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Digital gender-based violence in Chile: a survey during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract: This research was carried out under the wing of Amaranta, a Chilean feminist and activist NGO. Its objective was to explore from a gender perspective the digital violence that affected women in Chile. The study that was conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, 531 women from all regions of the country were surveyed. Of this non-probabilistic sample, 73.8% had suffered digital violence. The most reported attacks were: verbal violence, harassment, sending sexual images without consent, defamation, threats and loss of account or non-consensual access and tended to come from anonymous persons and men in their immediate circle. Among the consequences they mention: emotional effects, effects on self-esteem or relationship with their body and feeling watched. It is concluded that digital violence has a disproportionate impact on women, young women and girls and that, due to little or no access to comprehensive sexual education and digital literacy, it may be difficult for them to recognize, prevent and address it in time.

Key words: gender-based violence; feminism; online violence; technology-based violence; cyberbullying.

Violencia digital de género en Chile: un estudio durante la pandemia de COVID-19

Resumen: Esta investigación fue realizada bajo el alero de Amaranta, una ONG activista feminista chilena. Su objetivo fue explorar con perspectiva de género la violencia digital que afectó a mujeres de Chile y el estudio se realizó al inicio de la pandemia de COVID-19. Para ello, se encuestó a 531 mujeres de todas las regiones del país. De esta muestra no probabilística, un 73,8% habían sufrido violencia digital. Los ataques más reportados fueron: violencia verbal, acoso, envío de imágenes sexuales sin consentimiento, difamación, amenazas y pérdida de cuenta o acceso no consentido y tendían a provenir de personas anónimas y de hombres de su entorno. Entre las consecuencias de estas violencias, mencionan: efectos emocionales, en la autoestima o relación con su cuerpo y sentirse vigiladas. Se concluye que la violencia digital afecta de forma desmedida a mujeres, jóvenes y niñas y que, a raíz del poco o nulo acceso a educación sexual integral y alfabetización digital, podría costarles reconocerla, prevenirla y abordarla a tiempo.

Palabras clave: violencia de género; feminismo; violencia online; violencia basada en tecnología; ciberacoso.

Violência digital de gênero no Chile: um estudo durante a pandemia de COVID-19

Resumo: Esta pesquisa foi realizada sob os auspícios da Amaranta, uma ONG ativista feminista chilena. Seu objetivo foi explorar a violência digital que afetou as mulheres no Chile desde uma perspectiva de gênero e o estudo foi realizado no início da pandemia da COVID-19. Para isso, foram entrevistadas 531 mulheres de todas as regiões do país. Desta amostra não probabilística, 73,8% sofreram violência digital. Os ataques mais relatados foram: violência verbal, assédio, envio de imagens sexuais sem consentimento, difamação, ameaças e perda de contas ou acesso não consentido e sua origem tende a ser de pessoas anônimas e de homens ao seu redor. Dentre as consequências dessa violência citam: efeitos emocionais, na autoestima ou na relação com o corpo e o sentimento de ser vigiadas. Conclui-se que a violência digital afeta desproporcionalmente as mulheres, mulheres jovens e meninas que, como resultado do pouco ou nenhum acesso à educação sexual abrangente e à alfabetização digital, pode ser difícil para eles reconhecê-la, preveni-la e combatê-la a tempo.

Palavras-chave: violência de gênero; feminismo; violência on-line; violência baseada na tecnologia; bullying cibernético.

Digital gender-based violence in Chile: a survey during the COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Until a few decades ago, violence against girls, women, sexual and gender dissidence was invisible, naturalised, and relegated to the private sphere. It was only in the second half of the 20th century, thanks to the pressure of different feminist, women's and sexual dissidence movements, that this type of violence began to be made visible and denounced in the public space. The heteropatriarchal order is a social and cultural system of domination and subordination, where the male has a higher hierarchy than the female. This gender order, that various authors call patriarchy (Segato, 2018), is based on an androcentric principle, through which violent practices are legitimised based on roles deemed natural, attributed to the male and female gender respectively. In this way, the status, roles, and social hierarchies assigned according to the gender condition of each person are naturalised. This system imposes a discourse of male superiority that seeks to control and maintain women within this patriarchal order (OACNUDH; ONU MUJERES, 2014).

Mexican feminist anthropologist Marcela Lagarde defines gender violence as "misogynistic violence against women, for being situated in unequal gender relations: oppression, exclusion, subordination, discrimination, exploitation and marginalisation. Women are victims of threats, attacks, mistreatment, injuries and misogynistic harm" (Lagarde, 2008, p. 235). According to Lagarde, it can take different forms: physical, psychological, sexual, economic and patrimonial violence, and it may occur in different areas of life, including institutions and education.

When talking about violence, one must consider that women are not a homogeneous group, so they are not affected in the same way by multiple forms of violence and social injustices. In this sense, Afro-American activists and decolonial feminist theorists such as the Combahee River Collective (1983), Kimberle Crenshaw (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (2002) and María Lugones (2008) have proposed the analytical tool called intersectional analysis. It takes charge of the imbrication of oppression, to account for how the violence that affects women, in addition to gender, is determined by aspects such as economic, cultural, age, ethnic, religious differences, etc.

The roots of violence against feminised bodies, for Segato, obey the habits

rooted in the community and family life of all the peoples of the world, expressed in routines, customs, morality and in the unequal treatment with girls and women, deemed as as something normal (Segato, 2003, p. 3). This is reflected in statistics: the World Health Organization estimates that, globally, one in four women has suffered physical or sexual violence from her partner at some point in her life (Valdés, 2022). In Chile, it has been said that, historically, this problem affects one in three women (Ministry of Women and Gender Equity, 2018, p. 11).

Digital spaces have not been immune to this social problem: on the contrary, gender violence has been transferred to the Internet and amplified, thanks to the instantaneousness, physical distance and anonymity of this technology, among other features. As the Spanish writer Remedios Zafra (2005) explains, the Internet has not resisted patriarchal power and:

> it continues to reiterate models of domination, protected in many cases by the courage anonymity provides and by the processes of self-regulation by those who see the strong historical identities, the situations of domination and the reactionary power that maintain them crumble.

Gender violence in digital spaces

Digital environments constitute a territory whose dynamics and interactions must be considered typical of Twenty First Century societies. According to Article 19, an organisation that defends freedom of expression and the right to information whose name is a citation from the article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under that number:

> The digital space has become a site that complements participation in street protests, assemblies, and face-to-face discussions. Due to their relevance as a field for social and political participation, for the exercise of rights and for the exchange of information and ideas, digital platforms are a battlefield in which freedom of expression is attacked. In this sense, harassment on the Internet, especially through threats on social media platforms, has been consolidated in the period as a way to intimidate, to instil fear and to censor (Article 19, 2016).

In other words, it is a relevant space for the voices of different actors of civil society; a public square where discourses can be disseminated, find networks and, furthermore, suffer and resist censorship and hatred. Therefore, it is not a neutral

territory, but is as politicised as life offline. Therefore, it is important to stop seeing the Internet as a separate space, because what is revealed there do not occur by spontaneous generation; activism, discourses, as well as the aforementioned violence will be transferred, continued and even amplified in the Network Society—term coined by the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells (Convivencias en Red, 2019).

In this context, the continuum of violence against women and dissident corporalities, which subordinates and devalues women and non-heterosexual people throughout their life cycle, also intersects this space. Thus, it is not a new violence or a new phenomenon that is configured, but already-known structural mechanisms of power that are maintained. As Segato points out:

> Patriarchal violence, that is to say, the misogynistic and homophobic violence of this late full modernity—our era of human rights and of the UN—reveals precisely as a symptom, expanding without restraint despite the great victories obtained in the field of the Declaration, because it expresses perfectly, with an impeccable and clearly legible script, the growing will of a world marked by "ownership", a new form of lordship resulting from the acceleration of concentration and the expansion of a sphere control of life that I describe without hesitation as para-state [...]. In those crimes, capital in its contemporary form expresses the existence of an order governed by will, that exhibits the spectacle of the possibility of existence without institutional grammar or, in other words, of inevitable institutional failure in the face of unprecedented levels of concentration of wealth. (Segato, 2018, p. 16).

The first investigations and definitions of online gender violence date back to around 2005, when the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), working on this issue since then, defined it as "acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted, or aggravated in whole or in part by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones, the internet, social media platforms, and email" (APC, 2017, p. 3). In addition, the Due Diligence Project pointed out that it may result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering (Abdul Aziz, 2017).

As the civil association Hiperderecho explains in its report on the situation of online violence in Peru, it "disproportionately affects women, LGBTIQA+ people and bodies and identities that do not comply with gender stereotypes based on the "macho", patriarchal and heteronormative scripts of society" (2019, p. 7). In other words, in addition to the various and constant threats that the community of sexual dissidents or LGBTIQ+ face in the physical, offline, or non-cybernetic

world, we have to recognize other threats that are carried out in the digital, online or also called cybernetic world. As the NGO Access Now, which advocates for an open Internet, adds, "these threats come from both the public and private sectors, and take many forms" (Access Now, 2018).

From Chile, the journalist Paz Peña Ochoa has pointed out in her reports covering all of Latin America that "violence through electronic media is not something new or unique to the platforms, but a continuum of sexist violence across the culture in our countries" (Peña, 2017, p. 3). She adds that, in our region, the phenomenon must be addressed both by the States in public policy, as well as by private intermediaries. Peña's claims are part of a framework grounded on a study that invites to problematize the virtual as a contradictory space. Online networks and platforms have served to express the ideas and actions of various social organisations defending the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ community, as well as to denounce discrimination and violence. However, at the same time, it has become a space of insecurity and violence against women and the LGBTIQ+ community. This is but one more symptom of the rejection of the discourses that defend gender equality.

The Hiperderecho report also points out "the opportunities and risks that are presented to us in virtual spaces are different according to our gender, social class and ethnicity", whose recognition:

> is crucial to challenge the idea that virtual spaces are neutral or free of power dynamics. For women, the LGBTIQ+ community, activists and all those who actively challenge heteronormative, patriarchal, racist and sexist norms, the internet can become a violent space (2018, p. 47)

Despite its impact on the lives of those communities, this problem has not been given the importance it deserves, at least not in Chile, largely due to the feeling that "what happens on the Internet is 'passing' or not comparable to the 'real world'" (Ananias; Vergara, 2019). At the State level, the only figures collected are those by the Superintendence of Education, which is limited to receiving cases of plain "cyberbullying" in schools; despite the fact that the 2018 and 2019 reports raised that it mainly affected adolescents and girls (Superintendency of Education, 2021), therefore not addressing the issue from a gender perspective.

There is no law in Chile that addresses digital violence comprehensively; only sexual assaults, considered "serious", such as child pornography and grooming, and economic crimes such as digital fraud are considered in the Penal Code. Survivors of digital gender violence need to find protection under the Domestic Violence Law, which only helps in attacks committed by relatives, partners or ex-partners

and leaves out attacks committed by anonymous or unrelated offenders, or seek safeguard measures and compensation under the Civil Code–a long, expensive process that does not always provide results. Additionally, the police are badly or unprepared to investigate and therefore receive reports of cases of cyber violence. All of the above is a consequence of the absence of public policy aimed at making digital spaces free of violence.

However, we can mention important advances in the literature as references to further investigate the subject. At an international level, within the main studies, we can mention the research carried out by APC between 2012 and 2014, where they analysed 500 cases of online gender violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines to understand the main characteristics of this form of violence in developing countries. Despite all the cultural differences, the mapping data concluded that survivors are more likely: to be between 18 and 30 years of age; that the violation be perpetrated by a known person (40% of cases); that it took place in Facebook; that it consisted of a form of emotional damage; and that the abuse be repeated. In addition, abuses may involve threats of violence, emotional extortion or sharing private information (Plou, 2014).

At the national level, we can mention the pioneer study by the members of the NGO Amaranta, Cecilia Ananías and Karen Vergara (2019), focused on the experiences of feminists and other women activists on the Internet; the report of the Fundación Datos Protegidos (2018), that investigated the forms of violence on the Internet and possible pieces of civil law to address them; and the investigation "Online Violence and hate speech", against lesbians on the Internet, by Breaking the Silence Lesbian Group (Agrupación Lésbica Rompiendo el Silencio, 2020).

The studies have focused their analysis on: identifying subjects affected by online gender violence; who the main aggressors are; the modalities of violence; the platforms where these acts of violence are carried out; the main consequences for victims of gender violence online. Some offer strategies for reporting, defence, resistance and care for violence in virtual spaces. In general, the violence most often reported in the virtual space against women and dissidents are: verbal attacks; bullying or harassment; unauthorised access to one's accounts; receiving sexual images without consent; smear campaigns; threats or extortion; online identity theft; dissemination of personal information; and sexual exploitation.

The Mexican lawyer and activist Gisela Pérez de Acha (2018), explains that online gender violence is closely linked to the gender stereotypes that we learn since our childhood. Women are excluded from topics such as sports, politics and technology and are required to act as "ladies": well behaved, submissive, maidenly. The author delves deeper:

> Women who think that those things 'are none of our business' or who freely enjoy our sexuality through technology are met with violence. It is a social punishment to keep at bay dissident women who contest their roles (Pérez de Acha, 2018).

Online violence has a psychological and emotional impact on those who suffer it. As the journalists and researchers Florencia Goldsman and Graciela Natansohn (2016) claim, online violence has very real consequences in so-called real life: it damages reputations, isolates victims and limits their mobility both on the Internet and in public, it generates depression, fear, anxiety, and sleep disorders, among other issues.

It should also be noted that there are also cases where the virtual has gone offline, as in cases of physical violence, such as the attack against Carolina Torres Urbina, in 2019 in Chile, who was beaten due to her gender expression as a lesbian. She suffered a fractured skull and internal bleeding. Her attackers had previously threatened her, both online and in person. This hatred continued after the attack, to the point that a member of Carabineros (Chilean police force) wrote "one *qlia* less" (sic) in the Facebook comments of an online news site after reading about the attack (Agrupación Lésbica Rompiendo el Silencio, 2019).[1]

As Karen Vergara explains in a contribution to the Unesco Chair in Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (AMIDI, 2020), the proliferation of gender violence on the Internet responds to a number of factors:

> Lack of transversal digital literacy and transversal training, absence of comprehensive sexual education policies with a gender perspective, and conceiving the Internet as a tool that ends when one turns off the device whereby it is used (Vergara, 2020)

It is therefore necessary to know, implement and seek strategies within communities to identify, prevent and resist online violence. Resistance strategies vary and depend on each context, but as studies point out, we can mention education first—that is, instances to raise awareness and educate about violence in digital spaces. To the need that citizens learn to recognize online violence, one must add clarity in the instances available to be able to denounce it. It is also important to implement more research related to the subject in order to know the global and local impact of this situation.

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[1] "Qlia" (abbreviation of "*culiada*"), colloquial profane to refer to another person in a derogatory manner.

Legal framework

This study was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, when access to digital spaces to study, work or socialise was massive. In that context of emergency, there was an increase in violence. According to the independent investigative journalism medium CIPER, "in 2020 calls to the Carabineros Family Phone #149 totaled 24,806 between January and September, marking a surge of 43.8%" (Segovia; Pérez, 2021, web). That shows the exacerbation of violence, related to an increase in cases of gender-based violence on the Internet, the main way to socialise and/or maintain contact with other people during the pandemic.

In this more specific area, a study carried out by UN Women Chile (ONU Mujeres, 2020), together with the NGO Amaranta and Datos Protegidos, addressed this phenomenon: 22% of girls between the ages of 12 and 14 had already experienced digital violence; a figure that hikes to 41% among female youths between the ages of 15 and 18. In the case of male children, 13% had already experienced this violence between the ages of 12 and 14 and the figure increased to 24% among adolescents. Some of the most frequent forms of violence were insults; receiving photographs of genitalia without consent; and sexual harassment. Sexual violence affected girls and young women especially.

As already mentioned, the legislation regarding digital spaces in Chile is outdated, so the legal apparatus does not include bases that respond to online gender violence. During 2019, civil society organisations and parliamentarians promoted the Pack Law project, as a way of addressing legal gaps regarding the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images on the Internet. According to Deputy Maite Orsini, in an interview with CNN Chile (2019), "social networks or the digital world were a kind of tax haven for attacks and violations, particularly against women, girls and adolescents" (CNN, 2019). However, this law project does not fully respond to the problem of gender violence on the Internet. The dissemination of non-consensual material is only one of the forms this violence can take. For example, identity theft by taking control of a social network profile, or checking a person's cell phone without their permission or authorization are also forms of violence that are commonly invisible or silenced, either due to lack of information to be able to identify them, lack of public policy or also other forms linked to patriarchal violence.

Subsequently, the same Representative Orsini, together with civil society organisations, prepared a more comprehensive bill that sought to address digital violence. Unfortunately, it still sits in Congress. In addition, in 2022, the proposal for the new Chilean Constitution included a norm to guarantee digital spaces free of violence. However, the rejection of the new constitutional text by national plebiscite let the legal vacuum in the country continue.

Methodology

This research was conducted by members of the NGO Amaranta, a feminist organisation founded in 2018 in Concepción, Chile, to prevent and eradicate gender violence through education. Workshops, free circulation of educational materials, research and street protest are part of their actions. The NGO works around feminism and gender perspectives in different lines: Art and Culture, Women and Work, Children and Youth, Mental Health, Communication Media, Human Rights and Technologies. It is in this last area where the Aurora Project was born, with support from the Open Society Foundations and afterwards by the Indela Fund. Its aim was to carry out this investigation, to later rethink the workshops and educational materials that the organisation generates.

In order to know the scenario at the national level, between April and June 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, an online survey was developed and disseminated among women (cis, trans and non-binary). As there was a danger that the survey would be subject to digital attacks, that it would be altered, or that those who responded to it would be attacked, it was not disseminated openly on social media, but under more secure conditions. Among the dissemination strategies, private messages were sent via WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to different women's networks; general calls on the NGO Amaranta and the coordinators' networks (without openly disseminating the survey link, but only notifying that this instrument was being applied and that it could be requested internally); emails to collectives and groups throughout the national territory; and by word of mouth. The goal was set to obtain respondents from all regions of the country, and most of them come from the two cities with the largest population in the country: Santiago and Concepción. Therefore, it was a non-probabilistic sampling by quotas.

The instrument contained 15 questions that sought to determine how exposed they were to this type of violence, characterise the attacks, as well as collect their self-defence strategies and testimonies. Unlike previous works, this time respondents other than activists also participated, in order to have a general view of the panorama. In addition, as a result of the educational mission of the Amaranta NGO, the survey was formulated so that the respondents learned about digital gender violence while participating, including definitions and descriptions that gave visibility, named and problematized this issue.

Respondents' characterization

The survey was answered by 531 women (cis, trans, non-binary), mainly be-

tween 26 and 35 years old (47.8% of those surveyed) and between 18 and 25 years old (30.1%); although it was also answered by older women and girls and youths from age 12. It was possible to obtain a representative sample of all the regions of the country (over 10 responses for each geographic division), although the areas with the highest participation were the Metropolitan area (105); Biobío (85); Coquimbo (50); Atacama (40); Arica and Parinacota (27); and Valparaíso (26).

Among those who responded, 56.7% considered themselves activists or leaders, while 43.3% did not consider themselves as such. Of the 301 women who answered affirmatively, 83.8% defined themselves as feminists; 33.4% as Human Rights activists; 22.7% LGBTIQ+ activists; and 19.5% defended the rights of animals and species. In this item, they could mark more than one option and many defended multiple causes. There were also women who were active in neighbourhood councils or unions, in political parties, for the rights of native peoples, and in the field of education/culture. Finally, 95.9% of the respondents stated that they did not have any type of disability; 6 declared having a physical disability; another 6 of a sensory nature; and 10 claimed to be neurodiverse.

Results and quantitative analysis

Out of 531 surveyed, 62.9% declared having suffered violence on the Internet, while 37.1% declared that they did not. Moreover, after counter-asking in item 14 "Have you had any sexual-affective relationship where your partner (formal or casual relationship) exercised some type of control or violence through digital devices?". 57 respondents who said that they had not suffered violence in digital spaces responded for yes to this item, when reviewing the description that was given of different forms of digital control. Those were the review of contacts with whom they had interacted or called; device review; being forced to hand over passwords; being forced to share their location; social media hacking; non-consensual dissemination of intimate images; and threats. This means that even having been subject to control as a form of digital violence, those were not recognized as such. One respondent claimed that they had responded negatively by mistake and later described the different forms of violence that they had suffered in digital spaces:

> "Yes, he checked my phone and computer. He even installed a program on my computer to find out what I was writing."

> "Went through everything on my Facebook and in my email."

> "He forced me to share my GPS location."

If the figure is corrected based on the counter-question, adding these 58 cases to the 334 who had answered affirmatively to question 6, the total is 392 women who suffered violence in digital spaces out of 531 respondents, which is 73.8% of the sample.

When inquiring about the type of violence they had suffered, allowing more than one box to be checked, the most reported attacks were: verbal violence (66.4% of those surveyed had suffered it); harassment and/or bullying (59%); receiving of videos or photographs of penises without consent (49.6%); defamation (24.5%); threats (23.6%); account loss or unauthorised access by third parties (16.5%). Although to a lesser extent, account suspensions due to mass denunciations (6.7%); identity theft (5.2%); doxing (4.5%); use of their body or face to create humiliating images (3.5%); and the disclosure of intimate images without consent (3.2%) were also reported. It should be noted that the respondents could answer more than one option and, in general, they suffered a great variety of attacks, either throughout their lives, or by the same person or group of people. Attacks came mainly from anonymous users or from false profiles (41.9%); followed by attacks by a partner or ex-partner (18.1%); and attacks by a man or group of men from the respondent's circle (14, 8%). When asked about attacks coming from women or groups of women from their own circle, only 33 respondents (9.9%) answered yes.

About the platforms where the attacks took place, where more than one option to be marked as well, most of the cases were concentrated in Facebook (209 cases); Instagram (131); WhatsApp (108); Twitter (52); and Gmail (41). "Other" categories mentioned were Tumblr; text messages (SMS); forums; video games; other messaging platforms (Telegram; Messenger; chatrooms) and even cell phone games such as the Apalabrados chat.[2]

When asked how the attack affected them, seeking to characterise its consequences, 273 women claimed to be emotionally affected (82.2% of the sample); and in 92 cases it affected their self-esteem or relationship with their bodies. They also felt watched or insecure (81 cases); the attack triggered psychological problems (81 cases); isolated them (54 cases) and in 51 cases, it affected their health on a physical level (headaches, etc.).

Afterwards, 66% of those surveyed blocked their attackers; 47.5% increased the security of their devices or accounts; 23.6% discussed the attack with their entourage; and 22.7% discussed it with friends and/or organisations. In addition, 14.6% stated that they had not done anything; 14.3% closed their account or stopped using the social network where they were attacked; and 11% made the fact known on their social networks. It should be noted that 12.2% (41 cases) tried to file a complaint

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[2]   Word video game similar to Scrabble, developed for cell phones that became popular at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

with the Police Investigation division (PDI) of *Carabineros* or the Prosecutor's Office, the majority without a positive response. There were also women who began to go to therapy (32 cases) or who began to document or investigate the subject (28 cases).

Finally, 46.3% of the respondents (246 cases) stated that they had maintained a sexual-affective relationship where their partner exercised some type of control or violence through digital devices. The most reported attacks were the search of devices, such as telephones or computers (197 cases), control of the people with whom they interacted (127 cases), forcing them to share device or social network passwords (50 cases), use of applications to intimidating them (48 cases) and threats to disclose intimate photographs (26 cases).

Qualitative analysis

The first visible relationship that could be established was between question 6: "Have you suffered violence on the Internet?" and question 14: "Have you had any sexual-affective relationship where your partner (formal or casual relationship) has exercised some type of control or violence through digital devices?": 11.1% of the respondents who answered yes to the former answer yes to the second, after reviewing the list that described the forms that aggressions can take, such as surveillance and control of passwords and devices. This was planned in the methodology, since the instrument also sought to be educational and establish the conversation on the topic. Among the situations of violence listed, one of those with the highest response rate was "Yes, he checked my phone or computer without my consent."

This identified phenomenon is similar to what occurs in more traditionally recognized gender violence, where many survivors find it difficult to identify what they are suffering, because those who attack them are people who say or said they love them. According to Rita Segato (2003), the ideal "violent subject" is an unknown subject, who is in a dark place and attacks us. However, several feminist authors and researchers in the areas of health and criminology have pointed out (Rohlfs; Valls-Llobet, 2003; Nuñez et al., 2008; Trias Capella et al., 2013; Guerrero-Molina et al., 2020) that gender-based violence usually comes from people close to the victim/survivor of violence and it is more difficult to understand that an event of this nature is being experienced when it comes to a partner, friend, close person, etc.

Based on this finding, it is important to stress the importance of not seeing digital gender violence as a "separate" phenomenon or that it "appears on the Internet", but rather that it is, in effect, a continuation of violence against women and diversity in a space mediated by technology (Peña, 2017). As a result of this, the NGO Amaranta subsequently launched the #DigitalEsReal campaign to give

a name to different types of violence that occur on the Internet, to show that the control of devices by a partner is not love and not to underestimate these forms of aggression (Amaranta, 2022).

Regarding the forms of violence, several had been identified in the previous study by Ananías and Vergara in 2019 and registered similar rates. The only new option that elicited high rates was receiving of sexual videos or photographs (in 100% of the cases of male genitalia) without consent. This was so normalised that until then it had not even occurred to the researchers to recognize such attacks as forms of violence.

In addition, opportunistic violences were identified, due to knowledge gaps in cybersecurity, generally because this area is considered inherently masculine (Estébanez; De Filippo; Serial, 2003; Arango, 2004; Causa, 2009). Thus, in Chile, only one in five career enrollments in the Technology area correspond to women (Ministerio de la Mujer y la Equidad de Género, 2019). This is the case of account loss or unauthorised access by third parties and account suspensions due to massive complaints, forms of attack that are preventable if people learn to manage the Security and Privacy options of their accounts. For this reason, the NGO Amaranta has subsequently studied the phenomenon and offered feminist digital self-defence workshops, seeking to fill those gaps.

Regarding the attackers, although a significant percentage (almost 42%) were anonymous or false profiles, the rest of the attacks (42.8%) came from partners, ex-partners, known groups of men and, to a lesser extent, women around the respondents. This is in line with the aforementioned research carried out by APC between 2012 and 2014, which reflected similar results (40% of the attackers are known to the victim). Although the Internet provides other tools such as anonymity and can expose us to attackers in other parts of the country or the world, the attackers are generally close. For this reason, we must stop seeing it as a problem technologically impossible to address and start legislating on the subject: to provide tools, sanctions and reparation in cases where the identity of the attacker is known and to get out of the legal vacuum where distant aggressors participate in massive harassment due to misogyny and opportunism, among other forms of violence in digital spaces and continue to be protected.

Regarding the platforms where the attacks occurred, those usually coincide with the social media being used the most at the moment. Although it was not possible to record in this study at the beginning of the pandemic, the NGO Amaranta subsequently received dozens of call for help for violence on platforms that began to be used more in the context of COVID-19, such as Google Classroom[3] and the Roblox[4] game. The

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[3]   Educational web service developed by Google that became popular at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic for conducting online classes.

[4]   Online gaming platform where users can create their own virtual worlds.

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descriptions of how the attack affected the survivors account for the consequences of an digital attack on the physical body, its relationship with it, and with the person's life itself. Meanwhile, the answers about what respondents did after suffering the violence show how women survive and resist with the tools they have access to.

The respondents who declared having experienced violence pointed out a series of problems they faced when reporting. They noted, for example, that state institutions did not function as they would have expected and did not respond to situations of gender violence on the Internet. In order to analyse these elements more thoroughly, the following table brings quotes that better illustrate the issues:

Category	Quotes	Analysis
Negligence of responsible state entities	"I felt powerless, the entities that were supposed to protect you did nothing and would only do so if there was clear evidence of mistreatment or threat. No matter the psychological damage that cyber abuse entails, you must bear it alone or with your close circle while the aggressor remains unpunished and many times without having any idea of the complaints."	One of the relevant elements of this response is that it explicitly states that when making the complaint and/or resorting to the corresponding State entities, there was no understanding of the characteristics of gender violence on the Internet, where the expressions of this violence are not given explicitly (in their majority), so that in the absence of this evidence, many times the cases are dismissed, which shows shortcomings that the country's judicial system presents regarding the reception of complaints of gender violence, both at a general level, and to what this research refers to, related to the Internet. According to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (2007), States must act effectively on these issues: In particular, they must have an adequate legal protection framework, with effective application and prevention policies and practices that allow them to act effectively in response to complaints. The prevention strategy must be comprehensive, that is, it must prevent risk factors and at the same time, strengthen institutions so that they can provide an effective response to cases of violence against women. Likewise, States must adopt preventive measures in specific cases in which it is evident that certain women and girls may be victims of violence.
	"The Prosecutor's Office archives EVERYTHING. They do not care about what they consider to be a petty crime. In addition, in Antofagasta there is no Cybercrime [subdivision of the Investigative Police], everything takes three times as long. All bad.	Along the same lines as stated above, the Prosecutor's Office, an autonomous body in our country, follows the line of the judiciary, thus evidencing general shortcomings at the state level that need to be overcome to effectively address this violence. On the other hand, it is necessary to state that respondents from regions outside the RM, indicated that in the places where they resided the institution did not have certain specialised brigades.

| Therapeutic support and close circles | "I recovered through therapy and support from family, partner, friends, and colleagues"

"My close circle blocked my attackers from their social networks and gave me support"

"I did not want to access justice, I preferred to take refuge in my family" | Based on previous analysis, it was also necessary to ask where the respondents could receive help, listening and support after the violence they experienced. For most of them, one of the most useful tools to deal with these experiences was, on the one hand, psychological therapy and also friends and their own families, prioritising the ties and networks that did not judge them and who provided support, affection and company throughout the process.

In other words, social support and psychological therapy were the tools that allowed them to face violence, facing the problems they faced in state institutions.

Social support will be understood as follows:

Lin's (1986) concept of structured social support refers to the instrumental or expressive provisions that the community, social networks and people with whom close and trusted ties are established provide to individuals in their community. (Estrada; Olaizola; Rodríguez, p. 524, 2010). |

Table 1. Main categories

This research shows that, today, the main way to survive and resist this violence is by relying on one's own networks of friends, families, groups, and therapists. This reveals an abandonment by the State, by law and public policy, that is faced as a community. This is in line with the resistance, resilience and re-existence that is proposed by feminist, decolonial and community movements. As stated by the Cuban teachers González and Durán (2021), in Latin America, women who face various conditions of vulnerability and precariousness

> act and create ways to re-exist, especially in the face of the expressions of violence imposed for decades by neoliberal policies that impoverish communities, and affect them, above all. They also reinvent new ways of being, which generate solidarity and sisterhood (p. 130).

Finally, as an improvement since the previous study, of 2019, to the one carried out during the pandemic, there was an advance in the number of survivors who discussed it with their activism spaces. In 2019, 75.5% had declared that cyber violence was not discussed in their organisations or activist collectives. It is proposed that this change took place due to historical events that became milestones, such as the Nido Case (a sexist forum that published intimate and non-intimate material without the consent of women and youths, sharing their data and even inviting to kidnapping them, denounced in 2019), as well as the social revolt known as the Chilean Spring, in October 2019, where surveillance, censorship and state violence were conducted using technologies); and the COVID-19 pandemic itself. All these

events modified the idea that the Internet was something accessory, apart or "less real", and showed how united our lives are to this space, to the point that today this technology is considered a Human Right.

Conclusions

One of the main conclusions of our research indicates that digital violence is frequent in the lives of women, youths and girls, to the point of having been normalised. The difficulties in becoming aware of the violence experienced and reactions such as "doing nothing" or deciding not to seek justice speak of how frequent it has become and of the helplessness felt by the survivors. It should be noted that we did not find a higher frequency of attacks against women activists, compared to those who were not. Therefore, although it is still an exploratory work, we believe that the gender factor is the main one that exposes us to violence in digital spaces. These data constitute an alert about the ways in which gender violence on the Internet is treated by legislation and public policy. This research allows us to understand that it is a multidimensional phenomenon that not only affects cyberspace but also has direct repercussions on the lives of the people who experience it. Considering this violence as part of the oppressions that we expect to eradicate from our society is essential, since as societies advance, new violence is expressed, but also emerge new ways of resisting and organising against it by women, sexual dissidents and civil society.

Cyberfeminism was a concept coined by Sadie Plant and by the VNS Matrix artivist project at the beginning of the 1990s (Galloway, 1997) to define the fusion between cyberspace and feminism. Today in Latin America, it has been defined by the Argentine communicator Inés Binder as a network of political alliances where not only people connect, but also generate company at a diversity of levels. That idea makes one feel that "the others are there" (Binder, 2017, p. 35) and provides a substantial contribution to the current health context worldwide, since it has allowed the establishment of tools and strategies that allow women and dissidents to stay connected and safe, despite hate speech, cyber attacks, hacking and other various forms of online violence.

The work around the recognition of gender violence on the Internet, as one more form of violence expected to be overcome by society, is a permanent labour. Both feminist groups and individuals, territories, schools and civil society organisations must continue advance education, dissemination and prevention on this issue. Therefore, multiple challenges remain, especially with regard to public policies and the functioning of our country's institutions, since, as has been mentioned

throughout this article, they have not been able to cope nor have they responded properly. On the contrary, we can affirm that they have acted mainly with negligence and without taking into account a gender approach in accordance with the international frameworks developed in this regard. Along with this, Chilean institutions have not considered comprehensive sexual education as a necessity to eradicate this violence, which turns the body of women—both digital and physical—into a battlefield. Another important factor to consider is the lack of access to digital literacy, given that such violence occurs amid ignorance and opportunism. Such is the case of unauthorised access to accounts or loss of accounts. As Natansohn (2014) points out:

> "We observe that, to different degrees and with still little visible effects, the need to mainstream the gender perspective has been identified for the treatment of Internet governance issues, open and free access, freedom of expression, privacy, security, and human rights of women and men. It happens that the verbs used in these documents (stimulate, promote, contribute, foster) will not be sufficiently performative without specific regulations in each sector of application, which transforms these declarations of intent into concrete measures, with benefits for those who comply with them and sanctions for others who don't." (Natansohn, 2014, p. 3)

However, we consider it relevant to continue promoting the organisations that position the Internet as a space for political dispute where to position feminist and social demands, in such a way as to generate networks and thus achieve the objectives of being able to live in a society that is more just and free of violence. The issue is currently under discussion. When reviewing the state of laws and government policies on the subject worldwide, there are still few countries with laws that specifically address this violence. Simultaneously with this publication, in March 2023, Session No. 67 of the Commission on the Status of Women is held, whose priority theme is "Innovation, technological and educational change in the digital age to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and children", added to the session "Challenges and opportunities to achieve gender equality in the empowerment of rural women and girls". Such spaces will seek to open the dialogue on this situation worldwide and propose urgent actions to continue advancing on the subject.

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