This project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). The content of this report represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

I can say NO!
LOVE IS NOT VIOLENCE

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF CYBER SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN YOUTH PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

FUNDACIÓNINDERA
Well-being is our Foundation

NATIONAL REPORT
for Spain

June 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing reach of the internet, the rapid spread of mobile information, and the widespread use of social media, has led to the emergence of cyber violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a growing global problem with potentially significant economic and societal consequences[1].

Though digital technology has enabled improved access to information and networking, it has also provided a space for replicating the imbalance of gendered power relations and diverse forms of discrimination that underlie violence against women and girls (VAWG). Data on VAWG occurring online indicates that, in Europe, 9 million girls have experienced some kind of cyber violence, by the time they are 15 years old. There are various forms of cyber VAWG, including hate speech, hacking, cyber stalking, non-consensual pornography, gender-based slurs and harassment, 'slut-shaming', 'sextortion', rape and death threats, 'doxing' and electronically enabled trafficking.

Experts have warned against conceptualizing cyber VAWG as a completely separate phenomenon to 'real world' violence, when in fact it is more appropriately seen as a continuum of offline violence. For example, cyber stalking by a partner or ex-partner follows the same patterns as offline stalking and is therefore intimate partner violence, simply facilitated by technology.

Furthermore, data from the 2014 FRA survey shows that 77 % of women who have experienced cyber harassment have also experienced at least one form of sexual or/ and physical violence from an intimate partner; and 7 in 10 women (70 %) who have experienced cyber stalking, have also experienced at least one form of physical or/and sexual violence from an intimate partner[2].

The project in which this research is included (NO SGBV - I can choose to say no. Empowering youth, especially girls, to stand up against cyber sexual and gender-based violence in intimate partner relationships) was submitted to the European Commission in 2018, in the Call for Proposals for Action Grants Under 2018 Rights, Equality and Citizenship Work Programme, REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2018, by the Autonomous Women's Center (Serbia) in collaboration with CESI - Centar Za Edukaciju Savjetovanje I Istrazivanje (Croatia), NANE - Women's Rights Association (Hungary) and Fundación Privada Indera (Spain).

The project seeks to contribute to ending cyber sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in youth (aged 15-19) intimate partner relationships, by especially empowering girls and supporting them to stand up against violence. There is still a strong need to focus on lowering tolerance towards cyber SGBV, especially when it comes to youth intimate partner relationships and increasing their readiness for speaking out and acting against such violence. Research has shown that some teenagers have worryingly high levels of acceptance of abuse within relationships and often justify the abuse with the actions of the victim, occurring also in adult intimate partner violence[3].

[1]EIGE report "Cyber violence against women and girls",2017, available at: https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls
[2]Idem.
[3]Against Violence and Abuse: A teacher's guide to violence and abuse, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506524/teen-abuse-teachers-guide.pdf

For essential change to happen it is not enough to just have in place legal regulations and protocols of action. Because there is still insufficient research on cyber SGBV, it is necessary to map underlying determinants and key drivers of violent behavior to inform empowerment and support interventions with youth. For this very reason, the EU project NOSGBV, in which this research has been conducted, aims to, through awareness-raising and education activities, mobilize youth and teachers in standing up against cyber SGBV and provide them with knowledge and tools to better understand the causes, forms and consequences of cyber SGBV in youth partner relationship and take steps in standing up to it/preventing it.

In **Spain**, there has been several investigations on the extent of intimate partner violence in young relationships. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Equality in 2015 on teenage girls and boys across Spain shows that roughly 1 in every 10 girls says they have experienced an abusive situation at the hands of the boy they are going out with. A little more, 1.3 in every 10 teenage boys, admit to behaving aggressively towards their girlfriends.

Furthermore, IPV mediated through technology appears to especially be a problem among young couples compared to the general population, being 25,1% of the girls between 16 and 19 years old who have admitted being controled through their phones by their partners vs. 9.6% of the total women sample[4]. This relates to another study on teenage perceptions on TDV[5] which found out that one in three young people considers it inevitable or acceptable in some circumstances to 'control the couple's schedule', 'prevent the couple from seeing their family or friends',' not allow the couple to work or study 'or' tell them things they can or cannot do'. It looks like control violence is widely accepted among young people.

Related to cybersexual and gender-based violence, the newest investigation was made in 2014[6] and in that time there was already awareness about the potential and the huge role that social media plays in violence. Pointing out the difficulties that create social media to scape IPV violence due to the easy access the perpetrators have to the victim through harassment conducts online.

But, due to the relative emergence of the phenomena, further investigation about cyberviolence needs to be conducted in order to draw more extensive conclusions.

The Spanish Organic Law of Integral Protection Measures against Gender-based Violence (1/2004 december 28th) addresses, for the first time in our country, the comprehensive treatment of gender-based violence. This law, in its 7th article establishes a number of educative measures that affect the initial and permanent training of future teachers in equality matters. Through this law it is established that teachers are key in the identification and prevention of gender-based violence, as they are the adults who spend most of their time with children and teenagers, and that their educational curricula needs to incorporate a gender perspective in order to identify such situations better.

[4]Government Office against Gender based Violence (2015) Survey on violence against women: Main results. Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality Publications Center.
[5]Government Office against Gender based Violence (2015) Teenage perception on gender-based violence. Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality Publications Center.
[6]Government Office against Gender based Violence (2014) Cyberbullying as a way to exercise Gender Violence in Youth: a risk in the information and knowledge society. Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality Publications Center.

Although numerous studies and the scientific community have stated uncountable times the relevance of well-trained teachers to eradicate violence against women in our societies, professionals interviewed in researches such as the one made by Capllonch et al. (2012) have acknowledged that they are not prepared for the prevention and early detection of gender-based violence or on how to proceed if they detect any case.

Infant, primary and secondary teachers and university students want to have more knowledge to prevent gender based violence since they are concerned both personally and professionally and they also ask to include training on prevention and early detection of gender-based violence in the official curricula of their studies[7].

The research here presented will shed light on whether these opinions and the situation raised in the previous studies have changed over the years or if it still remains the same. However, the results of this paper will be a next step towards providing teachers with the tools they lack to be able to assist their students and help to eradicate this type of violence.

© Tim Mossholder

[7]Capllonch, M., Alegre, R. M. And Pérez, M. D. (2012) Lights and shadows in teacher training on prevention and gender violence. The views and perceptions of lectures, students and social agents. Revista Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado, 73 (26,1), 57-74government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506524/teen-abuse-teachers-guide.pdf

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of the present study was to get to know teacher's awareness and attitudes about gender-based violence and sexual and cybersexual violence and to get to know the scope of the phenomena through the experiences teachers have had with their pupils. Teachers were also asked about which tools they would need to assess better and be able to help their students in such situations.

The questionnaire was envisaged by CESI, our Croatian partner, with the assistance and comments of all other partner organizations. Once the questionnaire was developed in English, each partner was in charge of translating it into their corresponding national language and transforming it into an online survey, in order to distribute it among teachers and other people of interest.

INDERA distributed the questionnaire in the autonomous community of Catalonia, as it is the scope covered by our organization.

The Catalan Government public database was used to get into contact with all educational institutions in the area. The contacts were made via email to all 1179 institutions who met the criteria of offering education to young people between 14 and 18 years old alongside with 21 teacher's associations installed in the area, from face to face meetings at some schools and, in addition, it was published on Indera's social networks.

From all those contacts, exactly 200 responses were obtained, fulfilling the objective dictated by the project.

As it can be seen, the major obstacle encountered was to get the needed amount of answers from teachers to meet the requirements, as only 200 people from a total of 1200 institutions reached answered the questionnaire. However, it was successfully accomplished.

Although the dissemination of the questionnaire was made to all secondary schools in the region, the results obtained here have to be taken cautiously, as the people who have chosen to participate in the study could be professionals already interested in the topic, leading to a self-selection bias and possible differences between the results on our sample and the reality of the situation. For that reason, and because of the size of the sample, this research could not completely be representative of the reality.

3. RESULTS ANALYSIS

General information about the sample of teachers

The majority of respondants (63%) are between 31 and 50 years old, 8% of the rest being between 22 and 30 year old, 24.5% between 51 and 59 years old and 4.5% 60+ years old.

68% of the sample being female and 32% male. And 84% of them working at a public institution whereas 16% were in a private one.

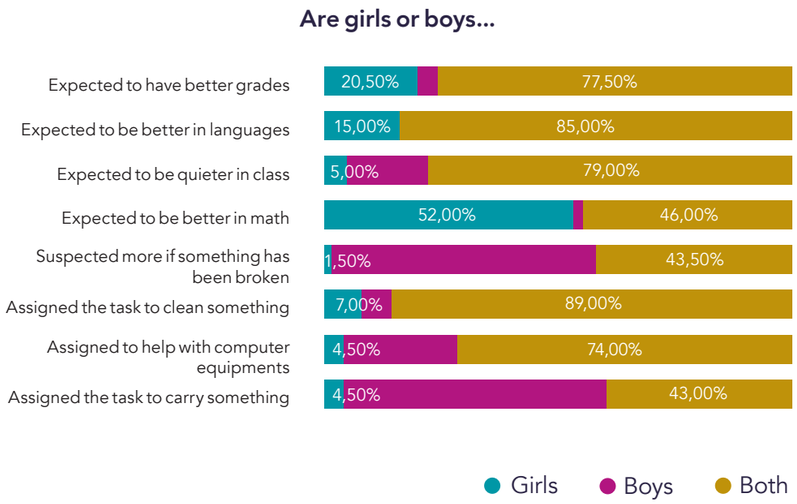
About their role in the school: 77.5% of them are teachers, 13% psychologists/ pedagogues and 9,5% school principals.

About the professional working years the sample is well distributed: 22% of them have been working between 1 and 3 years, 20% between 4 and 10 years, 28.5% between 11 and 20 years and 29.5% more than 20 years.

Regarding participants location: 64% come from a city and 36% from a town, the majority of the sample, 63%, from the region of Barcelona, 17.5% from the region of Lleida, 13% from the region of Tarragona and 6.5% from Girona.

Awareness of gender stereotypes and roles in school

When asked about different stereotypes on girls and boys at schools, such as be expected to have better grades or be more quiet, the results were:



As it can be seen, in most of the cases most respondents answered that both girls and boys are equal on those stereotypes, however, in some questions this is not the case. For example, **the stereotypes that boys are stronger than girls and that boys are more troublemakers than girls, who are more quiet and calm**, are still strong in the minds of respondents.

Also, in the cases where the majority made no distinction between girls and boys, those who do make those distinctions are making them stereotypically:

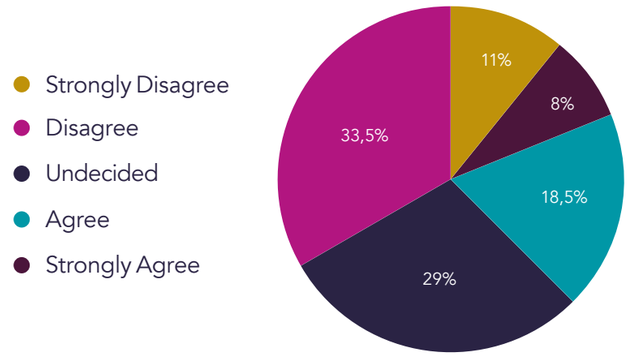
→ **21.5%** of respondants answered that boys are assigned to help with computer skills compared to only 4.5% that said girls are assigned to the same task.
→ **16%** answered that boys are expected to be better at math compared to 5% who said girls.
→ **15%** that girls are expected to be better at languages, compared to 0% who said boys.
→ And **20,5%** said that girls are expected to have better grades, compared to 2% who said boys.

In short, it is clear that stereotypes are still present among teachers, in the same way as in the rest of society.

Attitudes to GBV/cyber SGBV (related to youth/in youth partner relationships)

Respondants were asked to mark their level of agreement in certain satatements, the majority of respondants had a clear vision about most of them.

Most of respondants answered in a non-victim blaming way, having a clear view that the way a girl dresses doesn't make her responsible for what is happening to her, that sex without consent is rape, even if the person didn't resist and that violence against women is never justified. However, there were statements in which the response was not agreed upon by the majority, there were in fact discrepancies. For example, the results for the statement „Girls are equally violent as boys" are the following:

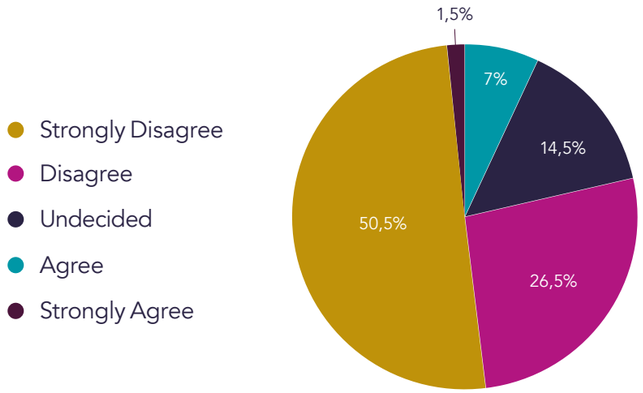


As it can be observed, there's not a total agreement about it, and a grand percentatge of respondants don't have it even clear (29%).

About the false myth that says that **„When a person is being abused in his/her intimate relationship, it is easy just to leave"**, most of the respondents disagreed (84% of them), however 12% of them were not sure about it and 4% agreed on it.

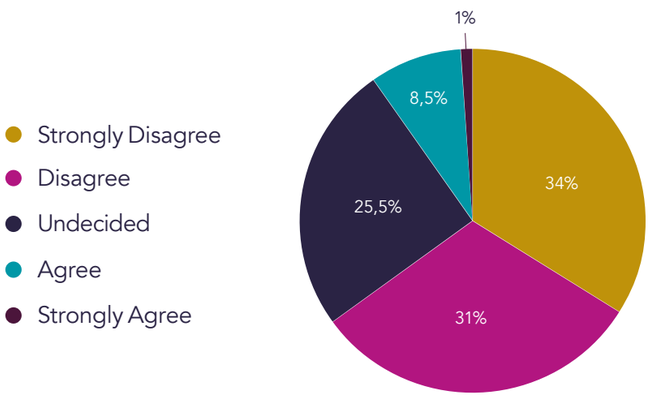
A similar thing happened at the following statements, **„If she sent him a naked picture of herself, it's her own fault if they end up on the Internet"** and **"Girls are dressing provocatively to attract boys' attention"**:

"If she sent him a naked picture of herself…"



Although 77% of respondents disagree with it, 8,5% agrees and 14,5% are not sure about it.

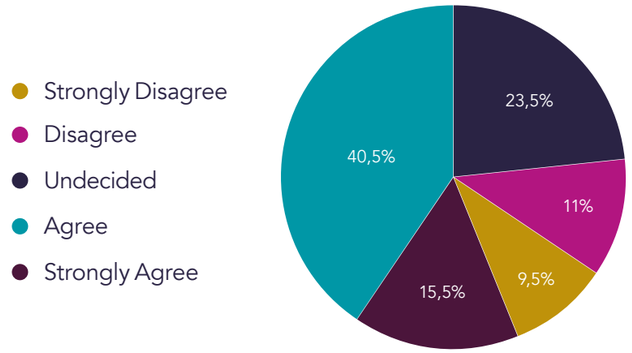
"If she sent him a naked picture of herself…"



In this case, 65% of people disagree with the statement, 9,5% agrees with it and a large group (25,5%) are not sure about it.

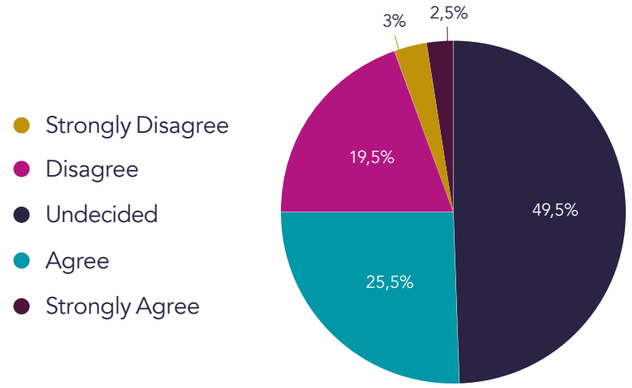
This considerably large percentage of "I'm not sure" answers may indicate that those people are struggling between what they feel is right to say and what the stereotype or common knowledge says, giving us the view (alongside with other data collected in this study) that professionals need more knowledge about feminism, gender stereotypes and sexism.

On the other hand, about the statement **"Young people learn about sexuality through pornography"**, the results show us the following:



As it can be seen, clustered, 56% of people agree with that compared to 20,5% that disagree and 23,5% are not sure about it. However, this reassures something that was already known: sex education as it is right now (in the case there is any) is not the source where young people are learning how to relate with other people in an emotional and sexual way.

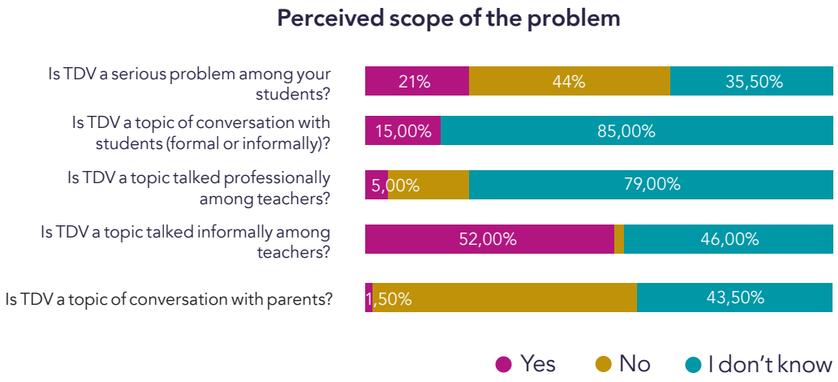
Finally, the last statement asked was **"Students trust teachers and other school professionals and ask for help in cases of teen-dating violence"**, and the results show us the following:



These results are very serious, because if 49,5% of respondents are not sure about it. It is possible that none of their students turned to them for guidance on these topics, meaning that maybe they don't have their trust. And moreover, 28% agreed on the statement compared to 19,5% that didn't agree.

Awareness of the scope of the problem and teacher's experiences of cyber SGBV among their students/in their school

About the **awareness of the scope of the problem teacher's peceived**, their answers were the following:

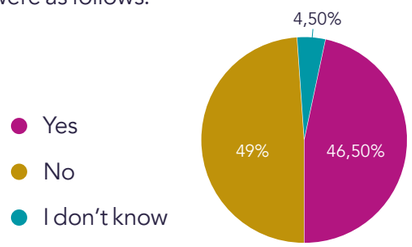


As it can be infered from this data, most of respondents state that they don't see TDV as a serious problem among their students but there is a considerable amount of people, 35,5%, that state that they don't know, which can tell us that there's no real awareness of the topic whatsoever, so they can't identify whether there is a problem or not and it seems that TDV is a topic talked with the students only in 37,5% of the cases. If the topic is not talked about with them, it makes it difficult for the teachers to assess wheather it is truly a problem or not.

Furthermore, between teachers, it seems that the topic is more widely discussed in informal conversations than in professional environments. That is a problem itself that needs to be assessed by the educational center's management team, because if the center doesn't take part in it and start putting this matter in their agendas, there is no possibility that professionals at the center can gain awareness, and the complete picture of the phenomena will be missed.

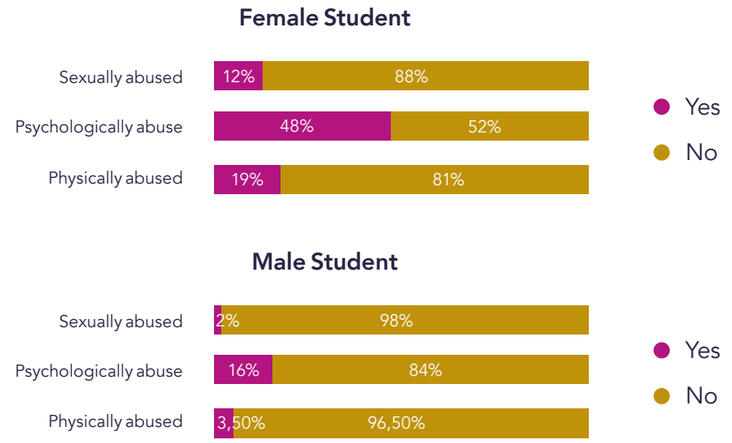
On the other hand, about real experiences on TDV and Cyber SGBV teacher's have noticed or have been informed:

When asked about if they ever have heard or have been informed about a case of TDV in their school, their answers were as follows:



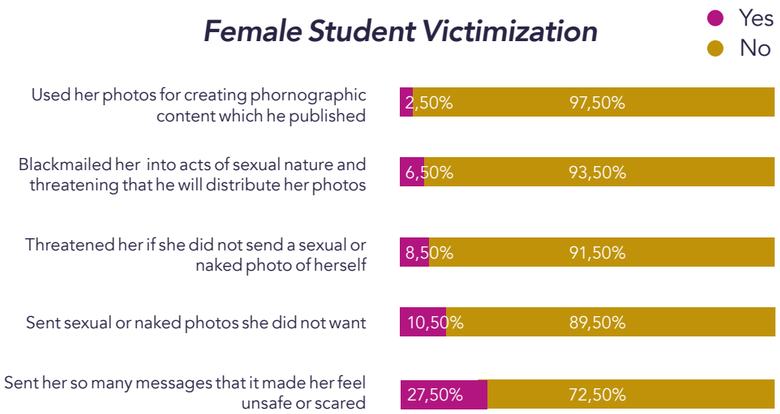
Almost half of the sample answered yes, what is even more concerning is that only 20,5% of the respondents answered affirmative to the question „Is TDV a serious problem among your students?" Even though it is possible that none of their specific students in that school have experienced TDV, these numbers are, at the very least, suspicious. This can indicate that the level of awareness about the seriousness of the topic is very low.

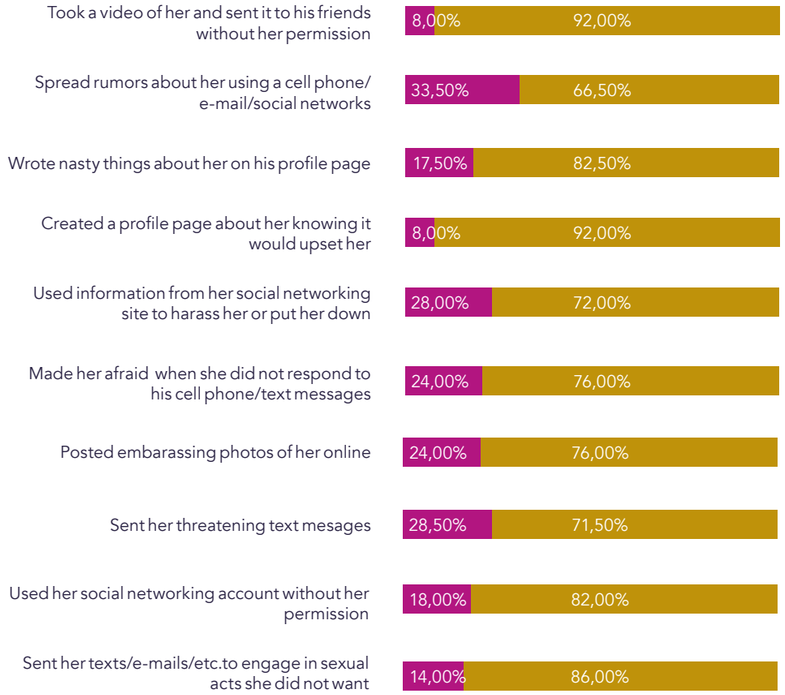
When asked if they have ever ***happened to be informed (directly or indirectly) that a female or a male student of theirs have had a romantic or intimate relationship in which they have been abused***, the answers were:



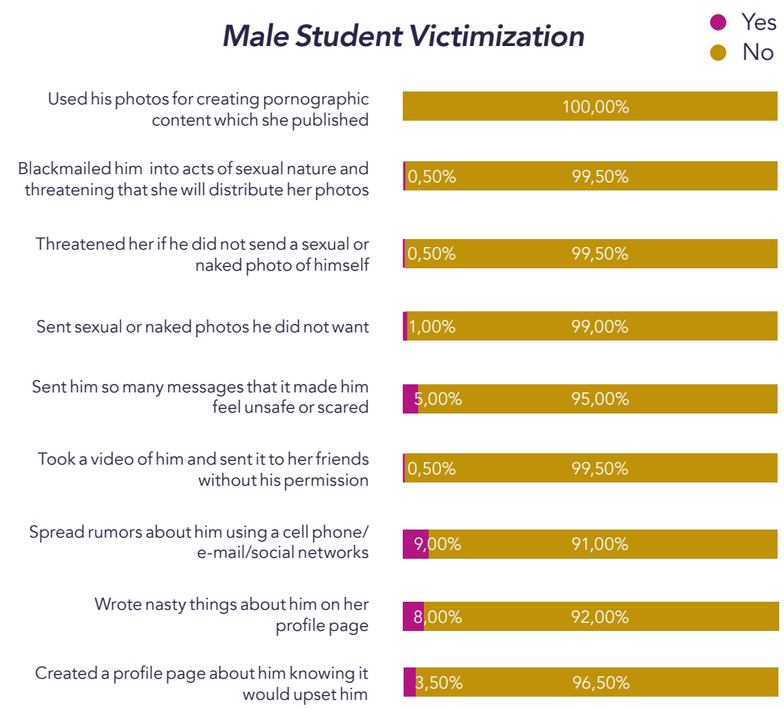
As it can be observed, the phenomena, as every other study shows, is gender-based, with almost half of the sample informed about psychological abuse, 12% informed about sexual abuse and 19% about physical abuse over female students in contrast to 2% and 3,5% of respondants being informed about sexual and physical abuse over male students and 16% informed about psychological abuse. All of this inflicted by the partner.

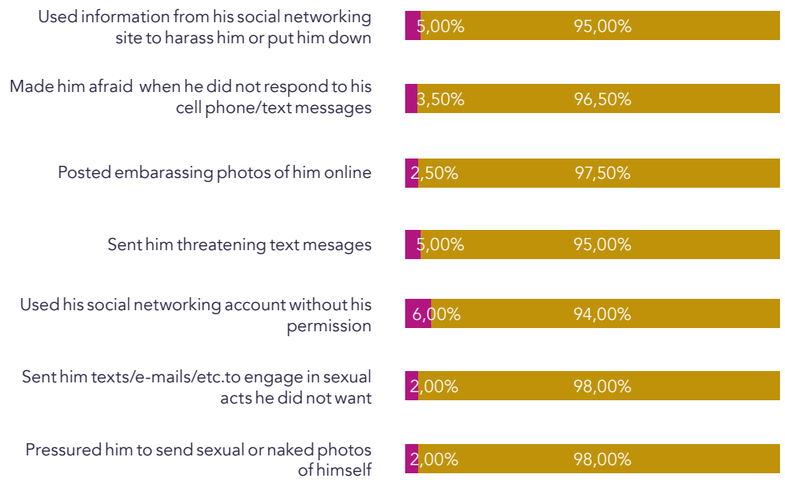
When asked about specific situations of abuse or violence, the responses, disaggregated by sex, are the following:





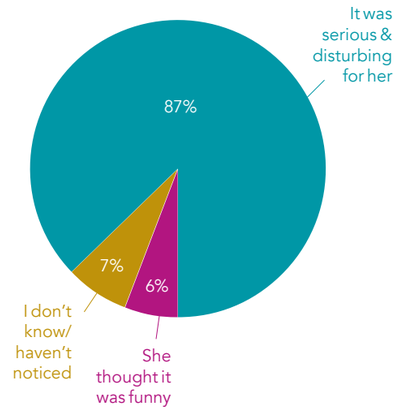
Male Student Victimization



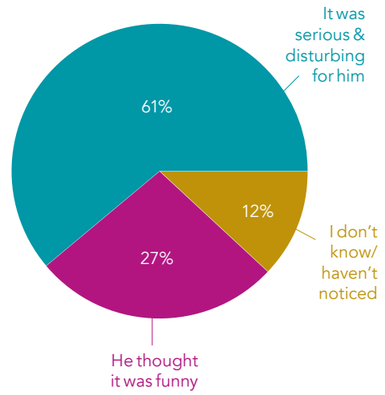


Effects on the students perceived by the teaching staff:

Female Student Victimized



Male Student Victimized



As it can already be seen in the previous graphics, it is clear that the violence and abuse is strongly gendered, with cases where up to 33,5% of teachers indicate that they have been informed about girls suffering from this types of abuse, while in the case of boys being abused, the percentage of teachers who say they have been informed only reaches 9% at most.

Besides, there are also differences with how this abuse affects the victims: in the case of female students, 87% of teachers report this situation being serious and disturbing for her and only 6% reporting it was funny. Whereas in the case of male students, 61% of teachers report this situation being disturbing vs. 27% reporting it was funny.

Another difference perceived is the percentatge of teachers who said they

haven't noticed how the situation affected their students: while only 7% of teachers whose students were female say they didn't notice, there exist 12% of teachers that didn't notice in the case of male students being the victims. That can be related to two interpretations:

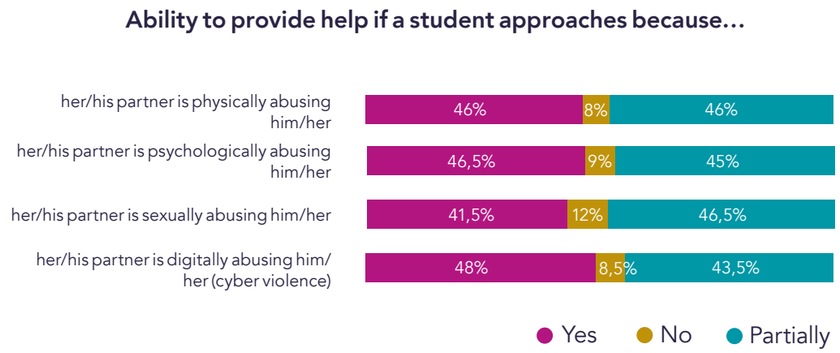
→ The situation wasn't even that noticeable for the male student.

→ There's a tendency, due to gender stereotypes, to believe that men are stronger and tougher than women and so this type of abuse can't affect them, so teachers don't pay attention (or even male victims can't see themselves as victims).

However, the level of abuse female and male students suffer is not comparable.

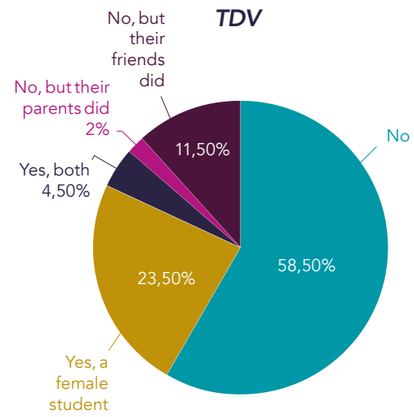
Teachers' ability to provide help to students experiencing (cyber) teen-dating violence

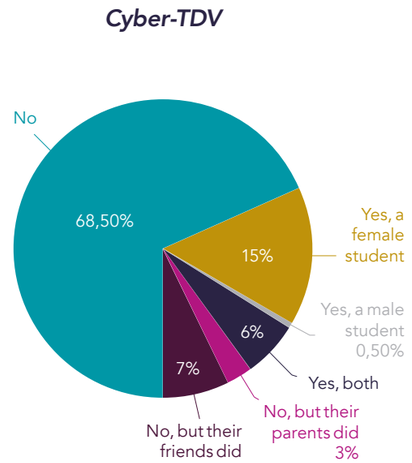
When asked about their ability to provide help to students experiencing different situations of abuse, Teachers' responses were:



It seems like most of the teachers believe they could help the student, at least partially, if they were to suffer from any form of abuse. One remarkable point about this is when the focus goes on sexual abuse: the percentage of people who responded "No" is slightly higher than in the other cases. This is a common fact for all people that when somebody tells she/he has been sexually victimized, the ability to cope with that and offer help is minimized, as society's view about sexual violence is different from other types of violence. To be sexually abused, or raped, is seen by society as the worst thing that can happen to you, and the most traumatic experience you can have, so the perceived ability to help can differ from other kinds of violence.

When asked about if any of their students ever approached them asking for help because they were suffering from TDV, teachers answered the following:

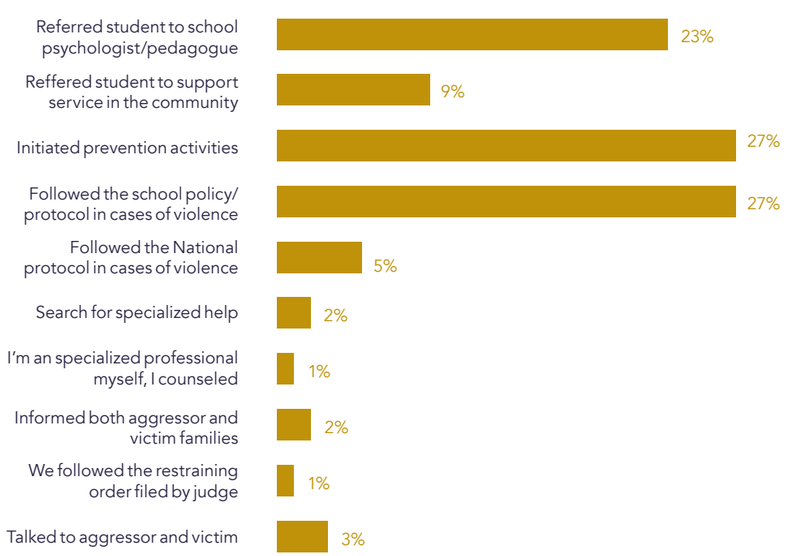




As it can be seen, in at least, 23,5% of the cases, a girl approached the teacher because she was being victimized and in 15% of the cases because she was being victimized online. The percentage of cases where friends approached teachers is noticeable, it seems that sometimes friends identify their friend's situation earlier and are eager to help them get out of the situation. Furthermore, it seems that students approach their teachers more if the abuse happens in the "real world" than if it happens in the "virtual world".

When asked if they were able to help in such situations, the answers were 76% Yes, 14% No and 11% Partially.

And the ways they helped were:



So, it seems that the most used strategies were: refer the student to the school psychologist/pedagogue, to initiate prevention activities in the class and to follow the school's protocol.

Teachers' role in addressing cyber SGBV in youth partner relationships

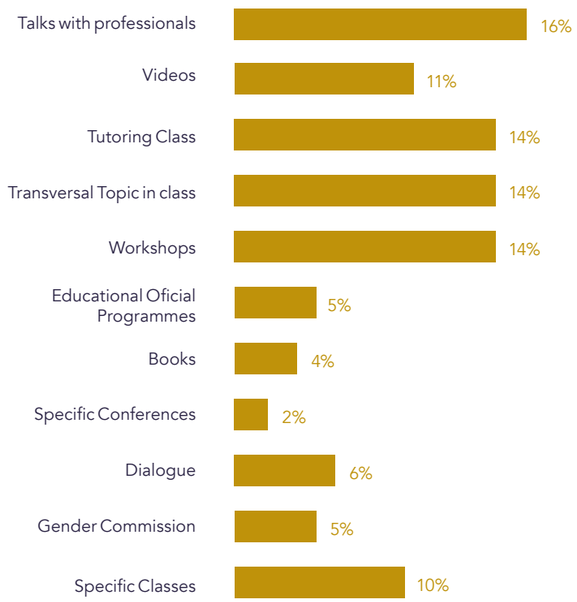
When asked about if they think that their role as teachers should be addressing the problem of cyber sexual teen-dating violence, the responses were yes in an overall of 87,5% of responses (50,5% saying yes, 34,5% saying yes but only with the school pedagogue's help and 2,5% yes but only if it happens in the school. The rest of the respondents answered No (7.5%) or I don't know/I haven't thought about it (5%).

And when asked about if the schools and teachers should be involved in the protection and safety of students from cyber sexual teen-dating violence, the absolute majority of answers were affirmative (94,5%) with 4,5% of the sample answering "I don't know" and 1% "No".

About how they rate their knowledge on cyber sexual teen-dating violence, 50,5% of the participants answered "Average", 27,5% answered "Poor", 19,5% "Fairly good" and 2,5% "Very good". So, it is clear that there is the need for more information about the phenomena to suit the professionals with better tools to be able to address it well.

Next, when questioned about if they were actively engaged on prevention TDV programs and activities, only 41,5% answered affirmatively.

The following are the prevention TDV activities and programs they were involved in:



Finally, teachers were asked to name what would support them to better address the problem, and these were the answers:

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusions that can be extracted from this research are the following:

1. Teachers, as the rest of the society, are not exempt of stereotyped beliefs when it comes to gender. Gender roles such as **boys are stronger than girls and that boys are more troublemakers than girls, who are more quiet and calm** are still strong in their minds, as well as the belief that boys are more violent.

2. But, when it comes to sexual violence and gender-based violence, most of the respondant's answers were less stereotyped, being clear, for example, that the way a girl dresses doesn't make her responsible for what happens to her, that sex without consent is rape even if the person didn't resist and that violence against women is never justified.

3. There was a considerably large percentage of "I'm not sure" answers which can indicate that people are struggling between what they feel is right to say and what the stereotype or common knowledge says.

4. When focusing on sex education, 56% of people agreed that youngsters were learning about sex through pornography vs. 20,5% that disagreed and 23,5% that were not sure about it. Indicating that even if they are offering sex education in their schools, most teachers do not consider it as a source of knowledge for teenagers.

5. When asked about trust with teachers, 49,5% of respondents are not sure that pupils trust them with TDV matters and only 28% agreed on the statement compared to 19,5% that did not agree.

6. Moreover, most respondants state that they do not see TDV as a serious problem among their students but there is a considerable amount of people, 35,5%, that state that they do not know. This, alongside with the previous point indicates to us that there's no real awareness of the topic whatsoever, because they can't identify whether there is a problem or not, and probably because they themselves don't find it important. Students are then more reluctant to trust that the teachers will take their concerns seriously.

7. Also, it seems that TDV is a topic talked about with the students in only 37,5% of the cases. Again, if the topic is not spoken about with them, it makes it hard for the teachers to assess wheather it is a real problem or not.

8. When asked about indirect experiences, if they ever have heard or have been informed about a case of TDV in their school, almost half of the sample answered yes. What makes this even more concerning is that only 20,5% of the respondents answered affirmative to the question „Is TDV a serious problem among your students?".

9. And when asked about if they have ever happened to be informed (directly or indirectly) that a student of theirs has a romantic or intimate relationship

in which they have been abused, almost half of the sample informed about psychological abuse, 12% about sexual abuse and 19% about physicall abuse over ***female students***; in contrast to 2% and 3,5% of respondants being informed about sexual and physical abuse over ***male students*** and 16% informed about psychological abuse.

10. About specific situations of abuse or violence their students have encountered, it makes it even clearer that violence and abuse is strongly gendered, with cases where up to 33,5% of teachers indicate that they have been informed about ***girls*** suffering from some types of abuse, while in the case of boys being abused, the percentage of teachers who say they have been informed only reaches 9% at the highest.

11. Besides, there is also a difference on the impact on the victims: in the case of female students, only 6% of teachers reported that the abuse was considered funny by the female students, whereas in the case of male students 27% of teachers reported that the male students considered the experienced abuse as funny.

12. When asked about their ability to provide help, most of the teachers believe they could help the students, at least partially, if they were to suffer from any form of abuse themselves.

13. About if any of their students ever approached them, at least in 23,5% of the cases, a girl approached the teacher because she was being victimized offline and in 15% of the cases because she was being victimized online. And the percentage of cases where friends approached teachers was also noticeable; it seems that sometimes friends identify their friend's situation earlier and are eager to help them get out of the situation. Furthermore, it seems that students approach their teachers more if the abuse happens in the "physical world" than if it happens in the "virtual world".

14. They were able to help in most of the cases when students approached them, mostly by referring the student to a counselor/psychologist, following the school policy or initiating prevention activities.

15. When asked about if they think that their role as teachers should be addressing the problem of cyber sexual teen-dating violence, the responses were yes in an overall of 87,5% of the cases. And when asked about if the schools and teachers should be involved in the protection and safety of students from ***cyber sexual teen-dating violence***, the absolute majority of answers were also affirmative.

16. About how they rate their knowledge on cyber sexual teen-dating violence it is clear there is a need for more information about the phenomena to suit the professionals with better tools to be able to address it well.

17. When questioned about if they were actively engaged on prevention TDV programs and activities, only 41,5% answered affirmatively.

18. Finally, when asked about what would be their needs in order to assess better the phenomena, most of them referred to more education and training for them, contact points or services where they can send the students, experts on the matter to work as their mentors and educational materials, followed by a school policy and better cooperation within the different actors involved.

Given the discoveries made by this research, the following actions should be directed towards:

1. Raising awareness and provide professionals with more knowledge about teen dating violence, feminism, gender stereotypes and sexism. As the law requires, professionals need to train themselves before being able to identify such situations and provide help to their students.

2. Build trust with students; it is clear with these results that teachers need to build trust with their pupils and this trust has to start with teachers believing that TDV and sexual abuse is a serious topic and showing them that they care and they will listen to their problems with full attention.

3. Recognize that online abuse is also abuse; teachers need to incorporate it themselves before showing it to their students.

4. Inform teachers about the services that are already available. One of the needs for them is to have more of these resources, make sure that they know about the ones that already exist and work well within youth.

5. Provide teachers with educational material that initiates a mutual learning process on the topic.

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