the respondent's factorial coordinate, the higher the degree of association between the respondent's profile of answers and the profile characterizing one of the two polarities of the factor/Dimension of meaning.

b) Analysis of correlation between variables

Pearson's correlations were computed in order to explore whether directly acted and indirectly observed cyberbullying relate to: a) suffered cyberbullying, b) fear of being bullied, c) awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness, and d) LDSs (as measure of respondents' view of the social and cultural context).

c) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Finally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed in order to test differences related to sex, place of living, year of school attendance, time spent alone, and father's and mother's educational status, of respondents. Then, Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test was computed to explore (dis)similarities related to place of living, year of school attendance, father and mother educational status.

3. Results

3.1 Latent Dimensions of Sense

After applying the Benzécri formula of inertia adjustment (Benzécri, 1975), it was found that the first factorial dimension of the VOC (VOC 1) accounts for 63.98% of the inertia, and the second (VOC 2) for 16.46%; on the whole, these two dimensions account for 80.45% of the total inertia expressed. Tables 2 and 3 show the most significant modalities of answers characterizing respectively VOC1 and VOC2 polarities and their level of association (V-test) to the factor.

VOC1. Evaluation of the social experience

This dimension opposes two patterns of answers (Table 2) which we interpret as the markers of two ways of evaluating the social experience: *Generalized devaluation* (-) versus *Valorization* (+).

(-) *Generalized Devaluation*. This polarity collects items that adopt extreme scores on Likert scales (e.g., “strongly agree”, “not at all”) and share a negative evaluation of different spheres of social experience. A very devaluate image of their own family and of their own school emerges (e.g., family is not useful, not welcoming, not influential; their own affect are not satisfactory; similarly, school is not welcoming and it is not at the service of the students). General dissatisfaction is expressed with their current situation. The devaluation of what is experienced in the present seems to organize also the feeling that for the future it is not important to stay in family, neither engage in studying. More widely, there is nothing worthy of investment: it not important to work, to understand the world, to be respected or to respect the rules. A sad and bleak picture where nothing matters and nothing seems enable to give meaning and purpose in life.

(+) *Valorization*. Moderate answers co-occur, that is items associated with intermediate points on a Likert scale (e.g., “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree”) and having positive evaluation of the social experience. A general satisfaction is expressed with their current situation and place where they live; the school is recognized as a reliable and welcoming place, where teachers are good and motivated; the acknowledgment of a trustworthy environment co-occurs with a sense

of agency and trust for the future; they imagine to find a job thank to their education and their willingness to work hard.

Table 2. VOC1: Evaluation of the social experience

Test Value ^a	Item	Responses
<i>Generalized devaluation (negative polarity)</i>		
-17.98	For a young person's future it is important to commit him- herself to study	Not important at all
-17.50	Studying	Not important at all
-17.44	Understanding the world is important for a young person's future	Not important at all
-17.25	Staying with family	Not important at all
-17.14	Respecting the rules	Not important at all
-16.59	Being respected	Not important at all
-16.13	I am satisfied with the affections	Not satisfied at all
-16.10	Working is safety/certainty	Not at all
-15.80	My family is helpfull	Not at all
-15.37	My family is welcoming	Not at all
-17.07	Working is necessity	Not at all
-14.89	For the future of a young person, it is important to be farsighted	Not important at all
-14.84	For a young person's future it is important to have new experiences	Not important at all
-14.75	Solidarity is important for a young person's future	Not important at all
-14.56	My school is welcoming	Not at all
-14.44	I think I find work thanks to my personal skills	Strongly disagree
-14.07	The school serves students	Strongly disagree
-14.06	My family is authoritative	Not at all
-14.02	My teachers are good	Not at all
-13.98	I think I find work due to my willingness to work hard	Strongly disagree
<i>Valorization (positive polarity)</i>		
8.55	How satisfied are you with your situation?	Quite a lot
8.33	The school serves students	Agree
8.21	My teachers are good	Quite a lot
8.09	Teachers tend to influence students	Agree
7.84	My school is welcoming	Quite a lot
7.74	I think I'll find a job thanks to a public exam	Agree
7.72	School is a place where one must obey	Agree
7.37	Teachers adore their job	Agree
7.37	I think I'll find a job with the training received	Agree
7.26	School	Quite reliable
7.26	I am satisfied with the school	Quite satisfied
6.92	I think I find work due to my willingness to work hard	Agree
6.91	Teachers do not know how to teach	Disagree
6.90	My teachers are talented	Quite a lot
6.89	Teachers adore the subject they teach	Agree
6.68	The teachers are too condescending with the students	Disagree
6.58	Police	Quite reliable
6.56	School is a place to leave	Disagree
6.50	In the future I will be a famous person	Agree
6.39	Are you happy living where you live?	Quite a lot

^a Coefficient of statistical association between an item and a factorial dimension.

VOC2. Models of relationship with the context

This dimension opposes two patterns of answers (Table 1) which we interpret as the markers of two opposite ways of positioning oneself with respect to the context, consequently two ways of connoting their own role in relation to the different spheres of the experience: *Contextual criticalities* (-) versus *Idealization* (+)

(-) *Contextual criticalities*. The answers tend to express only a partial positive image of one's own social experiences. The respondents set in this polarity are satisfied with the family system (welcoming, useful, source of satisfaction) and, more generally, with the affections. They are not satisfied with the school (the teachers do not like their work, nor the subject they teach; the school is not welcoming and is not at the service of students) but they recognize the importance of studying and understanding the world to build their own future. Work is recognized as an opportunity and a possible source of success and gratification, but it is only based on one's own strength and stubbornness.

(+) *Idealization*. The aspect that differentiates this polarity from that described above does not concern the contents of the items, but the response's modalities. A set of connotations and statements homogeneously positive, adopting extreme scores on Likert scales, depicts all the spheres of the social experience as comfortable, sources of satisfaction, resources for the construction of the future; family (useful and welcoming), friends, school (a big welcoming family). In this idealized scenario, the best among the possible worlds, everything matters: studying, working, enjoying free time.

Table 3. VOC2: Models of relationship with the context

Test Value ^a	Item	Responses
	<i>Contextual criticality (negative polarity)</i>	
-10.60	Working is important	Quite a lot
-10.05	For a young person's future it is important to commit him- herself to study	Quite important
-9.51	Studying	Quite important
-9.24	My family is helpfull	Quite a lot
-8.48	Teachers adore the subject they teach	Disagree
-8.36	Teachers adore their job	Disagree
-8.35	Working is a success	Quite a lot
-8.34	My family is welcoming	Quite a lot
-8.00	Working is a gratification	Quite a lot
-7.97	Respecting the rules	Quite important
-7.80	I think I find work thanks to my personal skills	Agree
-7.75	Staying with family	Quite important
-7.47	I am satisfied with the affects	Quite satisfied
-7.26	I am satisfied with my family	Quite satisfied
-7.10	I am satisfied with my friends	Quite satisfied

-7.04	My school is helpful	A little
-6.89	Understanding the world is important for a young person's future	Quite important
-6.81	I do not think you can learn much from experiences	Disagree
-6.64	The school serves students	Disagree
-6.51	I am satisfied with leisure time	Little satisfied
<i>Idealization (positive polarity)</i>		
13.15	I am satisfied with my school	Very satisfied
13.03	Working is a success	A lot
12.80	Working is a gratification	A lot
12.60	I am satisfied with the affects	Very satisfied
12.54	I think I'll find a job with the training received	Strongly agree
12.51	Working is an opportunity	A lot
12.44	For a young person's future it is important to commit him- herself to study	Very important
12.00	My teachers are effective	A lot
11.95	My school is helpful	A lot
11.74	Studying	Very important
11.72	My school is welcoming	A lot
11.53	The school serves students	Strongly agree
11.44	My family is helpful	A lot
11.29	I think I find work thanks to my personal skills	Strongly agree
11.26	I am satisfied with leisure time	Very satisfied
11.20	I am satisfied with my family	Very satisfied
11.01	Staying with family	Very important
10.98	I am satisfied with my friends	Very satisfied
10.76	My family is welcoming	A lot
10.66	The school is a great family	Strongly agree

^a Coefficient of statistical association between an item and a factorial dimension.

3.2. Relationships between different experiences of cyberbullying, its valuation and views of the social context: Analysis of correlation between variables

Table 4 shows significant statistical correlation with experience of cyberbullying.

Table 4. Pearson's correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Directly acted cyberbullying	-	.369**	.234**	-.163**	-.286**	-.220**	.048
2. Suffered cyberbullying		-	.528**	.193**	.027	-.232**	-.003
3. Indirectly observed cyberbullying			-	.193**	.137**	-.047	.024
4. Fear of being cyberbullied				-	.427**	.151**	.098*
5. Awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness					-	.326**	.176**
6. Evaluation of the social experience (Generalized devaluation vs Valorization)						-	.000
7. Models of relationship with the context (Contextual criticalities vs Idealization)							-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Statistical positive correlations were found between directly acted, suffered and indirectly observed cyberbullying.

Directly acted cyberbullying correlates negatively with fear of being cyberbullied, awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness and VOC 1 (“Evaluation of the social experience”); specifically, higher level of acted cyberbullying, lower levels of fear of being cyberbullied, awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness and positioning on negative polarity of VOC 1 (“Generalized devaluation”).

Suffered cyberbullying correlates positively with fear of being cyberbullied and negatively with VOC 1 (“Evaluation of the social experience”); specifically, higher suffered cyberbullying, higher levels of fear of being cyberbullied and positioning on negative polarity of VOC 1 (“Generalized devaluation”).

Indirectly observed cyberbullying correlates positively with fear of being cyberbullied and awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness. Specifically, higher level of indirectly observed cyberbullying, higher levels of fear of being cyberbullied and awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness.

Furthermore, fear of being cyberbullied was correlated positively with awareness of cyberbullying harmfulness and both were positively associated with positive polarity of VOC 1 (“Evaluation of the social experience” on “Valorization”) and VOC 2 (“Models of relationship with the context” on “Idealization”).

3.3. Analysis of Variance

ANOVA showed significant differences related to participants’ social and demographic characteristics (Table 5). Specifically:

Males, compared to females, show higher levels of directly acted cyberbullying, lower fear of being cyberbullied and awareness of the cyberbullying harmfulness. Furthermore, whereas males present an image of the context based on a “generalized devaluation” (VOC1 “Evaluation of the social experience”), females present a view of the context based on “valorization”.

Higher scores of directly acted cyberbullying were found among participants living rural, peripheral area and city, and these reported a critical view of the context (VOC 2 “Models of relationship with the context”), compared to respondents living in a town, that reported a view of the context based on idealization. Furthermore, in rural area, compared to others, respondents showed higher levels of suffered cyberbullied.

A statistical significant variation on mean score was found for awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness with regard to year of school attendance: lower levels for respondents enrolled in first and second years, compared to others. In the first year, there was a view of the context based on idealization (VOC 2 “*Models of relationship with the context*”), in the other years a critical context representation.

Respondents that spent “often” or “always” time alone showed higher levels of suffered cyberbullying and a view of the context based on “generalized devaluation” (VOC 1 “*Evaluation of the social experience*”), compared to respondents that spent “never” or “rarely” time alone, which showed also a “valorization” of the social context.

Higher level of suffered cyberbullying are reported among respondents with lower father’s and mother’s educational status (see “elementary” mean score). These present a “generalized devaluation” for social context (VOC 1 “*Evaluation of the social experience*”).

Table 5. ANOVA with social and demographic characteristics

Variable		Directly acted cyberbullying	Suffered cyberbullying	Indirectly observed cyberbullying	Fear of being cyberbullied	Awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness	Evaluation of the social experience (Generalized devaluation vs Valorization)	Models of relationship with the context (Contextual criticalities vs Idealization)
Gender	<i>Male</i>	.164	-.060	-.059	-.285	-.191	-.032	.018
	<i>Female</i>	-.230	-.014	.035	.343	.220	.067	-.018
	F	26.11	.377	1.328	65.976	27.303	6.403	1.488
	<i>p</i>	.000	.539	.250	.000	.000	.012	.223
	η	.205	.025	.047	.316	.209	.103	.050
	η^2	.042	.001	.002	.100	.044	.011	.002

Place of living	<i>Rural area</i>	.583	.535	.253	-.108	-.092	-.180	-.012
	<i>Town</i>	-.130	-.042	-.024	-.006	.076	.018	.030
	<i>Peripheral area of the city</i>	0.033	-.038	-.139	-.104	-.247	.045	-.126
	<i>City</i>	0.051	-.036	.024	.060	-.011	-.002	-.001
	F	6.944	4.491	1.438	.668	2.033	2.144	3.258
	<i>p</i>	0.000	.004	.231	.572	.108	.094	.021
	η	.180	.146	.083	.057	.099	.101	.125
	η^2	.033	.021	.007	.003	.010	.010	.016
Year of school attendance	<i>First</i>	.167	-.040	.038	-.139	-.239	-.045	.119
	<i>Second</i>	.029	.007	-.084	-.072	-.176	-.034	-.016
	<i>Third</i>	-.072	.048	.080	.047	.119	.108	-.011
	<i>Forth</i>	-.031	.011	.129	.132	.155	.020	-.042
	<i>Fifth</i>	-.119	-.027	-.186	.050	.175	-.056	-.072
	F	1.603	.157	1.970	1.504	5.096	2.343	5.379
	<i>p</i>	.172	.960	.097	.199	.000	.054	.000
	η	.101	.032	.112	.098	.179	.122	.183
η^2	.010	.001	.013	.010	.032	.015	.034	
Time spent alone	Never/Rarely	0.005	-.050	-.023	-.021	.005	.045	.005
	Always/Often	-0.070	.185	.118	.105	-.007	-.171	-.031
	F	.496	5.097	1.811	1.477	.014	17.261	.859
	<i>p</i>	.481	.024	0.179	.225	.907	.000	.354
	η	.029	.091	.055	.049	.005	.167	.038
	η^2	.001	.008	.003	.002	.000	.028	.001

Father's educational status	Elementary	-.014	1.262	.822	.004	.450	-1.025	-.030
	Middle	.021	.118	-.041	-.082	-.043	.001	-.040
	High school	-.087	-.103	-.035	.003	.037	.022	-.011
	Bachelor's degree	.099	.035	.022	.021	-.050	0.015	.025
	F	1.560	6.989	2.475	.211	1.039	15.038	.748
	<i>p</i>	.198	.000	.061	.889	.375	.000	.524
	η	.087	.181	.109	.032	.071	.260	.060
	η^2	.007	.033	.012	.001	.005	.068	.004
Mother's educational status	Elementary	.340	1.030	-.108	.235	-.283	-1.029	.002
	Middle	-.195	-.180	-.291	.107	.013	.047	-.015
	High school	-.065	-.076	-.013	-.009	.050	.040	-.026
	Bachelor's degree	.100	.082	.091	-.027	-.039	-.013	.030
	F	2.605	5.527	2.847	.529	.616	15.782	1.060
	<i>p</i>	.051	.001	.037	.663	.605	.000	.365
	η	.112	.161	.117	.051	.054	.266	.071
	η^2	.012	.026	.014	.003	.003	.071	.005

Post-Hoc analysis performed by Bonferroni's Test showed significant differences related to the socio-demographic characteristic of the participants:

- *Place of living*: participants living rural area (i) showed higher scores than participants living in other context (j) with respect to both **directly acted cyberbullying** ($j_1 = \text{Town}$; Difference $(i-j_1) = .71270$; $p = .000$; $j_2 = \text{Peripheral area of the city}$; Difference $(i-j_2) = .54919$; $p = .029$; $j_3 = \text{City}$; Difference $(i-j_3) = .53148$; $p = .008$) and **Suffered cyberbullying** ($j_1 = \text{Town}$; Difference $(i-j_1) = .57787$; $p = .002$; $j_2 = \text{Peripheral area of the city}$; Difference $(i-j_2) = .57397$; $p = .020$; $j_3 = \text{City}$; Difference $(i-j_3) = .57193$; $p = .003$);
- *mother's educational status*. participants whose mothers have a low educational status (primary school leaving certificate)(i) showed higher scores than participants whose mothers have a higher educational level (j_1) with respect to **directly acted cyberbullying** (Difference $(i-j_1) = 1.14361$; $p = .004$), high school (j_2) (Difference $(i-j_2) = 1.36430$; $p = .000$), bachelor's degree (j_3) (Difference $(i-j_3) = 1.22625$; $p = .001$) and **Indirectly observed cyberbullying** (Difference between elementary and high school level $(i-j) = .85738$; $p = .046$);;
- *father's educational status*: participants whose fathers have a low educational status (primary school leaving certificate) (i) showed higher scores on **directly acted cyberbullying** than participants whose father have a middle licence (j_1) (Difference $(i-j_1) = 1.20562$; $p = .002$), high school (j_2) (Difference $(i-j_2) = 1.10484$; $p = .003$), or a bachelor's degree (j_3) (Difference $(i-j_3) = .94629$; $p = .018$ and ; participants whose fathers have a middle educational status(i) score higher than participants whose father have a bachelor's degree level (j) on **Indirectly observed cyberbullying** (Difference $(i-j) = -.38217$; $p = .024$).
- *Year of school attendance*: first-year students in high school (i) score lower of students at the third (j_1) (Difference $(i-j_1) = -.35763$; $p = .030$), fourth (j_2) (Difference $(i-j_2) = -.38385$; $p = .014$) and fifth year (j_3) (Difference $(i-j_3) = -.41362$; $p = .010$) with respect the **awareness about cyberbullying harmfulness**.

Significant differences emerge also with respect to the **view of the context**:

participants whose mothers have a low educational status (primary school leaving certificate) showed lower factor scores on VOC 1 ("Evaluation of the social experience" –negative polarity: Devaluation) than participants whose mothers have a higher educational level (j_1) (Difference

$(i-j_1) = -1.02579; p = .000$), high school (j_2) (Difference $(i-j_2) = -1.04663; p = .000$), bachelor's degree (j_3) (Difference $(i-j_3) = -1.04049; p = .000$); the same differences were found for *father's educational status* (Difference $(i-j_1) = -1.07618; p = .000$; Difference $(i-j_2) = -1.06788; p = .000$; Difference $(i-j_3) = -1.01636; p = .000$).

- participants living town (i) showed higher scores showed higher factor scores on VOC 2 ("Models of relationship with the context" – positive polarity: Idealization) than participants living peripheral area of the city (j) (Difference $(i-j) = .15590; p = .011$); younger students (first year of attendance, i) score higher than students attending the second year (j_1) (Difference $(i-j_1) = .13528; p = .029$), the third (j_2) (Difference $(i-j_3) = -.12975; p = .034$), the fourth (j_4) (Difference $(i-j_4) = .16121; p = .004$) and the fifth year (j_5) (Difference $(i-j_5) = .19082; p = .000$).

4. Discussion

The current study has produced a series of information that appears relevant to our exploratory research.

We recall that the objectives of our research were to explore:

- a) The type of relationship between directly performed cyberbullying, suffered cyberbullying, and indirectly observed cyberbullying.
- b) The relationships between the different experiences of cyberbullying (acted, suffered, observed), the fear of being a victim and the awareness of its seriousness.
- c) The emerging representations of the meaning attributed to the context (LDS) and their relationship with the different types of experiences of cyberbullying (acted, suffered and observed), the fear of being a cybervictim, and the awareness of the its seriousness and the fear of being a victim.

Our results allowed us to explore the relationship between the experience of acting cyberbullying, observing cyberbullying, being cyberbullied on the one hand, and LDSs grounding adolescents' view of the context, fear of being cyberbullied and awareness of seriousness of the cyberbullying harmfulness on the other hand. Through the correlations analysis, we obtained a series of interesting results thanks to the arrangement of the different positive and negative correlations.

a) Regarding the first research question, it is possible to observe a significant relationship between acted, suffered and observed cyberbullying behaviors. These variables are all positively correlated with each other.

The context of the web subverts one of the relational patterns typical of the definition of bullying: the asymmetry of power in the real relationships. On the web and through the use of electronic devices, on the other hand, it is much easier in a simultaneous and fluid way to be involved as an observer, perpetrator and victim. It is worth hypothesizing and imagining further research developments on this point. Compared to this situation, in fact, the possible perception of anonymity of one's behavior can easily make one go from attacking to being attacked and vice versa. In this way, the dimension of fixity of the roles of victim and aggressor would not be as rigid as historically identified for the traditional bullying phenomena.

b) Regarding the second research question, the fear of being victimized and the awareness of severity are positively correlated each other. As we discuss by following, the association between fear and awareness suggests that cyberbullying experiences are organized not only from cognitive dimensions (i.e., how aware I am of the harm I cause) but also from emotional dimensions (a way of resolving the fear is to assume the part of the executioner). The relationship between a lack of awareness of the harm done to others and the direct implementation of harmful behavior online is striking – but not surprising. This association suggests a poor perception of one's own responsibility.

The association between the fear of cyberbullying and its directly acted experience also deserves attention, so that as one increases, the other also increases. Therefore, it is very interesting that those who directly engage in cyberbullying behaviors towards others do not recognize the seriousness of their actions yet are frightened by it.

The relationship between the fear of cyberbullying and having been a victim of cyberbullying is reasonably positive: being a victim correlates with the fear of repeating such aggressive behaviors towards oneself. However, the lack of any correlation (neither positive nor negative) between having suffered and the awareness of the severity is striking. In this case, the cognitive (i.e., evaluative-reflective) elements on the implications and dangers of cyberbullying does not seem to become explicit, giving way exclusively to a much more emotional dimension connoted by fear.

Finally, examining the relationships between the awareness of the harmfulness, the fear of being victim and the scale of observed (indirectly) cyberbullying, we note that the experience of being witnesses of such phenomena is positively correlated both with fear and with the evaluation of

their seriousness. In this case it seems that major distance from such behaviors allowed by an observation without personal implications produces feelings of fear and fear of being subjected, but does not prevent an evaluation of their seriousness and danger.

c) Regarding the third research question about socio-cultural meaning of the context, we synthetically observe that findings show that one out of two LDSs defining the cultural field – the one labelled as *evaluation of the social environment* (VOC1) – is associated both to direct cyberbullying and suffered cyberbullying. In particular, the negative association suggest that both direct cyberbullying and suffering cyberbullying are associated to the *Generalized devaluation* polarity.

Specifically, we have found that the first factor – i.e., *VOC 1. Evaluation of the social experience* - has a negative polarity characterized by a sense of *Generalized Devaluation* (most social ties - family, school, etc. - are not perceived as useful, welcoming and satisfying; future perspectives have no positive, predictable meaning. Personal commitment and one's own responsibility to improve one's own condition have not importance) and a positive polarity of *Valorization* (social experience in general has a satisfying, reliable and welcoming meaning. People are involved and motivated – teachers are appreciated for their work. Future perspectives have a meaning of hope, valorization of the training received and of one's will).

The second factor – i.e., *VOC2. Models of relationship with the context* – expresses different ways of positioning oneself with respect to the context. In fact, the negative polarity (*Contextual criticality*) is characterized by a partially critical view of the social context, with the exception of the family, which remains a reassuring, affective and satisfying anchor (unlike teachers and schools). In this representation, one's perseverance and effort may still be important for the future despite of a critical context. The positive polarity (*Idealization*) is characterized by a homogeneously positive evaluation of the context, which refers to a more emotional positioning with respect to the social experience (family, friends, school, public bodies), as if critical issues and tones could not be recognized of gray which is interpreted as safe, comfortable, and full of opportunities and resources for the future.

The two factors VOC1 and VOC2 both have positive polarities characterized by a assessment of the social context and the future in terms of reliability, safety and resources. What seems to distinguish them most is the modality participant respond. In VOC 1+ (positive pole: *Valorization*) – the answers are more moderate in expressing the positive evaluation, while in VOC 2+ (positive pole: *Idealization*) the answers are at the maximum intensity and homogenizing (everything is extremely and indifferently positive).

Our results show a negative correlation between acted and suffered cyberbullying and VOC1. Such a negative correlation is expressed as a significant relationship between a very deteriorated perception of the social ties of one's context, and a position of both aggressor and victim. This result was expected and responds to one of our exploratory hypotheses. Acted and suffered cyberbullying are related to a generally devalued perception of the social context that is perceived as lacking of resources and without any reliability (as showed by the negative polarity of VOC 1 – *General devaluation*). Being a negative correlation, cyberbullying acted and suffered correlate with the negative polarity of the factor.

This result are in line with all the previous studies (Mannarini & Salvatore, 2020; Marinaci et al, 2021; Ferrante et al 2022; Venuleo et al, 2016; Marinaci et al, 2021); De Luca Picione et al, 2021; Venuleo et al, 2015, 2016), which have shown how a series of dysfunctional social behaviors and individual discomforts have a significant relationship with the assessment of unreliability and insecurity of the context. The context in this case appears as a socially and culturally impoverished scenario that does not offer any resources, opportunities or hopes.

The negative polarity of VOC 2 (mostly based on the importance of the family as a safe place in the social scene) does not show significant correlations with any other variable.

It is interesting to note that we did not find significant connections between the indirect experience of observed cyberbullying with respect to the two factors VOC 1 and VOC 2. In this case, there is no significant relationship with the meaning attributed to one's own socio-cultural contexts of life. This element requires some reflection: having acted and suffered harmful behaviors of cyberbullying have a very strong and significant subjective implication for one's own experience and for the way of sensemaking of the socio-cultural context. Probably, however, the mere experience of witnessing such behaviors has in itself a random and contingent character (and probably with a greater emotional distance), and for this reason it can involve both subjects with very positive and reliable perceptions of the context, and subjects with essentially negative evaluations of the context and devoid of any resources. Further research developments will be aimed at investigating and deepening this relationship: does witnessing cyberbullying behavior generate subjective and socio-cultural implications? It is possible to imagine different psychological and relational positions, among which for example a tendency to avoidance (e.g., "it is better to observe with detachment and distance"), a consideration of the ineluctability of such phenomena as a real risk associated with the new ICTs, or habituation to a behavior now considered widespread and normal on the web. Therefore, this initial exploration opens up a field of research with new questions to investigate.

The two positive polarities of VOC 1 (*valorization*) and VOC 2 (*idealization*) are both positively correlated with fear of cyberbullying and awareness of its harmfulness. This result appears to be counterintuitive. Such an observation also generates a series of questions and the need for in-depth analysis for the future development of this research. When the representation of one's social context is excessively positive (up to the point of losing the ability to grasp critical elements to be improved), it is possible that the person feels the need to attribute excessively positive elements to an idealized reality, while the negative and worrying elements are reserved for specific and circumscribed elements (fear of a specific behavior, the negative evaluation only of some behaviors, the circumscription of a negative phenomenon to the individual and not collective area). While in fact the correlation between devaluation of the context and the implementation of aggressive/suffered behaviors of cyberbullying is explicit (and expected), when the behaviors are only observed there may be a need to recover elements of requalification and revaluation of the world with respect to of negative experiences that are not under one's control as amply documented by the literature (De Luca Picione & Lozzi, 2021; Esposito et al, 2016; De Luca Picione et al, 2022).

5. Conclusions

Our research was aimed at exploring and examining a number of characteristics related to the phenomenon of cyberbullying. We consider it as not simply a sub-class of traditional bullying, but a widespread aggressive behavior that generates great concern and fear in young people. Due to its specific characteristics – i.e., use of electronic devices, possible anonymity of the attacker, viral diffusion of contents on the web, absence of personal contact between aggressor and victim, etc. – cyberbullying can represent a real threat to the psychosocial development of young people, seriously undermining their serenity and trust in the others. Cyberbullying carries out offensive, harmful actions and violations of personal dignity and freedom of expression. If in the classic forms of bullying it was possible to observe a rigidity/fixity of roles (aggressor and victim) and an imbalance of power, in cyberbullying we observe a characteristic element of fluidity between the position of victim and aggressor. Our research shows that there are significant relationships between roles of aggressor and victim in cyberbullying.

Another significant element that our research highlights is the relationship between fear of being a victim and awareness of the harmfulness. This association makes it clear that in the implementation of cyberbullying behavior intensely emotional factors come into play, which can seriously undermine the reflective and evaluative processes.

Finally, we explored how young people give meaning to their life context, and a significant relationship emerged between cyberbullying behaviors performed, cyberbullying suffered and the perception of a context depleted of resources, opportunities, future prospects.

This relationship also emerges in connection with the amount of time spent alone. Loneliness - up to the potential risk of social isolation - is a position taken by those who have suffered cyberbullying attacks and have a very devalued perception of the context.

6. Limitations and future research

The study presents a number of limitations.

(1) It has an exploratory purpose and therefore results and considerations on possible causal relationships between the various variables considered are absent.

(2) In order to explore specific dimensions of the experience of the wide cyberbullying phenomena, we used six scale constructed *ad hoc* on the basis of a wide review on the phenomena and from previous our experiences of research (De Luca Picione et al, 2022; Esposito et al, 2016; De Luca Picione et al, 2022; Freda et al, 2021). The six scale showed a good reliability but that were not validated.

(3) The sample is limited to a small reality of a medium size town in southern Italy. However, the significance of the results obtained in this first phase of a larger research project supports our intention to extend the sample and implement more specific analyses.

Our results also open up a series of future research questions related to a more precise understanding of the transition between the role of victim and aggressor, the relationship between fear and awareness, the role of those who are indirect observers, the processes of sensemaking of their life contexts.

Due to the ineffability and very spread characteristics of cyberbullying, it is desirable to consider that the forms of contrast to such behaviors are not only aimed at identifying main characteristic of aggressors but at developing sensemaking processes and at increased self-confidence towards one's own context as a reliable frame of meaning with which to enter into a subjective and valorizing relationship.

Ethical approval

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of GIUSTINO FORTUNATO UNIVERSITY, Benevento, Italy

(The acceptance was protocolled by Academic Senate, acquired the evaluation of the University commission for the evaluation of research projects, with resolution in date February 2nd, 2021).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data are not publicly available because they are part of a larger project involving more researchers. If you have any questions, please ask the contact author.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

The paper is the fruit of the collective work of all the authors. However, some sections are specifically attributed as follows: Conceptualization, RDLP, EIM, and SC; methodology, RDLP, EIM, SC and CV; formal analysis, SR, RDLP, and CV; investigation, SC, ErM, RDLP; resources, RDLP, EIM, ErM; data curation, SR, RDLP, CV; writing—original draft preparation, RDLP, SR and CV; writing—review and editing, RDLP, CV, SR, MD, AM, GT and EIM; visualization, RDLP and EIM. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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