

Online Intrusiveness, online jealousy and dating aggression in young adults: a cross-national study (Spain-Italy)

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The current study aims to analyze the impact of online and conventional couple quality on the explanation of dating aggression in Spain and Italy. 312 Italian and 430 Spanish university students participated in the study. Logistic regression analysis showed that conflicts increased the likelihood to be involved in psychological and physical aggression in both countries. Transgressive behavior increased the odds of being involved in physical and psychological aggression in Spain and in psychological aggression in Italy. Online intrusiveness influenced Spanish participants' involvement in physical and psychological dating aggression while online jealousy was the main predictor of both types of aggression in Italy. Results are discussed in terms of the insecurity that seems to characterize dating aggression in young adulthood.

Key words: dating aggression, conflicts, online intrusiveness, online jealousy, young adults.

Intrusività, gelosia e dating aggression online nei giovani adulti: uno studio cross-culturale Spagna-Italia. Lo studio intende analizzare l'impatto della qualità della relazione tra partner *online* e *offline* nella spiegazione del *dating aggression* in Spagna e in Italia. 312 studenti universitari italiani e 430 spagnoli hanno partecipato allo studio. Regressioni logistiche hanno mostrato come il conflitto aumenti la probabilità di essere coinvolto nel *dating aggression* fisico e psicologico in entrambi i Paesi. Il comportamento trasgressivo incrementa la probabilità di essere coinvolto nel *dating aggression* fisico e psicologico in Spagna ma solo in quello psicologico in Italia. Infine l'intrusività *online* influenza il *dating aggression* fisico e psicologico in Spagna mentre in Italia è la gelosia *online* a predire entrambe le forme. I risultati enfatizzano il ruolo dell'insicurezza nel predire la qualità delle relazioni sentimentali nella prima adultità.

Parole chiave: *dating aggression*, conflitti, intrusività *online*, gelosia *online*, giovane adultità.

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† Granted by the Spanish Ministry of Education (FPU program-2013).

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This research was financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education under the National Program of Research and Innovation (I+D 2008-2011) *Violencia y Cortejo Juvenil: los riesgos del cortejo violento, la aggression sexual y el cyberbullying* (PSI 2010 – 17246), and under the National Program of Research and Innovation (I+D+i 2013-2016) “Dat_Adolescence” (PSI2013-45118- R).

1. Introduction

In Western cultures, the years of the transition to adulthood are characterized by the progressive attainment of commitments related to life plans: education, job and romantic relationships (Arnett, 2001; Shulman, Feldman, Blatt, Cohen, & Mahler, 2005). With regard to romantic relationships, Shulman and Connolly (2013) have recently described this pain of life as a transitional romantic stage defined by the task of coordinating dyadic commitment together with individual life plans. By negotiating the interdependence among the couple, young adults will achieve long-terms romantic relationships. Studies conducted with adolescent and young adults revealed that 90% of 18-25 year-old have had a sentimental experience, but the diversity of these is very wide, from those characterized by a relational instability (Garcia & Reiber, 2008) to married couples. This diversity of romantic experiences implies that the task is not easy, with cultural, social, family and personal factors affecting this process. To this respect, the relational context of the dyad has been considered a central factor to explain the positive or negative outcomes of the romantic relationship (Capaldi & Kim, 2007), being more important than the involvement in different romantic experiences (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Grover & Nangle, 2007). Studies have showed that couples with high levels of positive quality (relationship skills, commitment or intimacy) are involved in more stable, satisfied and long lasting romantic relationships, while those involved in romantic relationships characterized by conflicts, jealousy and intrusive behaviors show less satisfaction (Seiffge-Krenke & Connolly, 2010). Moreover, longitudinal studies have described how the quality of romantic relationships in adolescence predicts the satisfaction and the quality of romantic relationships in young adults (Madsen & Collins, 2011).

In short, the ability to negotiate and the acquisition of interpersonal skills will promote good relationship quality and the attainment of interdependence with the romantic partner. On the contrary, the presence of conflicts, controlling behaviors and negative strategies for conflict resolution should reflect poor outcomes, with the presence of aggressive behaviors in adolescents' and young adults' couples (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; Connolly, Nocentini, Menesini, Pepler, Craig, & Williams, 2010; Davila, Steinberg, Kachadourian, Cobb, & Fincham, 2004; La Greca & Harrison, 2005; Marcus, 2012). To this respect, Nocentini, Pastorelli &

Menesini (2013) confirmed that poor levels of self-efficacy regarding anger management predict high levels of conflicts within the couple, and the occurrence of psychological and physical dating aggression in both partners.

The presence of imbalance of power, controlling, and intrusive behaviors in the romantic relationships has also been associated with dating aggression. Messinger and colleagues found that the use of escalating strategies (a combination of controlling and coercive strategies) was related to dating aggression (perpetrated and received) in adolescents and young females (Messinger, Rickert, Fry, Lessel, & Davidson, 2011), whilst Menesini and colleagues (Menesini, Nocentini, Ortega-Rivera, Sánchez, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2011) concluded that the presence of imbalance of power and conflicts were more likely in couples characterized by reciprocal aggression in comparison to couples not involved in aggression. These results emphasize that behaviors and attitudes of control, intrusiveness and dominance over the romantic partner reinforce similar responses from the other member of the dyad, contributing to an escalation of conflict and aggression (Capaldi & Kim, 2007; Foran & O'Leary, 2008).

To date, the impact of poor relationship quality on dating aggression has not included the analysis of the interplay of the online context. Previous research has demonstrated that online and offline romantic relationships are specific but closely related (Caughlin & Sharabi, 2013), so it can be expected that behaviors that people act in offline romantic relationships will be related to behaviors that they express online. According to this hypothesis, offline couple quality should be related with online romantic relationship quality, and the influence of both contexts would impact on dating aggression. Indeed, studies interested in the relation between both measures of couple quality have showed that they are linked. Ishii (2010) found that conflict management styles in online relationships were related to the closeness and expectations for the future of the relationship, with adults with no intentions for the future using more dominating, obliging, and avoidant strategies during arguments with the partner.

One of the topics related to online behaviors among young and adult couples that have received more attention in the last years has been cyberstalking (Menard & Pincus, 2012; Sheridan & Grant, 2007; Strawhum, Adams, & Huss, 2013). These studies have been focused on cyberstalking behaviors perpetrated and received by ex-partners, alt-

hough Spitzberg and Cupach (2007) point out that these severe forms of cyberstalking are not very frequent. The authors differentiate among severe forms of cyberstalking tactics and obsessive relational intrusion, a way of common or moderate cyberstalking. These tactics are considered the most frequent forms of stalking that usually occur within romantic relationships, and not necessarily causing fear to the victim. Obsessive relational intrusion has been related directly with online jealousy and control, as a “distorted version of courtship and romantic relationships” (Spitzber & Cupach, p. 79), mainly oriented to maintain the intimacy and proximity with the partner after a discussion, a breakup, or looking for reconciliation. When it occurs, in the form of persistent and unwanted email messages, SMS, or instant messages, the response of the other partner has an important role in the perpetuation of the behavior, contributing to maintain this specific communication strategy for conflict resolution between partners (Nguyen, Spitzberg, & Lee, 2012). On the same line, Elphinston and Noller (2011) showed that intrusive behavior over the partner in social networks was linked to relationship dissatisfaction and jealousy, reflecting a relational romantic dynamic laden with insecurities and fears (Lavy, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010). In relation to offline dating aggression, studies have considered the relation among cyberstalking behaviors received or perpetrated and physical or psychological dating aggression in young adult couples, and among online jealousy and psychological dating aggression, especially in females (Strawhun, Adams, & Huss, 2013). No studies have analyzed the relation among intrusiveness and dating aggression in current relationships.

Starting from this literature, the present study will analyze the impact of online quality couple (in terms of intrusiveness and online jealousy) and conventional quality couple (in terms of conflicts, transgressive behavior, and imbalance of power) on physical and psychological dating aggression in two countries, Spain and Italy. Although the studies on dating aggression have been extended to Italy and Spain in the last years (Menesini & Nocentini, 2008; Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O’Leary, & González, 2007; Viejo, Sánchez, & Ortega, 2014; Nocentini, Pastorelli, & Menesini, 2013), most research still comes from USA and Canada. Moreover, cross-cultural research is still scarce, and mainly focused on adolescents (see Menesini et al., 2011 for a comparison among Spain and Italy; or Connolly et al., 2010 for a comparison among Italy and Canada). Spain and Italy are countries with very similar cultural and social characteristics, but results of previous studies confirmed that both

countries present different levels of physical aggression. Although no comparative studies have been conducted, results suggest that Spanish adolescents are more involved in physical aggression than Italian (Viejo, in press; Menesini & Nocentini, 2008) while no differences appear for psychological forms of violence. For young adults, the studies are still scarce and no consistent results have been presented. Studies developed in Spain, suggested that there is a decreasing trend from late adolescence to the first years of adulthood (Corral, 2009; Fernández-González, O’Leary, & Muñoz-Rivas, 2014), while in Italy prevalence rates seem to indicate a stabilization of physical aggression in university students (Romito & Grassi, 2007). According to literature, we expect to find higher levels of physical dating aggression in Italian young adults in comparison to Spanish ones. Regarding psychological aggression, we expect to find similar rates in adolescents’ samples both in Spain and Italy.

In relation to the impact of conventional and online quality couple in dating aggression, results have indicated the central role of conflicts and imbalance of power in the explanation of dating aggression across cultures (Menesini et al., 2011). We do not know studies regarding intrusiveness and online jealousy either in Spain or in Italy. Both countries are characterized for being lower users of ICT, with Italy showing lower levels than Spain in relation to children and adolescents users (EU-Kids Online, 2013). A recent national report from Italy stated that children and young adults of 6 to 25 years used internet and ICT below the average of the European countries (Istat, 2013). Similar levels have also been found in Spain (INE, 2014). We hypothesize that the conflicts will continue to impact on dating aggression, including also the influence on online quality of the relationship. Considering the novelty of this study and the absence of previous research on this topic, we do not have a specific hypothesis for it.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

793 university students with current romantic relationships participated in the study (469 from Seville, Southern Spain; 324 from Florence, Central Italy). Participants were recruited from the faculties of Psychology, Law, Sciences and Engineering, following Ferrer and col-

leagues' (Ferrer, Bosh, Ramis, & Navarro, 2006) considerations regarding the impact of the formative curriculum in the perception and sensitization with dating aggression among university students. The distribution of students per faculty was representative of the total university sample in each city. In both cases, there were more girls than boys (71.6% and 66% in Italy and Spain, respectively). Sample characteristics and descriptive results of the measures are shown on Table 1.

Table 1 - Sample descriptive statistics

		Italy	Spain	Diff.	
Sex	Male	92(28.4%)	159(34%)	<i>ns</i>	
	Female	232 (71.6%)	308(66%)		
Age (M; SD)		21.14(1.85)	21.90(2.33)	$t(775.54)=5.113^{***}$ $d=.36$	
Father Education	Illiterate	2 (0.7%)	17 (3.8%)	$\chi^2(3)=175.024^{***}$	
	Elementary School	18 (5.9%)	196 (43.7%)		
	Middle School	76 (24.8%)	119 (26.5%)		
Mother Education	University degree	210 (68.6%)	117 (26.1%)	$\chi^2(3)=236.894^{***}$	
	Illiterate	1 (0.3%)	20 (4.4%)		
	Elementary School	12 (3.9%)	205 (44.7%)		
	Middle School	75 (24.1%)	137 (29.8%)		
Mean relationship length (M; SD)		126.80 (98.61)	137.91 (108.24)	<i>ns</i>	
	Conventional Quality of romantic relationship (M; SD)	Conflict	2.04 (.70)	2.28 (.74)	$t(780)=4.436^{***}$ $d=.33$
Online Quality of romantic relationship (M; SD for Jealousy)	Imbalance of power	1.72 (.78)	1.55 (.70)	$t(777)=3.022^{***}$ $d=.23$	
	Transgressive Behaviour	1.32 (.45)	1.43 (.57)	$t(760.93)=3.146^{***}$ $d=.22$	
Dating aggression	Online Jealousy	1.35 (1.01)	1.14 (.89)	$t(604.53)=2.950^{***}$ $d=.33$	
	Intrusiveness	NI	158 (51.5%)	209 (45.8%)	<i>Ns</i>
Dating aggression	Psychological	I	149 (48.5%)	247 (54.2%)	
		NI	54 (16.8%)	70 (15%)	<i>ns</i>
	Physical	NI	196 (60.9%)	361 (78.3%)	$\chi^2(1)=28.708^{***}$
		I	126 (39.1%)	100 (21.7%)	

Note: NI = Not involvement; I=Involvement; d :.30 (small) .50(medium) .80 (large); $^{**} p \leq .001$

2.2 Measures

Conventional Quality of dating relationships. Dating relationship quality was measured by the Network Relationships Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). This measure comprises 8 items, which assess two subscales on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never true to always true: (1) six items were related to conflict in the dyad (i.e., I get upset with my boy/girlfriend); Italy $\alpha = .82$; Spain $\alpha = .89$; (2) two items were related to imbalance of power in the dyad (i.e., How often does someone tend to be bossy in this relationship?); Italy $\alpha = .64$; Spain $\alpha = .64$. Transgressive behavior in the dyad was measured by an adaptation of four items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never true to always true (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993) (i.e., how often do you break the rules to please your partner?) Italy $\alpha = .72$; Spain $\alpha = .73$. Previous studies using the same measures showed cross-cultural invariance (Menesini et al., 2011).

Online quality of dating relationship. Online quality of dating relationship was measured using two subscales of Cyberdating_Q (CBD; Sánchez, Muñoz & Ortega-Ruiz, in press; Sánchez, Muñoz, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2014). This measure comprised 10 items, which assess two subscales on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never true to always true; (1) six items focused on online jealousy, Italy $\alpha = .83$; Spain $\alpha = .80$ (i.e., I feel jealous if my partner posts provocative photos on her/his social network profile); and (2) four items were related to intrusiveness (Italy $\alpha = .72$; Spain $\alpha = .74$). According to Spitzberg & Cupach (2003), intrusiveness has been conceptualized as a specific form of cyberstalking characterized by invasive, unwanted and, undesirable behavior that violate physical or symbolic privacy of the partner. In this study, we will consider intrusiveness as a response to a breakup within the relationship (i.e., when I'm angry and my partner does not answer me I leave many messages on her/his private chat).

Dating Aggression. Dating Aggression was assessed using two scales measuring psychological and physical aggression. Following the definition by Straus (1979) and Capaldi & Crosby (1997), we decided to include verbal aggression, offense, threatening and control in the category of psychological aggression. The first scale comprised nine items for perpetrated acts, derived from the Physical Violence Scale of Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (Nocentini, Menesini, Pastorelli, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2011; Straus, 1979; Viejo, Sánchez, & Ortega, 2014), i.e.,

pushing, grabbing or shoving, slapping, kicking, or biting (Italy $\alpha = .83$; Spain $\alpha = .91$). The second scale was derived from the Relational Aggression Scale (Crick, 1995) and consisted of six items focused on psychological aggression (i.e., spreading rumors or telling mean lies to make one's boy/girlfriend unpopular; telling one's boy/girlfriend she/he won't be liked anymore unless she/he does what she/he is being told to do; teasing), (Italy $\alpha = .75$; Spain $\alpha = .68$). The items of the two scales were rated on a 5- point Likert scale, ranging from never true to always true. This measure has been previously validated in Italy (Nocentini et al., 2011) and Spain (Viejo et al., 2014) showing scalar invariance across countries (Menesini et al., 2011).

2.3 Plan of analyses

We conducted a binomial logistic regression across country, considering two profiles of involvement in aggressive behaviors – psychological or physical – as dependent variables; and gender and quality of romantic relationships – conventional and online – as independent variables. All these analyses were conducted using SPSS 20. The logistic regression was evaluated by R^2 Nagelkerke, and Percentage of Cases Correctly Classified (*PCCC*).

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive results

Measures of physical and psychological dating aggression were recoded in two points variables (Not involved *versus* Involved). Participants were considered as involved in physical or psychological dating aggression if they reported to perpetrate at least one of the items of the physical or psychological aggression scales.

As shown in Table 1, no significant differences among countries were found for psychological aggression. For physical aggression, results showed that Italian university students were significantly more involved than Spanish ones.

In relation to conventional and online quality of the romantic relationships, results showed that Italian young adults presented higher levels of imbalance of power and online jealousy than Spanish ones. In contrast, Spanish participants presented higher level of conflicts and

transgressive behaviors than Italians. No statistical differences were found for intrusiveness.

No gender differences were found within countries for Psychological (Spain, $\chi^2_{\text{psychological}(1)} = 1.103$; $p = .339$; Italy, $\chi^2_{\text{psychological}(1)} = .222$; $p = .742$), nor for physical aggression (Spain, $\chi^2_{\text{physical}(1)} = .318$; $p = .632$; Italy, $\chi^2_{\text{physical}(1)} = 1.597$; $p = .209$).

In relation to the quality of romantic relationships, significant differences were found for transgressive behavior (Spain $t_{(460)} = 5.838$, $p < .001$; Italy $t_{(314)} = 3.628$, $p < .001$) and imbalance of power (Spain $t_{(460)} = 3.430$, $p < .001$; Italy $t_{(313)} = 2.749$, $p < .001$). Boys presented higher levels of transgressive behavior and imbalance of power than girls both in Spain and Italy. There was no significant effect of gender on conflicts (Spain $t_{(460)} = -1.651$, $p = .099$; Italy $t_{(316)} = .430$; $p = .668$), online jealousy (Spain $t_{(457)} = -1.310$, $p = .191$; Italy $t_{(307)} = -1.31$, $p = .191$) and intrusiveness (Spain, $\chi^2_{\text{intrusiveness}(1)} = .178$; $p = .692$; Italy, $\chi^2_{\text{intrusiveness}(1)} = .196$; $p = .704$).

3.2 Modeling the association between conventional and online quality of romantic relationships, and physical and psychological dating aggression

Binomial logistic regressions were run in order to analyze the impact of online and conventional negative quality within the romantic couple (conflict, imbalance of power, transgressive behavior, intrusiveness and online jealousy) as predictors of being involved in psychological and physical aggression.

Previous analysis confirmed significant associations among predictors and the involvement in both forms of aggression, so all the predictors were included in the model. Given the relevant interplay of gender and country in the results, regressions were run separately by country, and sex was controlled including this variable in a first step. A two-step model was run with main effects in the first step, and interaction effects of quality with gender in the second step. Since no interaction effects were found, we deleted it from the final model. Table 2 shows the regression coefficients and the *odds ratio* for the final model in both countries.

The final models showed significant associations between conventional and online negative quality and being involved in psychological and physical aggression in boys and girls. Overall, in Spain, involve-

ment in psychological and physical dating aggression was predicted by conflicts, transgressive behavior and intrusiveness. In Italy, involvement in both aggressive behaviors was predicted by conflicts and online jealousy, and psychological dating aggression by transgressive behavior. In both countries imbalance of power was excluded from the final model.

Table 2 - Betas and standard errors resulting from the logistical regression analysis in both samples, Spain and Italy

		Spain		Italy	
		Psychological aggression ^a	Physical aggression ^b	Psychological aggression ^c	Physical aggression ^d
Romantic Relationship Quality	Conflict	1.344(.265) OR = 3.834***	.984(.183) OR = 2.676***	1.146(.333) OR = 3.146***	.724(.192) OR = 2.062***
	Transgressive behaviours	1.185(.441) OR = 3.272**	.476(.214) OR = 1.609*	1.666(.749) OR = 5.288*	<i>ns.</i>
Romantic Relationship Quality Online	Intrusiveness	-.881 (.301) OR = .414**	-1.074(.288) OR = .342***	<i>ns.</i>	<i>ns.</i>
	Online Jealousy	<i>ns.</i>	<i>ns.</i>	.692(.218) OR = 1.998***	.270(.127) OR = 1.311*

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

^a $R^2 = .24$; % $pccc = 86.5\%$; ^b $R^2 = .25$; X% $pccc = 80.4\%$; ^c $R^2 = .23$; % $pccc = 83\%$; ^d $R^2 = .14$; % $pccc = 66.9\%$

Specifically, in Spain, a unit of change in conflict and in transgressive behavior increases the odds of being involved in psychological aggression rather than not being involved by about 3.8 and 3.3 times, respectively; for physical aggression, conflicts and transgressive behaviors increase the odds of being involved rather than not being involved by about 2.7 and 1.6 times, respectively. Likewise, to be involved in intrusive behaviors increases the odds of being involved in psychological

aggression rather than not being involved by about 0.4 times; and by about 0.3 times in physical aggression.

In Italy, a unit of change in conflict and in transgressive behavior increases the odds of being involved in psychological aggression rather than not being involved by about 3.1 and 5.2 times, respectively; in the case of physical aggression, conflict increases the odds of being involved by about 2.1 times in comparison to not involved participants. Finally, a unit of change in online jealousy increases the odds of being involved in psychological aggression rather than not being involved by about 2 times, and 1.3 times with regard to the involvement in physical aggression in comparison to not involved participants.

4. Conclusions

Studies on dating aggression in young adults are still scarce in Europe, and particularly in Italy and Spain. This work represents a first attempt to explore the predictors of physical and psychological dating aggression related to online and conventional quality couples of young adults. In a digital world, where ICTs are changing the way people socialize, the analysis of how online behaviors in romantic relationships impact face to face contacts, needs to be performed in order to understand more accurately the dynamics of romantic relationships. This is especially true in different cultures, where the meanings people attribute to online and offline behaviors within romantic relationships can be interpreted differently (Seiffge-Krenke, 2008).

Results have showed that Italian university students present higher levels of physical aggression than Spanish, while no differences were found for psychological aggression. For Spain, results on physical dating aggression are similar to those of Corral (2009) and Fernández-González and colleagues (2014). Both papers showed a pattern of physical dating aggression decreasing with age. The authors explained this trend as a consequence of a developmental pattern where youngsters mature in terms of personality, but also in terms of social and romantic relationships (Moffit, 2006). In contrast, results from Italy are not conclusive. Nocentini, Menesini & Pastorelli (2010) found a significant linear decrease of physical aggression from 16 to 18 years, while Romito & Grassi (2007) found similar rates of physical aggression in comparison to adolescent years, as we found in this study. Cohort effects and different design methods (transversal and longitudinal) could influence

the results, indicating that studies on physical dating aggression in Italy need further assessments. As expected, no differences were found between Italy and Spain in relation to psychological dating aggression. More than 80% of university students affirmed to perpetrate one or more of these behaviors against their partners, stressing the normative use of these behaviors among young couples (Foshee et al., 2009). Since very scarce evidence exists regarding the prevalence of psychological aggression in young adults, studies to come should clarify this trend in the results and cultural correlated factors.

Logistic regressions showed that conflicts within the couple increased the probability of being involved in psychological and physical aggression in both countries. These results are consistent with previous cross-cultural studies (Menesini et al., 2011) and reflect the conflictual and contextual nature of dating aggression also in the first years of adulthood. In contrast, imbalance of power did not show any effect on dating aggression, reflecting an important level of symmetry in power between the two partners. Previous studies on dating aggression in adolescence have repeatedly showed that the low levels of imbalance of power are related to the fact that dating aggression is mainly reciprocal or mutual (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 1995; Menesini et al., 2011), where males and females present the same levels of aggression and victimization. This mutual violence regards couples where both members fight for the control of the relationship, and there is not a clearly dominating partner. Higher levels of reciprocal violence in comparison to pure or unidirectional roles have also been presented in recent studies on dating aggression in young adults (Fernández-González et al., 2014; Marcus, 2012). Even if we have not controlled reciprocal involvement in this study, results seem to point to this direction. Futures studies could confirm this result.

Transgressive behavior has been described as an important predictor of psychological and physical aggression in Spain, and of psychological aggression in Italy. This result is very interesting because it could reflect a certain kind of reactivity in dating aggression among young adults. Transgressive behavior can be defined as a feeling of being under the pressure of the partner (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993) with people affirming to have difficulties to negotiate their needs with their partners' needs. Together with conflicts and with the absence of imbalance of power, the results should indicate that the perception of being submitted or dominated by the partner will deal on conflicts and, finally, on dating aggression.

sion (Werkele & Wolfe, 1999), resulting in a more insecure and impulsive aggression. The inclusion of emotional variables in futures studies, as attachment style, emotion regulation and self-esteem, could help to test this hypothesis.

The predictor effect of online quality relationships on physical and psychological aggression in young adults has underlined the importance of this context in young romantic couples. Intrusiveness was the main online predictor of physical and psychological aggression in Spain while online jealousy was the main factor in Italy. It is difficult to understand why these clear differences appeared in the two countries since no previous study exists on this topic. Overall, the profile continues to delineate the insecurity as the main characteristic of the romantic couples in both countries, as previous studies about cyberstalking, insecure attachment and online jealousy have shown (see Fox & Garber, 2014; Nitzburg & Farber, 2013; Strawhun, Adams, & Huss, 2013). Starting from this pattern of insecurity, Spanish participants seem to externalize more their insecurity, invading the online privacy of their partners following an argument or a break-up. These online obsessive behaviors could increase the levels of conflicts and lead to psychological and physical aggression. Italian young adults, in contrast, present a more internalized profile of online insecurity, often displayed with feelings of jealousy, mistrustfulness and fear about their partners' online behavior. These feelings could contribute to an escalation of conflicts and discussions that would lead, consequently, to psychological and physical aggression. Future studies, including other measures, as rumination and other externalized behaviors together with cultural factors, could clarify these two different profiles found in both countries.

Even if the impact of conventional and online quality has been demonstrated, the impact of the different predictors was different. Conventional quality presented more predictive power than online quality in both countries, Spain and Italy. These results would suggest that online interactions have not the same relevance as face to face interactions in romantic relationships. Cauglin & Sharabi (2013) have concluded with a similar consideration. In their study, young adults affirmed that face to face communication was more important than online interactions. When the latter was used as an instrument or resource for the former, the levels of satisfaction and intimacy with the partner increased. To this respect, it could be interesting to test if online interaction could have the same impact in adolescents' couples or in couples at an early stage of

the relationship. Future studies can test if the stability of the romantic relationship together with the age of the participant could vary in relation to the weight of the online and conventional predictors of dating aggression.

This study has been a first attempt to explore the impact of online interaction on dating aggression in young adults. Since the research in this area is still scarce, this study represents one of the first contributions that leaves many open questions on the relation among online and offline context in the explanation of dating aggression. The cross-cultural design has allowed to find similar trends in both countries, but also cultural differences that need to be explored deeply in future studies. The study presents, also, limitations that must be addressed. First of all, the measures of online quality were partial and very specific. Since the topic of online quality is emergent, researchers ought to make efforts to design more comprehensive measures of online quality in romantic relationships. A second limitation is that we have not included positive measures of conventional and online quality. The analyses would provide keys for the design of prevention programs, not only oriented to minimize the negative aspects of the couples but also maximizing the positive ones. Finally, another limitation is that we have not controlled the time that participants used ICT and internet together with other personal measures already mentioned and other forms of electronic aggression. Their inclusion in futures studies would illuminate the interplay of personal and relational factors in online contexts and their relation to dating aggression.

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Pervenuto luglio 2014
Accettato settembre 2014