Multiple online victimization of Spanish adolescents: Results from a community sample

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A B S T R A C T

Little is known about online victimization of Spanish adolescents. The present study aims to determine the past-year prevalence of online victimization in a community sample of Spanish adolescents. The final sample consisted of 3,897 adolescents between 12 and 17 years old (M = 14.45, SD = 1.59), 1,836 males and 2,049 females, recruited from 39 secondary schools in the east of Spain. The *Cuestionario de victimización juvenil mediante internet y/o teléfono móvil* (hereinafter, Juvenile Online Victimization Questionnaire, JOV-Q, Montiel & Carbonell, 2012) was applied for the assessment of eight types of online victim- ization grouped in two major domains: sexual (sexual coercion, sexual pressure, online grooming by an adult, unwanted exposure to sexual content and violation of privacy); and nonsexual victimization (online harassment, happy slapping, pressure to obtain personal information). Sixty-one percent of adolescents reported online victimization during the last year. Online sexual victimization was reported by 39.5% of adolescents and nonsexual victimization by 53.4% of them, whereas 31% of youth reported having experienced online victimization in both domains. The highest prevalence rates were recorded for online harassment (50%), unwanted exposure to sexual content (24.4%), pressure to obtain personal information (18.4%) and online grooming by an adult (17.2%), and the lowest for sexual coercion (6.7%) and happy slapping (2.2%). Thirty-five percent of the adolescents were considered online polyvictims and most of them experienced victimization in both sexual and nonsexual domains (88%). This study illustrates that Spanish adolescents experience high levels of online victimization and that multiple online victimization appears to be the norm among cybervictims.

Introduction

Considerable research and clinical attention have been paid in recent years to various forms of child and youth online victimization, especially in the United States (e.g., Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2014) and in northern European countries (e.g., Smith et al., 2008; Wachs, Wolf, & Pan, 2012), but knowledge on this problem in Spain is still not well-founded. A recent systematic review of Spanish publications providing rates of victimization from the adolescents' own self-reports carried out by Pereda, Guilera, and Abad (2014a) showed that, of all the revised studies published between 1994 and 2010, only 10.7% were focused on online victimization. Although some European studies about online risks assert that Spain is in the "low risk and harm" group in comparison with other countries (Helsper, Kalmus, Hasebrink, Sagvari, & De Haan, 2013), the scarce Spanish studies conducted on this problem have shown data of concern about the prevalence of online damaging situations for young people. For example, a report published by the Ombudsman (Defensor del Pueblo, 2010), based on the reports of 3,219 adolescents (12–18 years old), noted that a relevant proportion of youth recognized that they had experienced a situation of violation of their rights or had felt threatened or intimidated while surfing the Net. Nearly 23% of the youth had received sexual solicitations and nearly 12% had been insulted, threatened or harassed online. More recently, Pereda, Guilera, and Abad (2014b), administered the Spanish version of the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ; Finkelhor, Hamby, Ormrod, & Turner, 2005) to a community sample of 1,107 youth aged 12–17, and found that electronic victimization (i.e., sexual solicitations and electronic harassment) was reported by 12.6% of adolescents during their lifetime and by 8.9% in the past year. However, an endemic problem with the literature about online victimization in adolescents is that studies usually focus on only one or a few forms of victimization out of the large spectrum of victimizations that young people experience online, just as it has been observed traditionally in the field of child and youth victimization (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007a; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005a; Saunders, 2003), ignoring that victims of a single form of violence are very rare (Finkelhor, 2008). In Spain, the majority of studies about online victimization have focused on describe the prevalence rates of particular types of victimization such as cyberbullying (Buelga, Cava, & Musitu, 2010), online harassment and unwanted sexual solicitations (Pereda et al., 2014b). This narrow perspective underestimates the burden of victimization that young people experience through information and communication technologies and fails to show the interrelationships among different kinds of online victimization and thus to understand fully the problem of victimization vulnerability or the impact of one kind of victimization alone, as has been concluded in previous studies about polyvictimization (Cyr, Clément, & Chamberland, 2014; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007b; Finkelhor et al., 2005a; Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finkelhor, 2007).

Nevertheless, there are a few international studies that provide data about the co-occurrence of different forms of online victimization in adolescents. For example, in the United States, Ybarra, Espelage, and Mitchell (2007) observed a strong association between online harassment and online sexual harassment, along the lines of the recent findings of Zweig, Dank, Yahner, and Lachman (2013) when studied cyber dating sexual and nonsexual abuse among teens. In Canada, Mishna, McLuckie, and Saini (2009), after examining 346 anonymous posts made by children and youth to a free, 24-hour, national, bilingual phone and Web counseling, referral, and information service, concluded that children and youth frequently experienced various forms of cyberabuse, including bullying, stalking, sexual solicitation and pornography. Studies from Europe, such as the work by Wachs et al. (2012) in Germany have found a significant association between being victim of cybergrooming and cyberbullying in a community sample of adolescents between 12 and 16 years old.

From these studies it can be concluded that experiencing one form of online victimization is closely related to the experience of other types of online victimization. But in the absence of a comprehensive online victimization developmental epidemiology, certain forms of victimization may get overemphasized, while other, equally or more damaging problems are being ignored. Besides, the interrelationships between these forms of victimization remain completely unknown, since a true measurement of multiple online victimization has not been conducted.

Aim of the Study

In this context, the present study aims to extend research on online victimization by simultaneously gathering the prevalence of eight different forms of online victimization in a community sample of Spanish adolescents during a one-year period. Following previous studies of polyvictimization (e.g., Finkelhor et al., 2005a; Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005b; Pereda et al., 2014b), a multiple online victimized group will be detected and analyzed. Furthermore, according to the developmental victimology perspective, gender and age differences will be taken into account to detect high-risk groups of victimized adolescents (Finkelhor, 2008; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2009). Whereas it has been amply proved that girls and older adolescents are more at risk of unwanted online sexual solicitations than boys and younger ones (Mitchell et al., 2014; Pereda et al., 2014b), in the case of online harassment or cyberbullying, although several researchers have addressed on age and gender differences (e.g., Mesch, 2009; Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, & Daciuk, 2012), inconsistent findings have been reported (Bauman, 2013; Tokunaga, 2010). Therefore, further research is needed to clarify the effect of gender and age on the incidence and frequency of different and specific forms of online victimization.

Method

Sample

From a total of 709 secondary schools in the eastern region of Spain, 354 were randomly selected and were asked to participate in the research. Finally, participants were recruited from 39 that accepted the proposal. The total sample comprised 4,310 young people between 12 and 20 years old, but we restricted the sample for the current research to youth

aged 12–17 (n = 4,126). Moreover, 184 questionnaires were excluded from the sample due to non-reliable or incomplete responses. Participants who did not answer the question about age (n = 25) were also excluded. So, the final sample included 3,897 young people, 1,836 males (47.3%) and 2,049 females (52.7%), with a mean age of 14.45 years old (SD = 1.59).

The sample selection procedure was based on a stratified randomization plan with proportional allocation in each stratum of educational level – 75% of the sample in compulsory secondary (ESO), 22% in general upper secondary (Bachiller) and 3% in Initial Professional Qualification Programs – and simple allocation – around 1,400 adolescents – in each province (Alicante, Castellón and Valencia), taking as a reference the population percentages for the 2009/2010 academic year in the region and the whole country (INE, 2010).

Thirty-one percent of the adolescents were 12–13 years old, 40% were 14–15 years old and nearly 29% were 16–17 years old. Practically all the youth (95%) were regular users of the Internet (i.e., they used the Internet more than once a week) and had their own mobile phone (96%), but only a minority (37%) used their mobile phone to connect to the Internet.

Procedure

This multicenter, cross-sectional study was guided by the Code of Ethics of the General Council of Official Associations of Psychologists of Spain (Consejo General de Colegios Oficiales de Psicólogos de España, 2014). The research complied with the governmental directive of February 3, 2010, of the Spanish Autonomous Secretariat for Education and Training (Secretaría Autonómica de Educación y Formación), on the procedure to be followed in authorizing the completion of questionnaires by school students for research projects.

In compliance with the aforementioned two documents, an informative postal letter and an email was sent to the principals of the randomized selected schools. Meetings with the principals who were interested in participating in the project were carried out and the general objectives of the research were explained. Parents or guardians were asked to sign an informed consent document allowing the students to participate in the research, and adolescents also gave their oral consent to participate. We stressed the confidentiality of the data and the importance of responding sincerely. The survey targeted all youth of the requested grades who attended school the dates of survey administration. The instrument was applied by three researchers from the Criminology and Legal Sciences Research Institute of the University of Valencia (Instituto Universitario de Investigación en Criminología y Ciencias Penales de la Universidad de Valencia) between January 2011 and April 2011. Written information about where to get counseling in case of a need for support was given to all students. Only a few of them refused to complete the questionnaire (<1%).

Prior to the data collection phase of the study, a pilot study and a qualitative study based on focus groups of adolescents were conducted to develop the instrument that was finally applied. Information regarding these two previous phases can be obtained from the first author of this article.

Measures

Online Victimization. The Juvenile Online Victimization Questionnaire (JOV-Q; Montiel & Carbonell, 2012) was developed to promote a more comprehensive approach to understanding online youth victimization. Since there was no instrument specifically designed to assess multiple online victimization in adolescents, the authors developed this ad hoc self-report questionnaire, in order to simultaneously gathering the prevalence and frequency of all major forms of online victimization from the child's perspective both as a victim and perpetrator. The scale has been designed based on previous instruments already developed (e.g., Buelga et al., 2010; Tynes, Rose, & Williams, 2010; Ybarra et al., 2007). Its use of simple language and behaviorally specific questions enable the instrument to be used by teens as young as age 12.

The first part of the JOV-Q included 20 items that allow information to be compiled on the subject's sociodemographic variables (age, sex and grade), the pattern of Internet use (time spent online daily, frequency of use, place of use) and online/offline relationships (quantity and satisfaction). As a result of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), the online victimization scale included 44 items that describe potentially harmful online incidents and comprise eight forms of victimization, grouped into sexual and non-sexual modules. The reliability for the whole scale using Cronbach's alpha was .930 for the current study (.928 for the online sexual victimization domain and .832 for the non-sexual domain). The sexual module comprised *sexual pressure* (six items; Cronbach's alpha = .884), *sexual coercion* (nine items; Cronbach's alpha = .923), *online grooming* by an adult (seven items; Cronbach's alpha = .825), *unwanted exposure to sexual content* including general sexual material and mirror pictures from sexting or online exhibitionism (four items; Cronbach's alpha = .786), and *violation of privacy* (four items; Cronbach's alpha = .725). The non-sexual module comprised *online harassment* (eight items; Cronbach's alpha = .831), *happy slapping* (two items; Cronbach's alpha = .738), and *pressure to obtain personal information* (four items; Cronbach's alpha = .805) (see Table 1).

For each item, participants indicated on a four-point Likert scale (*never, occasionally, often, always*) how often they had experienced each specific situation while using the Internet in the past year (i.e., the year prior to the survey). Those who responded positively to at least one of the items making up each victimization form were categorized as having been cybervictims in the previous year. This dichotomous scoring approach reports the occurrence of any victimization within each category and was used by Finkelhor et al. (2005) "because of potential overlap among items within an aggregate domain" (p. 393). Follow-up questions for each form of online victimization gathered additional information needed to describe events in greater detail, but are not included in the present study.

Table 1
Description of the modules of the Juvenile Online Victimization Questionnaire, JOV-Q (Montiel & Carbonell, 2012).

	Definition	Number of items	Item example	Cronbach's alpha
Sexual modules				.928
Sexual pressure	Requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information that involves insistence and reiteration, regardless of the age of perpetrator.	6	Someone has pressured me repeatedly to talk online about sex.	.884
Sexual coercion	Requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information that involves explicit violence or intimidation as threats or blackmail, regardless of the age of perpetrator.	9	Someone has threatened me to pose for sexy pictures in front of the webcam.	.923
Online grooming by an adult	Requests made by an adult, regardless of the use of coercive or grooming techniques, to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or give personal sexual information.	7	An adult has tried to seduce me through material gifts such as mobile top-ups.	.825
Unwanted exposure to sexual content	Receiving unexpected and unsolicited sexual material from someone. It can include general sexual material such as pornography or specific images such as mirror pictures from sexting or online exhibitionism.	4	Someone has sent me, without me requesting them, images or videos of people showing their private parts.	.786
Violation of privacy	Manipulation and/or dissemination of personal information or images without consent.	4	Someone has sent videos or images without my permission in order to bother me which are of myself or my family.	.725
Non-sexual modules				.832
Online harassment	Repeated threats or other offensive behaviors (not sexual solicitation) such as efforts to embarrass or humiliate youth, sent online to them or posted online about the youth for others to see, regardless of the age of perpetrator.	8	Someone has insulted or ridiculed me repeatedly with messages or calls to bother me.	.831
Happy slapping	Verbal or physical aggressions that are recorded to be spread online.	2	Someone has recorded me while another person attacked me verbally or physically.	.738
Pressure to obtain personal information	Repeated requests to give personal information.	4	Someone that I met online has pressured me repeatedly to give him/her personal information such my telephone number, postal address, etc.	.805

Note: All the items were introduced after the sentence "Now think how often you have experienced the following events through Information and Communication Technologies during the last year, and select the option as similar as possible to your reality".

Data Analysis

The first set of descriptive analyses present the past-year prevalence of eight forms of online victimization and two major domains experienced by adolescents. To identify these, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out. Pearson Chi-square tests were performed to identify significant associations between each form of online victimization, gender and age. Adolescents were divided into three age groups to reflect the developmental stages of early adolescence (12 and 13 years old, $n = 1{,}217$, $M = 12.55$ years, $SD = 0.50$), middle adolescence (14–15 years old, $n = 1{,}563$, $M = 14.50$ years, $SD = 0.50$), and middle-late adolescence (aged 16–17 years old, $n = 1{,}117$, $M = 16.45$ years, $SD = 0.50$).

When comparing gender (female vs. male), the *Odds Ratio* (*OR*) was computed in order to quantify the association between this variable and victimization rates. When comparing age groups, the *Cramer V* statistic was computed in order to quantify the association between this variable and victimization rates. The *OR* measure was considered statistically significant when its 95% confidence interval did not include the 1 value ($p < .05$).

The mean frequency of major domains of victimization and the total number of online victimizations experienced during the past year was also examined. Multivariate analysis of factorial variance (MANOVA) was performed to analyze the main

effects of gender and age, and the interaction effect between both independent variables on the dependent variables taken together because they were correlated.

Following in the footsteps of studies conducted in the United States by Finkelhor et al. (2005a, 2005b), and in Spain by Pereda et al. (2014b), a measurement of the total number of different forms of online victimization experienced in the

Table 2
Incidence of online victimization in the past year by gender and age (%).

Victimization	Victimized		Gender (%)			Age (%)				
	n (3,897)	%	*M*	*F*	*OR*	95% CI	12–13	14–15	16–17	V_{Cramer}
Any online victimization	2,098	60.9		64.8	1.424*	1.241–1.634	53.2	61.4	68.6	0.122**
Any online sexual victimization	1,539	39.5		42.6	1.327*	1.159–1.520	30.1	41.4	47.1	0.138**
Sexual coercion	261	6.7		7.0	1.127	0.869–1.461	6.8	6.7	6.4	0.005
Sexual pressure	475	12.2		14.6	1.609*	1.316–1.968	8.4	13.3	14.8	0.081**
Online grooming by an adult	670	17.2		24.2	3.092*	2.554–3.742	9.6	17.3	25.6	0.163**
Unwanted exposure to sexual content	951	24.4		23.8	0.936	0.806–1.088	17.9	26.0	29.4	0.107**
Violation of privacy	592	15.2		15.3	1.020	0.853–1.220	12.9	16.3	16.1	0.043**
Any online nonsexual victimization	2,081	53.4		58.0	1.492*	1.309–1.701	47.2	54.2	58.7	0.090**
Online harassment	1,948	50		55.1	1.543*	1.356–1.756	44.8	51.2	53.8	0.073**
Pressure to obtain personal information	717	18.4		20.6	1.356*	1.148–1.602	12.8	19.7	22.8	0.103**
Happy slapping	86	2.2		1.5	2.138*	1.355–3.372	2.0	2.4	2.2	0.009

* The 95% confidence interval does not include the null value (*OR* = 1).
** Significant association between age and victimization (² tests; $p < .05$).

past year was created in order to identify highly victimized youth. *Multiple online victimization* was defined by the most parsimonious and simple operational definition of it, i.e., the occurrence of more than one form of online victimization during the last year in a range from two to eight, as other authors have done regarding polyvictimization (Pereda & Gallardo- Pujol, 2014; Sabina & Straus, 2008). In addition, following the recommendations of Finkelhor et al. (2007a), we divided online multiple victims into *low* and *high* groups. The ten percent most victimized of the adolescents was identified as *high multiple online victimization group*, i.e., youth who reported a number of forms of online victimization above the Percentile 90, which was four. Youth in the low group reported two or three different forms of online victimization. The adolescents that had only experienced one form of online victimization during the last year were classified in the *low online victimization* group.

One complexity of victimization epidemiology is that multiple kinds of victimization can occur in a single episode (Mitchell et al., 2007). In the present study we do not attempt to differentiate whether or not online victimizations occurred as part of the same episode (e.g., sexual pressure and sexual coercion occurring during the same incident would be counted as two victimizations), so, following the recommendation of Finkelhor et al. (2005b), the method used is similar to the *Screener Sum Version* of the JVQ. Nevertheless, instead of counting the number of endorsed screener items (in our case 0–44) we add together the number of different forms of online victimization experienced (0–8).

Results

Overall Incidence and Frequency of Online Victimization

Among the 3,897 participants, 60.9% (n = 2,098; 56.4% of males and 64.8% of females) reported at least one type of online victimization during the last year, with females being more victimized than males (OR = 1.42, $p < .05$) and older youth more than younger ones (V_{Cramer} = .122, $p < .05$). These youths were considered cybervictims. Table 2 shows the incidence of each form and major domain of online victimization in the total sample, males, females and three age groups – 12–13 years old, 14–15 years old and 16–17 years old.

Among the total sample, four in ten youth had experienced online victimization in a sexual domain (39.5%), five in ten had experienced victimization in a nonsexual domain (53.4%) and three in ten had experienced victimization in both domains (31%), during the past year.

In general terms, the most common form of online victimization experienced by youth was online harassment (50%), followed by unwanted exposure to sexual content (24.4%), pressure to obtain personal information (18.4%), and online grooming (17.2%); while the least common were sexual coercion (6.7%), and happy slapping (2.2%).

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of online victimization, MANOVA tests revealed significant main effects on gender ($F_{(6, 3423)}$ = 10.166; p = .000; щ²$_p$ = 0.018) and age ($F_{(12, 6848)}$ = 6.156; p = .000; щ²$_p$ = 0.011), and a significant effect of the interaction between both independent variables on the frequency and number of online victimizations taken together ($F_{(12, 6848)}$ = 3.225; p = 0.029; щ²$_p$ = 0.003). In general terms, females had been victimized online more often during the past year than males (M = 0.11; SD = 0.17 vs. M = 0.09; SD = 0.20; $F_{(1, 3428)}$ = 7.995; p = .005; щ²$_p$ = 0.002), and older youth (14–15 and 16–17 years old) more than youngest (early adolescence M = 0.07; SD = 0.15; middle adolescence M = 0.11; SD = 0.21; middle-late adolescence M = 0.11; SD = 0.18; $F_{(2, 3428)}$ = 9.780; p = .000; щ²$_p$ = 0.006). Nevertheless, our results showed the lack of significant interaction effect between age and gender on the frequency of online victimization ($F_{(2, 3428)}$ = 1.495; p = .225; щ²$_p$ = 0.001). That is, neither statistically significant differences between boys and girls nor in age group were observed (see Table 3).

Table 3
Mean number of different forms of online victimization experienced (0–8), mean frequency of occurrence (0–3) and incidence rates of multiple online victimization and each domain of online victimization in the past year by age and gender (%).

	Total (*n* = 3,897)	12–13 (*n* = 1,217)			14–15 (*n* = 1,563)			16–17 (*n* = 1 117)		
		Total	Females (*n* = 602)	Males (*n* = 611)	Total	Females (*n* = 748)	Males (*n* = 811)	Total	Females (*n* = 486)	Males (*n* = 627)
No victimization	39.1	37.1	49.3	50.7	39.9	46	54	23	51.3	48.7
Low online victimization	25.9	31.1	52.2	47.8	38.4	52.8	47.2	30.5	54.6	45.4
Multiple online victimization	35	23.8	53.3	46.7	42.5	61.5	38.5	33.6	63.5	36.5
Low: 2–3 forms of online victimization	22.9	25.8	52.7	47.3	41.3	55.4	44.6	32.9	60.6	39.4
High: 4 forms of online victimization and over (Pc90)	12.1	20.2	54.8	45.2	44.8	72.2	27.8	35	68.5	31.5
Mean number of online victimizations (*SD*)	1.40 (1.66)	1.09 (1.48)	1.13 (1.49)	1.05 (1.47)	1.47 (1.72)	1.72 (1.81)	1.20 (1.57)	1.64 (1.72)	1.80 (1.76)	1.42 (1.63)
Mean frequency of online victimization*	0.09 (0.18)	0.07 (0.15)	0.08 (0.15)	0.07 (0.15)	0.11 (0.21)	0.12 (0.19)	0.09 (0.23)	0.11 (0.18)	0.12 (0.16)	0.09 (0.19)
Only sexual victimization	8.3	25.3	44.3	55.7	37.2	42.9	57.1	37.5	53.8	46.2
Only nonsexual victimization	21.7	32.8	56.1	43.9	38.2	55.1	44.9	29	56.2	43.8
Sexual and nonsexual victimization	30.9	23.2	51.8	48.2	43.5	63.3	36.7	33.3	64	36

* No significant differences were found among males and females in any age group.

Online Sexual Victimization

Among the total sample, 39.5% reported past-year online sexual victimization. In general terms, females and older adolescents were more likely to be the target of this major domain of victimization than males ($OR = 1.32$, $p < .05$) and younger adolescents ($V_{Cramer} = .138$, $p < .05$), respectively.

As shown in Table 2, the most common form of online sexual victimization was unwanted exposure to sexual content (24.4%), followed by online grooming by an adult (17.2%), violation of privacy (15.2%) and sexual pressure (12.2%); while the least common was sexual coercion (6.7%).

With regard to unwanted exposure to sexual content, no statistically significant differences for gender were observed. With regard to age, however, rates were significantly higher for older adolescents (from 17.9% for the 12–13 year-olds to 29.5% for the 16–17 year-olds; $V_{Cramer} = .107$, $p < .05$). Concerning online grooming by an adult, females were more victimized than males during the last year ($OR = 3.09$, $p < .05$), and older adolescents more than the youngest (from 9.6% for the 12–13 year-olds to 25.6% for the 16–17 year-olds; $V_{Cramer} = .163$, $p < .05$). With regard to violation of privacy, no significant differences for gender were observed, but higher percentages were found for the 14–17 year-olds than for the 12–13 year-olds (16.2% and 12.9%, respectively; $V_{Cramer} = .043$, $p < .05$). Regarding sexual pressure, the highest prevalence rates were recorded for girls ($OR = 1.61$, $p < .05$), and older youth (from 8.4% for the 12–13 year-olds to 14.8% for the 16–17 year-olds; $V_{Cramer} = .081$, $p < .05$). The least prevalent form of online sexual victimization was sexual coercion, with no significant differences between boys and girls or between age groups.

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of online sexual victimization, in general terms, MANOVA tests revealed no statistically significant differences between boys and girls ($M = 0.06$; $SD = 0.15$ vs. $M = 0.06$; $SD = 0.19$; $F_{(1, 3428)} = 0.903$; $p = .342$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.000$). In relation to age, older youth (14–15 and 16–17 years old) had experienced online sexual victimization more often during the past year than the youngest adolescents (early adolescence $M = 0.04$; $SD = 0.13$; middle adolescence $M = 0.07$; $SD = 0.20$; middle-late adolescence $M = 0.07$; $SD = 0.17$; $F_{(2, 3428)} = 9.341$; $p = .000$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$). Regarding the effect of interaction between age and gender, our results showed the lack of a significant interaction effect on the frequency of online sexual victimization ($F_{(2, 3428)} = 1.421$; $p = .242$; $\eta^2 = 0.001$). That is, no statistically significant differences between boys and girls in either age group were observed.

Online Nonsexual Victimization

Among the total sample, 53.4% reported online nonsexual victimization in the previous year. In general terms, females and older adolescents were more likely to be the target of this major domain of victimization than males ($OR = 1.49$, $p < .05$) or younger adolescents ($V_{Cramer} = .090$, $p < .05$).

Specifically, 50% of adolescents reported having suffered online harassment. Females had experienced more online harassment than males during the past year ($OR = 1.54$, $p < .05$), and older adolescents more than younger ones ($V_{Cramer} = .073$, $p < .05$). A similar pattern was observed for pressure to obtain personal information. Its prevalence was 18.4%, with the highest percentages recorded for girls ($OR = 1.35$, $p < .05$), and older youth ($V_{Cramer} = .103$, $p < .05$). The least common form of nonsexual victimization was happy slapping, reported by 2.2% of the sample, with males being more victimized than females ($OR = 2.14$, $p < .05$), but no statistically significant differences between age groups were found.

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of online nonsexual victimization, in general terms, MANOVA tests revealed that females had experienced this more often during the past year than males ($M = 0.20$; $SD = 0.27$ vs. $M = 0.15$; $SD = 0.26$; $F_{(1, 3428)} = 22.618$; $p = .000$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.007$) and older youth (14–15 and 16–17 years old) more than the youngest (early adolescence $M = 0.15$; $SD = 0.27$; middle adolescence $M = 0.19$; $SD = 0.29$; middle-late adolescence $M = 0.20$; $SD = 0.28$; $F_{(2, 3428)} = 6.274$; $p = .002$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$). Regarding the effect of interaction between age and gender, our results showed the lack of a significant interaction effect on the frequency of online nonsexual victimization ($F_{(2, 3428)} = 2.065$; $p = .127$; $\eta^2_p = 0.001$). That is, no statistically significant differences between boys and girls in either age group were observed.

Multiple Online Victimization

Among the total sample, 25.9% of adolescents had only experienced one form of online victimization over the past year, whereas 35% (n = 1,205) had experienced more than one during the same time frame (57.6% of the cybervictims). These youths were defined as past-year online multiple victims. Forty percent of them were males (n = 480) and 60% were females (n = 725), with a mean age of 14.71 years old ($SD = 1.56$). The mean number of past-year online victimizations among the total sample was 1.4 ($SD = 1.66$), in a range from zero to eight (see Table 3). In general terms, females had experienced more forms of online victimization than males ($M = 1.57$; $SD = 1.73$ vs. $M = 1.21$; $SD = 1.56$; $F_{(1, 3428)} = 33.436$; $p = .000$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$), and older youth (14–15 and 16–17 years old) more than the youngest (early adolescence $M = 1.09$; $SD = 1.48$; middle adolescence $M = 1.47$; $SD = 1.72$; middle-late adolescence $M = 1.64$; $SD = 1.72$; $F_{(1, 3443)} = 56.715$; $p = .000$; $\eta^2_p = 0.016$). Regarding the interaction effect between gender and age, no significant differences were observed for gender in youth aged 12–13 years old, but a higher number of online victimizations was found in girls in the 14–15 and 16–17 year-old age groups ($F_{(2, 3428)} = 5.603$; $p = .004$; $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$).

Twenty-six percent (n = 893) of the total sample were classified in the "low online victimization" group (only one form of online victimization during the past year), 22.9% (n = 788) in the "low multiple online victimization" group (two or three different forms of online victimization) and 12.1% (n = 417) in the "high multiple online victimization" group (between four and eight different forms of online victimization).

In the low online victimization group, 46.8% were males and 53.2% females, with a mean age of 14.48 years old (SD = 1.57). In the low multiple online victimization group, 43.6% were males and 56.4% females, with a mean age of 14.67 years old (SD = 1.59). In the high multiple online victimization group, 32.6% were males and 67.4% females, with a mean age of 14.79 years old (SD = 1.51).

A further analysis explored the major victimization domains experienced by online multiple victims. Eighty-eight percent of them had experienced both sexual and nonsexual online victimizations during the past year. Alternatively, three in four in the low online victimization group had experienced only nonsexual online victimization and one in four had experienced only sexual online victimization ($^{2}_{(4;N=2098)}$ = 1,640.235; p = .000; V_{Cramer} = .625).

Discussion

To our knowledge, the present study provides the first available estimates of some forms of online victimization in Spanish adolescents such as sexual pressure, sexual coercion or happy slapping and is the first study documenting multiple online victimization of adolescents in Spain. Although previous studies have clearly identified specific online victimizations as important problems in the adolescents' lives (e.g., Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010; Buelga et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Wachs et al., 2012; Zweig et al., 2013), the objective of the current study was to obtain estimates of online victimization following a more comprehensive perspective, and to present gender and age differences to draw a map of adolescent online victimization which is relevant to both clinical practice and public-policy approaches to the problem.

Using self-reports, this study has revealed high levels of online victimization in eastern Spain. More than half of the adolescents (61%) experienced online victimization over the course of a year, five in ten in a nonsexual domain, nearly four in ten in a sexual domain, and three in ten in both of them. The most common form of online victimization experienced by youth in our study was online harassment (50%), followed by unwanted exposure to sexual content (24.4%). The least common were sexual coercion (6.7%) and happy slapping (2.2%), which are online victimization forms in which the violence exerted by the perpetrator is more evident. These results suggest that cyberspace is an environment in which violence can be manifested both in a subtle and more explicit form, and all of them deserve consideration in the study of online victimization and their possible consequences.

In general terms, our results show higher incidence rates of online victimization than other studies (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2007; Pereda et al., 2014b), which could be partly explained by differences in the definitions and in the methods used to assess each form of victimization. For example, it should be noted that the Juvenile Online Victimization Questionnaire (Montiel & Carbonell, 2012) includes 44 items to assess eight different forms of online victimization and measurements based on multi-item scales usually produce higher rates than those based on global and isolated questions (Gradinger, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2010). These instruments, nevertheless, also provide more valid, reliable and accurate measures than those obtained through an isolated item (Menesini, Nocentini, & Calussi, 2011). It should also be noted that in our prevalence rates we have not distinguished between cyberaggressions committed by adults or by other minors, except in the case of online grooming, which is by our definition, committed by an adult. Therefore, it may be possible than much of the victimizations reported here have occurred among peers, since it is frequent that the cyberaggressions against adolescents were perpetrated by peers of similar age, both in the case of unwanted sexual solicitations and online harassment (Mitchell et al., 2014).

It is worth mentioning that the frequency of occurrence of past-year online victimization in our sample was quite low, which indicates that online victimization, both sexual and nonsexual, tends to involve isolated rather than recurrent episodes over time. These findings suggest that the frequency of online victimization events might not be an adequate criterion to define this type of victimization, but only an indicator of its intensity, as has been suggested by Ybarra et al. (2007) in reference to cyberbullying. In this sense, Gradinger et al. (2010) have suggested that in cyberspace, one single negative action from a perpetrator might have a much greater impact because it potentially reaches an uncontrollable audience and can be easily repeated. In contrast to this idea, some researchers have used to classify subjects as cybervictims a cutoff based on a minimum frequency required as "once a week or more", both in the case of cyberbullying (e.g., Riebel, Jäger, & Fischer, 2009) and cybergrooming (Wachs et al., 2012). In addition, Menesini et al. (2011) have proposed referring to cyberbullying that it is important to take into account not only the frequency of the acts but also the kind of the acts, because some of them are severe per se (e.g., threats) and other can become sever depending on their frequency of occurrence (e.g., insults). These ideas could be applied to other forms of online victimization beyond online harassment and we have taken them in account in our study, since we included in the questionnaire an explicit instruction about frequency (i.e., repeatedly) and intention of harm (i.e., to bother me) in those items which severity could be questioned (e.g., someone has insulted me repeatedly to bother me or someone has pressured me repeatedly to talk online about sex). Moreover, we did not use a cutoff based on a specific frequency but those who responded positively to at least one of the items making up each victimization form were categorized as having been cybervictims in the previous year. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to compare several possible ways to measure online victimization and analyze the influence of the frequency and severity of the specific acts of online victimization on the wellbeing of the adolescents taken into account their own perceptions about severity of the acts.

Regarding nonsexual online victimization, the prevalence rate for online harassment was higher than that obtained in the *Growing Up with Media* survey (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Korchmaros, 2011), according to which nearly 40% of North American youth aged 10–15 years old had suffered Internet harassment during the last year. Our findings are also higher than those found by Buelga et al. (2010) in the same Spanish area, according to which 29% of youth aged 11–17 years old had been the victim of cyberbullying during the last year. However, it should be noted that this study focused exclusively on online victimization among peers, which could explain to some extent the differences with our findings, since we have not distinguished between online harassment committed by peers (cyberbullying) or by adults (cyberstalking). Moreover, the high prevalence of online harassment we have found could be partly explained by some double counting in the analysis. Online harassment (and peer victimization more generally) has quite often a sexual overtone but in the questionnaire we did not provide an explicit instruction in the items to exclude it (e.g., "excluding sexual messages"). Therefore, some adolescents could have answered "yes" to some items of online harassment thinking in sexual events, what may have inflated the incidence rate.

In relation to happy slapping, typically assessed as a specific behavior included in cyberbullying studies, our results are similar to those obtained by Gamez-Guadix, Orue, Smith, and Calvete (2013), which showed a prevalence rate of between 0.9% and 1.8% among Spanish adolescents from 13 to 17 years old for the items concerning recordings or photographs taken on a mobile phone in ridiculing or humiliating situations, or where physical aggression was involved. This low prevalence rates could be partly explained because physical aggression tend to be less frequent than other types of aggression such as exclusion or malicious gossip and requires communication face-to-face, so aggressors must give up the comfort of anonymity that Internet give them. Nevertheless, their incidence it is not insignificant and further research is needed for a better understanding of this rare but serious phenomenon.

Regarding online sexual victimization, the current study distinguishes three kinds of unwanted sexual solicitations: sexual pressure, sexual coercion, and online grooming by an adult, according to the perpetrator's age and the techniques employed. However, the majority of the studies about online sexual victimization in adolescents have focused in unwanted sexual solicitation in a broad sense, making it impossible to compare our results. For example, according to Mitchell et al. (2014), the prevalence rate of unwanted sexual solicitations among youth in the United States declined from 19% in 2000 to 9% in 2010. With regard to Spain, the study carried out by Pereda et al. (2014b) found a prevalence of 6.3% in a community sample of Spanish adolescents aged 12–17 years old. In none of these studies is shown whether the perpetrators used persuasive, coercive or grooming techniques.

The high prevalence of all types of sexual online victimization, especially online grooming by an adult (17.2%), is really concerning, but it must be borne in mind that part of this percentage could be referred to seduction attempts of an adult that did not necessarily ended in a sexual intercourse or to contacts carried out by other minors acting as an adult. To our knowledge, there are not specific studies on online grooming by an adult against Spanish adolescents. However, in Germany, Wachs et al. (2012) showed that in the year prior to the study, 24.4% of the adolescents surveyed between 12 and 16 years had been in contact with a cybergroomer who they had met online, and who was at least seven years older than them, an incidence slightly higher than that found in our sample, even though the authors classify as cybervictims only those teens who had been contacted by a cybergroomer at least once a week.

In relation to unwanted exposure to sexual content, according to the review by Ospina, Harstall, and Dennet (2010), the prevalence rate among youth aged 10–17 years old, ranged between 14% and 34%, similar to the rate incidence found in our sample (24%). The unwanted exposure of adolescents to sexual content is very frequent and its consequences should not be overlooked. In this sense, the study conducted by Mitchell et al. (2014), showed that 22% of 1,560 North-American youth between 10 and 17 years old reported feeling very or extremely upset about unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material, 25% reported feeling very or extremely embarrassed, and 16% reported experiencing at least one stress symptom related to the episode.

Age and Gender Differences

The current study also provides an important perspective on how online victimization changes over the course of adolescence, something that has been rarely available, but is extremely important from a developmental victimology perspective (Finkelhor, 2008; Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009).

With regard to online sexual victimization, most of our results are in line with those obtained in previous studies about unwanted sexual solicitation according to which girls and older youth are generally more victimized online than boys and younger adolescents (Baumgartner et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2014; Pereda et al., 2014b; Tynes et al., 2010). This is the case for sexual pressure and online grooming. However, no gender or age differences were observed in sexual coercion, and regarding unwanted exposure to sexual content and violation of privacy, incidence rates increased with age but no gender differences were found.

In relation to online harassment and pressure to obtain personal information, the findings also show that girls and older youth are generally more victimized than boys and younger adolescents, in line with the results of several studies about cyberbullying and online harassment carried out with community samples of adolescents, both in Spain (e.g., Del Río, Sádaba, & Bringué, 2010) and other countries (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2014; Tsitsika et al., 2013; Ybarra et al., 2011). In the case of happy slapping, no age differences were found, but males were more victimized than girls during the past year. One suggested explanation for gender differences is that the stereotypical participation of boys and girls in situations of violence has social roots, because traditionally the more aggressive behavior and violence of boys are reinforced (e .g., physical

aggression), whereas indirect involvement (e.g., gossip or teasing) or further victimization (e.g., online grooming) of girls is more consistent with traditional stereotypes of femininity (Carrera Fernández, Fernández, Castro, Failde Garrido, & Otero, 2013).

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of online victimization, our results show that both sexual and nonsexual victimization increases with age, but surprisingly gender differences have only been found in nonsexual victimization, experiencing girls the victimization events more often than boys. In this regard, Gradinger et al. (2010) have suggested that gender differences in cyberbullying might be partly attributed to different measurement methods used, since they found that while more boys frequently cyberbullied others according to a global item, no gender differences were found according to three specific items. It would be interesting to analyze whether or not this also occur in the case of victims of other forms of online victimization.

On the other hand, it must be underlined that gender differences disappeared when age was introduced into the analysis, what notes the importance of taking into account different age groups in the study of online victimization and the need for further efforts to explore other possible risk factors beyond gender and age.

In sum, these findings suggest that, on one hand, there are different developmental trends in the prevalence rates of each form of online victimization according to age and gender, and on the other hand, that when the incidence of traditional bullying and child sexual abuse decrease, at middle-late adolescence (Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2009) the incidences of online harassment and online grooming by an adult increase, with adolescents remaining at risk of victimization, although in a different context.

Multiple Online Victimization

An especially important contribution of this study is to demonstrate that it is more common to experience multiple online victimization than a single form of victimization. This observation has been noted in earlier studies about child polyvictimization (e.g., Finkelhor, 2008) but it has been missing from many studies that considered individual types of online victimization in isolation. In this regard, our findings underline the large number of youth who experience multiple types of online victimization simultaneously. Nearly six in ten of past-year cybervictims experienced at least two forms of online victimization, being girls between 14 and 17 years old who were at a higher risk.

In addition, a strong association between sexual and nonsexual online victimizations has been observed, since half of the cybervictims reported having experienced online victimization in both domains during the past year. These results confirm previous research indicating that online sexual and nonsexual victimization are related (Wachs et al., 2012; Ybarra et al., 2007) and show that youth not only tend to experience multiple forms of online victimization, but are often victimized in different domains.

It must be noted that these results could be partly explained by some double counting in the analysis, as mentioned above, what may have contributed to the high rate of multiple online victimization. On the other hand, although the categories of online victimization exposed here needs to be subject to confirmatory analysis, they can be a good starting point to further research on multiple online victimization.

Limitations of the Study

The current study has a variety of limitations that need to be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, the representativeness of the sample might be questioned because, although the sample size is large, the study included only adolescents attending school regularly and from schools that accepted to participate in our research, which may have influenced the results. Second, the study was carried out with adolescents living in a specific region in Spain, so it cannot be assumed that the results are completely representative of the entire country. It would be necessary to assess online victimization in adolescents involved in different social environments such as mental health services, juvenile justice and child protection systems, and to extend the sample to other regions of Spain or even other countries – which would permit meaningful cross-cultural comparisons. Additionally, the research was only based on collectively administered self-reports, what may be problematic because of the risk of memory biases or social desirability. However, experts recommend their use in preference to official records or even in preference to parent reports in some cases (Hamby & Finkelhor, 2000).

Practice Implications

The findings of the current study have implications for practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. The incidence rates of different forms of online victimization found suggest that they should be added to conventional child victimization assessment. The high incidence rate of multiple online victimization indicates that the presence of one form of online victimization could be indicating the presence of another. More efforts are needed to identify and intervene with adolescents who seem to be highly victimized (Finkelhor et al., 2005b) since a pattern of chronic victimization may often be present (Finkelhor, Turner, et al., 2009), both offline and online. Furthermore, despite the fact that some Spanish questionnaires covering some forms of online victimization, mainly cyberbullying, are available, none of them include the full spectrum of online victimizations discussed here. Results showed that focusing on only one type of online victimization is a narrow perspective that does not allow online multiple victims to be detected and them are probably at a higher risk of developing

a variety of psychosocial problems, as studies of offline polyvictimization have shown (Cyr et al., 2014; Finkelhor et al., 2007b; Mitchell et al., 2007). Moreover, findings further support the call for the inclusion of several items describing online specific events, instead of generic terms such as harassment or abuse, to assess each type of online victimization, as has been highlighted in studies on sexual abuse (e.g., Fricker, Smith, Davis, & Hanson, 2003) and cyberbullying (Gradinger et al., 2010; Menesini et al., 2011).

Conclusion

This study has shown that multiple online victimization is a frequent problem among adolescents, although study of it has been neglected until very recently. The results obtained underline that clinicians and researchers should inquire about a wide range of online victimization experiences, and avoid assessments organized around a single form of online victimization. In this manner, they could identify adolescents who have suffered multiple online victimizations, and could thus tailor prevention and intervention programs to the full range of threats that children and youth face online.

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