

## A Cross-Country Perspective on Cyber Bullying: Italian and Turkish Experience

### Siber Zorbalık Üzerine Ülkeler Arası bir Karşılaştırma: İtalya ve Türkiye Örnekleri

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**Abstract:** The present study aimed to investigate how Italian and Turkish university students perceive cyber bullying. A total of 256 Italian (161 females, 95 males) and 122 Turkish (76 females, 44 males, 2 did not report gender) university students were recruited by convenience sampling. The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 33 for both the Italian sample ( $M = 20.9$ ;  $SD = 1.92$ ) and the Turkish sample ( $M = 22.77$ ;  $SD = 2.47$ ). Data were collected via a questionnaire which included two vignettes depicting different cyber bullying episodes (one web-site and one mobile phone episode) and follow-up questions. Results indicated that cyber bullying appears to be widespread among both samples. Although the respondents from the two countries share similar perceptions of cyber bullying, discrepancies exist in how Turkish and Italian university students perceive what a cyber bullying incidence is, and who is called the cyber bully and the cyber victim. Researchers and practitioners need to be aware of the unique needs of university students from different countries while planning prevention programs for cyber bullying.

**Keywords:** Cyber bullying, university students, cross-country, Italy, Turkey

**Öz:** Bu çalışmanın amacı İtalyan ve Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin siber zorbalığı nasıl algıladıklarını incelemektir. Veriler kolay ulaşılabilirlik örnekleme yöntemi ile kendilerine ulaşılan 256 İtalyan (161 kadın, 95 erkek) ve 122 Türk (76 kadın, 44 erkek, 2 katılımcı cinsiyetini belirtmemiştir) üniversite öğrencisinden elde edilmiştir. Her iki örneklem için de katılımcıların yaşları 18 ve 33 arasında değişmektedir. İtalyan katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 20.9 ( $SS = 1.92$ ), Türk katılımcıların yaş ortalaması ise 22.77'dir ( $SS = 2.47$ ). Veri toplamak için kullanılan ölçme aracı siber zorbalıkla ilgili iki kısa hikayeden (bir web sayfası ve bir cep telefonu örneği) ve takip eden sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Sonuçlar siber zorbalık olaylarının her iki örneklem için de yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. Her ne kadar benzerlikler olsa da Türk ve İtalyan üniversite öğrencilerinin siber zorbalığın ne olduğuna ve siber zorba ile siber mağdurun kim olduğuna dair algılarında farklılıklar vardır. Araştırmacı ve uygulayıcıların siber zorbalığa karşı önleme programları hazırlarken farklı ülkelerde yaşayan üniversite öğrencilerinin değişen ihtiyaçlarının farkında olmaları ve bunları göz önünde bulundurmaları gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Siber zorbalık, üniversite öğrencileri, ülke karşılaştırması, İtalya, Türkiye

#### Introduction

Cyber bullying, using technology to bully others, appears to be a worldwide problem as researchers from various countries such as Spain (Del Rey, Elipe & Ortega-Ruiz, 2012), Austria (Gradinger, Strohmeier & Spiel, 2010), the United States (Holfeld & Grabe, 2012), Italy (Menesini, Nocentini & Calussi, 2011), and Turkey (Arslan, Savaşer, Hallett & Balci, 2012) report varying prevalence rates. Based on the findings of a review study conducted by Veenstra (2009), the frequencies of cyber bullying vary between 4% and 56%. Besides the commonality in different countries, different age groups defined as children, adolescents (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Topcu, Erdur-Baker & Çapa-Aydın, 2008), and university students (Rivituso, 2014; Xiao

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& Wong, 2013) are part of the problem, and targets of cyber bullying report serious psychological and behavioral problems such as disappointment, anger, sadness, isolation, helplessness, depression, anxiety, family and peer problems, truancy, and delinquency (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Laftman, Modin & Östberg, 2013). Although the researchers agree on the fact that cyber bullying is prevalent among children, adolescents, and university students, and a great majority of the victims of cyber bullying report negative consequences, owing to the disagreement in definition and measurement of cyber bullying, how similar cyber bullying is perceived and evaluated by the youths from different countries still remains unknown (Riebel, Jager & Fischer, 2009).

With regard to definition of cyber bullying, a group of researchers defined cyber bullying by converting the definition of traditional bullying to cyber environment. Smith et al.'s (2008) definition "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p. 376) includes the three main criteria (repetition, power imbalance, and intention to hurt) of traditional bullying and introduces the idea of engaging in bullying activities in the cyber environment, is among the mostly used and cited definitions. However, there has been another group of researchers arguing for the need for a unique definition of cyber bullying because of the specific characteristics of the cyber environment (Smith, 2012). In addition to differences in definition, measurement tools that are used to examine the frequency of cyber bullying also vary from study to study. For example, while some researchers investigated cyber bullying by using only one question (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) such as "Have you ever engaged in cyber bullying?" and "Have you ever been cyber bullied?" others have used more detailed questionnaires that examine the occurrence of each cyber bullying behavior separately (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2010). Other differences in conceptualizing cyber bullying are caused by differences in the measurement of where the cyber bullying event has been happening. While some studies took into account bullying acts happening through the Internet and mobile phones (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2010), others differentiate between the settings in which the bullying event takes place and separately measure cyber bullying via the web (Slonje & Smith, 2008) and cyber bullying via text (Erdur-Baker & Kavşut, 2007). Given that cyber bullying is an emerging universal problem, studies from different countries utilizing parallel operational definitions and research methodologies are needed to clarify similarities and differences in the cyber bullying experiences and perceptions of youth around the world. Gaining knowledge on the shared and the unique aspects of cyber bullying would help practitioners and researchers to develop and implement prevention and intervention strategies.

The number of cross-country studies investigating the cyber bullying experiences of children, adolescents and college students from different countries has been increasing rapidly. Although there are arguably no boundaries in the cyber environment (Baek & Bullock, 2014), acknowledging that different countries experience different cultures, and culture has a role in shaping and determining the human behaviors in the physical world, researchers conducted studies to understand how people from different countries behave in online settings and perceive acts in cyber world.

When these studies were examined, early studies were found to aim comparing people from different countries reported similarities rather than differences between countries regarding their cyber bullying and victimization experiences (Dooley, Gradinger, Strohmeier, Cross & Spiel, 2010; Li, 2008; Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010). In one of these studies, Li (2008) investigated cyber bullying among Canadian and Chinese adolescents and found that adolescents from the two countries are more similar in traditional bullying cases but there are significant differences in terms of cyber bullying. More Canadian adolescents than Chinese reported that they cyber bullied others and had heard of cyber bullying cases. However, the differences in the frequency of cyber victimization cases were not significant between Canadian and Chinese adolescents. In another study, emphasizing the lack of cross-country comparisons in cyber bullying, Perren et al. (2010) recruited Swiss and Australian participants to analyze the relationship between traditional and cyber forms of bullying and victimization in addition to the

relationship between cyber victimization and depressive symptoms. Perren et al. (2010) reported that cyber bullying and victimization frequencies are high among Australian adolescents. However, the link between cyber victimization and depressive symptoms was found as common among Australian and Swiss adolescents. Dooley et al. (2010) researched help seeking behavior among cyber and traditional victims of Australian and Austrian youngsters and reported that cyber victims in both countries are less likely to ask for help than victims of traditional bullying. Finding similar results rather than differences between countries was interesting because the assessment of cyber and traditional victimization was not identical in Dooley et al.'s (2010) study.

The interest in comparing cyber bullying experiences of children, adolescents, and university students has been rapidly increasing among researchers. More recently researchers from several countries across Europe collaborated and published results of large scale studies that compare cyber bullying in multiple countries, with most of these studies including more than 20 countries. A relatively small scale study was conducted by Nocentini et al. (2010) in three European countries: Italy, Spain, and Germany. By using a qualitative methodology, Nocentini et al. (2010) examined Italian, Spanish, and German adolescents' perception of the label cyber bullying, their perception of the type of cyber bullying (written-verbal, visual, exclusion, and impersonation), and their perception of the application of traditional bullying criteria to cyber bullying. Country-specific labels for the word "cyber bullying" was raised in focus group sessions and German adolescents used the label "cyber-mobbing", Italian adolescents voiced "virtual or cyber-bullying", and Spanish adolescents name the bullying acts in the cyber environments as "harassment via Internet or mobile phone". Providing evidence for the role of spoken language in people's perception of the behavior across cultures, Nocentini et al.'s (2010) study indicated more similarities rather than differences among three European countries and suggested research be conducted with non-European countries.

Recent studies including more than one country varied in terms of utilized methodology (Barlett et al., 2014; Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2015) and investigated topics (Görzig & Olafsson, 2013; Vazsonyi, Machackova, Sevcikova, Smahel & Cerna, 2012) with regard to cyber bullying. For instance, Barlett et al. (2014) utilized a short term longitudinal design study and examined the cyber bullying frequency, cyber bullying reinforcement, and attitudes toward cyber bullying between college-aged American and Japanese participants. In addition to being one of the rare longitudinal design studies examining cyber bullying, the significance of Barlett et al.'s (2014) study comes from its selection of samples from an Asian (Japan) and a Western (USA) country that are assumed to possess different cultural characteristics and comparison of these samples. Based on their findings, although technological advances are more common in Japan, American students reported higher levels of cyber bullying than Japanese participants. Moreover, Barlett et al.'s (2014) study also indicated that culture moderated the relationship between cyber bullying frequency and attitudes toward cyber bullying. That is, participants who have positive attitudes toward cyber bullying engage in cyber bullying at a rate that is 2 times or more higher in the US sample than in the Japanese sample. Schultze-Krumbholz et al. (2015) compared the frequency of cyber bullying among adolescents from six European countries (Poland, Spain, Italy, UK, Germany, and Greece) both by adopting person-center approach and variable-center approach. The findings of Schultze-Krumbholz et al. (2015) substantiated evidence that the utilized categorization method makes a difference in the frequency of cyber bullying and the conventional method for classification for cyber bully, cyber victim, cyber bully/victim, and not involved participants mostly overestimates involvement in cyber bullying. Although Schultze-Krumbholz et al. (2015) recruited samples from six different European countries; the comparison of each country was not presented clearly in their paper.

As well as differences in cyber bullying behavior due to differences in methodology utilized, Görzig and Olafsson (2013) hypothesized that cyber bullying behavior is related to several factors (risky internet use, anonymity, gender, age, and technical ability) and the relationship between cyber bullying and these factors differ as a matter of country. To test their hypotheses, they recruited samples from 25 European countries. Different from the studies

mentioned so far, Görzig and Olafsson's (2013) results emphasize a similarity between countries and highlight the importance of individual differences among participants. Similar to Görzig and Olafsson (2013), Vazsonyi et al. (2012) conducted their study with samples from 25 European countries and tested a model examining the associations between low self-control, externalizing behavior, traditional and cyber bullying, and victimization. Confirming their model with data, Vazsonyi et al. (2012) reported minor differences for multi-group analysis that compares data coming from each country.

Although cross-country studies examining the cyber bullying experiences of adolescents are more common now than they were in the past, we were unable to identify any studies that examined how the perception of cyber bullying (whether cyber bullying is a serious incident or who is responsible for the cyber bullying act) varies among university students across countries by using the same methodology and measurement tools. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine how university students from Turkey and Italy experience and conceptualize cyber bullying, including how frequently they engage in cyber bullying and are cyber bullied, how serious they evaluate the situation, how they evaluate the aim of the cyber bully, and who is responsible for the cyber bullying event.

In sum, as mentioned earlier, to investigate the impact of culture on how people perceive cyber bullying and in order to allow for cultural differences, we present findings from two countries: Turkey and Italy. Cyber bullying has generally been investigated in Western countries and samples from only a few non-western countries were examined to date (Barlett et al., 2014; Li, 2008). Information coming from a Turkish sample, which connects the Middle Eastern and the European countries, and its comparison with Italy, a westernized country, would contribute to the literature on perception of cyber bullying by youth from different countries. Acknowledging the similarities and differences in Italian and Turkish cultures, the aim of the present study is to gain cross-country validation on the cyber bullying issue by comparing Italian and Turkish university students' evaluation and perception of cyber bullying by using the same measurement tools.

## **Method**

### ***Participants and Procedure***

The sample consists of 256 Italian (161 females, 95 males) and 122 Turkish (76 females, 44 males, 2 did not report gender) university students. Their ages ranged between 18 and 33 for both the Italian sample ( $M = 20.9$ ;  $SD = 1.92$ ) and the Turkish sample ( $M = 22.77$ ;  $SD = 2.47$ ). First author collected data in Italy and the second author collected data in Turkey. The participants were recruited by convenience sampling in both countries and researchers reached the participants at their classrooms. The researchers explained the aim of the study and asked for their voluntary participation. Volunteered students completed a paper-pencil questionnaire. The Institutional Review Board at the researchers' university approved this study.

### ***Instruments***

#### ***Items measuring the frequency of cyber bullying***

Frequency of cyber bullying was measured with 16 items (eight for cyber bullying and eight for cyber victimization). The items were constructed after reviewing the most frequently reported cyber bullying incidences in several international studies and based on the Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory (Topcu & Erdur-Baker, 2010). Students responded to each item on a 3-point rating scale ( $1 = \text{Never}$ ,  $2 = \text{Once or twice}$ , or  $3 = \text{Three times or more}$ ) indicating the frequency of their engaging in particular cyber bullying acts in the past six months. The items were created in English first and then translated into Italian and Turkish. Expert opinions on the content, readability, and clarity were sought by both Italian and Turkish researchers in their own languages. While analyzing data, respondents were divided into two categories: those who were not involved in cyber bullying and victimization, and those who reported that they were involved at least once in cyber bullying and/or victimization episodes.

*Items measuring the perception of cyber bullying*

The participants' perception of cyber bullying in terms of (a) overall evaluation of the cyber bullying incident, (b) intentions of the cyber bullies, and (c) attributions of fault were measured via specific questions following vignettes that were created in Italian, translated into English and then into Turkish.

*Vignettes*

Expert's opinions were sought on the appropriateness and readability of the vignettes and their subsequent statements for both the Italian and the Turkish questionnaires. In the present study, vignettes were preferred because they help the researchers to acquire information on people's attitudes and position on an issue by creating a relatively safe environment for the respondents rather than directly asking their own experience about a sensitive issue. Thus, the researchers preferred to utilize vignettes to understand whether the same cyber bullying incidences were judged and interpreted similarly or differently by the members of two different countries.

The vignettes used in this study depicted two cyber bullying situations; one via the web and one via a mobile phone text message, differing in the characterization of both the cyber bully and the cyber victim. The stories narrated were created based on real life experiences, and while creating the vignettes every effort was made to keep them relevant (Neff, 1979) and real (Finch, 1987). The vignettes were also vague enough to 'force' participants to provide additional factors which influenced participants' decisions (Barter & Renold, 1999). Each vignette was followed by three questions and each question had four statements the respondents had to evaluate.

*(a) Items measuring the evaluation of cyber bullying:* In order to understand how participants evaluate the cyber bullying cases in both vignettes, we asked the participants "What do you think about this situation?" The provided statements read as 1) I think it's very funny; 2) I think it's just a joke, nothing too serious; 3) I think it's a very bad situation; 4) I don't have an opinion on this matter. Participants responded to each item on a 3-point Likert scale ( $1 = Agree$ ,  $2 = Neither agree nor disagree$ ,  $3 = Disagree$ ).

*(b) Items measuring the intentions of cyber bullies:* To investigate how participants evaluate the intentions of cyber bullies, we provided four statements to the participants: 1) The cyber bully meant to hurt the cyber victim; 2) The cyber bully was aware of how many people would see the website/receive the text message and how long it would be available; 3) The cyber bully hoped to remain anonymous; and 4) The cyber bully felt more powerful than his/her victim. Participants responded to each item on a 3-point Likert scale ( $1 = Agree$ ,  $2 = Neither agree nor disagree$ ,  $3 = Disagree$ ).

*(c) Items measuring attribution of fault:* In the final part of the questionnaire, we listed four statements and asked the participants to rate what they think about who is responsible about the cyber bullying incident. The provided options were: 1) What happened is the cyber bully's fault; 2) What happened is the cyber victim's fault; 3) What happened is the fault of all those who continued the joke; 4) The Internet/mobile phone makes it very easy to hurt people. The participants were asked to respond to each statement on a 3-point Likert scale ( $1 = Agree$ ,  $2 = Neither agree nor disagree$ ,  $3 = Disagree$ ). At the end, age and gender of the participants were asked.

## **Results**

### ***Frequency of Cyber Bullying***

As depicted in Table 1, more Italian than Turkish students reported engaging in cyber bullying activities (online gossiping, publication of private e-mails and/or SMS) and being exposed to cyber bullying (online publication of an embarrassing photo, online gossiping, and publication of private e-mails and/or SMS). On the other hand, more Turkish than Italian students revealed that they cyber bullied others by making prank calls and stealing online identities.

**Table 1.** *Cyber Bullying Experiences in Italy and in Turkey*

During the last six months, how often have the instances described below happened to you?					
		Never (%)	At least once (%)	$\chi^2$ (p)	$\phi$
Online gossip	It	69.2	30.8	25.391***	-.263
	Tr	93.1	6.9		
Private message publication	It	81.6	18.4	7.528**	-.142
	Tr	92.4	7.6		
Photo publication	It	84.4	15.6	7.034**	-.137
	Tr	94.1	5.9		
Prank calls	It	75.4	24.6	12.716***	.185
	Tr	57.1	42.9		
Identity theft	It	94.9	5.1	7.904**	.145
	Tr	86.6	13.4		
Mean threatening email/text	It	83.6	16.4	1.621	
	Tr	78.2	21.8		
Unpleasant comment on social network	It	87.9	12.1	.671	
	Tr	90.8	9.2		
Exclusion from forum	It	96.5	3.5	.493	
	Tr	95	5		

  

During the last six months, how often have you done these things to others?					
		Never involved (%)	Involved at least once (%)	$\chi^2$ (p)	$\phi$
Online gossip	It	72.5	27.5	30.606***	-.291
	Tr	97.4	2.6		
Private message publication	It	79.6	20.4	9.411**	-.160
	Tr	92.3	7.7		
Photo publication	It	91.2	8.8	3.439	-.097
	Tr	96.6	3.4		
Prank calls	It	83.9	16.1	1.682	
	Tr	78.3	21.7		
Identity theft	It	94.8	5.2	.538	
	Tr	96.6	3.4		
Mean threatening email/text	It	85.3	14.7	.074	
	Tr	86.3	13.7		
Unpleasant comment on social network	It	87.9	12.1	3.181	
	Tr	94	6		
Exclusion from forum	It	98	2	.038	
	Tr	98.3	1.7		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Evaluation of Cyber Bullying**

In order to examine how Turkish and Italian participants' evaluate cyber bullying in general a series of 2 (country) X 3 (agreement level) Chi-square analyses were conducted for each of the statements in the first part of the questionnaire (Table 2). According to the findings of Chi-square analyses, Turkish participants evaluated the cyber bullying episodes as funny more often in both web and mobile phone scenarios, while Italian participants more often assessed the cyber bullying act in the web scenario as a very bad situation.

**Table 2.** *Evaluation of Cyber Bullying by Country*

		Web Scenario				Mobile Phone Scenario					
		Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>
I think it's very funny	It	3.1	3.9	92.9	64.79***	.42	3.9	3.9	92.2	8.49*	.15
	Tr	25	15.8	59.2			10.8	6.7	82.5		
I think it's just a joke, nothing too serious	It	5.5	10.2	84.3	2.40	-	5.9	9.1	85	1.75	-
	Tr	9.2	12.5	78.3			6.7	13.3	80	1.80	-
I think it's a very bad situation	It	90.2	5.5	4.3	6.70*	.13	88.7	5.1	6.3		
	Tr	81.7	7.5	10.8			84.2	8.3	7.5		
I don't have an opinion on this matter	It	3.1	15.9	81	5.10	-	1.3	16.2	82.5	4.91	-
	Tr	5.2	7.8	87.1			1.7	7.7	90.6		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### ***Intentions of Cyber Bullies***

To investigate how Turkish and Italian participants differ in terms of their perception of the motivation of cyber bullies, eight separate 2 (country) X 3 (agreement level) Chi-square analyses were conducted (Table 3). The perception of the cyber bullies significantly differed in three of the four analyses in the web and mobile phone scenarios, but the effect sizes were moderate to weak. In the web scenario, more Turkish participants reported that the cyber bully aimed to hurt his victim. However, more Italians thought that the cyber bullies were aware of how long the joke could go on and how far it could spread. When evaluating this same statement in the mobile phone scenario, the Italians expressed a higher level of uncertainty, while Turkish people scored higher both in the 'agree' and 'disagree' options. Additionally, in the mobile phone scenario, the cyber bully was perceived as more keen on remaining anonymous by the Turkish respondents, while no significant difference between the two samples was detected in the web scenario. In both scenarios, significantly more Italians imagined that the cyber bullies felt more powerful than their victims.

### ***Attribution of Fault***

To understand how similar or different Turkish and Italian university students are in their perception of whose fault is the cyber bullying event is, eight 2 (country) X 3 (agreement level) Chi-square analyses were conducted (Table 4). Two of the web scenario analyses and only one of the mobile phone scenario analyses resulted in significant findings. In the web scenario, Italians were more inclined to attribute the fault to the cyber bully and all those who participated in the joke. In the mobile phone scenario more Italian participants attributed the responsibility of the cyber bullying to the victim.

**Table 3.** Chi-square Analysis of Representation of Cyber Bully’s Intentions by Country

		Web scenario				Mobile Phone Scenario				$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>
		Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)		Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)			
Meant to hurt the cyber victim	It	86.2	5.5	8.3	12.19**	.18	88.6	2.4	9	.52	
	Tr	97.5	0	2.5			89.2	3.3	7.5		
Found out how far the thing would go (in time and amount of people involved)	It	34	19	47	20.05***	.23	35.6	20.6	43.9	6.55*	.13
	Tr	19.2	9.2	71.7			42.5	10	47.5		
Hope to remain anonymous	It	24.8	23.2	52	3.08	-	41.2	22.4	36.5	13.89**	.19
	Tr	33.3	19.2	47.5			60	10	30		
Desire to feel stronger	It	41.3	15.4	43.3	6.12*	.13	65.1	14.5	20.4	7.17*	.14
	Tr	33.3	10	56.7			61.7	7.5	30.8		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Discussion**

Cyber bullying seems to be a prevalent phenomenon among both Italian and Turkish university students. Like the previous research studies that compared and contrasted different countries and suggested that there are similarities (Dooley et al., 2010; Li, 2008; Perren et al., 2010), the present study also found similarities to some extent. The Italian sample reported both cyber bullying and victimization acts almost equally, while participants in the Turkish sample reported mostly cyber victimization cases. The differences between the two countries should be read cautiously as this study is a preliminary exploratory study and the representativeness of the samples is limited. However, this result also provides evidence that similar cyber bullying acts (such as online gossiping, leaving nasty comments, and online publication of an embarrassing photo/video without permission) were experienced in both countries. Despite these similarities, supporting the findings of Barlett et al. (2014) who reported differences between Japan and the United States of America in terms of cyber bullying behaviors, differences were also observed between Italian and Turkish university students’ perception of the cyber bullying episodes and between their evaluation of the cyber bullying acts on the Internet and on the mobile phone. First of all, while many Turkish participants found cyber bullying in vignettes “funny” especially in the web scenario, Italian respondents expressed a more negative condemnation and reported that the cyber bullying incident was “bad”. However, although the percentage of Turkish participants who said cyber bullying was a bad situation is lower than the Italians, there were still a considerable number of people in the Turkish sample who evaluated cyber bullying as “bad”. Interestingly, Turkish participants found cyber bullying as “funnier” when it happened on the web, as opposed to cyber bullying through a mobile phone. The reason for this



discrepancy might be related to their evaluation of the attack via mobile phone as a violation of privacy.

**Table 4.** Attribution of Fault by Country

		Web Scenario				Mobile Phone Scenario					
		Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	$\chi^2$	<i>V</i>
What happened is the cyber bully's fault	It	76.1	16.1	7.8	19.20***	.23	72.3	14.5	13.3	2.34	-
	Tr	61.7	14.2	24.2			65	20	15		
What happened is the cyber victim's fault	It	9.8	20	70.2	2.93	-	11	13.7	75.3	7.58*	.14
	Tr	14.2	24.2	61.7			8.3	5	86.7		
What happened is the fault of all those who continued the joke	It	77.7	15.6	6.6	19.93***	.23	87.5	8.6	3.9	1.24	-
	Tr	60.5	17.6	21.8			83.3	10.8	5.8		
The Internet Mobile phones makes it very easy to hurt people	It	60.8	23.5	15.7	.91	-	42.4	32.9	24.7	1.57	-
	Tr	65.8	20	14.2			47.5	26.7	25.8		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

When it comes to the motivations of the cyber bully, Turkish participants are more prone to attribute mean intentions to the cyber bully on the web scenario. Desire to hurt, along with intentionality of the actions are reported in previous studies as relevant characteristics of cyber bullying for its definition, while anonymity of the cyber environment is considered as a facilitating factor (Nocentini et al., 2010). Furthermore, Italian participants were unsure about the cyber bullies' awareness of the potential impact of their actions, but imagined that the cyber bullies felt more powerful than their victims both in the web and mobile phone scenario.

Another difference in the responses of Turkish and Italian participants' was observed in evaluating how they perceive whose fault the cyber bullying incident is. In the web scenario the Italians said it is the fault of cyber bullies and the other people who take part in the cyber bullying. Their attribution of the fault to the cyber bully may be related to their evaluation of the

act as more serious than the Turkish participants. Despite the statistically non-significant results, according to the Turkish participants, the cyber victim was responsible for being cyber bullied on the web. In the mobile phone scenario, Italian participants attributed the fault to the cyber victim, but the Turkish participants seemed to blame the people who took part in the cyber bullying act. The Italian participants' attribution of fault to the cyber victim in the mobile phone case might be associated with their idea of appropriate usage for a mobile phone. People should keep their mobile phone number as private as possible because its diffusion is mostly in the control of the owner of the mobile phone. However, when it comes to cyber bullying on the web, people are less likely to have control over others' behaviors. Alternatively, the difference in the assessment of responsibilities between Italians and Turkish participants may be related with the different characterization of the victims in the two scenarios (one being a pretty girl victim of jealousy, the other being a good but not too popular student that did not "help" his schoolmate during an exam). These results highlight the importance of the context in the youth's evaluation of cyber bullying situations.

This study has some limitations such as the usage of convenience sampling and the usage of vignettes. Therefore, future studies should cross-validate the result of this study by using more comparable samples and by utilizing measurement tools that consist of methods other than vignettes. As a recommendation for further research, it would be valuable to investigate whether the impacts of cyber bullying on the web and cyber bullying through mobile phone are similar or not. If they are not the same, unique prevention and intervention strategies need to be developed for each type. In the present study, the vignettes were created in Italian and translated to English and then to Turkish, using English for translation of the vignettes from Italian to Turkish may lead to loss of meaning and further research should consider using more language equivalent forms while collecting data from different countries.

Despite these limitations, the present study contributes to the cyber bullying literature as being among a limited number of cross-country studies investigating the perception of university students. Although cyber bullying seems to be a prevalent problem among both Italian and Turkish university students, the types of the acts that young people in each country do to cyber bully others differ. Thus, precautions should be country specific. Also, how severe Turkish and Italian youth perceive the cyber bullying varies. For many Turkish university students, cyber bullying is mostly a joke, but Italians evaluated cyber bullying acts as something 'bad'. Therefore, for Turkish youth the first step in the prevention and intervention strategies should be changing the wrong idea that cyber bullying is done just for fun and does not hurt the cyber victim. Additionally, besides the country differences, the medium that cyber bullying is done (web or mobile phone) also changes the perception of the youth about cyber bullying. It may not be very helpful approaching all the cyber bullying incidents as if they are all the same. The present study does not have data to validate whether the type of cyber bullying has a link to people's perception of cyber bullying severity or not. Yet, it can be speculated that those who think that cyber bullying is an innocent joke could be engaging in more severe acts of it. Future research should investigate such mediating relationships.

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## Uzun Öz

### Giriş

Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojileri aracılığıyla zorbalık yapmak olarak tanımlanan siber zorbalık Türkiye'nin (Arslan, Savaşer, Hallett ve Balcı, 2012) yanı sıra İspanya (Del Rey, Elipe ve Ortega-Ruiz, 2012), Avusturya (Gradinger, Strohmeier ve Spiel, 2010), Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (Holfeld ve Grabe, 2012) ve İtalya'da (Menesini, Nocentini ve Calussi, 2011) da yaygın olarak görülen bir problem olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Veenstra (2009) siber zorbalık sıklığının %4 ve %56 arasında değiştiğini belirtmiştir. Siber zorbalık çalışmaları her yaş grubundan bireyi kapsamaktadır ve çocuklar, ergenler (Hinduja ve Patchin, 2008; Topcu, Erdur-Baker ve Çapa-Aydın, 2008) ve üniversite öğrencileri (Rivituso, 2014; Xiao ve Wong, 2013) ile yürütülmüşlerdir. Siber zorbalığın olası sonuçlarını inceleyen çalışmalara göre siber mağdurların ciddi psikolojik ve davranışsal sorunlar yaşadıkları görülmektedir (Hinduja ve Patchin, 2006; Juvonen ve Gross, 2008; Laftman, Modin ve Östberg, 2013). Neredeyse her ülkede ve her yaş grubunda yaşandığı bilinen siber zorbalık olaylarının ve deneyimlerinin kültüre göre değişebileceği düşünüldüğünde farklı ülkelerdeki bireylerin siber zorbalık deneyimlerinin incelenmesi gereği önem kazanmaktadır fakat farklı ülkelerdeki bireylerin siber zorbalık algılarını aynı ölçme aracıyla inceleyen çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır (Riebel, Jager ve Fischer, 2009).

Siber zorbalığın farklı ülkelerdeki görünümünü karşılaştırmalı olarak inceleyen az sayıdaki araştırmaya bakıldığında ülkeler arasında benzerlikler olduğu görülebilir. Buna göre, Li (2008) siber zorbalığın hem Kanada'da hem de Çin'de yaygın görünümü olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Benzer biçimde İsveç ve Avustralya'da siber zorbalık sonuçlarını inceleyen Perren, Dooley, Shaw ve Cross (2010) her iki ülkede de siber zorbalık ve depresif belirtiler arasında bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Avusturya ve Avustralya'da yaşayan gençlerin siber zorbalık sonrası yardım alma davranışlarını inceleyen Dooley, Gradinger, Strohmeier, Cross ve Spiel (2010) de her iki ülkede de gençlerin siber zorbalık olayı sonrası geleneksel akran zorbalığına kıyasla daha az yardım aradığını bulmuştur.

Ülkeler arası benzerlikler kadar farklılıkların da olduğu görülmektedir. Yaptıkları çalışmada Nocentini ve diğerleri (2010) İspanya, İtalya ve Almanya’da siber zorbalık olaylarını tanımlamak için kullanılan kelimelerin farklı olduğunu göstermiştir. Boylamsal bir desen kullanarak Japon ve Amerikalı üniversite öğrencilerinin siber zorbalık deneyimlerini araştıran Barlett ve diğerleri (2014) siber zorbalığın Japonya’da Amerika’dan daha yaygın olarak görüldüğünü bulmuşlardır.

Görüldüğü gibi ülkeler arası karşılaştırma yapan çalışmaların bazıları benzerlikler bazıları ise farklılıklar ortaya koymuştur. Siber zorbalık araştırmalarında ülkeler arası karşılaştırmaların giderek arttığı görülse de hala aynı ölçme aracı ve benzer örneklem ile farklı kültürleri siber zorbalık algısı yönünden inceleyen çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır. Bu çalışmanın amacı birer Akdeniz ülkesi olmaları nedeniyle ortak kültürel öğeleri bulunan fakat bir o kadar da farklılıkları olan iki ülkenin (Türkiye ve İtalya) üniversite öğrencilerinden oluşturulan çalışma gruplarının aynı ölçme aracı kullanılarak siber zorbalık algılarını araştırmaktır.

### **Yöntem**

Araştırmaya 256 İtalyan (161 kadın, 95 erkek) ve 122 Türk (76 kadın, 44 erkek, 2 katılımcı cinsiyetini belirtmemiştir) üniversite öğrencisi katılmıştır. Her iki çalışma grubundaki katılımcıların da yaşları 18 ve 33 arasında değişmektedir. Verilerin elde edildiği ölçme aracı araştırmacılar tarafından İngilizce geliştirilmiş ardından Türkçe ve İtalyanca çevirileri yapılmıştır. Ölçme aracının ilk bölümünde siber zorba ve mağdur olma sıklığını ölçen bir form yer almıştır. Formun ardından siber zorbalıkla ilgili iki hikaye ve takip eden sorular verilmiştir. Hikayelerin biri web sayfası aracılığıyla yapılan siber zorbalık olayını diğeri ise cep telefonu üzerinden yapılan bir siber zorbalık olayını anlatmaktadır. Her hikayenin ardından katılımcılara üç grupta dörder soru sorulmuştur. İlk gruptaki sorularla katılımcıların siber zorbalık olayını değerlendirmeleri, ikinci gruptaki sorularla siber zorbanın amacına ilişkin görüşlerini belirtmeleri ve üçüncü ve son gruptaki sorularla ise siber zorbalık olayının sorumluluğunun kimde olduğunu değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir.

### **Bulgular**

Yapılan betimsel analizler ve Ki-Kare analizleri sonucunda siber zorbalığın hem Türk hem de İtalyan üniversite öğrencileri arasında yaygın olarak görüldüğü ortaya çıkmıştır. İtalyan üniversite öğrencileri Türklere göre daha çok çevrimiçi dedikodu yapma, özel mesaj ve fotoğrafların yayınlanması türlerinde siber zorbalık yaptıklarını ve bu türlerde siber zorbalık olaylarına maruz kaldıklarını dile getirmişlerdir. Türk üniversite öğrencileri ise İtalyanlara göre daha çok hesap ele geçirme ve telefon şakaları yaptıklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Türk üniversite öğrencileri hem web sitesinde hem de cep telefonu aracılığıyla yapılan siber zorbalık olaylarını komik olarak değerlendirirken İtalyanların özellikle web sayfası üzerinden yapılan siber zorbalığı kötü olarak değerlendirdiği görülmüştür. Türk üniversite öğrencilerine göre siber zorbanın amacı karşı tarafı incitmek ve gizli kalmakken İtalyan katılımcılar siber zorbanın amacının daha çok olayın nereye kadar gideceğini görmek olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Son olarak, İtalyan üniversite öğrencilerine göre web sayfasında yapılan siber zorbalık hikayesinde sorumlu kişi daha çok siber zorba ve siber zorbalık olayını devam ettiren diğer kişilerken cep telefonu ile yapılan siber zorbalık hikayesinde sorumlu kişi siber mağdurdur.

### **Tartışma ve Sonuç**

İtalyan ve Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin siber zorbalık algılarının incelendiği bu çalışmada daha önce yapılan çalışmalara (Dooley vd., 2010; Li, 2008; Perren vd., 2010) paralel olarak iki ülke arasında benzerlikler olduğu görülmüştür. Görülen en temel benzerlik siber zorbalık olaylarının her iki ülkede de yaşanmasıdır. İtalyan öğrenciler hem zorbalık hem de mağduriyet bildirirken Türk öğrencilerin daha çok mağduriyet yaşantılarından bahsettikleri görülmüştür. Bir ön çalışma olarak değerlendirilebilecek olan bu çalışmaya göre Barlett ve diğerleri (2014) tarafından yapılan araştırmaya benzer olarak iki çalışma grubu arasında farklar da vardır. Bu

farklar yorumlanırken iki örneklemin de tesadüfi örnekleme metoduyla oluşturulmadığı ve bulguların tam olarak bir kültürler arası kıyaslama çalışması gibi okunmaması gerektiği akılda tutulmalıdır.

İtalyan ve Türk öğrenciler arasındaki ilk fark siber zorbalık algılarına ilişkindir. İtalyanlar siber zorbalık olayını “kötü” olarak algılamakta, Türk üniversite öğrencileri arasında da olayı “kötü” olarak değerlendirenler olsa da daha büyük bir çoğunluğu olayı “komik” olarak değerlendirmektedirler. İkinci olarak, İtalyan öğrenciler olayın sorumluluğunun siber zorbada ya da siber zorbalık olayını devam ettirenlerde olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Siber zorbalık olayıyla ilgili algıları daha sert olan İtalyan öğrencilerin sorumluluğu siber zorbaya vermeleri ise bu olayı daha ciddiye aldıklarını ve şaka olarak değerlendirmediklerini göstermektedir. İlginç bir biçimde cep telefonu üzerinden yapılan zorbalık olayında suçun mağdur kişide olduğunu söylemişlerdir. Buna göre, katılımcıların cep telefonunun daha kişisel bir araç olması nedeniyle kişinin kendini koruması gerektiğini düşündüğü görülmektedir.

İki ülkeden bulgular sunan ve bir ön çalışma niteliğinde olan bu araştırmanın kullanılan örnekleme yönteminin temsili olmaması, kullanılan ölçme araçlarının İngilizce geliştirilip daha sonra Türkçe ve İtalyancaya çevrilmesi gibi bazı sınırlılıkları vardır. Bu sınırlılıklara rağmen Türkiye ile bir başka ülkeyi siber zorbalık algısı açısından karşılaştıran bilinen ilk çalışma olması nedeniyle bu çalışmanın bulguları önemlidir. İleride yapılacak daha kapsamlı araştırmalarla bulguların doğruluğu test edilmelidir. Uygulamaya yönelik ön bulgular ortaya çıkaran bu çalışma sonuçlarına göre siber zorbalık önleme ve müdahale programları hazırlanırken gençlerin içinde yaşadıkları toplum ve kültürün etkilerinin göz önünde bulundurulmasının önemi ortaya çıkmıştır.