A PROGRAM FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY COEXISTENCE AND PREVENTION OF VIRTUAL VIOLENCE: “A CONVIVÊNCIA ÉTICA ON-LINE”

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ABSTRACT: A research-action study of the research-formation type will be presented, grounded in Piagetian constructivist theory, to understand how an educational intervention can promote ethical coexistence in online environments. To achieve this objective, the "A Convivência Ética On-line" program was developed, implemented, and evaluated, which was applied to students in the 8th and 9th grades of a public school in the Municipal Network of Campinas, São Paulo. Data were collected through formative assessments, questionnaires, and focus groups and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results reflected significant transformations identified in the participants, represented through three case studies in this article, regarding students' involvement in virtual aggression situations and advances in the dimensions addressed during the intervention: online behaviors and virtual risks. This research is justified due to the lack of scientifically evaluated Brazilian programs aimed at promoting ethical online coexistence, especially regarding the prevention of virtual violence and the promotion of universally desirable moral values essential for coexistence in virtual and offline environments.


RESUMO: Irá ser apresentada uma pesquisa-ação do tipo pesquisa-formação, fundamentada na teoria construtivista piagetiana, com o propósito de compreender como uma intervenção educativa pode promover a convivência ética em ambientes on-line. Para alcançar esse objetivo, foi desenvolvido, implementado e avaliado o programa “A Convivência Ética On-line”, o qual foi aplicado a estudantes do 8º e 9º anos de uma escola pública da Rede Municipal de Campinas, São Paulo. Os dados foram coletados por meio de avaliações formativas, questionários e grupos focais, e foram posteriormente analisados tanto quantitativamente quanto qualitativamente. Os resultados obtidos refletiram em transformações significativas identificadas nos participantes, representados por meio de três estudos de caso neste artigo, no que diz respeito ao envolvimento dos estudantes em situações de agressões virtuais, bem como em relação aos avanços nas dimensões abordadas durante a intervenção: comportamentos online e riscos virtuais. Esta pesquisa se justifica devido à carência de programas brasileiros avaliados de forma científica que visem à promoção da convivência ética online, especialmente no que se refere à prevenção da violência virtual e à promoção de valores morais universalmente desejáveis, fundamentais para a convivência tanto no ambiente virtual quanto fora dele.


RESUMEN: Presentamos una investigación-acción, del tipo investigación-formación, basada en la teoría constructivista piagetiana, con el objetivo de comprender cómo una intervención educativa puede forjar una convivencia ética en internet. Para lograr este objetivo, diseñamos, implementamos y evaluamos el programa “A Convivência Ética On-line”, que fue desarrollado con estudiantes de 8º y 9º año de una escuela pública de Campinas-SP. Los datos se produjeron a través de evaluaciones formativas, cuestionarios y grupos focales; y analizados cuantitativa y cualitativamente. Los resultados encontrados reflejaron importantes transformaciones identificadas en los participantes, representados por tres estudios de caso en este artículo, respecto de la implicación de los estudiantes en situaciones de agresión virtual y sus avances en las dimensiones trabajadas durante la intervención: conductas en internet y riesgos virtuales. La presente investigación se justifica por la ausencia de programas brasileños científicamente evaluados destinados a la convivencia ética en internet, particularmente actuando en la prevención de la violencia virtual en la promoción de valores morales universalmente deseables, fundamentales para la convivencia tanto en el ciberespacio como fuera de él.

**Introduction**

The coexistence problems arising from online relationships, such as cyberbullying and other forms of virtual violence, have become increasingly prevalent. This is due to children and adolescents’ growing use of the internet and social media each year. In 2021, according to the TIC Kids Online Brasil (2022), there was a notable increase in the number of children and adolescents aged 9 to 17 who used the internet (93% in 2021, compared to 89% in 2019).

However, as a society, we have made limited progress in promoting conscious, safe, respectful, and positive internet use. Data released by Safernet Brazil (2022) indicate that reports of xenophobia (a type of "hate speech") on social media grew by an impressive 874% in 2022 compared to the previous year. The study “Hidden in Plain Sight: More Dangers of Cyberbullying Emerge”, conducted by McAfee Corp (2022) reveals that 22% of Brazilian children and adolescents aged 10 to 18 admitted to cyberbullying with someone they knew. A survey conducted in 2019 by ADL’s (the Anti-Defamation League) Center on Technology and Society (2019), reports that 65% of players aged 13 to 17 have experienced severe violence while playing online, including physical threats, stalking, and harassment.

All these actions that occur in cyberspace are characterized by disrespect. However, various forms of violence can be identified in the virtual realm. Cyber aggression, for instance, refers to a broadcast of charge with the intention to harm a person using devices such as cell phones, the internet, and social media. On the other hand, cyberbullying corresponds to deliberate and violent actions among peers in the virtual environment (DEMPSEY et al., 2011; AVILÉS, 2013), meaning between individuals who are at the same hierarchical level of authority, such as students in a school. Provocations in the virtual realm, which have gained prominence among adolescents, are referred to as cyber teasing, representing aggression disguised as humor present in memes and stickers shared on social networks. The authors of cyber teasing often justify their actions by attributing the concept of "playfulness" to aggression, indicating a lack of moral sensitivity by not recognizing the absence of the value of respect in their practices (LA TAILLE, 2009). Hate speech, also present in memes and stickers, consists of discriminating against or inciting discrimination against a particular social group or people who share a common characteristic (SILVA et al., 2011).

These issues of online coexistence are not recent. A study (PLAN, 2010) conducted with 5,000 Brazilian students aged between 10 and 14 indicated that in the year 2010, the rates of aggression in the virtual environment were concerning: 17% had already been victims of cyberbullying, with 87% of these cases occurring on social networks, at a time when these
platforms were not as numerous as they are today. A survey was conducted with adolescents (BOZZA; TOGNETTA, 2012), who were asked about their involvement in victimization, humiliation, or any other form of violence on the internet. It was found that among the participants in the sample, 40% were victims of bullying through social networks, 16% had bullied a classmate, and 44% knew someone who was a target of bullying.

Abramovay et al. (2016) identified that in 2015, cyberbullying had surpassed other types of school violence. Data released by Stelko-Pereira et al. (2018) indicate that among 1,534 Brazilian students, 37% were involved in virtual violence situations. A study by UNICEF (2019), which included over 170,000 participants from 30 countries, pointed out that in Brazil, 37% of respondents claimed to have been victims of virtual aggression. Social networks were identified where most violence cases among young people in the country occur, with Facebook being highlighted as the primary medium. Furthermore, 36% of Brazilian adolescents reported having skipped school after suffering online aggression from classmates, making Brazil the country with the highest percentage in the survey. This underscores the impact of the forms of violence experienced on the internet on school relationships and the "real" lives of our students.

Instances of cyber aggression are detrimental and pose a threat to the mental health and psychological well-being of those involved. Studies conducted by Garaigordobil, Mollo-Torrico and Páez (2020) indicate that victims of online aggression experience feelings of insecurity, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, irritability, depression, suicidal ideation (some even commit suicide), post-traumatic stress, fear, anger, and frustration, somatic symptoms, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, phobias, academic performance problems, among others. Furthermore, these consequences tend to persist in the medium and long term. The authors also assert that those who engage in cyber-aggressive behaviors are more likely to exhibit moral disengagement, lack of empathy, absence of moral sensitivity, low emotional stability, difficulty in following rules, delinquent behavior, issues with aggressive behavior, technology dependence, school absenteeism, alcohol, and drug consumption, as well as feelings of emotional loneliness (GARAIGORDOBIL; MOLLO-TORRICO; PÁEZ, 2020, p. 2).

Witnesses of violence who observe the aggressions and are unable to intervene to assist the victim end up accumulating a significant sense of guilt and, over time, may become insensitive to violence as they adopt the belief that such behavior is socially acceptable (GARAIGORDOBIL, 2011). This indicates that the data alert us to the importance of the damage to mental and physical health and the impacts on social relationships present in the
lives of aggressors, victims, and bystanders, indicating suffering for all parties involved in online violence situations.

It is a fact that online violence practiced or experienced by children and adolescents, in some way, reverberates in the school environment, as cyberspace is a place of student interaction. However, the approaches adopted by Brazilian schools to address these issues have limited educational impact. This is because actions focus on reacting in a punitive and isolated manner after a crisis without adequately investing in prevention, education, moral development, and the promotion of ethical values essential for coexistence on the internet and beyond.

Given this reality, there is an urgent need to incorporate these issues as an integral part of the school curriculum, emphasizing promoting healthy coexistence. This aims not only to prevent risks, aggression, or other disrespectful forms of online interaction but also to provide learning opportunities for the ethical, safe, healthy, conscious, positive, and responsible use of technological tools.

To effectively address this area, schools should not limit themselves to isolated actions such as cross-curricular projects, extracurricular activities, educational campaigns, or lectures delivered by lawyers or technology experts. These initiatives, for the most part, are informative or focused on legal aspects, proving insufficient to promote personal transformation or the formation of more ethical individuals. Working on online coexistence is complex and requires not only an understanding of what happens in the virtual world and the support of research to underpin this discussion but also deliberate intent, planning, proper training of professionals involved, as well as the development of proposals for dialogue, reflection, collective discussion, and educational agreements with students.

Consequently, the need for the school to act systematically through an educational program integrated into the curriculum has been justified. The purpose is to promote the continuous education of its students regarding responsible and safe internet use, as well as respectful coexistence in various virtual environments, including the principles advocated by the BNCC (BRASIL, 2018).

In this perspective, it was assumed that educational actions with this purpose should be informative and formative, be based on active methodologies, approach content reflectively, and aim to develop socioemotional competencies and moral values. Furthermore, it is imperative for the school to recognize education for safe and ethical use of virtual environments as an intrinsic responsibility, not just a concession since these environments also constitute spaces of interaction among members of the school community.
It is essential to develop programs in Brazilian schools based on academic research capable of indicating more effective strategies and relevant content to be addressed in initiatives to educate children and adolescents. In this regard, an educational program called “Convivência Ética On-line (Online Ethical Conviviality)”, was developed, designed to meet the needs of adolescents who interact in the current cyberspace, reflecting on topics related to virtual images, online relationships, harmful online behaviors, virtual risks, and responsible technology use.

The objective of the research “Adolescentes e interações on-line: uma proposta de intervenção educativa visando à convivência ética virtual (Adolescents and Online Interactions: A Proposal for Educational Intervention Aimed at Ethical Virtual Coexistence)” (BOZZA, 2021) was to understand how an educational intervention can contribute to promoting ethical coexistence on the internet and social media. To achieve this goal, the authors created, implemented, and evaluated their academic program, which was applied to 8th and 9th-grade students in a public school in the Municipal Network of Campinas.

The data underwent quantitative and qualitative analysis, employing the triangulation of methods and previously established evaluative categories. This article will present a selection of the results, focusing on the transformations observed in the participants through the study of individual cases. Specifically, the involvement of participants in virtual violence situations, both as targets and as perpetrators, will be examined, as well as the changes identified about the addressed dimensions, online behaviors, and virtual risks. It was chosen to highlight three subjects for presenting and analyzing the results, considering that the research encompassed more than 45 students.

Methodology

A research-action approach of the research-training type will be adopted to implement and evaluate a novel educational program with students from a school. The methodological choices were grounded in authors such as Thiollent (1986), Santos (2019) and Cazzolato (2008).

The primary focus was to promote the transformation of students' behavior regarding their online experiences through a formative process, and we chose to conduct action research. The main objective of this approach is to enable both researchers and group participants to collaborate in seeking solutions to the problems faced, thus aiming for transformative action (Thiollent, 1986). Cazzolato (2008) highlights some essential assumptions related to this type
of research, including equal and democratic involvement of the actors, maintaining horizontal relationships between researchers and participants, organizing means to diagnose the problem and propose actions collectively, as well as generating knowledge, learning, and change in a co-responsible and participatory manner.

Therefore, action research emerged as a methodological strategy consistent with our objectives, allowing for interaction between researchers and research participants to identify problems and collaboratively seek solutions. Throughout this process, actions and interventions were monitored to expand researchers' understanding and promote awareness among the individuals and groups involved, as advocated by Thiollent (1986, p. 16).

Additionally, we adopted a research-training approach inspired by the concepts of Barbier (2002 apud SANTOS, 2019). In this context, the researcher assumes an active role, engaging in training, self-training, and learning processes. The subject is considered an agent capable of critically and reflectively investigating their practice. The issue is active in research training, and their voice is recognized as a fundamental element of the research. Therefore, we sought data collection and production, including records, narrative expressions, and images as objects of investigation. In the words of Santos (2019, p. 108), in research training, subjects are encouraged to express themselves, often promoting exchange and sharing with others involved in the process. Resources used in research training include records, research memorials, professional practice, conversations, and open interviews.

Based on the above, the relevance of choosing action research of the research-training type as a research method to achieve the objectives was emphasized. In this approach, the researcher plays the role of an investigator while acting as an agent of transformation, contributing to their and others' development and promoting collective learning. Throughout this process, individual and collective knowledge is developed, and skills and attitudes to facilitate the transformation of situations or problems encountered.

Therefore, based on this methodological approach, a formative program called “A Convivência Ética On-line (Online Ethical Conviviality)”, was implemented in a public school in Campinas, in the state of São Paulo, selected for convenience. The program focused on students but also included the training of families, teachers, and school administrators. It began in the second semester of 2018 and was completed at the end of 2019, with a total of 16 months. In 2018, 54 8th-grade students participated, divided into two classes. In the following year, 46 9th-grade students were involved.
The program was conducted in weekly sessions, with 100 minutes for each class, totaling two daily classes. The formative meetings with students aimed at improving the quality of interactions on the Internet and social networks and promoting positive, safe, conscious, and respectful use of these spaces. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were established: promoting the moral self-regulation of participants, stimulating individual and collective advancement, and fostering youth leadership.

The theoretical assumptions related to Piagetian constructivism were adopted as the basis for designing activities with students, employing active methodologies and moral practices during the classes.

The program's topics were organized into five blocks, called "curricular components" (BOZZA, 2021). These components encompassed the following themes: virtual image, online behaviors, online relationships, virtual risks, and positive use of technology. In this article, we will focus on presenting two components: "online behaviors" and "virtual risks," whose objectives will be described as follows:

- **Curricular Component: Online Behaviors**
  
  Objectives: Understand and reflect on harmful or disrespectful behaviors of internet users, as well as the ethical and legal implications resulting from certain types of online behavior. Examples of topics covered: cyber aggression, cyberbullying, hate speech, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, fat-shaming, and the balance between freedom of expression and online responsibility.

- **Curricular Component: Virtual Risks**
  
  Objectives: Acquire knowledge and reflect on the risks and threats individuals are exposed to on the internet, as well as explore available security strategies to identify, prevent, or address these risks. Examples of topics covered: online scams, creation of fake profiles, interactions with strangers, data theft, virtual crimes (racism, hate speech, pedophilia), information manipulation, the spread of misinformation, spreading rumors, excessive use of mobile devices, online addictions, online gaming challenges, and digital security.

Each of these components aimed to promote the development of socioemotional competencies and skills considered essential for respectful coexistence in online environments. This includes the promotion of virtual empathy, assertiveness, critical thinking, dialogue skills, risk perception, consequential thinking, and the fostering of sociomoral values such as justice, tolerance, and respect.
The methodology of Collective Knowledge Building Cycles (NUNES, 2017) was adopted to develop the lessons. This approach encompasses a series of work stages that expand knowledge on a specific subject through reflections and coordination of perspectives, aiming to establish collective positions representing a group commitment.

To assess the program's impact on the group of students, a questionnaire was developed as a measurement instrument inspired by previously validated works and questions. This questionnaire was administered both before and after the intervention. The items underwent expert review and empirical pre-tests in other educational institutions. The final version of the questions consists of a total of 184 items. This instrument aimed to: assess the students' profiles, measure the frequency with which individuals engage in online violence situations, assess agreement with such cases, indicate the likelihood of action in the face of these situations, and measure the impact of social networks on students' lives about behaviors and self-image construction. The pre-test was administered before the start of the intervention in August 2018, and the post-test was distributed upon its completion in November 2019. The results were subjected to statistical analysis.

An evaluation was sought to assess the learning process and the student's participation during the lessons. For this purpose, an evaluative rubric was developed, which consists of evaluative documents created based on specific criteria. These criteria are aimed at promoting awareness of students' difficulties and reflection on their actions. The rubrics guide students to take responsibility for their learning, encouraging them to participate in activities set and manage their goals. Furthermore, they assist teachers in assessing students' performance. Therefore, creating rubrics contributes to optimizing teaching and learning processes (ANDRADE, 2000).

According to Nunes (2014), rubrics promote reflection and learning focused on individual development. The teacher prepares formative assessment through rubrics and includes criteria or characteristics to be evaluated. Generally, these rubrics consist of four levels of quality, ranging from less complex to more complex about a specific action, task, or content. The description of these levels is crafted so that students can read the descriptions and identify which group they are in and the expected story for a specific action. Therefore, these rubrics are called instructional rubrics, as they provide clear student guidance. In the study context, the rubrics developed were intended to assess (from the student's point of view) participation in classes and engagement with the topics studied. They included four levels of quality: Level 1 - Offline, Level 2 - Seeking a Connection, Level 3 - Connecting, and Level 4 - Connected (from
least to most complex). The choice of terms representing the levels was based on expressions related to the connection of electronic devices to the internet.

In line with our research methodology, we sought to listen to the opinions, feelings, and perspectives of the students. At the end of the program implementation, focus group sessions were organized, a qualitative data collection technique aimed at obtaining responses from groups regarding feelings, opinions, and reactions that contribute to the construction of new knowledge (Gomes, 2005, p. 279). Focus groups are characterized by their subjective nature of investigation and are employed as a methodological strategy to gather insights into personal experiences (Aschidamini; Saupe, 2004). We opted for this approach to collect additional information about unique interpretations that could not be quantified through our questionnaire and evaluative rubrics. Unlike quantitative data collection, which tends to be more impersonal, focus group interviews allow direct contact with the researched students, who become sources of information about their experiences.

A hybrid methodology was adopted to assess the program, combining quantitative evaluation based on pre and post-test questionnaires with qualitative assessment from the rubrics and focus group analysis. In this way, it was chosen to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative strategies into the research to analyze the collected data, employing the method of Method Triangulation. According to Minayo (2010), this method is particularly suitable for program evaluation studies, projects, and disciplines. The evaluation process encompasses various variables, including external and internal evaluators, allowing for combining and cross-referencing different perspectives. It involves conducting quantitative and qualitative research, analyzing the context, and using various data collection techniques during the investigation, such as focus groups, interviews, and questionnaire administration.

Flick (1998) apud Gurgel (2007), characterizes method triangulation as a strategy that adds rigor, complexity, richness, and depth to any investigation. It represents the combination of multiple techniques intending to obtain more comprehensive and closer-to-reality results. In this perspective, method triangulation is "an instrument that allows one to illuminate reality from various angles, like a prism, demonstrating greater theoretical clarity and deepening of interdisciplinarity, interactivity, and intersubjectivity" (p. 50, our translation).

Based on these theoretical foundations, a method triangulation analysis was proposed, taking into account the objectives of each evaluative instrument, as described in the following table:
Table 1 - Evaluative Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Instrument</th>
<th>Type of Analysis</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>To compare the pre and post-test results to measure personal and collective changes before and after the intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>To qualify the advancement of the quality levels of the participant group regarding their participation in the classes and engagement with the topics studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>To assess the relevance of the subjects studied and the relationship with the researchers.</td>
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Source: Elaborated by the author.

Results

Below, a selection of results and analyses corresponding to studies of three individual cases will be presented. The data indicated significant transformations in the participants regarding their involvement in virtual aggression situations and advancements in the curriculum components worked on during the intervention.

All students had their names represented by codes to avoid any possibility of identification. Data from the three evaluative instruments were used, and they were organized as follows:

1. To present individual results from the pre and post-test questionnaire application, spider-like graphs related to involvement in virtual aggression situations (perpetrator, target, bystander) were displayed;
2. To demonstrate individual results from the rubrics, excerpts written by the students during the intervention were presented;
3. To present the focus group results, excerpts from interviews in this context were used.

For the analysis of individual cases, observations and records of the activities carried out by the subjects were also included. Three issues were chosen to analyze individual results: participants A09JA, B26JA, and A29JA. The justification for selecting these individuals over others was based on some criteria, such as the sufficient amount of data produced (both qualitative and quantitative), active participation in activities, and the frequency with which they expressed opinions or argued during the classes. However, it is essential to note that other students progressed in different ways and at different paces, but these three met the criteria established for this analysis.
Subject A09JA

We will commence the presentation and discussion of results based on the data produced by subject A09JA. Analyzing the quantitative items from the questionnaire (pre and post-tests) regarding the subject's involvement in online aggression situations, whether as a target, perpetrator, or bystander, it was observed that this subject is primarily active in the role of a bystander to this type of violence, as illustrated in Figure 1:

**Figure 1** – Personal transformations of subject A09JA about involvement in virtual aggression situations

Source: ProEstat Statistical Consulting (2020)

Further evidence indicates the subject's behavior as a bystander in virtual aggression. In excerpts from the focus group interviews, the participant demonstrates awareness and a change in attitude when witnessing disrespect, as can be seen below:

*For me, it changed the way I look at certain things that happen in our classroom because, whether we like it or not, we go through conflicts, and sometimes people use someone's physical characteristics to insult them because they're very stressed. Before, it didn't bother me much because I thought, 'I won't get involved because I don't want to get into other people's fights.' But today, I feel deeply uncomfortable when I see someone isolating someone else because of who they are or what they're going through, and I try to help someone I see is having a hard time. Sometimes I don't always notice, but I'm trying to change about that.*
This change in perspective was also observed in excerpts from their formative assessment (rubric), highlighted below:

Yesterday, I took the initiative to leave a Facebook group that made offensive posts, and I used to find it funny. Now I see how much hatred and disrespect that group generated, and I no longer find it amusing. I reported the group. To move to the next level, I need to take more action in saying it's wrong and learn to identify virtual offenses better.

I explain to classmates (informally) that it's important to respect others when arguing on the internet and in real life. I try to be respectful with strangers when explaining this importance as well.

In situations of violence, people must recognize the act as disrespectful, although this is not always possible because violence is often confused with humor or playful banter. As La Taille (2014) pointed out, we need to reflect on what we consider "funny" and how it can result in moral violence, prejudice, discrimination, and hatred against individuals or social groups. For this reflection, the individual must possess moral sensitivity, enabling them to perceive signs in which they can recognize whether mockery will be well-received or may cause suffering (LA TAILLE, 2014).

Moral sensitivity is "the ability to perceive moral issues in situations where they do not appear so clearly" (LA TAILLE, 2006, p. 88, our translation). Due to the lack of this disposition, highly shared online content on social networks, such as memes and stickers containing hate speech and insults to people, maybe expected and not identified as violent acts. People with low moral sensitivity may interact more with violent topics on the internet, even if indirectly (e.g., laughing at memes). Therefore, educating students to be more morally sensitive is reiterated so they can recognize violent situations and take a stand against injustices and disrespect online, which is not easy, especially for teenagers.

There is another excerpt from the focus group interview in which subject A09JA demonstrates sensitivity towards the feelings of others and their own:

I used to refer to someone's characteristics with offensive words, and today, I realize how wrong I was and try to be respectful when referring to someone. Now I see how much it can change someone's life, including mine, very, very much... We worked on one topic (cyberbullying), and I felt more sensitive and even got quite emotional in class.

Regarding the advancements in the dimensions addressed during the intervention, the topic of "Hate Speech on the Internet" within the "Online Behavior" curriculum component was
highlighted. In one of the classes, a practical role-playing activity was conducted, in which the participants were divided into three groups: students in group 1 read a sentence (based on authentic expressions observed on the Internet) involving hate speech to a peer in group 2, while group 3 attended the scene. The proposal was for the students in each group to reflect upon and discuss the following questions: Group 1 - How did you feel when uttering the sentence? Group 2 - How did you feel when being the target of the offense? Group 3 - How did you feel when watching the scene?

Participant A09JA was supposed to read the following sentence to a classmate: "You think you're something, you ridiculous! You think you're pretty, but you're not. Soon, your boyfriend will dump you and replace you with someone better, you fool." In the responses below, it is evident that the subject adopts the perspective of the other and aligns it with their own, thus achieving one of the main objectives of this proposal:

*How did you feel when reading the sentence?*
I felt terrible because I would feel bad if someone said that to me.

*How do you think the person who heard the sentence you read felt?*
I think she felt bad, too, because it's not something someone would like to hear typically.

When analyzing the results of the focus group, the relevance of studying this topic from A09JA's perspective becomes evident:

*The activity that affected me the most was about hate speech. Three groups sat in front, and we spoke offensive phrases. We discussed feelings and why people talk like this on the internet.*

Significant personal transformations related to this theme can also be observed when analyzing the responses to the "I used to think..., but now I think..." thinking routine, as highlighted below:

*I used to think that hate speech was just verbally insulting someone, calling them 'stupid' or other kinds of insults, but now I know it goes far beyond that. There are many terms I didn't know, and now I know that hate speech is insulting someone (whether based on ethnicity, gender, or religion).*

In addition to the data produced by the subject and presented above, it was evident that A09JA was actively involved and participated in the project throughout the intervention. Their Activity-based on the video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnYucZKoxQA.
way of engaging in discussions on the topics was of utmost importance, and their ideas often positively impacted the group due to their sensitivity towards others and the expression of opinions and arguments in a respectful manner.

**Subject B26JA**

When analyzing the results of subject B26JA, advancements in various aspects were observed. The presentation of significant transformations about the two components worked on, "Online Behavior" and "Virtual Risks," is initiated. During the classes, one topic was extensively addressed, spanning both elements: virtual aggression and its aspects, such as cyberbullying and hate speech. The results presented in Figure 2 indicate an increase in scores in these dimensions, which theoretically reflects significant advancements in understanding online risks, harmful behaviors, and their consequences.

**Figure 2 – Personal Transformations of Subject B26JA in Relation to the Worked Dimensions**

Source: ProEstat Statistical Consulting (2020)
When seeking other sources of data to complement this information, it was found that B26JA, in the routine thinking activity "I used to think... but now I think..." about hate speech, shows progress in identifying manifestations of this form of disrespect:

*I used to think that hate speech is when one person criticizes another or something as if they were a hater. I know almost the same as before, but now with more details and that there are various types of hate speech. It often criticizes a person based on gender, sexual orientation, religion, politics, disability, social class, physical appearance, etc.*

Hate speech is considered a type of violence that has been gaining strength on social media. In recent years in Brazil, especially after the presidential elections 2014, this type of violent expression on the internet has worsened. Data released by SaferNet Brazil (MESQUITA, 2018), indicate that during the 2018 presidential elections, the total number of reports more than doubled compared to the 2014 elections, increasing from 14,653 to 39,316 in 2018. This represents a significant increase in words of hate speech or intolerance on the internet. Essays related to xenophobia increased by 2,369.5%; those related to the promotion and incitement of crimes against life increased by 630.52%; those pertaining to neo-Nazism increased by 548.4%; those related to homophobia increased by 350.2%; those related to racism increased by 218.2%; and those related to religious intolerance increased by 145.13%. During the election period, social media was flooded with comments, memes, and other virtual content containing prejudiced remarks and violating human dignity.

Hate speech is "a discriminatory externalized expression that encompasses acts of discriminating and inciting discrimination against a particular group of people who share a common characteristic" (SILVA et al., 2011, p. 450, our translation). This is because hate speech is not limited to affecting only the fundamental rights of individuals but also impacts an entire social group. According to the organization SaferNet Brazil (2022), these expressions attack and incite hatred against certain social groups based on criteria such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and national origin, among others.

Rosenfeld (2001) presents two types of hate speech: hate speech in form, which refers to explicit expressions of hatred, and hate speech in substance, which refers to veiled hate. The latter is even more problematic since, often, its expression is disguised as humor in content shared on the internet. According to La Taille (2014, p. 142), in humor, the moral criterion is often used to evaluate its quality, as even when the humorous effect is positive, i.e., people laugh, the moral standard determines whether it is worthy of laughter or not, remembering that
"laughter is always somewhat humiliating for the object of it" (BERGSON, 1940 apud LA TAILLE, 2014, p. 144, our translation).

For this reason, it was essential to reflect with students on the ethical impacts of sharing content on the internet, such as "memes" and stickers that use social stereotypes as a target for humor. Additionally, knowledge from a legal perspective is equally important, as hate speech is considered a crime in Brazil and a violation of Human Rights.

We emphasize that this topic was comprehensively addressed with the participants. Below, records from the role-playing activity described earlier will be presented, in which B26JA was asked to read the following sentence to a black colleague: "Has anyone ever seen a black person dating a beautiful white girl? I haven't. Also... with that fat nose and bad hair, nobody wants them! Only if they're rich or a famous soccer player." When responding to the questions posed in the activity, the subject expresses feelings of guilt when reading the sentence to the colleague, as we can observe below:

**How did you feel when reading the sentence?**

*I felt guilty, and at first, I hesitated to say the sentence.*

**How do you think the person who heard the sentence you read felt?**

*They felt bad because it wasn't real, but they would feel worse if it were.*

According to La Taille (2006), guilt is a distinctly moral feeling characterized by being painful and arising from the awareness of having transgressed a rule or violated a principle. We feel guilty for what we have done or intended to do. This feeling can regulate more ethical behaviors, as those who feel guilty fear being viewed as malicious by others. We can infer that the sense of guilt did not prevent the subject from reading the sentence but emerged as a consequence of the situation experienced, leading to an awareness of the other person's feelings.

In light of the presented results, it can be observed that B26JA underwent significant changes during the intervention. In addition to indicating greater awareness of their actions in relationships with others, the results of the instruments also showed the presence of critical moral elements, such as respect and empathy. These transformations in the individual were attributed to the reflections and activities carried out during the intervention, which aimed to work with moral values and improve the quality of relationships on the internet and beyond. It is known that effective transformation requires continuous work, but we consider the relevance of the changes identified in this subject in our analysis.
Subject A29JA

One noteworthy aspect when analyzing the results of this participant is the change in their involvement as an author of virtual aggressions. It was observed that there was a reduction in this category when comparing the results of the pre and post-tests. This means that the participant no longer marked responses on the questionnaire that aimed to measure their involvement as an author in situations of online violence. Figure 3 illustrates this transformation:

Figure 3 - Personal transformations of subject A29JA about involvement in virtual aggression situations

Source: ProEstat Statistical Consulting (2020)

In line with this result, the subject demonstrates empathy when analyzing other data collection instruments when participating in the role-playing activity on hate speech. They are the only participant who refuses to read the prejudiced sentence while looking at their peer. The ruling had a racist connotation, and A29JA responded as follows when participating in the activity:

How did you feel when reading the sentence?

I couldn't read it. I felt terrible. I put myself in his place and wouldn't want to hear that. Not even in jest!!! Not even in a performance!!! I felt bad.
As highlighted by Gini et al. (2008), individuals who engage in violence often exhibit a low level of empathy, characterized by the ability to empathize with the emotional state of others. Therefore, the importance of educational work in this area is emphasized, aiming to provide students with the ability to recognize the feelings of others, coordinate their perspective with others, develop moral sensitivity, and understand the impact of their actions on the lives of others, as observed in the activity carried out by A29JA.

In the three individual cases presented so far, the significant impact of this role-playing activity on the students has been observed. This activity was so substantial that they decided to reapply it with the other students in the lower secondary school during an event they organized. The success of the proposal was attributed to working with empathy. Some characteristics of the online space, such as the physical absence of the other, the lack of feedback on their feelings, and the inability to observe the real impacts that a publication can have on another person's life, tend to favor emotional disconnection, resulting in a low level of empathy in virtual relationships.

When proposing a work where students are face to face, with direct visual contact, they can embody facial expressions and the performance of their bodies. Direct visual contact makes a difference in empathy. Therefore, it is essential to develop empathy in the virtual world since the other person is not physically present. In this way, students are allowed to empathize with the emotional state of others. According to La Taille (2009), this motivates the individual to act ethically, as by empathizing with others, they strive to understand their point of view, adopting a more open perspective, which is fundamental for moral development. Furthermore, this feeling significantly contributes to cultivating the value of generosity, which is crucial for ethical coexistence, both online and offline.
Final Considerations

The research aimed at developing, implementing, and evaluating the program “A Convivência Ética On-line (Online Ethical Conviviality)” for 8th and 9th-grade students at a public school in the Municipal Network of Campinas. The main focus was on the analysis of the transformations observed in the participants of this study. In general, satisfactory results were obtained, indicating learning and behavioral changes, which were examined in individual cases represented in this article by subjects A09JA, B26JA, and A29JA.

A research-action of the research-training type was conducted, involving an educational intervention aimed at improving the quality of online relationships and promoting students' positive, safe, conscious, and ethical use of the internet and virtual social networks. The results highlighted significant personal transformations, and the individual analysis of the subjects was the differentiator in our research, allowing us to track the impacts of the training in their daily lives and observe their growth throughout the program.

It is important to emphasize that the personal transformations identified in the subjects were significant to us as researchers and educators dedicated to forming more ethical individuals. In a time when constant attacks on democracy are witnessed, ruptures in the social pact of civility, a flood of misinformation on social media, and the spread of content filled with hate speech, prejudices, violence, and disrespect, it is reassuring to know that there are individuals in the process of development who demonstrate empathy for the feelings of others, strive to be better in their interpersonal relationships, and exhibit empathetic behaviors. This represents the tremendous success of the research.

It was emphasized that the theme "hate speech on the Internet" was extensively discussed and explored due to the student's interest. As mentioned earlier, this activity was conducted by the research participants with the other students of the Middle School at the school. The impact of these classes on the institution was remarkable, leading other professionals to show interest in participating in discussions on the topic. It is important to note that the theme in question was not limited to a single class but was explored in subsequent meetings, addressing issues such as the distinction between hate speech and humor, the concept of freedom of expression, and its relationship with the content disseminated on the internet. The flexibility and adaptability of the proposals are essential premises of our intervention program, encouraging active participation of students, sharing of suggestions, and engagement in activities that pique their interest and promote more in-depth discussions.
Finally, it is a source of satisfaction to note that many of these students had the opportunity to reflect on their actions, underwent significant transformations, and acquired new knowledge, socio-emotional skills, and a deeper understanding of the importance of moral values in coexistence, both on the internet and offline. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the richness of the work, and it is hoped that it will inspire other education professionals who share the same principles and goals.

REFERENCES


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