



The Action of Digital Design in the Awareness Against School Bullying – A Case Study for the Analysis of Digital Communication

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Abstract

Bullying is a recurring phenomenon in society that can happen at school, work, or even at family level. It is known that the practice of this form of aggression involves several dimensions, which characterizes it as a problem of concern and difficult to combat for all involved. In the current context of globalization, social transformation and constant evolution of the magnitude of the role of the digital and online media in peer relationships, the practice of bullying and cyberbullying has been increasing and gaining prevalence in our society.

Particularly in school culture, the phenomenon has been growing in size and echo, which not only conditions students' learning but also affects their personal and social behavior, and can generate psychological and physical damage in those who are considered the victims. Since technology and materials that enable new readings of the world are already present in the educational environment, and in an increasingly widespread way after the digital transition process that the pandemic period in 2020 and 2021 forced, it should value the role of digital communication in this process.

This paper is developed around the reflection on the digital universe in the awareness against school bullying, namely through the analysis of digital platforms that work fundamentally as an informative medium in the definition of these themes. As a methodology, it was sought to collect data of informative content, advice, and even assistance to the needs of the user of digital platforms that allude to the phenomena. In this sense, several digital platforms were identified, understanding which are the most relevant functionalities for their construction and a specific set of criteria related to their communication, experience and interface design. Design and digital thus have the possibility to be interpreted by educational actors in a way that allows accessibility and speed through efficient platforms objectively crafted to combat the problem.

Keywords: *bullying; cyberbullying; digital communication; digital design*

1. Introduction

Bullying is a recurrent phenomenon in society that can happen at school, professional or even family level. It is known that the practice of this form of aggression involves several dimensions, which characterises it as a worrying problem that is difficult to combat for all those involved. This phenomenon also involves what may be considered a violation of human rights. Numerous studies in recent years, including [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6] and [7], have highlighted the influence of the phenomena, and in particular, the impact that digital technology and digital communication have in its echo in individuals and society.

Currently, we can identify online platforms that are informative media in defining the topic of bullying and, by relation, cyberbullying. However, the development of this project aimed at the design of a platform that seeks to implement more than the informative content as it offers advice, monitoring, questionnaires, and support to victims of bullying, to receive help through the school and the institution's psychologist.

Thus, it was sought to collect data, both informative content, advice and even assistance to the needs of the user of digital platforms that allude to the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying. In this sense, we elaborate on digital platforms that incorporate required parameters of analysis and understanding which are the most relevant features for its construction.



2. Digital design platforms in the awareness against school bullying

2.1. Stop Bullying

"Stop Bullying" is an official web platform of a United States government organisation. Its content is aimed at parents, guardians, children aged 9-13, teachers, school staff and health and safety professionals [8].

In this platform we verified the use of a simple and effective structure, presenting an accessible and intuitive navigation, using through submenus the quick search on the theme and the subcategories on this theme. Thus, the ease of access and search to any selected information was demonstrated. In the concept of information architecture, it was possible to visualise the need to include a filtering of subcategories, so as not to visually overload the website with several pieces of information.

In this way, the website presents a simple structure, which does not recur to many clicks, and has as an advantage the easy accessibility in the search change, a good organization on the categories and a clear presentation to the user. At the level of information content, it was found that the topics are up to date and the inclusion of different presentation models, both the presence of text and video. Analysing from the point of view of the information, it was verified that it is incorporated at textual level. They make the content available in print format and the sharing of the same through social networks. The category "Videos & Social Media" presents various formats of presentation on the subject through children's illustrations and interviews between adolescents where they give their opinions on bullying and possible forms of response (Figure 1).

From the point of view of usability, the information integrated into the website is what the user needs to carry out his/her search. There is also the possibility of choosing between two languages, English and Spanish, for the presentation of information for adults. In terms of language, the website presents objectivity and clarity, and the user feels safe in navigation, due to the presence of the reference of the government and state organizations. At the level of ease of use, it was identified that the included pages show an easy and consistent reading, and the included text is easy to read, including lists and easy access to the rest of the pages. Its visual appearance lacks an easily accessible website, making it unappealing due to the lack of interaction. In terms of complementary relationship, it was observed that the website presents different images when changing the theme, but the organization of the text remains fixed. We also noticed the permission of an external online transition, in the presentation of scientific articles, however, most of the contents are of internal transition. Finally, in terms of design, an unappealing aesthetics was observed, without an emotional appeal. The platform resorts to a simple design and a use of identical sizes in the image, video, and text, creating a consistency between them, but without being applied for the younger target audience.



Fig.1. Stop Bullying online platform. (Source © Stop Bullying, 2023)

2.2. Escola Sem Bullying Escola Sem Violência

In the Portuguese context, "Escola Sem Bullying Escola Sem Violência" (School without Bullying School without Violence, in Portuguese) is a Portuguese platform that is known and implemented in school groupings. Created in the scope of the "Plan for Prevention and Combating of Bullying and Cyberbullying", it expresses the intention to create practices of health, well-being in the school environment, non-violence, inclusion and non-discrimination [9].



In this platform we found a simple, dynamic, and well-organised communication structure through an efficient hierarchy of contents designed for the user, which aims to search for information. In this sense, it was analysed by the information architecture the simplicity of only exposing a simple menu, without including submenus, only one, on the topic of resources, where the user can quickly access resources such as studies, manuals, videos, posters, and webinars, reducing the number of clicks and obtaining a fast and easy to use search tool. The information content includes a presentation with different forms, information divided into updated blocks, exposing the presence of text, illustrations, studies, animation videos, posters, manuals on the researched theme. It was observed that the visual environment, unlike the previous example, it was possible to visualize the presentation of colorful illustrations, search buttons, text, with a selection of colours, such as primary colours and vibrant, with colour distinction that allows the differentiation of each target audience, thus, give prominence to the information to users and greater interactivity (Figure 2).

With this, we realize that, in terms of functionality, they facilitate the information search tools. We found some important peculiarities in the website, with presentation of an informative hover, enabling pre-information on that page, allowing an informed and careful search, with an extra support to the user. In terms of usability, the ease of operation between pages and navigation was identified, not being necessary the exposure of the search tool and being possible to easily obtain the information that the user needs. Thus, in terms of ease of usability, it can be concluded that the pages present a quick, simple and direct reading, containing the information in blocks facilitating the reading and also an easy use of the website. In terms of visual appearance, it was verified that visually it is pleasant, appealing, and that the user feels good in its use.

The website also includes a contact through a message communication and includes an internal transition, through the presentation of posters and studies. Finally, in terms of design, an appealing aesthetic was verified, with a good balance and the use of attractive colours.

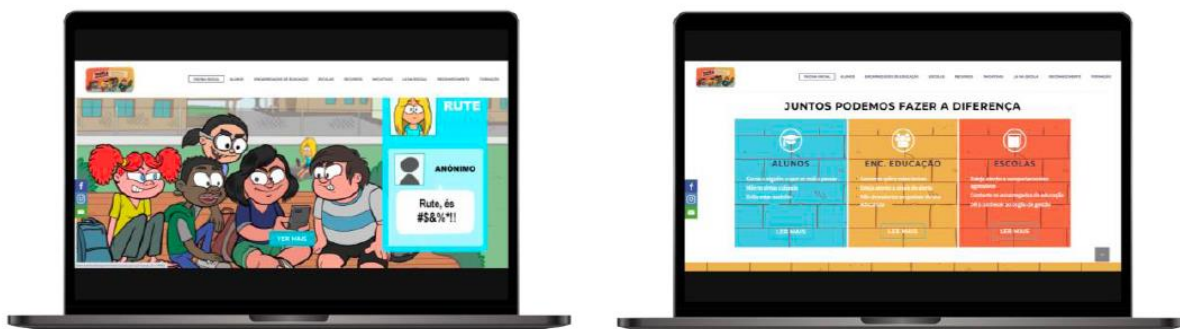


Fig.2. Escola Sem Bullying, Escola Sem Violência online plataforma. (Source © Escola Sem Bullying, Escola Sem Violência, 2023)

2.3. No Bully Portugal

"No Bully Portugal" platform is a non-profit association founded in 2016, which aims to exterminate bullying in Portugal [10]. This website offers coaching training programmes to teachers, young people, and parents, allowing to educate and support everyone about this phenomenon through informative content, trainings and registrations, support for cyberbullying victims.

Analysing the structure of the website in question, one finds a simple and organised hierarchy layout, focused on search tools. On the platform there is a previous description of the phenomenon - giving knowledge to the user and then referring to the process of requesting help through a form that the victim needs to fill in, however it includes a very extensive scroll. Thus, the exposure of a menu bar was verified, excluding submenus to guarantee a quick and intuitive search.

With this, the information architecture was analysed, which has a structure designed to collect information on the various themes. It is also possible to note the presentation of information with the aid of images or minimalist illustrations. Thus, it is understood that the organisation and arrangement of all the information in blocks guarantee faster reading, without resorting to many clicks during navigation. In terms of information content, there is the constant presence of text, images, videos, buttons, which are presented in blocks, making reading easier for the user. The dialogue arranged textually ensures comfort and tranquillity to the reader to collect the information he needs (Figure 3).



In terms of visual environment, there is a chromatic palette of neutral colours, among them: red, white, black, which emphasize the brand identity, the importance highlighted through images and pampering illustrations. At the level of functionalities, a distinct highlight was identified in the buttons to the feedback between actions that the website offers the user, ensuring an active experience under an efficient hierarchy from the menu to the text blocks, images, and buttons. The use of hyperlinks allows informing the user how to proceed to the complaint. In addition, it is a platform that includes information for requesting meetings, the use of informative videos as interviews and the use of scheduling for the platform programme to appear in school institutions. It also features a blog called "Families on Bully", with sharing of testimonies, scientific and opinion articles. With this, through usability it was denoted that all the information available on the website is essential to communicate with the user. It was also considered that the presence of public figures, highlighting campaigns and the presence of television/radio ensure reliability and empathy for greater security that transmits to the user. It was identified that at the level of user-friendliness, quick efficiency and objectivity of navigation are paramount, also including reading and access. With this, it was observed the distinct innovation and creativity that the whole website sends to the user, in terms of visual appearance.

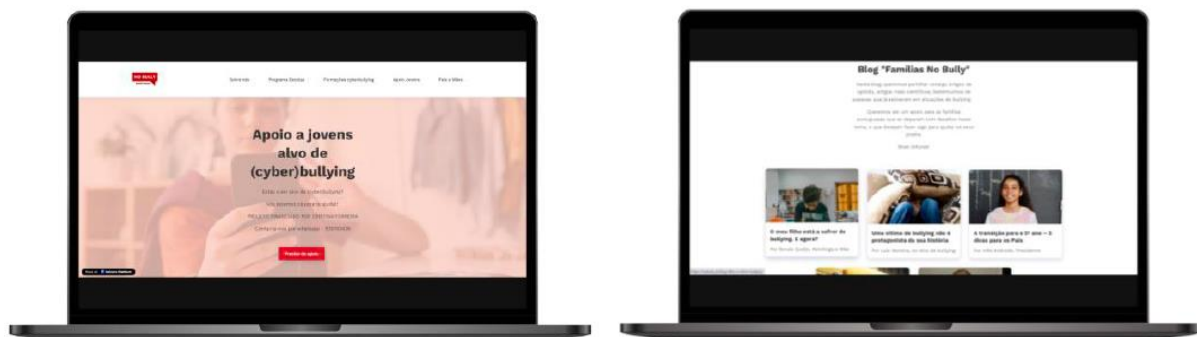


Fig.3. No Bully Portugal online plataforma. (Source © No Bully Portugal, 2023)

3. Conclusion

Digital design can thus be used by all these educational actors in a way that allows accessibility and speed through platforms that are objectively designed to combat the problem.

The various design strategies that should be included for a good user experience, encompassing different types of users are: the inclusion of simplicity, ease of navigation, and the focus on the main needs they seek, with the integration of emotional reaction and also empathy towards the platform and the user. One of the essential factors to achieve a good result in the project in question, was the implementation of user-centred design, providing a platform with a solution to combat bullying in a school environment. The study in usability tests allowed a greater perception of the relevance of the platform by the various users, as well as understanding the improvements made throughout the testing phases.

In conclusion, after a long research project, it should be noted that this contributed significantly to the literary level about bullying and cyberbullying. It is, also to highlight the acquisition of skills in different specificities with various target audiences, beneficial to the performance of the profession as a designer, more specifically as a designer of digital products.

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