CIBERBULLYING LGBT-FOBICO

Nuevas formas de intolerancia

Grupo de Educación de COGAM.
LGBT-phobic cyberbullying
New forms of intolerance

COGAM Education Group

Education Research Team, COGAM Education Group

Co-ordinator-Researcher: Eduardo Benítez Deán.


Collaborators: Anna, César, Christian, Esther, Juanjo, Julia, Paloma, Patricia, Rafael.

Acknowledgements
ILGA-Europe, participating students and teachers, educational centres that requested the COGAM Education Group talk programme, COGAM Education Group volunteer speakers, César Barrantes, Guillermo Barón, Yolanda Cosgaya, Jesús M. Grande, Mario Gatti and Ángel Lázaro.

We would like to sincerely thank the following participating experts: Esteban Ibarra Blanco, Rosa Bada, Laura Sánchez Fernández, Ignacio Sola Barleycorn, María Teresa Verdugo Moreno, Rosa Garvín Fernández, Miguel Ángel Aguilar García, Carmen Quesada Alcalá, Felix Labrador Arroyo and Jesús Generelo Lanaspa.

Contents

Contents ........................................................................................................................................ 2
Abbreviations ............................................................................................................................... 4
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 5
Theory and background. ................................................................................................................ 6
Objectives..................................................................................................................................... 9
Methodology ................................................................................................................................ 10
Description of sampled students ................................................................................................. 11
Results and discussion .................................................................................................................. 14
1. Students’ sexual orientation and gender identity ................................................................. 14
   1.1 Gender identity .................................................................................................................. 14
   1.2 Sexual Orientation .......................................................................................................... 14
2. Students’ perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying............................................................... 15
   2.1 Overall perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. ......................................................... 15
   2.2 The on-line environment of LGBT students. Perception of cyberbullying. .................. 17
3. LGBT students in the Region of Madrid. Victims of cyberbullying. ........................................ 19
4. Relationship between bullies and their victims. ................................................................. 22
   4.1 Personal relationship between bullies and their victims .................................................. 22
   4.2 Relationship between LGBT-phobic on-site school bullying and cyberbullying ........... 24
5. Ways and forms of LGBT-phobic bullying in on-line environments of students in the
   Region of Madrid .................................................................................................................... 26
   5.1 Frequency and duration of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying ............................................... 26
   5.2. Forms of cyberbullying and means used by cyberbullies .......................................... 27
6. Individual bases that support LGBT-phobic cyberbullying .................................................... 32
   6.1 The individual behaviour of students before cyberbullying situations toward LGBT
       classmates ............................................................................................................................ 32
   6.2 Anonymity and the lack of control felt by teachers, families and web administrators. 36
   6.3 Visibility, stereotypes and gender .................................................................................. 37
7. Reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying and its
   environment .............................................................................................................................. 42
   7.1. Reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying ................. 42
   7.2. Expected family reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying. .......................................................................................................................... 45
7.3. Expected reaction of teachers to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying ........................................................................................................... 53

8. Teachers .................................................................................................................. 58

9. Authorities ................................................................................................................ 63

Conclusions .................................................................................................................. 69

On students’ perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying ............................................. 70
On the profile of victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying ............................................. 70
On the relationship between bullies and their victims ............................................... 70
On the frequency and duration of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying ................................. 71
On the forms of cyberbullying and the mediums used ............................................... 71
On the individual bases that support LGBT-phobic cyberbullying ............................ 71
On students’ reactions to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying and its environment ................................................................. 72
On teachers’ ability to act ........................................................................................... 73
On the opinion of authorities ....................................................................................... 73

Proposed course of action .......................................................................................... 75

Bibliographic references ............................................................................................ 77
Abbreviations

ICT: Information and communication technologies.

SEP: School education project.

IRP: Internal rules of procedure.

CD: Counselling department.

COGAM: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Collective of Madrid.
Introduction

The study you hold is the result of the altruism and not-for-profit collaboration of volunteers from the Education Group of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Collective of Madrid (COGAM). Since 1997, this group has been working intensely in schools in order to prevent, identify and resolve possible school bullying situations that may arise due to students’ sexual orientation or gender identity. Their activity is carried out within the programme Red de Educación para el fomento de la diversidad, la igualdad de oportunidades, la paz, la convivencia en las aulas y la educación en valores (“Education network to promote diversity, equal opportunity, peace, classroom harmony and the teaching of values”). It consists of conducting talks and workshops for primary and secondary school students, parent associations and teacher training.

With the publication of the report “Homofobia en las aulas 2013. ¿Educamos en la diversidad afectivo-sexual?” (“Homophobia in the classroom (2013). Do we teach sexual diversity?”), levels of homophobia continue to be heavily monitored in classrooms in the Region of Madrid. Through their close collaboration with schools, whom we thank immensely for their commitment to teaching respect for sexual diversity and gender identities, our volunteers could see first-hand the discrimination, intolerance and hatred toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals that today are still found among students. The fear of being penalised for being different and being seen as LGBT by their classmates, teachers and/or family members, the loneliness from being excluded from the group, blackmail, cyberbullying and other forms of violence, make up the numerous accounts told to volunteers while working in classrooms.

The “New Information and Communication Technologies” (ICTs) are not so “new” any more for current generations of students, who at birth were already known as “digital natives”. Instant messaging applications and social networks have deeply transformed the ways our youth interact with one another and are not so much an extension but an essence of their social lives. The opaque nature of the relationships forged through these means poses new challenges to the educational community by creating spaces where LGBT-phobic violence and hate speech are able to flourish free of consequences.

Prior to this study, we presented our research entitled “LGBT-fobia en las aulas 2016. ¿Educamos en la diversidad afectivo-sexual?” (“LGBT-phobia in the classroom (2016). Do we teach affective-sexual diversity?”), in which we evaluated trends in LGBT-phobia levels in educational centres and the reactions of teachers and family members. This time round, we focused on learning to what extent gender identity or sexual orientation-related cyberbullying affects secondary education students in the Region of Madrid, and what characteristics define it. To this end, we had the participation of 2,678 students, 30 active teachers and 10 education experts.

Eduardo Benítez Deán.
Co-ordinator, Education Research Team.
Theory and background.

Parents, guardians and educators agree on how important the schooling period is for young people. Compulsory education is regulated by governments with laws so as to guarantee that students receive the best education possible. This interest corresponds with the need for ensuring that education principles match the democratic identity of Europe and allow students to fully develop physically and mentally.

Based on this reflection, Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that education must be directed to “The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations”. Furthermore, under Article 16, the convention provides for the protection of minors from interferences and attacks on their honour and reputation. This acknowledges that a child’s development should be without any trauma and he or she should learn by having respect for others. Both of these aspects must be present in the education process for minors, who spend more time in school than at home, a fact that is acknowledged by the UN (2006).

At schools, certain situations have been identified which disrupt the desired functional and social setting that make it possible to learn, teach and acquire the competencies established by law. In going against what is desirable for an institution, school bullying has been found to be one of the problems to be eradicated from high schools, where the dynamics of bullying have become normal in the lives of millions of students. School bullying disrupts the normal activities of classrooms and schools and replaces them with attacks, the learning of toxic dynamics and academic failure (Garaigordobil, 2011).

Bullying refers to situations where a person is being harassed, exposed to demeaning and oppressive acts by one or more people repeatedly and over a long period of time. In other words, these individuals attempt to inflict harm by taking advantage of an existing social power imbalance (Olweus, 1999). In addition to this definition, Ortega (2005) states that the situation is sustained both by the submissiveness and the abetting silence of students that are aware of the violence but do not commit it. Some students are implicated in this type of situations on a day-to-day basis.

The consequences of this type of abuse and lack of harmony in the classrooms are noticeable in victims and aggressors alike, and even in students who remain silent. According to García (2013), school bullying leads to psycho-social and behavioural problems, low self-esteem and depression. School bullying also causes absenteeism, which, along with the situation perpetuated among students who are victims of bullying, does not favour the assimilation of knowledge and learning, and causes academic performance to suffer considerably. But these are not the only consequences. Victims, bullies and silent participants are learning negative relationship and conflict-solving dynamics, as well as negative habits that will influence their current and future behaviour.

In high schools, minors are learning shady conducts that run counter to educational values and have serious consequences on their personality and development. Furthermore, maintaining this type of situations enters into conflict with the Convention on the Rights of the Child by infringing on the respect for human rights.
and fundamental liberties. What is the future of a society that allows its youth to learn anti-social principles?

The use of new technologies, in which minors are considered “natives”, are adding a new level to school bullying: cyberbullying. This phenomenon is seen as a dynamic directly related to bullying (Garaigordobil, 2012; INTECO, 2012; López, 2014). It is typical for cyberbullying to appear in situations where bullying is already present. Nonetheless, this dimension adds the anonymity new technologies afford aggressors, as well as 24/7 exposure (INTECO 2012), thus turning bullying into something that is always present, non-stop. Therefore, cyberbullying intensifies the bullying experienced by minors in their classrooms since this reality follows them in all spaces in their lives by way of the various means of communication.

As a result of their dependence on on-line social networks, victims are less likely to tell others about their being bullied for fears of losing mobile connection or use. This leads to victims feeling punished and prolongs the harassment they experience. The unawareness of many adults about new ICTs also leads to defensiveness and helplessness. Minors do not want to be deprived of their social networks and connections, and adults are not always able to give them advice or protect them from improper usage.

Bullying through the virtual world increases the negative implications to the already serious consequences of traditional bullying. For victims, cyberbullying increases bewilderment, uncertainty, impotence, fear, anguish, and anger (García, 2013). And for aggressors, it means a greater moral disconnect, lack of empathy, difficulties to obey rules and problems related to their aggressive behaviour (Garaigordobil, 2011).

These problems with bullying considerably damage correct functioning of classrooms and the learning of social norms implicit in education. It is particularly important to look deeper into the causes of these cases of bullying. Hoff and Mitchell (2009) point out the intolerance in regard to racial and sexual prejudice as one of the main causes. Similarly, studies conducted by Generelo, Pichardo and Galofré (2008); Generelo (2012) and Moreno and Puche (2013) indicate that homophobia is the main cause of bullying.

Therefore, we must see, as experts have pointed out, how homophobia is one of the main causes of cyberbullying. To this end, it is important to specifically study homophobia as the cause of cyberbullying. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Collective of Madrid (COGAM) paid special attention to education, understanding the need for acting within educational settings. Through their education group, the collective has been carrying out homophobia awareness workshops for a long time. Its presence in educational settings made the first study on homophobia possible through direct surveys of students in Madrid in 2005 (Generelo 2005). This analysis has led to several other studies (Takacs, 2006; Pichardo, 2009; López, 2013) that demonstrate the important role sexism and homophobia have in bullying, as they are the main causes of bullying and cyberbullying among minors. Furthermore, with homophobia present in their own households, many LGBT minors are invisible at home and do not have any consolation from family members (Generelo and Pichardo, 2006).
Continuing with the work started by their studies with students, COGAM-Education further analysed the causes and repercussions of homophobia for students in Madrid. The purpose of this report is to continue the evaluation objective of previous studies and look further into dimensions that could be less evident and especially harmful such as cyberbullying in order to enhance the tools that may allow us to eradicate bullying in general and particularly bullying caused by LGBT-phobia.
Objectives

- Analyse the magnitude of LGBT-phobic attacks carried out using new information and communication technologies or “ICTs” (cyberbullying) among students in the Region of Madrid.

- Define the temporary characteristics and the on-line spaces in which cyberbullying takes place.

- Learn about the ways and forms of bullying in which LGBT-phobia most frequently is expressed on the Internet.

- Analyse to a greater extent teachers’ opinions regarding their ability to react to LGBT-phobic intolerance on the Internet.

- Demonstrate the opinion and ability to react to hate on the Internet of other institutions and public officials involved in education.
Methodology

This is an educational research conducted using sociological quantitative methods. The results that are presented correspond with three different samples: students, teachers and authorities.

The sampling technique used with students was a survey consisting of 19 closed-ended questions and a space at the end for students to give opinions or comment on their personal experience. Of these 19 questions, five were about identity (three dichotomous questions, one numerical and one single-answer multiple choice questions), five were single-answer multiple choice questions, two were numerical response questions and seven were multi-answer multiple choice questions (therefore, results will not add up to 100%).

Sampling was carried out during the 2014-2015 school year by COGAM Education Group volunteers, who were trained beforehand in order to ensure that sampling would be conducted properly.

Since educational centres are the ones who request the talks, it is impossible to do a probability sampling. Therefore, quota sampling was selected in order to be the most representative as possible. Ultimately, 2,678 students were sampled from 21 educational centres in the Region of Madrid that asked to participate in our talks programme (see student sample description below). 98% of the centres that requested talks are public, with private and semi-private centres making up only 2% of the demand COGAM received.

It is important to point out the commitment participating centres had to teaching respect for sexual and gender diversity, and to take into account the fact that, in some centres, teachers already acted to this end prior to our workshops. It is possible that if we had more centres that currently do not request our talks, the LGBT-phobia levels found in this study might increase.

On the other hand, in order to ensure understanding of the terms found in the survey, it is completed by students at the end of the talk. The concepts students learn will help them to take the survey. Hence, the survey is completed at the end of the class because, on the one hand, students are considerably unaware of such concepts beforehand; and on the other hand, we know that the survey could lead to potential biases.

With reference to the samples of teachers and education experts, a quantitative method was chosen with both closed-ended and open-ended answer items as appropriate. The size of this sample was a total of 30 active teachers from several districts in the Region of Madrid, of which twelve were from counselling departments, ten were teachers of a specific subject, six were form room teachers as well as subject teachers, and two were only form room teachers. As for the participating education experts, ten took part, and this study only shows the results for the seven surveys with greater information. Four are NGO members, two are from the Spanish public administration and one is a specialised prosecutor.

To create the data tables and conduct analyses, Microsoft Office Excel (2007 edition) and R v. 3.2.2 were used.
## Description of sampled students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Region of Madrid 2013/2014 (a)</th>
<th>Research Sample 2014/2015</th>
<th>Research Sample 2012/2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of public school students (Compulsory Secondary Education, GCSE programmes, Vocational/Pre-University).</td>
<td>133,701</td>
<td>5,605 (2)</td>
<td>2,678 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Public school students (Compulsory Secondary Education, GCSE programmes, Vocational/Pre-University).</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4.19%</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Secondary Education Schools</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Secondary Education Schools</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11.40%</td>
<td>6.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Classrooms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Cultural diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of non-Spanish general education students in public schools from nursery school to “ESO” (Compulsory Secondary Education). (b)</td>
<td>101,365</td>
<td>1,328</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% non-Spanish students</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>23.68%</td>
<td>23.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Cultural diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of non-Spanish general education students in public, semi-private and private schools from nursery school to “ESO” (Compulsory Secondary Education). (b)</td>
<td>132,473</td>
<td>1,327</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>24,743</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>19,647</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>16,376</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>7,640</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>6,605</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>6,278</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>5,580</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>5,406</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>3,157</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2,861</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other nationalities</td>
<td>34,180</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% non-Spanish students</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Numbers rounded to the nearest integer.
(b) Nationalities are classified according to citizenship.
### Students by sex at birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGBT-PHOBIA</td>
<td>CYBERBULLYING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females (ESO)</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>49.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males (ESO)</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>50.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGBT-PHOBIA</td>
<td>CYBERBULLYING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of public school students (Compulsory Secondary Education, GCSE programmes, Vocational/Pre-University)</td>
<td>199,620(1)</td>
<td>5,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education), Public Schools</td>
<td>126,731(1)</td>
<td>62.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year, ESO</td>
<td>36,589(1)</td>
<td>18.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year, ESO</td>
<td>33,095(1)</td>
<td>16.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year, ESO</td>
<td>29,969(1)</td>
<td>15.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year, ESO</td>
<td>27,078(1)</td>
<td>13.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCPI (General Certificate of Secondary Education)/FPB (Vocational/Pre-University)</td>
<td>6,970(1)</td>
<td>3.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-University</td>
<td>65,919(1)</td>
<td>33.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not assigned(3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGBT-PHOBIA</td>
<td>CYBERBULLYING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of public school students (Compulsory Secondary Education, GCSE programmes, Vocational/Pre-University)</td>
<td>118,794</td>
<td>5,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>38,019</td>
<td>2,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>9,931</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>38,660</td>
<td>1,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>21,338</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>10,846</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Includes: Three semi-private schools with a total of 638 students; 194 pre-university students and 143 students coming from other education programmes (mostly mid-level vocational training courses).

[2] Students whose legal guardians were born in a foreign country.

[3] Includes other vocational programmes (mostly mid-level vocational training courses).
[4] Includes: One semi-private school with a total of 188 students and 34 students coming from other training programmes.


[B] General Structural Data Repository (DESVAN) Statistics Institute of the Region of Madrid. Data for the City of Madrid and north, south, east and west metropolitan areas.
Results and discussion

1. Students’ sexual orientation and gender identity

1.1 Gender identity

Our sample includes a total of five students who identify as transgender. This represents 0.19% of all individuals included in the sample (see Table 1). These students are: Four transgender boys studying in the first or second cycle of Compulsory Secondary Education (“ESO”) and one transgender girl in the second cycle of ESO (Table 2). We recommend reading the section about students’ gender identity in our research titled “LGBT-phobia in the classroom (2016): Do we teach sexual diversity?” which we presented before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of total cyberbullying sample</th>
<th>First cycle “ESO”</th>
<th>Second cycle “ESO”</th>
<th>Pre-University</th>
<th>Vocational/GCSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Girl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Boy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender Girl</td>
<td>1242</td>
<td>46.43%</td>
<td>50.39%</td>
<td>46.62%</td>
<td>43.41%</td>
<td>9.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender Boy</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>53.38%</td>
<td>49.39%</td>
<td>53.19%</td>
<td>56.59%</td>
<td>90.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2675*</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Percentages representing the cisgender and transgender population in our sample.

Table 2: Breakdown of sample by gender identity and level of study. (*Three surveys were not able to be classified in accordance with the criteria of this table). ¹ First cycle “ESO” corresponds to students aged 12-15, and second cycle “ESO” corresponds to students aged 15-16.

1.2 Sexual Orientation

In the sample considered in this study more than 6% of those surveyed said to be non-heterosexual: more than heterosexual: more than 4% said they were homosexual or bisexual and about 2% chose the option “I don’t
As regards LGB students, this sample is predominated by bisexual girls, followed by gay and bisexual boys, and lastly lesbian girls [Figure 1b].

Figure 1: A) Participating students by sexual orientation. B) Percentage breakdown of sampled LGB students

[Figure 2] shows a downward trend among students who choose the option “I don’t know” in higher levels of education. Accordingly, while 3.49% of students in the first cycle of ESO indicated that they did not know what their sexual orientation was, all pre-university students defined their sexual orientation. The percentage of students that considered themselves heterosexual stood at 93% at all education levels; nonetheless, the percentage of homosexual and bisexual students tended to increase through the school years. It is worth comparing the 3.37% of students in the first cycle of “ESO” to the 6.98% of students in pre-university studies. We recommend reading the section about students’ sexual orientation in our research titled “LGBT-phobia in the classroom (2016): Do we teach sexual diversity?”, which we presented before.
2. Students’ perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

2.1 Overall perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.

More than half of students said to have witnessed LGBT-phobic cyberbullying as a result of being or “looking” LGBT and 8% said they did not know if they had witnessed it [Figure 3A]. Furthermore, 24.11% of students claimed to know someone who has experienced this type of bullying [Figure 3B]

“I’m insulted, called gay, faggot... and I am not. Maybe I seem effeminate, but I don’t know (I don’t think so).”

Comment given by a heterosexual boy in his second-year of vocational school.

---

1 Since neither gender identity nor sexual orientation are observable traits, it is impossible for someone to “look” LGBT. The purpose of using this discourse is that students will respond with all of the cases of LGBT-phobic intolerance they have observed, based on being certain of victims’ orientation or identity or on LGBT-phobic prejudices that may lead to such aggressive acts.
Percentage of students who claim to be victims of this situation is 1.17% (see below). Given the fact that 54.66% have witnessed LGBT-phobic cyberbullying and 24.11% claim to know someone who has experienced it, it is evident that, with one out of every 100 students being affected, many more students who observe or are aware of these aggressive acts taking place are participating in this type of bullying. Also, the difference between these last two figures indicates that the on-line setting is becoming globalised, thus allowing people to witness (and join in) cases of cyberbullying towards people with whom students do not even have a personal relationship. This makes this type of bullying more dangerous. On the other hand, the fact that more than 8% of students claim to not know if they have witnessed this type of situation leads us to believe that these students might not have received sufficient instruction in order to identify situations of abuse on social networks or to distinguish LGBT-phobic abuse from other types of abuse.

In the analysis done by educational cycle [Figure 4], the number of witnesses is seen to increase significantly further along the considered years of education, and as a result, there is a downward trend in the percentage of students who have not witnessed it. There are not significant differences between the percentages of students who marked the “I don’t know” option. From this, it can be deduced that greater baggage and access to social networks leads to more experiences that demonstrate sexual orientation and gender identity-related bullying through social networks. This suggests that this phenomenon may even be more frequent than what the overall results indicate. Vocational/pre-university students in this case are situated at a middle point between the first and second cycles of “ESO”.

![Figure 4: Students who have witnessed cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.](image-url)

It is certain that LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is a reality known and observed by secondary education students and is one of the new faces of LGBT-phobic intolerance that must be addressed by the education community.

This is how a student described it to us “On many social networks (Twitter, YouTube, etc.) I have seen people picking on someone only because they look or are LGBT...” (Boy. Heterosexual. Third year, “ESO”)

2.2 The on-line environment of LGBT students. Perception of cyberbullying.

The percentage of LGB students that have seen LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is higher than that of heterosexual students, at practically 70% (68.52% > 54.76%) [Figure 5], which goes to prove the idea that this phenomenon could be more frequent than what all students taken together believe to be true.

![Figure 5: Students who claim to have seen acts of cyberbullying towards LGBT people, broken down by sexual orientation.](image)

There are no significant differences between LGB witnesses of cyberbullying, whether they are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Thus, it is possible that all of them share a cyberspace with similar LGBT-phobia levels, or that bullying is equally evident online for all groups [Figure 6]. Among trans* students considered in this sample, three out of five students have witnessed cyberbullying, while two claim to have not. The fact that LGB students witness these events could mean new ways of internalising prejudice and LGBT-phobia by gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans* students.

![Figure 6: Students who claim to have seen acts of cyberbullying towards LGBT people, broken down by sexual orientation.](image)
Furthermore, it is noted that the percentage of LGB students that know people who have suffered bullying on social networks for being or “looking” LGBT is greater than that of heterosexual students [Figure 7]. This also would support the idea that LGBT-phobic bullying could be more frequent than what is indicated by the overall results.

Figure 7: Students who know someone who has experienced LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, broken down by sexual orientation.

3. LGBT students in the Region of Madrid. Victims of cyberbullying.

The overall prevalence of bullying among students varies from one country to another, and in Spain, there are different figures depending on the autonomous region in which the study is carried out (Giménez, 2015). On the national level, this prevalence is estimated to be around 13% (INTECO, 2013); Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 2014). As stated before, in our study slightly more than one out of every one hundred students who were surveyed (1.17%) claimed to have been a victim of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.

For this type of cyberbullying, the greater percentage of victims we registered is within the second cycle of ESO, followed by vocational students, and to a lesser extent in the first cycle of ESO and pre-university studies [Figure 8]. Nonetheless, no significant trends or differences were noted between the percentages, which suggests that victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying could experience this type of abuse regardless of their current level of study. These results coincide with the empirical evidence obtained from previous studies (Gimenez, 2015). Although some studies indicate that there are higher levels of cyberbullying in the middle stage of adolescence (12-15 years of age) (Garaigordobil, 2011; Kowalski and Limber, 2007; Tokunaga, 2010), others show that bullying among peers also occurs among university students (Baldasare, Bauman, Goldman and Robie, 2012; Schenk and Fremouw, 2012). Still, the forms of cyberbullying and its consequences varies in all cases (Smith et al, 2008).
Just as in the case of non-virtual, LGBT-phobic school bullying (COGAM, 2016a), in our sample the percentage of boys suffering LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is slightly higher than that of girls [Figure 9A]. 60% of victims’ opinions in this study are from males [Figure 9B]. The influence of gender on cyberbullying is a variable in which contradictory results were obtained in previous studies. In Giménez’s (2015) study of this issue, it is mentioned that some research either indicates that boys are the main protagonists in the various roles, or highlights the role of girls as victims or as perpetrators of cyberbullying, while other research has not found such differences. In our study, gender is an influential variable for one to experience cyberbullying. As analysed below, this is because gender leaves adolescent women exposed to a different degree than it does adolescent males given the interaction with sexual orientation and gender bias.

If we analyse the percentage of victims among LGB students that specifically experience this type of cyberbullying, the previous figures become much less diluted and we can affirm that 15% of LGB students suffer cyberbullying as a result of their sexual orientation, somewhat higher than the percentage indicated by studies on cyberbullying for the overall national population (INTECO, 2013; State Ministry of the Interior, 2014). Although significantly less,
there is a certain probability of being heterosexual and an LGBT-victim for “looking” LGBT as a result of the bully’s own impressions. Proof of this is a comment given by a student “They pick on me because I look that way, but I’m not. They show me loads of homophobic gestures”. The difference in the percentage of victims between heterosexual students and LGB students clearly shows how this type of bullying is specifically directed to LGB students. Thus, what is also clear is how LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is one specific type of the multiple forms that intolerance and hate take on the Internet. In practical terms, 45% of victims’ opinions in this study correspond to heterosexual students with 52% corresponding to LGB students and 3% for students who do not define their sexual orientation.

Figure 10: Breakdown of cyberbullying victims by sexual orientation. A) Over total heterosexual/LGB in the sample. B) Over total victims.

Following a pattern similar to that of on-site school bullying (COGAM, 2016a), from a descriptive point of view, higher percentages of victims are identified among LGB boys compared to girls, which suggests that gender stereotypes and prejudices might play a role as well in LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. [Figure 11] Gay students in this sample were attacked more often, followed by bisexual boys, lesbian girls and bisexual girls.

Figure 11. Cyberbullying victims by sexual orientation over total lesbian, gay and bisexual boys and girls in the sample.

It is particularly significant that, while being only 0.19% of this sample, trans* students who experienced cyberbullying were only 6.45% of victims [Figure 12]. These figures, just as in the
case of non-virtual bullying, indicate that there is a bias in the way cyberbullies choose their victims, with a strong tendency to inflict this type of attacks on people whose identity does not correspond to the cisgender group.

Only 35.5% of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying victims indicated that they know another person who also experiences it [Figure 13], while practically 50% of victims did not know anyone else who shared their situation. It is likely that this last figure is undervalued and could reach 64.52% since 16.13% of victims indicated that they know only one person who has suffered this situation (probably a male or female). Experiencing this abuse in solitude is one characteristic shared with non-virtual LGBT-phobic bullying (COGAM-FELGTB, 2012).

4. Relationship between bullies and their victims.

Are cyberbullies people who have a personal relationship with victims in real life? Is cyberbullying a means of spreading on-site LGBT-phobic bullying to students’ personal environment? These questions will be addressed in this section.
4.1 Personal relationship between bullies and their victims

As mentioned earlier, the percentage of witnesses among students is greater than the percentage of students that claimed to know someone who is or “looks” LGBT and experiences cyberbullying because of it. This suggests that a considerable percentage of witnesses sees situations of abuse on social networks towards people with whom they do not have an interpersonal relationship. This presents LGBT-phobic bullying on the Internet as a complex phenomenon in which both people close to victims and complete strangers might be involved.

As referenced by the opinion of students claiming to know someone who experiences LGBT-phobic cyberbullying and that responded to this question (22.5% of the total sample) [Figure 14A], it can be noted that there is a significant difference between students who believe that bullies are people from bullied students’ immediate social-academic environment and students who believe bullies are strangers. **72.31% of students recognise bullies in their immediate environment**, twice as many as those students who stated that bullies are strangers. **Regardless of students’ current level of studies**, the opinion on the relationship between bullies and bullied students shows no significant differences [Figure 15]. Therefore, we can presume that it is more common for there to be a personal relationship between victims and cyberbullies and this interpersonal relationship is probably the starting point for the bullying in which other people could later participate.

If we analyse the multiple answer combinations of students who recognise bullies in their social-academic environment [Figure 14B], we find that **72.5% of these students** (52.4% of students who responded to this question) recognise cyberbullies within their own school. This demonstrates that LGBT-phobic cyberbullying affecting students in the Region of Madrid is, in many cases, a form of bullying between school students and thus the responsibility of the entire education community. An example of this is the experience of a bisexual boy in the second year of ESO: “I have experienced this type of abuse. Two days ago, a classmate of mine in this class picked on me on Ask”. But cyberbullies do not only exist in schools: 27.52% of students indicate that there are also cyberbullies who live in the same area as their victims but are not registered in the same school. It is possible that the school bullying that once was limited to schools may also be getting students from other nearby schools involved through new technologies. In this case, it is fitting to propose that measures taken to address this issue should not be limited only to decisions taken by schools but rather be extended to schools working together in the same town and be coordinated based in inspections of each territorial area.
If we analyse the multiple answer combinations for students who know only one LGBT-phobic cyberbullied victim and who answered this question (13.55% of the total sample), we can affirm that cyberbullying is a phenomenon that is more complex than on-site school bullying. This affirmation is based on the fact that 37.58% of these students indicate that bullying situations exist in which bullies from victims’ environment participate with others with whom victims do not have any relationship and that 20.26% of opinions we received show that bullying may come exclusively from people outside students’ immediate environment. In other words, bullying is expanding and may even go beyond the school bullying environment, with the inclusion of adults who introduce and widen channels of ideological hatred among minors.
The idea that, in a considerable number of cases, bullying through new technologies is related to victims’ non-virtual environment is further supported by our analysis of victims’ opinions. Thus, [Figure 17] shows how 82.14% of students who identify as cyberbullying victims in this study indicate that cyberbullies are part of their own social-academic environment.

According to the above, the existence of an interpersonal relationship between cyberbullied students and their cyberbullies seems to be the general trend in most cases. Nonetheless, this does not always imply that there is a situation of on-site (non-virtual) school bullying that is caused by or the result of cyberbullying, as indicated below.

4.2 Relationship between LGBT-phobic on-site school bullying and cyberbullying

Our analysis of the opinions of students who know people who suffer cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT [Figure 18] shows that, when asked about if the reason bullies perpetrate this type of abuse on social networks could be attributed to the fact that they also commit similar acts in person, only 20.5% of these students agreed with this statement. Something similar occurs when considering victims’ opinions (19.35%) or even the opinions of bullies (25%), whom we will discuss in greater detail in later sections.
It could be reasoned that these percentages are reduced by the opinions of students who may have seen cases in which cyberbullies are not part of victims’ immediate environment. Nonetheless, if we consider the opinions of students who know only one person who has suffered cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT, organising them based on their answers about the cyberbully-victim relationship [Figure 19], we can see that, although most of those who recognise cyberbullies within their high school agree that there is a correlation with on-site bullying, in general, few students agree with this notion.

Based on this, we see that identifying LGBT-phobic cyberbullying has an added difficulty, as practically in 70%-80% of cases students do not consider that cyberbullying coincides with situations of on-site bullying. Furthermore, we deduce that students that personally would not have this type of LGBT-phobic behaviours on the Internet are finding a group of circumstances (which are explained in section 6. Individual bases that sustain LGBT-phobic cyberbullying) that cause them to act aggressively towards sexual orientation and gender identity diversity.
5. Ways and forms of LGBT-phobic bullying in on-line environments of students in the Region of Madrid

5.1 Frequency and duration of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

When analysing the opinions of students who claim to have witnessed LGBT-phobic cyberbullying in regard to its duration, it is noted that 31% consider that bullying through social networks goes on for months [Figure 20]. The same percentage of students claims that this abuse occurs mostly in periods of short duration (i.e., days). However, if we analyse the opinion of students who, in addition to having witnessed it, can adequately provide information both about the duration and the frequency of these situations (16.54% on the total sample), we see a drastic change in these numbers, with a reduction in the percentage of those who choose the option “days” to only 4.51% and an increase in the percentages that refer to months or years of duration [Figure 21A]. This suggests that in cyberspace isolated abuse is commonly seen towards people who are or “look” LGBT based on aggressors’ prejudices. But given the short time in which abuse takes place, it is difficult to catalogue this abuse under the term “cyberbullying”, as the main definitions indicate that cyberbullying must be repeated and continuous actions over time (Olweus, 1999; Smith et al, 2008; INTECO, 2009).

![Figure 20: Duration of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying based on the opinions of surveyed students who have witnessed this type of abuse.](image)

If we put aside students’ opinions in general and refer to the results of students who provide more data regarding this topic, we can say that LGBT-phobic cyberbullying has, in almost 50% of cases seen by students, a duration of 2 to 12 months. The second most frequent case of bullying is that which goes on for years, as we were told by a heterosexual student in her second year of ESO: “... I have seen how people have been humiliated for being LGBT. They are insulted, and that hurts. A person even had to go to therapy because of the insults that lasted more than a year.” The last case is that which lasts for some weeks [Figure 21A], an example of which is the following comment from the survey of a heterosexual boy: “I had a friend in the first year of ESO four years ago and they bullied him and cyberbullied him for being LGBT. It lasted for two weeks and could have carried on longer until some friends of his helped him and stopped the bullies.”

As for how frequent this happens [Figure 21B], almost 55% of these students stated that incidents of bullying repeat several times a week. Behind them, 34% of students indicated
that, although it does not happen every week, bullying happens once a month or more. Lastly, 11% said that these incidents repeat on several occasions throughout the year.

Figure 21: A) Duration and B) frequency of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying based on the opinions of surveyed students who have witnessed this type of abuse and are familiar with both data.

By combining these data (frequency and duration), we can represent the types of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying most frequently seen by students [Figure 22]. In the forms of cyberbullying that last the longest (years and months), we can see that students who chose answers indicating a greater frequency dominate. In other words, cyberbullying prolonged over time tends to be, in general, very intensive, regular or frequent. This situation could generate long-term and exhausting suffering in students as attacks continue closely within each other.

Figure 22: How long and often cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying witnessed by students occur. The arrows indicate the predominance of high-frequency sub-types. D: Duration. F: Frequency.

5.2. Forms of cyberbullying and means used by cyberbullies

In this section, we will try to take a close look at the ways cyberbullies attempt to humiliate and denigrate their victims, and at the means used to this end.

As for the types of shame tactics most often witnessed by students that answered as having seen cyberbullying [Figure 23]: 70% of surveyed students agree that messages with insulting content are the form of bullying that is most commonly seen by students in the Region of
Madrid. Second to these messages were attacks carried out through photographs or images meant to humiliate and denigrate victims; or through impersonating victims’ identities, with bullies passing for their victims on social networks in order to humiliate them. A heterosexual student in the first year of pre-university studies tells how a friend of hers has experienced this type of cyberbullying: “My best friend is gay and uploaded pictures on Instagram with his boyfriend, and people at school started to do screen shots of the pictures and send them to everyone, insulting them.” The third most frequent shame tactic is recorded videos with which bullies attempt to shame or attack bullied students.

If we analyse the combinations of the multi-answer responses given by students who know only one LGBT-phobic cyberbullying victim and answered this question (28% of the total sample) we can see that 56% of cases described by these students consisted of only one type of bullying taking place [Figure 24A], mostly through insulting messages (51.49%). Nonetheless, 44% of reported cases show the existence of numerous types of bullying, namely insulting messages combined with impersonating the bullied individual’s identity and denigrating photographs or images [Figure B].

In regards to the previously mentioned mediums most frequently used by bullies to attack and humiliate their victims, students who respond as having witnessed cyberbullying (67.03%)

---

**Figure 23.** Types of LGBT-phobic shame tactics most often seen by students on social networks.

**Figure 24.** A) Forms of bullying that coincide with the cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying seen by students who know only one victim. B) Breakdown of combined forms of cyberbullying.
indicated that the **medium most frequently used** are **social networks** like Facebook, Tuenti or Twitter [Figure 25]. Several comments given by students show that social networks are a normal medium for perpetrating acts of LGBT-phobic bullying: “I have seen cases of homophobic bullying in my own class, and also on Twitter, but I believe that it can be avoided”, “It was a boy who was effeminate and his “friends” started to pick on him with insinuations on Twitter”. The **second** most frequently used mediums are **instant messaging** applications. These include Whatsapp, Line, Telegram, Messenger, Skype, Kik or Ask, which are the mediums on which this type of situations are seen most frequently. Once again, students commented on LGBT-phobic cyberbullying through messaging applications: “One of the guys that I know, who is gay, posted it on Ask. A few days later, he started to receive offensive questions, people telling him that being gay was “disgusting”, that he was inferior...”, “I know a guy who was in my class before. In the beginning, classmates picked on him calling him a faggot without knowing his sexual orientation. When this guy came out to me and to the class... on Whatsapp and other social networks they would send pictures in which he appeared acting like a woman and they would comment on them. ... Nowadays, people still comment on those pictures”. **Next**, we found **blogs** (e.g., Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest) and **video websites** (e.g., YouTube or Google videos) as online spaces where sexual orientation and gender identity-related bullying takes place. **Lastly**, we found other mediums, such as calls or text messages (SMS), were used less often by bullies.

This classification of mediums is also analysed by Giménez (2015). After reviewing previous research, Giménez indicates that the mediums most used by cyberbullies are social networks. Furthermore, she points out the serious damage caused to victims, as they are currently one of the tools most used by adolescents to define their social relationships. Thus, they are a very important psycho-social space for them. Giménez also states that messaging applications are another medium through which cyberbullying is frequently carried out, owing to the fact that its simultaneousness allows bullies to contact their victims directly.

If we analyse the multi-answer response combinations of students who have a relationship with only one victim of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying and responded to this question (11.6% of the total sample), we see that just as with the forms of bullying, the **mediums through which**
these attacks are inflicted are very diverse and may be combined [Figure 26]. 61% of cases reported by students point out combinations of several mediums. The most frequent ones are: messaging applications, social networks and the previously mentioned blogs. All this adds uncertainty about the form and medium through which LGBT-phobic cyberbullying will be expressed the next time around. This is something that may increase the anguish felt by minors who experience it and puts forth another obstacle to addressing and detecting it. Therefore, teaching minors to denounce these situations may be one of the best, if not the only, means of nipping this serious and evasive problem in the bud.

Figure 26. A) Mediums used in the LGBT-phobic cyberbullying seen by students who know only one victim. B) Breakdown of medium combinations

In the analysis of observed shame tactics by education level [Figure 27] no major differences are seen between the cycles of ESO or in pre-university studies. Nonetheless, a slight downward trend was noticed in terms of the answers “impersonation of victims’ identity” and “I don’t know”, which could explain the apparent upward trend in “insulting messages”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational education</th>
<th>First cycle of “ESO”</th>
<th>Second cycle of “ESO”</th>
<th>Pre-university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>27,14%</td>
<td>14,31%</td>
<td>12,20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonation</td>
<td>14,29%</td>
<td>27,44%</td>
<td>22,31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliating videos</td>
<td>17,14%</td>
<td>11,74%</td>
<td>13,11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humiliating photographs and images</td>
<td>30,00%</td>
<td>24,96%</td>
<td>25,95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulting messages</td>
<td>54,29%</td>
<td>69,42%</td>
<td>71,96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of the mediums used [Figure 28], when we compared the various school cycles, we were able to see that the frequency of students seeing LGBT-phobic cyberbullying on messaging applications followed a significant downward trend. This trend may be explained by the strong upward trend that can be seen in the case of those who put down the “social networks” answer, and by the fact that as students advance through education levels, the number of students who claim to be unaware of mediums through which cyberbullying takes place tends to decrease. Furthermore, a significant upward trend is noticed in how often students see cyberbullying on video websites. These occurrences seem to be observed equally on blogs or through phone calls or SMS messages throughout the school years.

The differences found in this sense may be the result of the chronological order in which the considered new technologies and services appeared. Thus, older students might prefer the use of social networks and video websites, which appeared before most messaging applications (Spanish Ministry of the Interior, 2014; García, López de Ayala and Catalina, 2013) while students in lower levels of study might tend to use messaging applications. Thus, the prevention measures used to avoid these situations must be specifically directed to students’ ages and to how they normally use ICTs.

6. Individual bases that support LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.

The phenomenon of cyberbullying is highly linked to school bullying, and is starting to be addressed as a digital extension of it since, on many occasions, it facilitates contact beforehand between bullies and their victims (Luengo, 2011). Still, as it is proposed in this study, cyberbullying goes beyond its confines as students who are from outside the same school are often involved. Furthermore, according to Calmaestra (2011), cyberbullying implies dimensions that exceed traditional bullying, such as impersonating someone’s social “self” and, above all, the possibility of protection by remaining anonymous on the Internet. Calmaestra suggests that if young people expose too much private information, it leads to the uninhibited conduct of other young people using this information in an aggressive manner.
In our particular case, we focus on the type of cyberbullying that is based on LGBT-phobic motives to direct attacks. What is maintaining on-line bullying towards LGBT people? In cyberbullying, aggressors are people with low cognitive empathy, even lower than in traditional bullying (Calmaestra, 2011). In other words, they have a hard time putting themselves in the place of others and identifying how their conduct will have an effect on their victims’ feelings.

For LGBT-phobic attacks, the lack of empathy is the main cause. When LGBT people are identified as strangers, they may then be treated as an object that can be dominated and controlled (Borrillo, 2001). Both situations become the same insofar as maintaining LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is concerned; the depersonalisation that comes with having no empathy on Internet networks and using homophobia as a domination process.

6.1 The individual behaviour of students before cyberbullying situations toward LGBT classmates.

However, as we were able to see in the results of the study, the percentage of students that we consider to be bullies was 1% [Figure 29]. These low results match the low number of students claiming to participate in bullying that we saw in the study carried out by COGAM in 2016 (“LGBT-fobia en las aulas 2016: ¿Educamos en la diversidad afectivo-sexual?” [“LGBT-phobia in the classroom (2016). Do we teach sexual diversity?”]). Still, as mentioned in this report, the existence of a few bullies is enough to turn the educational environment into a hostile space for LGBT people (Generelo, 2006). Schools become governed by the laws of a few individuals over the majority of students.

This minority feels supported by the total number of witnesses who do not initiate attacks but support them. This is 6% of students who, with their support but not their participation, are reinforcing bullying behaviour. Since the nature of participation on on-line social networks varies, it is difficult to quantify the non-participation of this group of students. We do consider not adding comments to a picture but sharing it with the comments made by bullies as participating in acts of bullying. But students do not have this notion. For them, sharing a picture or comment, or “liking” does not mean that the bullying continues since they were not the ones who started it (Kowalski, 2008). We can even point out that, according to managed levels of prevalence, most of those involved are not aware of how serious their participation is and that they are supporting a situation of cyberbullying (Kowalski, 2008). This is how a heterosexual student in her second year of ESO described it, upon realising after the talk that she was helping to discriminate: “So, when I saw that other people were being discriminated for looking or being LGBT, the only thing I did was laugh and not defend them, and I should have done something about it, because by not saying anything, I become one of those who discriminates in some way against these people.”

As in traditional bullying, the fact that there are witnesses who do not help bully victims but also do not denounce or criticise the situation is extremely important. In this case, we saw that almost half of students (41%) were witnesses to acts of cyberbullying and that, even though they did not agree with it, did not act to prevent it from continuing to occur [Figure
Studies carried out on cyberbullying (Orjuela, 2014) show that witness participation is vital for cyberbullying to continue or end.

There are other factors to bear in mind when it comes to LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. The normalisation of homophobia in society (Pichardo, 2009) prevents people from recognising LGBT-phobic attacks. Therefore, these attacks are seen as something traditional and not as a real attack. Proof of this is the fact that only 54% of students who identify as homosexual or bisexual react by defending a situation that by extension stigmatises LGBT people [Figure 30]. This phenomenon, known as the “horizon of insult”, was also evident in our study on LGBT-phobia in the classroom (COGAM, 2016a). This perception of LGBT-phobic insults as being normal probably is in response to the little defence put up by heterosexual students (33%), and to the fact that only half of LGB students defend anyone being insulted.

If we consider the “stigma contagion” notion (Goffman, 1986) applied to LGBT-phobic attacks (Pichardo, 2009), we can also understand why few students act to defend their classmates. The fear of being the target of attacks is higher in the case of cyberbullying, where minors feel an increase sense of defencelessness. This is how a heterosexual student in his third year of ESO explained this fear of this “contagion”: “If you defend them, you are called the same thing”. Another example is the attack that a heterosexual student in her third year of ESO suffered as a result of this “contagion”: “One time, I was walking with a lesbian friend of mine and some other guys came up and started to insult her for being a lesbian and me for being her friend. They then tried to hit us...” Attacks happen at any time and come from any part of social networks. And attackers see themselves with greater impunity by being protected by the anonymity on the Internet or in their group (Garaigordobil, 2011).

Therefore, ideas like the normalisation of homophobia and fear of the stigma contagion are evident in LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, as they are in traditional bullying. This is evidenced by the fact that the reaction to defend is mitigated (32%) between heterosexual students and only half of homosexual and bisexual students (54%) [Figure 30].
It is important to mention the stance taken by girls as defenders compared to boys. 26% of boys claim to “defend” people suffering LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, while 42% of girls (almost double) say they defend such people [Figure 31]. Males were more susceptible to fears of catching the stigma, as we mentioned before. Boys who are developing their masculine identity come to reject what is feminine and homosexual (Kimmel, 1997; Connell, 2003), since homosexuality is perceived and assimilated as a type of sexuality that is closer to femininity than to masculinity (Penna, 2012). Several comments given by female students that took part in this study show the supportive and defensive stance they have taken in situations of bullying against LGBT individuals: “I knew a homosexual boy whom everyone picked on and I was one of the few that helped him”; “The truth is that these issues help you to not go down the bad path. I’m not a lesbian, but I would defend this wholeheartedly because I do not agree with bullying” “I know many people who are picked on, but I always try to help and defend them.”

In the 2013 and 2016a COGAM studies on homophobia and LGBT-phobia in classrooms, it was concluded that male students show increased levels of LGBT-phobia, with female students providing a less toxic environment and defending their LGBT classmates more. This goes against the impression that there are not clear data that demonstrates that males are cyberbullies more often than women (Gairgordobil, 2011). Nonetheless, as we can see in [Figure 31], it does seem that there is a gender difference as regards LGBT-phobia. We can comprehend that women have more awareness in terms of LGBT equality, and that can be seen in specific acts of bullying due to this issue.
As we see in Figure 32, in the second education cycle, the number of defenders goes down while the number of dissenting witnesses goes up. This helps to explain the increased number of victims in [Figure 32]. In pre-university studies, we see that students defend more actively and do not remain silent if they do not agree. This trend coincides with other studies (Calmaestra, 2011; Gairigordobil, 2011) in which growing access to and knowledge of new information and communication technologies have an influence, along with later personality matureness and on-line social network usage.
6.2 Anonymity and the lack of control felt by teachers, families and web administrators.

This study attempted to assess the influence of anonymity, the lack of control of family members and teachers and the lack of control of web administrators as aspects that facilitate LGBT-related cyberbullying.

The low percentage of students who chose one of these three possibilities [Figure 33] is surprising. This could mean we need to consider that they may think that there are other stronger causes when carrying out acts of this specific type of cyberbullying. Another possibility is that, as this type of bullying is not frequent, most students are unaware of the circumstances that cause it to happen. Nonetheless, these results hold if we specifically analyse the opinions of students who have a personal relationship with one victim of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying (results are not shown). Despite this, the bibliography of previous studies done on this subject show that anonymity and lack of control are very relevant to the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

It is important to mention that anonymity is an element singled out by a number of studies as a facilitator of cyberbullying (Avilés y col, 2011; Spanish Child Defender, 2011; INTECO, 2012). Avilés (2011) points out that anonymity makes it less costly for attackers to carry out their intentions because they are not exposed to the rest of the group of their peers or adults when they attack their victims since they can remain anonymous while doing so. He also indicates that, with new technologies and easy access to the virtual world, it is easier for both attackers and witnesses to not empathise with victims because, as Canalda (2011) explains, virtual tools make “the barrier of the other’s look disappear”. This makes it possible for the attacker to remain anonymous and dehumanises his or her victim.

Another very important element is the role played by families and schools as the main educators of minors and those legally responsible for them. For these educators, knowing how to address and prevent school bullying in all of its forms is a challenge. Proof of this is the fact that, despite all the legal progress made and all state and municipal initiatives carried out to prevent bullying in recent years (campaigns, action protocols, school harmony observation, etc.) the reality of bullying and violence experienced by minors in classrooms has not changed (Avilés et al, 2011). Therefore, the education community needs to be more involved in developing efficient educational measures that also include both victims’ and bullies’ families (Avilés et al, 2011). It is necessary to emphasise the role of families in parenting, since they have more resources to differentiate risk situations in the world of cyberspace (Fierro, 2012); as well as the need for raising the awareness of minors about how serious this abuse is since, on many occasions, families consider it to be something normal among people of the same school age (Llaneza, 2012). As for schools, the legal framework in force dictates that families are able to take corrective measures against cyberbullying. The only way for these measures to be efficient and effective is by having a prevention and action protocol (Represa, 2012).
6.3 Visibility, stereotypes and gender.

Around 50% of students consider that prejudice against LGBT students and gender stereotypes are two of the bases for cyberbullying behaviour toward LGBT students, since, as seen in [Figure 34], students more often answered “Because being LGBT is believed to be wrong” (53%), followed by “Because they act effeminately” (43%). These results hold if we analyse the opinion of students who have a personal relationship with a victim of LGBT-phobic bullying (results are not shown).

The belief that being LGBT is wrong is a very well-established prejudice among students, as previous studies point out the prevalence of several LGBT-phobic biases such as those based on the belief that “being LGBT is a choice, unnatural, a mental or social deviation”, etc. (COGAM, 2006), which have a directly proportional relationship with the frequency of LGBT-phobic behaviours (COGAM, 2013 and 2016a).

These biases are also evident in many comments given by surveyed students:

“Gays are unnatural. You can’t adopt or get married. Strange. Disgusting. It’s a disease.” Heterosexual boy in the third year of ESO.

“My opinion and ideology is totally unchangeable and radical. I don’t care what they do with their lives. I only ask that they don’t go around spreading it...” Heterosexual boy in the fourth year of ESO.
“I like the opposite sex and when I see a [illegible] and another [illegible], it bothers me because I think it is disgusting, but everyone is different and you have to accept them.” Heterosexual boy in the third year of ESO.

45% of students claimed that “sissyphobia” (defined as the rejection of people who do not fulfil conventional gender stereotypes associated with their biological sex) is what causes cyberbullying towards LGBT people. This suggests that, just as with non-virtual LGBT-phobic bullying (COGAM, 2016), confusion between the concepts of gender and sexual identity could lie under the LGBT-phobic behaviour of some cyberbullies.

Comments given by students show how “sissyphobia” is a factor that explains LGBT-phobic behaviour:

“Last year people from class picked on a boy because he did ballet, and they said he was “gay”, and at school, the same thing happened: there were two or three boys who did rhythmic gymnastics and danced; and they were picked on and had to quit it because of all the insults, taunting, being socially marginalised...” Heterosexual girl in the third year of ESO.

“A friend of mine is called gay because he hangs out with girls. He doesn’t like football, and the boys always or almost always play football. That’s why he is with girls.” Heterosexual girl in the second year of ESO.

“Many times I see people calling (him) “faggot, fag...” They even call me that. But it’s because of stereotypes, because they think that if you are LGBT, you have to act a certain way, if you act that way, you must be LGBT.” Heterosexual boy in the third/fourth year of Diversified Studies.

The graph shows that, in turn, the visibility of LGBT individuals, either real (“Because he came out in class”), fictitious (“Because, even though they don’t say it, we all know they are LGBT”) or perceived as such on-line (“Because they talk about LGBT issues on social networks”), is selected to a lesser degree by students. Nonetheless, cyberbullying among classmates is only one of the possible forms of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying (among witnesses, only 52.4% stated that classmates are the ones who bully (section 4.1)). Thus, the importance of this figure could be undervalued if we consider the overall opinion. This is demonstrated by the opinions below of classmates who claimed to be bullies.
Figure 34. The stances taken by students on the idea that on-line visibility and LGBT-phobic and gender stereotypes are one of the causes of LGBT-phobic bullying

It is important to point out that there are differences in opinion when analysing the responses given by students who match the condition of bullies and those who match the condition of victims [Figure 35].

Students that match the role of victims continue to emphasise biases toward LGBT people (74%) and also consider that other students’ assumptions about someone’s being LGBT is the second cause of acts of bullying, either on-line (43%) or not (67%). When bullied students expect to be rejected, it causes them to be afraid of coming out of the closet, leading them to hide their orientation or gender identity. This cancels out the natural expression of their sexual feelings and experiences, and forces them to be inhibited (COGAM, 2013).

Students that match the role of bullies also emphasise biases (50% toward LGBT and 44% in gender biases). This further demonstrates that LGBT biases are connected to the overstepping of gender roles, and share a sexist conception about sexuality, which is reflected in students who bully. The third cause of acts of cyberbullying that is pointed out is the real visibility of LGBT people (37.50%). This corroborates the findings of previous studies on the fact that students that come out of the closet suffer more LGBT-phobic attacks than those who do not (USA School Climate in America: From Teasing to Torment, GLENN, 2005; COGAM, 2016a). Although this last figure is low, it is important to remember that this is probably a result of the low percentage of LGBT students who come out of the closet (COGAM, 2013 and 2016a), as well as the fact that if there were more students who openly recognised their sexual orientation or gender identity, the percentage of students choosing this option could increase.
The following graph shows gender differences regarding the overall opinion of students [Figure 36]. Female students, irrespective of their sexual orientation, were seen to put less emphasis on “camp” behaviour as a cause of cyberbullying, particularly in the case of lesbian girls. In this case, it may be evidence of the non-recognition suffered by lesbian women, generated by hetero-patriarchal values (Gimeno, 2003; Platero, 2005; Maroto, 2013). This discrimination against women not only leads to women denying their sexuality but also to their rejection of “camp” behaviour, as both lesbianism and masculine behaviour in females (in other words, acting camp) has historically been regarded as defying the hetero-normative sex-gender system and male supremacy (Maroto, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that it may be related to the internalising of sexist values by lesbian women, openly exhibiting their sexual orientation and camp behaviour to a lesser degree. This also seems to be evidence of the fact that, based on hetero-patriarchal values, feminising men is more punished than masculinising women (COGAM, 2005, 2013 and 2016a).
We can see that as students get older, there is greater acceptance of openly LGBT individuals within the school environment [Figure 37], since as they move on to higher education cycles, the percentage of answers reduces as they consider that coming out of the closet could potentially be the cause of cyberbullying.

Conversely, in each higher cycle, students’ opinions that being perceived as openly LGBT on-line or in school is a cause of cyberbullying increase. Still, being perceived as openly LGBT was not considered by pre-university students as important compared to other proposed possibilities, especially in the case of being perceived as only LGBT on-line.
7. Reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying and its environment.

Family and teachers have very important roles within cyberbullying, as they have a basic function to ensure the security of adolescents and other young people, along with the police. Furthermore, they are basic agents in their socialisation, a process by which people become aware of their rules, values, attitudes and beliefs (Arnett, 1995; Maccoby, 2007; Grusec and Hastings, 2007). All of these help them form their identity and acquire certain roles within society.

A fundamental part of each person’s identity is formed through his or her sexuality. From a very early age, children create a description of themselves, in which their sexuality is very important, since we are born with sexual organs (Millar and González, 2001). We must remember that sexuality cannot be reduced to genitalia or sexual practices alone. Sex is culturally translated in a gender which carries a series of rules, values, traits and behaviours that are acquired and transmitted through socialisation, especially within the family and classroom settings (Penna, 2012).

Therefore, it is important to assess whether students trust in these socialisation agents as people to whom they can resort for help in cases of sexual orientation or gender identity-related cyberbullying, along with what reaction they can expect from these agents if they experience it.

7.1. Reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying.

If we notice the opinions of students regarding their reaction to being victims of cyberbullying [Figure 38], more than half (54%) trust their parents and would go to them for help. Almost a third would tell the police (28%) and only one out of every five (21%) would go to a teacher to ask for help. This last figure seems to indicate that students to not trust or feel supported by teachers. They would rather go to their parents or the police, probably because they had already seen a lack of support or a lack of resources and abilities in teachers in order to act against cyberbullying. Only 8% would not say anything, an encouraging result that seems to indicate that the majority of surveyed students does not favour “suffering in silence” and seems to be aware that, in situations of bullying, the best thing to do is report it or tell family. It is important to point out that 24% of students would not know who to go to if they experienced LGBT-phobic bullying. Thus, it is fitting to question whether more information is required on these matters. Furthermore, only 21% of students would report cyberbullying to web administrators. This shows the need for demanding increased awareness of mechanisms available on social networks and other on-line applications for this purpose.
If we look at the breakdown by education cycle [Figure 39], results indicate a decline in students’ trust toward their families (62.2% in the first cycle, compared to 44% in pre-university studies) and especially in teachers (29.61% in the first cycle, compared to 8% in pre-university studies) as students go on through their schooling. Similarly, their trust in the police grows (27% in the first cycle would tell police, compared to 44% in pre-university studies).

Therefore, it seems that trust in traditional protection figures (for students, parents and teachers set the highest example of order, are authority figures or occupy a higher position in their own hierarchy) is substituted by trust in an institutional authority figure, the police. This change of opinion may be caused by the awareness that students get, as they get older and mature, that they are entering an adult world with new rules and authority figures (Papilla, Wends and Dusking, 1984). Another possible explanation is the influence that cyberbullying and on-line security workshops conducted in schools by police have. There is also an upward trend of students who are not reporting LGBT-phobic cyberbullying if they are victims of such as they go through education cycles. This is alarming because it may be attributed to the fact that they perceive increased helplessness based on previous experiences.
As for the answers given by students in terms of their sexual orientation [Figure 40], 56% of heterosexual students would go to their parents or guardians for help if they were victims of cyberbullying, while only 39% of LGB people and 39% of those questioning their sexuality would do it. Based on the data obtained, **heterosexual students may be surer about getting their family’s help while non-heterosexual individuals have more doubts in this respect.** Other studies call attention to the difficulty LGBT students have to tell their families about bullying for fears of being rejected when telling them about their sexual orientation (Generelo and Pichardo, 2006). Heterosexual students also trust the police more than LGB and questioning students. On the other hand, **LGB students are those who most often would choose to report cyberbullying to administrators of the relevant pages or social networks.** This is possibly due to the fact that this mechanism allows them to remain anonymous and avoid potential bad reactions to their sexual orientation. They also are seen as having more doubts about how to act and would be less likely to report it. This may be related to the fact that they perceive that there is less understanding of their social and educational reality.

![](image)

**Figure 40:** Breakdown by sexual orientation regarding the perceived power of victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

Out of students who identify as victims [Figure 41], it is worth mentioning that only 17% would go to teachers or their families, while a third (33%) would go to the police or would not say anything. As a result of the potentially insufficient teacher involvement these students perceive (as described below in section 7.3. Expected reaction of teachers to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying) and families in cases of bullying, and the little effectiveness of the measures they take, these students are likely to prefer choosing to go to the police, since they would then be protected by the law. **Being afraid of being singled out, seeming weak, fear of causing a negative reaction in their families and teachers or other causes may lead them to putting up with the situation in silence** (Generelo and Pichardo, 2006).
If we notice the gender differences between students [Figure 42], girls stand out as being more in favour of reporting abuse in all cases, with high levels of trust in their families (65% compared to only 45% among boys), followed by the police (30% of girls compared to 26% of boys). Website administration and teachers bring out similar trust levels in boys and girls (between 20% and 22%). It is also worth noting that boys are more in favour of not saying anything (9% compared to 6% of girls) or do not know how they would act (29% compared to 19% of girls). Although the differences are not significant, it seems that girls in a situation of cyberbullying tend to act and report it more to their family, teachers or the police, while boys appear to be more reluctant and suspicious of letting others witness their “weakness”.

7.2. Expected family reaction to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying.

It is extremely important to assess the opinion of students about how family members or guardians would react if they were picked on on social networks, mobile phones or the internet for being or “looking” LGBT, since they are the first actors in the socialisation process. This process is where children acquire a series of norms, values and roles that help them create their first personal and social identity (Berger and Luckman, 1986). Accordingly, by
orientating their behaviour and ways of thinking, new-borns are taught what Shafer (2002) described as gender classifications, which is the process by which children do not only acquire a gender identity but also certain norms about gender roles. Thus, gender identities are loaded with biases and stereotypes acquired from families, many of which have to do with LGBT-phobia.

When we observe the thoughts of students about how their families would react, we see how most percentages show positive reactions [Figure 43]. Still, these reactions are not enough since we should also point out that 65% of students believe that their families would not talk to teachers [Figure 44]. This is followed by 55% who would not report bullying to the police and 36% of students who think that their families would not support them. It is significant that along with the high percentage of students who believe that their families would not talk to teachers, 83% think that they would not ask web administrators to block a given account. This shows the need for training teachers and informing parents and guardians about the terms of use of these networks and for promoting communication between them. It is worth mentioning that almost 20% of students would not know how their families would react to a situation of cyberbullying [Figure 44].

On the other hand, the negative reactions of family members [Figure 44] show that 10% think that their families would move them to a different school. Further along these lines, 4% believe that they would take away internet privileges, their mobile phone or access to social networks and would be ashamed of them. Lastly, 2% think their family members would not do anything. These last facts are important, since they show how a percentage of students view some of these reactions from their families as a punishment. These reactions can lead to students suffering their bullying in silence out of fears that they will be stripped of social network access, the Internet or their mobile phones, and in many cases these are the ways students acquire knowledge and information and find their social references and their means of establishing social and support connections with a group of people like them (López, 2010).

An example of a negative reaction from family members is the comment given by a trans* student in the fourth year of ESO, who has been rejected by family members when he told them of his gender identity: “I have felt and still feel rejected by my family, and they’ve known for four years now.”
Despite the fact that in figure 39 we see that as students advance in their school years, they would be less likely to seek out their family, it is worth noting that, as we can see in [Figure 45], the percentage of students who think that their family would support them also increases, with 62% in their first cycle of ESO and 70% in pre-university studies. On the other hand, we see that, the higher the education level they find themselves, the less they trust their parents to address it with teachers, going from 41% in the first cycle of ESO to 31% in pre-university studies. This reiterates the need for improving relations between families and schools [Figure 45]. Also, in [Figure 46], we can see how, as students move on to higher cycles, they believe that their families would not impede them from accessing the Internet, social networks or using their mobile phones (going from 6% to 0% in pre-university studies). Furthermore, the belief that their families would move them to a different school goes down, from 12% in the first cycle of ESO to 8% in pre-university studies. In other matters, very similar figures are obtained between the various education levels regarding both positive and negative reactions from family members. We should point out that the second cycle of ESO is where there is a greater percentage of students that do not know how their families would react (16%) and 3.5% of students think that their family would be ashamed. This may occur owing to the hetero-normative presumption of their family members (Generelo and Pichardo, 2006).
When we analyse students’ opinions by sexual orientation [Figure 47] we see that their expectations of positive reactions from family members are more frequent in heterosexual people than in LGB people or in people who do not know their sexual orientation. It is significant that 47% of heterosexual students feel that their families would report their bullies to the police, compared to 30% of LGB students. Thus, it seems necessary for authorities to show greater support toward families with LGBT children. Furthermore, we see that 36% of heterosexual students feel that their families would talk to teachers, compared to 23% of LGB students. Again, the results we obtained seem to indicate that families with LGBT students need greater support from teachers so as to create an environment that enables them to inform about cases of cyberbullying. Another fact that we should point out is that, when asked if they feel that their families would support them, there is not much difference between heterosexual students (65%) and LGB students (58%). There was, however, a big difference regarding people who do not know their sexual orientation (38%).
On the other hand, the expectation of negative reactions from family members is higher among LGB students than among heterosexual students [Figure 48]. It is significant that 4% of heterosexual students and 9% of LGB students said their families would react by taking away their mobile phone, Internet or social network privileges. Although we did not get significant differences, it is important to mention that 10% of heterosexual students think their families would transfer them to another school, versus 7% of LGB students.

When we looked at the family reactions homosexual, bisexual and questioning students [Figure 49 and Figure 50] think they would get, we noticed that girls expect greater support from their families, with lesbians being those who trust their families the most (71%), followed by bisexual girls and girls who do not know their sexual orientation. The fact that boys expect less support from their families may be due to several factors, particularly the oppressive environment and pressure caused by the hetero-normative and sexist society in which we live (Generelo and Pichardo, 2006). Nonetheless, bisexual girls constituted the largest
percentage of those who would expect their families to be ashamed of them and take away their Internet, mobile phone or social network privileges as a result of cyberbullying (13%) or transfer them to another school (11%). It appears that bisexual girls are those who are least likely to expect a positive reaction from their families and, thus, require special attention in school. Generally, the responses “They would transfer me to another school” and “They would take away my Internet, mobile phone and social network privileges” were well among the minority of responses overall. Therefore, it seems that LGB students are not afraid of their families reacting by punishing them. A minority of students also believe that their parents would not do anything if they were to suffer cyberbullying. Still, it is alarming that one out of ten gay boys believes their families would not act; this leads us to imagine the lack of protection and the feeling of defencelessness of these boys. The boys that are not sure about their sexual orientation were also those who were most likely not to know how their families would react (50%), followed by the girls who are not sure about their sexual orientation (30.43%). In all cases, boys were the ones who marked this option the most. We can again suppose that pressure suffered by boys to “behave like men” is one of the reasons that leads them to not trust their families and not know how they would react.

Figure 49: Breakdown by sexual orientation and gender of the expectation of positive reactions from family members

- They would ask web administrators to shut down the account
- They would report it to the police
- They would talk to my teacher(s)
If we look at the reactions students who identify as victims of bullying believe their families would have [Figure 51 and Figure 52], we can see that 61% think that they would be supported (we can suppose that students have answered based on personal experiences). Still, the fact that two out of every five students do not indicate that they would be supported by their families is a worrisome figure. Along with other results obtained in this study, it shows the need for making not only students and teachers more aware, but also parents, in regard to respect for sexual orientation and gender identity diversity. Nevertheless, the percentage of students who are victims and believe that their parents would not do anything is low (6%), as is the percentages of those who do not know how their families would react (10%), those who think their parents would be ashamed of them (6%) or those who think they would be “punished” (transferred to another school or stripped of Internet privileges, both below 10%). Therefore, even though they are not sure they would receive their families’ support, it seems that, overall, they would expect a positive reaction or, at least, no negative response from their families. Half of students who were victims believed that their families would go to the police to report cyberbullying. Since cyberbullying is a crime and considered a hate crime provided that it is based on sexual orientation (Spanish Criminal Code, Article 2.4.2), we should emphasise the need for reporting LGBT-phobic cyberbullying to the police in order to prevent bullies from doing it again in the future.
When we analyse gender differences in regard to reactions students expected from their families (Figure 53 and Figure 54), we notice that boys had the most doubts about a potential reaction from their families (21% of boys said “I don’t know”, versus 11% of girls) and that the percentage of boys’ answers is lower in all possible options except in this one. Something similar occurred with LGB boys (Figure 49 and Figure 50), which seems to indicate that boys are less likely to trust their families or simply seem more insecure with this type of question for reasons explained above. Almost three fourths of girls think that they would be supported at home, compared to less than 60% of boys. Aside from these two questions, no significant differences were seen between boys and girls. Again, the negative responses (inaction, punishment or shame) are the least expected (the most expected response from girls was that they would be transferred to another school with only 11%).
7.3. Expected reaction of teachers to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying.

Schools are the second factor, behind families, that most helps to promote gender differences (Itati, 1988 and 1989; Moreno, 2000). Schools promote these gender differences in two ways. On the one hand, they use books in class that support masculine and feminine stereotypes by omitting women’s contributions when teaching history; teaching the characteristics of men and women in biology class; or through language by using masculine forms of words as a generic reference. On the other hand, teachers have certain expectations and perceptions about their students’ behaviour. These expectations are related to the dominant hetero-normative model. Teachers use these expectations to have students perform
or not certain activities associated with each gender (as understood from the binary gender model). Therefore, again, students are socialised in a series of gender stereotypes that are connected to LGBT-phobia.

If we look at this perception that surveyed students have about cyberbullying and their schools’ reaction [Figure 55], only 33% think teachers find out and do something about it. **This result is very alarming, as it indicates that, one way or another, two out of three students do not expect their teachers to have an appropriate response**, because they believe that they will not find out that cyberbullying is taking place (27%); or that they would not do anything to stop it if they were made aware of cyberbullying (8.5%); or even because they do not know if teachers find out or how they will react (31%). This latter result shows that a third of surveyed students distrust their teachers because they do not know how they will react since, if they knew that their reaction would be positive, they would say so. Therefore, we can presume that a big part of teachers probably do not have the necessary knowledge or tools to face cyberbullying and, as a result, students feel this sense of helplessness. Therefore, teachers must tell their students that they can help them and support them in cases of cyberbullying.

![Figure 55: Expectations about teachers' reaction](image)

If we look at the results by education level [Figure 56], we can see that students in the first cycle of ESO are most likely to trust their teachers: 36% feel that they find out and do something about it, versus 32% of second cycle ESO students and 35% of pre-university students. Second cycle ESO students are most likely to distrust their teachers, with 29% of them believing that their teachers do not find out and 9% saying that, even if they do find out, they will not do anything.

Therefore, the trend of students to lose trust in their teachers seems to be negative. This may be due to negative experiences (because they have seen or suffered cyberbullying),
general distrust adolescents often have of adults, or to other reasons that cannot be inferred from these results.

If we analyse the expectations students have regarding their schools’ reaction based on their sexual orientation [Figure 57], heterosexual students are more likely to trust their teachers (34% think that they find out about cyberbullying and do something about it) than students who do not yet know their sexual orientation (27%) and LGB students (25%).

On the other hand, LGB students are more likely to be sceptical about their teachers being able or willing to intervene in cases of cyberbullying, since one of every six LGB students think their teachers find out about cyberbullying but do not do anything, and 30.5% think that they do not even find out. This could be stem from reasons we explained above, or from possible previous discrimination experiences they had which make them for sceptical or less trusting of teachers who should, in theory, protect them (either due to their own experience or the perception of certain sexual orientations as being not normal, which still occurs within certain sectors of society). It is important to highlight that 54% of students who are not sure about their sexual orientation do not know how their teachers would react to cyberbullying. These students, who are apparently more likely to have doubts about themselves, have the most doubts about others and show more distrust. To avoid these situations, we would recommend teachers to create an environment of trust and security in the classroom, whereby they explain the consequences of bullying and present themselves as authority figures whom students may approach if they are bullied (Generelo and Pichardo, 2005; Penna, 2005).
If we consider the gender of LGB students [Figure 58], we see that, proportionately, bisexual boys were more likely to think their teachers would not find out about cyberbullying, followed by bisexual girls (45% and 29.5% respectively). This may indicate that bisexual students feel invisible in society. This would, thus, mean that they think that if they are bullied, their teachers would not realise it. On the other hand, gay boys are more likely to think that their teachers find out and do something about cyberbullying (29.5%). This result may indicate that gay students have more trust owing to their greater visibility in society and rights obtained in recent years. We should also highlight that 35% of lesbian students did not know how their teachers would react or if they would find out. As with bisexual students, this may be indicative of the lack of visibility lesbians experience in society.
Among students who admit having been victims of bullying [Figure 59], most answered that teachers do not find out that cyberbullying is taking place (36%).

If we consider that they have experienced bullying, its consequences and reactions to it first-hand, and suppose that they gave answers based on their own experience, it is extremely alarming that only one out of every three students chose this option. **We must wonder if teachers do not find out because they do not pay proper attention or because they do not have the adequate tools or means to find out.** Only 29% believe that teachers find out and take action against cyberbullying. **This could mean that less than a third of students who have experienced bullying have received (or, at least, have felt they have received) enough attention and protection from their school and their teachers.**

![Figure 59: Expectation of reactions from teachers of students who identify as victims of LBGT-phobic cyberbullying](image-url)
8. Teachers

In order to know possible reasons such a high percentage of students would not go to their teachers and consider that teachers do not take enough action against LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, we sent this survey to a total of 55 secondary schools to be distributed amongst teachers. Nonetheless, we only received answers from a total of 30 active teachers in 15 different schools in the districts of the Region of Madrid. Of these teachers who took the survey: Thirteen (13) identify as counsellors or Counselling Department staff. Nine (9) identified as subject teachers, six (6) of which also mentioned being tutors. Only two (2) identified as being form teachers.

Of course, this sample does not represent the work of all teachers in the Region of Madrid. In fact, we can presume that participants responded because they are proud of the attention they give to LGBT individuals. This testimony given by 30 professionals, who mostly work to promote respect for sexual orientation and gender identity diversity, helps to show good practices and short-term goals to be achieved.

When it comes to bullying, each member of the education community, regardless of their function, needs to be involved and intervene together. If members of the education community act independently, there will be aspects that may not be addressed. Intervening in cases of cyberbullying needs to take place at the school-level, with school bodies, family members, peers, counselling departments, teachers and ultimately the entire education community. Firstly, we asked surveyed teachers about documents that regulate how the schools where they work usually function, since the education community creates and modifies such documents. We also asked them about the attention given to preventing LGBT-phobic cyberbullying at their schools [Figure 60].

Slightly more than half of surveyed teachers answered that on documents such as their schools’ “Proyecto educativo del centro” (“School education project”, or PEC) or “Plan de convivencia” (“Harmony plan”) explicitly referred to their schools’ rejection of sexual orientation and gender identity-related cyberbullying. 50% of cases also indicate that on school documents, such as the internal rules of procedure (“RRI”), education community members are allowed to intervene in cases of cyberbullying (50%).

Negative reinforcement or punishment of cyberbullying, whether it is not performed or does not make sense regarding the action/act that took place, becomes a less useful tool. Accordingly, 37% of surveyed teachers answered that they consider that a list of punishments that specifically apply to cases of cyberbullying does exist in the school internal rules of procedure document; 10% did not know and 53% said no. The fact that a series of punishments or steps to follow for this type of cases does exist helps the work of teachers, form teachers and counsellors since punishments are not left to the devices of the person in charge or to their personal assessment of the event. Also, this punishments are important beyond the mere punishment of bullies. For bullied students, it may mean the difference between feeling supported and feeling highly unprotected by their school.
The fact that schools do not recognise or act are still more subtle but less damaging forms of structural violence suffered by victims of LGBT-phobia. Teaching in order to empower students should also be an objective for the education system in order to not look the other way and allow the conduct of bullies to become the norm.

We also questioned teachers about whether there were protocols that coordinated actions taken by schools and families in regard to cyberbullying and if there were activities that involved students in preventing and reporting LGBT-phobic cyberbullying (e.g., the “Plan de acción tutorial” [“Teacher action plan”, or “PAT”]). Although 60% of teachers said that such activities existed for students, only 40% of teachers said there were activities to involve families in addressing cyberbullying.

It is different when action is taken by the Head of Studies than when it is taken by the Counselling Department, even though they try to coordinate between the two. There is a programme in the school for peer mediation, which raises awareness and takes action to improve harmony and its training expressly includes general sexual diversity. (Counsellor from a district in the capital)

We should remember that these schools are schools that implement awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity diversity and that request our talks programme. Therefore, the fact that these topics are not included in all documents at the schools of participating teachers, as well as the fact that specific punishments do not exist at many of them, could be considered clear evidence that awareness needs to be raised among the entire education community in order to spread good practices to all schools in Madrid.

In addition to formally recognising the need for preventing, detecting and eliminating cyberbullying at schools, teachers at these schools must also be willing and proactive in doing so. It is surprising that a small percentage of teachers claim to not know if their schools take a formal position in this matter.

One of the main drivers that should act against discrimination and intolerance in schools is the Counselling Department. Furthermore, counsellors and staff that are aware and take
measures to address the LGBT-phobic cyberbullying that could be affecting their students are fundamental. Nonetheless, some participating professionals who show a high degree of awareness in this regard, have positions that show a lack of attention by the Counselling Department in terms of these new forms of intolerance and hate on the Internet [Figure 61].

On the other hand, 73% of employees at surveyed schools consider that communication between professionals and school bodies is good enough so as to inform about incidents of cyberbullying. This fact is particularly important in order to be able to take action against cyberbullying, as the relationship between both parts is essential to do a truly efficient job in this matter [Figure 61].

100% of surveyed teachers consider that form teachers and counsellors would be willing to collaborate to take action against cyberbullying toward LGBT students at their schools [Figure 61]. However, this trust shown by teachers of their colleagues is not evident among regional inspectors. In response to the question “Do you think that regional inspectors would be willing to collaborate in actions against cyberbullying toward LGBT students at your school?”, 48% of surveyed teachers said they did not know, only 38% said yes and 14% said openly that inspectors would not collaborate. These responses make the distance between schools and their employees and the rest of the population quite clear. Teachers’ willingness gives the impression that if schools’ responses and the educational and material mediums were to improve, LGBT-phobic bullying and cyberbullying could be significantly reduced.

In terms of how up-to-date teachers are about the new technologies used by students, 81% claimed to feel sufficiently competent with digital mediums and know about social networks currently used [Figure 62]. Still, almost 20% stated that they are not up-to-date or do not know if they are. The progress and spread of these new forms of communication is continual. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to not fall behind in terms of this progress; otherwise, the generation gap that impedes adults from understanding the reality of the minors they must teach widens.

Despite their willingness, only 56% of surveyed teachers claimed to have access to information and resources about how to detect cases of cyberbullying. In addition to the 44% of teachers...
who claimed to not have access to these mediums, 82% of surveyed teachers said they had not received sufficient formal training to prevent, detect and take action against cyberbullying. 22% of these teachers even mentioned that before taking our survey, they were not aware of their duty to act if they identified a case of cyberbullying among their students [Figure 62].

As mentioned above, it is not enough that teachers are willing to act against cyberbullying, know about the new technologies and are sufficiently competent in terms of digital mediums in order to use them; it is essential to provide them with adequate training and resources in order to know how to act appropriately against cyberbullying.

23% of surveyed teachers [Figure 63] indicated that they have detected cyberbullying at their schools. In other cases, they stated that, even though they have not detected it before, they think that cyberbullying takes place and relate the lack of detection directly to the lack of recognition of LGBT students at their schools:

*I have not detected any cases of cyberbullying, but I am sure that they exist at my school. I believe that the few cases of LGBT students we know about are precisely the ones that are most normalised within school life.*

(Subject teacher, capital district)

Other cases indicated how LGBT students are recognised, which would lead to situations of bullying (see COGAM, 2016a, section 3.4.2):

*Often times, when talking to his peer, taunting him, ignoring him... I don’t know if it also occurred on social networks, but it was indeed a normal relationship model in daily class life. [As a measure, we proceeded to] talk to students. [The victim], on one hand, seemed to be weaker, but on the other hand, he went around as a flag bearer, bringing up the issue even in situations and contexts that were unrelated, like he was obsessed to the point that he ended up being so annoying that it lead to him being rejected.*

(Counsellor, capital district. Has not received resources or information to intervene in cases of bullying/provide guidance to LGBT students)
The previous comment again reveals teachers’ needs in terms of addressing sexual orientation and gender identity diversity and preventing, detecting and dealing with LGBT-phobic school bullying (see COGAM, 2016a, section 5.2). It is essential for teachers to become aware that in both school bullying and cyberbullying, power relationships are not egalitarian (Giménez, 2015), and even less in cases of LGBT-phobic bullying where bullies build on a hetero-normative ideology system that is socially accepted and promotes discrimination and intolerance of people who do not meet their standards.

The responses given by victims of bullying at school may vary. Some could assume a position of inferiority and submission to those who attack their freedom, while others could try to confront the situation or act disruptively in class (Platero, 2014). Nonetheless, victims should never be regarded as the origin of the problem. Behaviours that result from school bullying are only the way minors express their need for external help and reinforcement and recognition that they do not find in their environment or in society, as in the case we are analysing.

We must be aware of the valuable opportunities LGBT students provide for teaching tolerance in class, and know how to find moments to teach respect for sexual orientation and gender identity diversity as part of students’ civic education.

![Figure 63: Teachers that have detected cases of cyberbullying at their schools.](image)

Table 3: Comments given by teachers about the cases of cyberbullying they have detected. shows answers given by teachers who have detected or are aware of cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. Again, we see a variety of experiences. Both the mediums, the shaming and the frequency with which cyberbullying occurs takes several forms in each particular case. We find very good practices among these teachers who said there were no reasons that justified bullying and clearly indicated the source of bullying: homophobia, rejection of differences and the exclusion from the group as a result of it.

Some teachers claimed to have protocols and systems of coordinated attention for these situations that involve not only students and teachers, but also the entire education community. They include the participation of people like family members, authorities (education inspectors) or national security forces.

At the school, professional teachers specialised in ITC are also involved. Of course, the educational initiative taken by teachers is one of the keys for everyone to address...
cyberbullying as what it is: a social problem in which everyone takes part by action or omission.

We find that surveyed teachers deal with cases of cyberbullying where the relationships between bullied students and their bullies vary, as there are students who are in the same class as well as cases of people from outside the school who attack students on the Internet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency, social network, type of shaming...</th>
<th>Measures taken</th>
<th>Direct relationship between bullied student and bully</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insults and taunting on Whatsapp</td>
<td>Apply the school’s bullying protocol Inform families Punishment according to the school’s internal rules of procedure</td>
<td>Direct the same class</td>
<td>Homophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a year in a given ESO year</td>
<td>The families involved were informed. Civilians (national police) participated. The school administration, counselling department and the corresponding form teacher got involved</td>
<td>There were some cases in which bullying took place among students at the school and, on other occasions, with people from outside the school.</td>
<td>Sentimental relationships, friendships or belonging or not to a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>There is a coordinated response from the administration, the head of studies or the counselling department to handle any case of bullying of any nature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>There are no reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Whatsapp, direct insults, indirect references</td>
<td>Form teachers, counselling department, administration and head of studies at the school; education inspectors and in some cases the student filed a formal complaint at the police station.</td>
<td>They were known</td>
<td>Exclusion from the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Comments given by teachers about the cases of cyberbullying they have detected.

Ultimately, we find that teachers lack homogeneous and equal training and resources. We also see that sexual orientation and gender identity diversity as well as bullying and cyberbullying prevention receive different attention depending on the school. It is important to take measures that eliminate this inequality by ensuring a safe school and virtual environment for all students, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that allows teachers who take proper action against LBGT-phobic bullying and protect students at their schools to exchange experiences.

9. Authorities
This section includes information given by authorities from several parts of the Spanish state regarding the current situation of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying and the course of action being taken by the institutions they represent. This section aims solely to create networks that allow this social problem to be jointly addressed, and that allow the objectives and goals that must be proposed to this end to be made known.

*Esteban Ibarra Blanco*, president of the NGO *“Movimiento contra la Intolerancia”* (“Movement against intolerance”), which has been receiving and processing court claims in regard to harassment due to racism, xenophobia, homophobia, etc., believes that this type of cases are happening more often. He mentions that minors are not telling their parents or anyone around them, suffering in silence and not reporting it to public safety forces, prosecutors or the courts. In turn, he indicates that there are not many witnesses who report these cases either, even though they become aware on social media. He has seen how boys and girls are picked on for being or “looking” LGBT both on Twitter and Whatsapp, with degrading comments, insults, threats and stigmatisation, which, according to him, damage victims’ human dignity. He also comments that there are bullies who remain anonymous and from within victims’ peer environment.

When the institution he represents has evidence that a minor is experiencing cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT, it informs his or her school so that his or her parents become aware and can take a decision. They recommend reporting cases to the Spanish Juvenile Prosecutor’s Office. He believes that minors who are or “look” LGBT and experience cyberbullying generally do not receive sufficient support from their school or from their families. In general, he says, “They do not take it seriously... and say that... it’s what adolescents do.”

He also believes that the Spanish Juvenile Criminal Liability Act is very poorly written and does not protect victims and that minors who are or “look” LGBT and suffer cyberbullying are not supported enough by public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts, who receive little training in this matter. He says that there is a lack of political initiative and that “when there is, there will be resources.”

In this regard, he mentions that regional and national authorities (regional department, ministries, etc.) do not provide enough support for problems related to LGBT-phobic cyberbullying at all, and that they consider it to be something minor. In his opinion, organisations such as NGOs, action groups and associations do not address these situations much either, with the exception of the very few that are specialised in this area. On the other
hand, when asked about how web administrators deal with these cases, he said that if there is not a legal threat, campaign or protest, they allow the situation to continue.

Esteban told us that the path to follow would be: to end victims’ loneliness and punish aggressors after reporting the incident through the corresponding legal channels. He also described for us the case of a girl in Pamplona who committed suicide a year and a half ago at the age of 15 after being bullied for being a lesbian. Neither the family nor the school were aware of their liability in this matter.

Rosa Bada, representative of GAG, Grup d’Amics LGBTI de Catalunya, which is a reference entity for the LGBTI community and a place where people can go to ask for advice and help, believes these cases are very frequent and under-reported and under-recognised, which makes it very difficult to fight against them.

She thinks that minors that are or “look” LGBT and suffer this type of bullying do not tell their parents or teachers enough and do not report it to public safety forces, prosecutors or the courts. She knows about cases of comments and bullying experienced by people on social networks, where bullies are known by their victims. Like Esteban, she believes that minors who are or “look” LGBT and experience cyberbullying generally do not receive sufficient support from their school or from their families. She also mentions that even if they have support from public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts, they do not know it. Still, she says that they do not have enough training or resources for these issues, and that organisations such as NGOs, action groups and associations have more interest than resources and capabilities to take on these issues.

Rosa feels that the measures she deems necessary for preventing these situations and supporting minors who experience cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT are “a culture of rights, education and legislation not only with regards to discrimination but also crimes committed on social networks.”

Laura Sánchez Fernández coordinates the education team at Amnesty International Madrid, where they are starting to address the issue of bullying because they understand that people experiencing it are seeing their human rights violated. Laura believes that these cases are more frequent than what they seem to be and that minors who are or “look” LGBT and suffer cyberbullying do not report it to public safety forces, prosecutors or the courts.
Ignacio Sola Barleycorn, deputy director of Equal Treatment and Non-Discrimination at the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, expert in discrimination, says that he is very familiar with the dynamics of these phenomena. He mentions that some claims they received refer to bullying on social networks. But in addition to the bullying caused individually to specific individuals, attention must be given to intimidating behaviours of undetermined groups of people, whose impact is reflected in the individualised conduct of people belonging to groups of those who are bullied.

Ignacio believes these cases are very frequent and that not all minors that are or “look” LGBT and suffer this type of bullying tell their parents or teachers, since this would lead them to revealing their sexual orientation in some cases, and that reports filed with public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts happen less often.

He indicates that the direct reporting of cases of discrimination, bullying and even hate and intolerance crimes is very rare and, thus, it can be deduced that reporting done by witness is also almost insignificant.

He has seen boys and girls being picked on on Twitter and Facebook for being or “looking” LGBT with such things as insults, humiliating or disdainful comments and threats, where bullies are generally anonymous, hidden behind generic profiles on social networks. He points out that he and the institution he represents inform the police, prosecutors, etc. when they have evidence that a minor is suffering cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT.

In turn, he thinks that minors who are or “look” LGBT and suffer cyberbullying do not have sufficient support from their school and says that teachers and other members of the school community lack specific training to prevent and deal with homophobic school bullying.

Ignacio considers that regional and national authorities (regional departments, ministries, etc.) do not provide enough support for problems related to LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, although certain initiatives in this regard are being taken. They are preparing a manual about homophobic school bullying.

Ignacio also mentions that we continue to depend on the particular sensitivity of web administrators and server owners that contain content. Some take down content and ban users while others fall on deaf ears and consider it freedom of expression. Unfortunately, procedures leading to shutting down websites are very slow owing to a focus on guaranteeing rights.

In order to prevent these situations and support minors who experience cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT, Ignacio considers it necessary to train key agents and put an

2 The manual was published after the interview was conducted for this study. It is called “Abrazar la diversidad” (“Embracing diversity”) and can be obtained through the following link: http://www.inmujer.gob.es/actualidad/NovedadesNuevas/docs/2015/Abrazar_la_diversidad.pdf
Inforcement and punishment system in place in administrations that removes the legal process for certain cases and enhances the institutional response against discrimination.

**Provincial Prosecutor’s Office of Malaga**

*María Teresa Verdugo Moreno, deputy prosecutor for criminal protection in cases of Equality and Discrimination at the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office of Malaga,* points out that, overall, if a crime of duress is committed against someone’s moral integrity, or if threats or physical injuries are committed against someone in relation to his or her sexual orientation, she would be liable to investigate and prosecute such crimes. Nonetheless, she would only be able to do so if an aggressor were of legal age; otherwise, it would have to be handled by the Juvenile Prosecutor’s Office.

She mentions that she has been made aware of certain matters, but could not say whether or not these cases are frequent or not. She also says that very few cases are reported and does not know if this is because the events do not actually occur or because of victims’ fears or their lack of information about their rights. In terms of cases reported by witnesses, she has not received any case reported by witnesses of such crimes. In her experience, she says that, when a case is reported, the conduct has been occurring for weeks or months.

She has known of shaming through attacks and insults, in many cases recorded on video and posted on Tuenti and Whatsapp, whereby bullies were known by their victims.

The institution she represents opens an investigation if there is evidence that a minor is experiencing cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT if their aggressor is of legal age and no previous report has been filed. Once the facts are clarified, she says, a claim is filed with the court of first instance for further investigation. If the case is already aired in court, they appear before the court and file a written accusation when necessary. If the aggressor is a minor, the matter is taken up by the Juvenile Prosecutor’s Office.

She points out that public safety forces receiving these reported cases are processing them and carrying out in-depth investigations about them. Prosecutors and the courts are becoming increasingly aware of these cases, and are trying to respond to these events. Still, it is true that there may be a tendency to minimise them and leave them as simple misdemeanour infractions. There may be a problem of a lack of awareness, but not a lack of interest or resources (beyond what involves the Justice Administration).

María Teresa understands that organisations such as NGOs, action groups and associations are very dedicated to these issues and says that, to prevent these situations and support minors who experience cyberbullying for being or “looking” LGBT, it is necessary to “work on prevention and on training adolescents and adults to respect others and to not commit or consent to cyberbullying. In the legal system, we must continue to specialise and implement protocols to interact with civil society, educators, law enforcement and legal professionals.”

Lastly, we asked her to describe for us a case of cyberbullying and she told us about a “12-year-old lesbian girl who was attacked by two minors of the same age shouting “Bollera”
Dike). Her attackers had been threatening her by telephone days before. Her attack was recorded and spread throughout the girl’s high school.”

Rosa Garvín Fernández, head of services at the Centro Nacional de Investigación Educativa (“National Centre for Education Research”) of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, believes these cases are very frequent and that minors who are or “look” LGBT and suffer this type of bullying do not tell their parents or teachers and do not report it to public safety forces, prosecutors or the courts.

She thinks that public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts are increasingly more trained and understand the problems experienced by these individuals, but improvement is needed.

Rosa indicates that it is fundamental for the entire education community to be trained and to participate in schools. Schools that have a community project based on egalitarian dialogue are the ones overcoming violence within their classrooms. She mentions that regional and local entities, associations and administrations and the General Administration of the Spanish State must coordinate efforts and collaborate.

Jesús Generelo Lanaspa, President of the “Federación de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (“Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transgender and Bisexuals”, or “FELGTB) points out that one of FELGTB’s main objectives is to achieve an education system that inclusive of LGBT individuals and free of bullying due to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Within this bullying, cyberbullying is becoming increasingly stronger, and he feels that it is one of the main types of bullying.

He thinks that minors that are or “look” LGBT and suffer this type of bullying do not tell their parents or teachers in most cases. In this regard, he mentions that minors who are able to freely come out of the closet and denounce their attackers are still a minority. Therefore, he feels that much fewer minors are able to file a report with public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts, since they do not have information about their rights and see LGBT-phobic bullying as something normal.

He tells us that there is also not a lot of help coming from their surrounding environment. The stigma contagion is a particular element that makes the LGBT community more vulnerable. This year, FELGTB has started the #ConlaVozbienAlta3 (“Say it loud”) campaign to encourage society to take responsibility in reporting these and other types of attacks and not leave victims defenceless.

3 More information on their website: http://conlavozbienalta.org/
Jesús has seen boys and girls being picked on for being or “looking” gay through such things as threats, insults or humiliation from seeing information or videos posted against their will on social platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and mentions that he does not believe there are networks free of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

On the other hand, he tells us that **FELGTB has a support service for youth and another that compiles reports of hate crimes and follows up on victims.** He feels this service is very necessary as he believes minors who are or “look” LGBT and suffer cyberbullying do not have enough support from their schools, their families, public safety forces, prosecutors or the courts: “*They do not have enough support against any type of bullying, but cyberbullying goes even more unnoticed.*” He thinks that “*there are still some insurmountable barriers. Reports filed by victims of LGBT-phobia discrimination and hate crimes are very rare, even more so in the case of minors.*”

He tells us that they are starting to work on training **public safety forces, prosecutors and the courts in this type of issues, but there is not sufficient or specific training.** Victims are afraid of reporting cases, and many times, this is justified because those who are going to handle them do not offer sufficient guarantees that they can properly follow up on the cases they report.

Jesús also criticises the fact that there is barely any attention given to LGBT-phobic bullying by regional and national authorities (regional departments, ministries, etc.). **There are general protocols that evidently are not working and do not reach LGBT victims.**

He tells us that LGTB-phobic bullying is a problem that is certainly alarming to **LGBT organisations** and is at the top of their agendas, but **there is much work to be done and very, very few resources.** Cyberbullying has made this issue much more complex and there is not enough preparation to rigorously address it.

Lastly, he concludes that “*the important thing is to teach how to recognise and handle sexual and gender diversity. This basis does not even exist. Therefore, touching on the specific nature of LGBT-phobic bullying is quite far off. Since cyberbullying generally is starting to cause concern within the education system, we hope that prevention takes place with consideration for its specific relationship with homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.*”

**Conclusions**

Results of this research show that **LGBT-phobic cyberbullying has become a specific form of hatred and intolerance on the Internet that affects minors in the Region of Madrid,** poses new challenges to the education community; and requires urgent and effective measures for it to be prevented, detected and stopped. Below, we present our main findings from this study:
On students' perception of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

- LGBT-phobic cyberbullying has become a new and specific form of hatred and intolerance on the Internet.
- It involves both actively and passively, a large number of students, since it is known and seen by more than half of students.
- The increased number of experiences and growing access to a greater number of ITC devices and software at students’ ages is leading to an increase in the percentage of students who claim to have witnessed LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. Thus, cyberbullying could be more frequent than what overall results indicate.
- One of the factors adding danger to this type of bullying is the fact that abuse is spreading and being generalised by reaching Internet users who have no personal relationship with bullied victims.
- Practically 70% of LGB students see sexual orientation and gender identity-based cyberbullying in their online environment, which proves the idea that this phenomenon could be even more frequent than what overall results indicate and may lead to new ways of prejudice and LGBT-phobia being internalised by gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans* students.

On the profile of victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

- More than one out of every one hundred surveyed students claimed to have been a victim of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, irrespective of their current education level.
- 15% of LGB students suffer cyberbullying that is based on their sexual orientation.
- There could be an influence on LGBT-phobic cyberbullying on gender stereotypes and bias.
- Trans* students face a higher risk of becoming victims of cyberbullying.
- Although it is less likely, heterosexual students also are prone to becoming victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.
- 50% of victims do not know other people in the same situation as them, and face these situations alone.

On the relationship between bullies and their victims.

- LGBT-phobic bullying on the Internet is a complex phenomenon in which both people close to victims and complete strangers may be involved.
- Most often, there is a personal relationship between victims and their cyberbullies, as 72.31% of students in general and 82.14% of students who claimed to be victims of cyberbullying in this study, indicated that cyberbullying are part of their social and academic environment.
- 52.4% of students that have seen LGBT-phobic cyberbullying recognise cyberbullies at their school. Thus, LGBT-phobic cyberbullying is a form of school bullying and, as such, is the responsibility of the entire education community.
- There are cyberbullies who live in the same area as their victims but are not registered at the same school.
There are situations of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying in which bullies from victims’ environments participate along with others with whom victims have no relationship. Furthermore, bullying can also come exclusively from people outside students’ immediate environment.

Identifying LGBT-phobic cyberbullying has an added difficulty, as practically in 70%-80% of cases, students do not consider that cyberbullying coincides with situations of on-site (non-virtual) bullying.

Students that would otherwise not have this type of LGBT-phobic behaviour in person, are finding a number of circumstances on-line that lead them to act aggressively toward the sexual orientation and gender identity diversity.

### On the frequency and duration of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

- It is common for students to see one-time abuse towards people who are or “look” LGBT; however, given the short nature of this abuse, it cannot be categorised as bullying.
- LGBT-phobic cyberbullying tends to be carried out over prolonged periods of time (months or years) and occurs in short intervals of time in a very intense manner.

### On the forms of cyberbullying and the mediums used

- Messages with insulting content are the form of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying most students see in the Region of Madrid. This is followed by humiliating or denigrating photographs or images, the impersonation of victims on the Internet, and humiliating videos.
- Forms of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying can also be combined, and one person can be victim to several of them.
- The mediums most commonly used by LGBT-phobic cyberbullies are social networks (Facebook, Tuenti, Twitter, etc.). Followed by instant messaging applications (Whatsapp, Line, Telegram, Messenger, Skype, Kik, and Ask), blogs (Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, etc.), video websites (YouTube, Google videos, etc.) and to a lesser extent, phone calls and text messages.
- Bullies use in many cases a combination of mediums to perpetrate LGBT-phobic attacks on the Internet.

### On the individual bases that support LGBT-phobic cyberbullying

- Although a low percentage of students considered themselves to be cyberbullies, these particular students felt backed by all students who do not initiate bullying but who support it and by almost half of students (41%) who, without approving of LGBT-phobic behaviour, do not support or defend victims.
- Only 54% of LGBT students identify as defending witnesses.
Female students are twice more likely to be defenders than male students.

The figures obtained do not make it possible to conclude that anonymity and the feeling that teachers, families and administrators lack control are elements that facilitate LGBT-phobic cyberbullying. But the low percentage of students choosing this option may be due to the fact that most students do not know the circumstances that lead to this specific type of cyberbullying taking place and also are elements indicated as being significant in previous studies.

53% of students thought that LGBT stereotypes are one of the bases that explain LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, a notion that is widely shared by students who identify as being victims.

A high number of students (45%) felt that rejection towards people who do not meet conventional gender roles is one of the causes that creates this specific type of cyberbullying.

Students that identify with this profile of LGBT-phobic cyberbully showed a connection between LGBT-phobic biases and the overstepping of gender roles, since they are the main causes they identified of LGBT-phobic behaviours taking place on social networks.

On students’ reactions to the possibility of falling victim to LBGT-phobic cyberbullying and its environment.

More than half of students trust their parents and would go to them to ask for help if they were to fall victim to cyberbullying. However, they show less trust in the police and teachers.

As students advance through education levels, they show a less trust in their families and teachers, which is replaced by a trust in the police.

LGBT students and especially students who identify as victims of cyberbullying were seen as having less trust in their families and teachers, as they would be less likely to go to them for help than heterosexual students and all surveyed students.

A higher percentage of students expect positive reactions than those who expect negative reactions, as 64% of students felt that their families would support them if they were to be victims of cyberbullying. Still, it is significant that less than half of students expect their families to talk about it with teachers and report it to the police.

LGB students were less likely to expect a positive reaction and more like to expect a negative reaction from their families when compared to heterosexual students.

Boys, regardless of their sexual orientation, expect less support from their family.

Two out of every five students who identified with the profile of victims did not indicate that they would be supported by their families.

Only one out of every three students believed that teachers find out about situations of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying and does something about it. Furthermore, the same percentage of students did not know if they find out about such situations or how they would react.
LGB students are less likely to expect teachers to find out and act in this specific type of cyberbullying when compared to heterosexual students. Especially bisexual and lesbian students showed lower percentages in regard to this particular expectation.

Most students who admit to being victims of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying believed that teachers do not find out about these specific situations of bullying.

**On teachers’ ability to act**

- There are differences in the teachers’ training and access to resources as well as in the attention given to sexual diversity and school bullying and cyberbullying prevention at every school. Furthermore, not all schools express the need for such attention in their documents, nor do they allow the education community to intervene in cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.
- Not all schools have a list of punishments, protocols or activities to prevent, eliminate or address LGBT-phobic cyberbullying among students.
- Not all counselling departments contemplate intervening in cases of LGBT-phobic bullying on-line.
- Communication between teachers and school bodies is not always good in order to address these specific cases of cyberbullying.
- Teachers seem to be willing to prevent, detect and eliminate cases of cyberbullying, but is not always up-to-date in regard to new technologies and many times lack the appropriate training, materials and resources to do so.
- There are schools that carry out good practices to prevent, identify and resolve cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.

**On the opinion of authorities.**

- There are increasingly more cases of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, which are being unrecognised and undervalued.
- Minors suffer it in silence, since they do not usually report it to their families, schools, the police, courts or prosecutors, out of fears of revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, or because they do not know their rights or LGBT-phobic bullying has become normal in their environments.
- Cases reported by witnesses are also practically non-existent.
- Bullies can be anonymous or from their peer environment.
- Families, schools and institutions (police, courts, prosecutors and other authorities both regionally and nationally) are considerable under-prepared and lacking resources.
- There are not enough laws to protect minors from this type of bullying and there is a lack of awareness among prosecutors.
- Entities such as NGOs, associations and action groups are very interested in preventing and eradicating this type of cyberbullying, but they do not have the exact resources or are sufficiently able to provide an effective response in this regard.
Administrators of social networks, websites, chats and other Internet platforms where cyberbullying takes place enable these situations and do not take action unless a legal threat is implied, alleging freedom of expression in most cases.
Proposed course of action.

With the results and conclusions presented in this report, we feel it is important to propose four lines of basic and general measures based on the agents who are involved as a result of their relevant relation to this specific form of hate and intolerance on the Internet:

1) **Activities need to be put in place to raise the awareness of students about the consequences of cyberbullying and prevent LGBT-phobia inside and outside schools.**
   - This course of action must promote students’ empathy for victims of cyberbullying and encourage them not to hide behind their anonymity to carry out or contribute to this type of abuse. It is also important to emphasise the need for witnesses to get involved by reporting cyberbullying and educate students to know how to detect and act in these situations. Their participation is vital in that the continuance or the end of cyberbullying depends on it.
   - Furthermore, the high levels of LGBT-phobic prejudices and gender stereotypes causing specific cases of bullying suffered by LGBT students and students who do not meet conventional gender roles need to be reduced. To this end, students need to receive an education that is transverse (with the recognition of sexual diversity in various school subjects taught at the numerous education levels), and includes specific measures (workshops, seminaries, etc.) that enable students to come into contact with theories about sexual diversity and the reality of discrimination suffered by LGBT individuals. This way it is possible to correct myths and false notions about the LGBT community and provide examples of positive role models.

2) **The education community must have a more active role and take effective measures against LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.**
   - Half of students identified cyberbullies in their schools. Thus, it is the entire education community’s responsibility to take measures to prevent and act against this specific type of bullying. To this end, it is important to prepare protocols for taking action that are shared by all schools. Schools must also collaborate more extensively together and coordinate themselves through inspections of each area. As the results and our conclusions indicate, cyberbullying constitutes intolerance, hate and discrimination that goes beyond the walls of schools (since people both within and outside students social and academic environment are involved). If schools take such measures, a broader response can be provided against LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.
   - Students’ and teachers’ opinions demonstrate the need for teachers to be specifically trained in dealing with cyberbullying and LGBT-phobia, so they can detect and act against this particular type of bullying. Consequently, students will probably be able to have a greater sense of support from their teachers, go to them for help and report these situations of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying on-line.

3) **Families need to be involved in preventing LGBT-phobic cyberbullying, as well as in interventions that take place in specific cases detected by schools.**
To this end, families need to be made aware of sexual diversity and the risks inherent to cyberbullying. Thus, they need to be given training, resources and advice by schools and social services in each district, so they can instil in their children a culture of respect for diversity and a responsible use of the Internet.

Furthermore, families need to be involved in measures developed by schools regarding victims, cyberbullies and students in general, as well as in the proposed course of action put forth by the education community.

4) **Institutional authorities (police, courts, prosecutors and other regional and state authorities) need to be made more aware of the significance of LGBT-phobic cyberbullying.**

They must have greater information about this phenomenon and about resources available for taking action.

They must also be made aware of the danger that LGBT-phobic cyberbullying bears in online settings and promote the creation of laws to protect minors that are affected and to require administrators of social networks, websites and other online platforms to get involved in preventing and eradicating this type of cyberbullying.

Organisations dedicated to preventing and eradicating LGBT-phobic cyberbullying must be provided with more resources so that they are more effective when they intervene.
Bibliographic references


Generelo, J. (Coord.) (2012). Acoso escolar homofóbico y riesgo de suicidio en adolescentes y jóvenes LGB. Madrid: COGAM/FELGTB.


Ministerio del Interior (2014). *Encuesta sobre hábitos de uso y seguridad de internet de menores y jóvenes en España*. Disponible en: http://www.interior.gob.es/documents/10180/2563633/Encuesta+sobre+h%C3%A1bitos+de+uso+y+seguridad+de+internet+de+menores+y+j%C3%B3venes+en+Espa%C3%B1a/b88a590a-514d-49a2-9162-f58b7e2cb354


EDITA: COGAM.

SUBVENCIONA: ILGA-EUROPE.

DESARROLLO DEL PROYECTO: COGAM-EDUCACIÓN.

"COGAM es una organización sin ánimo de lucro. Ayúdanos a acabar con el bullying LGBT-fóbico. Haz tu donativo y/o hazte soci@/ voluntari@ de COGAM-Educación."