

EMOTIONAL DETERMINANT OF INTERNET SEXTING AMONG ADOLESCENT IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigates the emotional determinant of internet sexting among adolescent in Rivers State. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study was 50,568 adolescence students. Multistage sampling was used for the study which involves stratified random sampling, simple random sampling by balloting method and proportionate random sampling. A questionnaire tagged "Emotional Determinant of Internet Sexting among Adolescent Questionnaire" (EDISAQ) was used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instrument was 0.72. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The data collected were analyzed with Mean and standard deviation is used to answer the research question while t-test was used to test the corresponding null hypothesis. From the analysis, it is therefore concluded that guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in secondary adolescent school in Rivers State. Also, the result of the finding shows that loneliness significantly determines internet sexting among adolescence in secondary adolescent school in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that adolescence that feels lonely or isolated from loved once should talk to a professional. Psychologists and other mental health professionals can help you express and manage your feelings and find healthy coping tools

Keywords: Internet sexting, Guilt, Loneliness and Adolescence

INTRODUCTION

Some 30 years ago, the Internet began to spread around the world and has today become a fundamental element in the lives of young people. Today, there is a great diversity of devices that have revolutionized the way of working, relationships, having fun and learning through the use of communicative applications such as chats, online games or social networks (Robinson, 2010). There is no doubt about the many advantages that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have brought to society, highlighting the speed, accessibility, overcoming of barriers and real-time intercommunication from anywhere in the world.

The internet and smartphones are incorporated into all aspects of life and are the main social tools for adolescents and young adults (Campbell, 2015; Chalfen, 2019). Instead of going out and socializing outside the home like it's been done in the past, social interaction has taken place through blogs, social networks and various applications intended for communication between users at the comfort of their home (Horst, Herr-Stephenson, & Robinson, 2010). Today, digital technology provides new ways of developing and maintaining social relationships and enables young people to define themselves as they use them (Simpson, 2013). The virtual world is becoming part of everyday life, and it is difficult to separate it from real life (Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone, & Harvey, 2012; Van Doorn, 2011).

The adolescence population is especially attracted and influenced by the Internet, as they get quick answers, instant rewards and have a very effective interactive mode capable of overcoming the barriers of space and time. Through the Internet young people have found an ideal means of communication, relationship and satisfaction of curiosity (Moral & Suárez, 2018). They use social networks to build their social identity, as well as a relational bond, tending to stay connected for long periods of time (Ekene, 2016). For this reason, it is also the youngest who are most exposed to the risks involved in this phenomenon. Young people also use ICT to provide each other with intimate information by exchanging sexual content and messages, making use of the practice known as sexting (Lareki, 2020). This practice (Sexting) has increased in recent years due to the ease of access to cameras and the Internet through mobile devices and the need to get more attention among friends. The experience itself would not be a problem if it were not used to damage the image of the agents involved and as long as no adults are involved with minors, which would become child pornography.

"Sexting," a term which blends the words "sex" and "texting," was first used in 2005 (Marker, 2011; Walker, Sancí, & Temple-Smith, 2013), and is defined as "the action or practice of sending or exchanging sexually explicit or suggestive messages or images electronically, especially using a mobile phone" (Ronko, 2020). Sexting is defined as the creating, sharing, and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images or video clips through the internet (Ringrose, 2012). According to Wolak and Finkelhor (2019) sexting is generally known as the sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexual text messages, nude images, and/or sexual content (e.g., photos, videos) via the internet, mobile phones, or any electronic devices. There are indications that sexting usually occurs between romantic partners (Cooper, 2016; Lenhart, 2019), but it also seems that adolescents may sext with people they have different relationships with, such as people just met online, or someone that the adolescent has a romantic relationship with (Lee, 2015). Also, adolescents who sext are more likely to experience anxiety or depression, use alcohol or other drugs and engage in sexual activity due to blackmailing from their partner (Englander, 2012).

Sexting is when people share a sexual message and/or a naked or semi-naked image, video or text message with another person. It's also known as nude image sharing. Children and young people may consent to sending a nude image of themselves. They can also be forced or coerced into sharing images by their peers or adults online. If a child or young person originally shares the image consensually, they have no control over how other people might use it (Lennhart, 2009). If the image is shared around peer groups it may lead to bullying and isolation. Perpetrators of abuse may circulate a nude image more widely and use this to blackmail a child and/or groom them for further sexual abuse. It's a criminal offence to create or share explicit images of a child, even if the person doing it is a child.

Research has shown that adolescence has so many reasons why they sexted, such as; it is a "fun way to flirt" and that it could be used to attract someone they were interested in (Henderson, 2011; Jonsson, 2015). Adolescents also report that sexting can be a constructive part of being in and maintaining a romantic relationship (Albury & Crawford, 2012; Jonsson, 2015). Some adolescents maintain that sexting also allows for "safe" sexual exploration and interactions with others in contrast to offline inter-personal sexual interactions (Bond, 2011; Dir, Cyders & Coskunpinar, 2013). Some girls report that they send sexts to gain popularity among boys or to seek affirmation that they are "looking good" (Lippman & Campbell, 2014).

Sexting has a significant effect on mental health and wellbeing (Jonsson, 2015). It is associated with many detrimental consequences that can lead to negative internalizing and externalizing behaviours. It has been seen that young adults are becoming victims of sexting which in turn leads to be the victim and other psychological consequences like depression, anxiety, mood swings, suicidal ideations and their complications (Krieger, 2017). Though, in one-way, social media facilitate communication and relationships but this also cast alarming situation on the other hand by engaging youth and adult in useless and destructive activities like sexting. That is why; Sexting has increased across the broad media consideration and worry because of the harming emotional, social, psychological effects, and lawful ramifications of sexting elevated by development of new technology. Sexting has made people victims to life stolen habits and now these people depend on others to console.

In this sense, Klettke (2018) found significant relationships between sexting and risky sexual behaviour, with several other adverse outcomes, such as: the sharing of sexual content without consent, legal consequences such as being prosecuted for child pornography distribution, and negative mental health repercussions. Considering the increasing number of suicide cases related to sexting, shame and the relationship between sexting and emotional health, this attracted the interest of the researcher. According to Rio (2017), sexting itself may not be problematic, but having

partners who sexts with their friends or others, sharing of sexts outside of the person they were intended for has become increasingly common among teens could be problematic and lead to bullying, emotional pain, shame and suicidal thought (Justin, 2015).

Another identified motivation for adolescents' sexting is the feeling of pressure from others, both direct and indirect. This pressure usually comes from a romantic partner or a friend or peers group, and it is more common for girls than for boys to feel pressured (Walrave, Heiman & Hallam, 2013). The pressure can take different forms, but one of the most common was the threat of losing a romantic relationship (Lippman & Campbell, 2014). These stem from both positive and negative aspects of sexting, which undoubtedly affect how adolescents perceive sexting. For instance, if sex-ting is engaged in within a romantic relationship, it is possible that it is viewed more positively by adolescents. In contrast, if a sexting situation involves pressure, it is likely that adolescents view it as negative. Understanding how adolescents perceive others' motivation for sexting may thus provide a clue of when sexting may be viewed as an acceptable activity and when it is not.

The problem arises when information is misunderstood or used. These facts often lead to harmful experiences with negative psychological effects (Won 2017). Therefore, sexting is a potential risk, which starts as a fun and opportunity for sexual exploration, but can end up in a serious, out-of-control situation with serious social, emotional, physical, psychological and even legal consequences. Van Ouytsel (2015) found a relationship between sexting and psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, emotional disturbance and substance use. Cox (2020) said in "demonstrating some individuals engage in sexting, but would prefer not to, but do so as a means to either gain affirmation about their relationship, relieve anxiety, or get something tangible — non-sexual — in return." Cox, established three main motivations for why people are inclined to sext: While "some people use sexting as foreplay for sexual behaviours later on," others "sext for the relationship assurance they receive from their partner," and still others "sext their partner as a favour, with the expectation the favour will be returned later in a non-sexual way, such as a dinner date, gift or money." Emotional factors that can determine sexting is guilt. Guilt in a relationship shrouds the individuals thinking with feelings of doing something wrong (Rain, 2015). If adolescence carry thoughts of having done something wrong there is more than likely the individual will begin to overcompensate for their supposed wrong actions. This overcompensation can present itself in the form of neediness and have a consistent need for reassurance. This places strain on any relationship because there is a constant stop/start sensation where you have to reassure your partner that everything is fine by doing all him/she ask of even sexting. In its true sense, guilt is a feeling of remorse or sadness over a past action, experienced when we think we've caused harm or breached our moral code. It's our moral compass. Our values and how we process our emotions will all inform the way we react to certain situations. So while one person might catastrophise about a situation, another may not think twice about it. The irrational kind – when we mistakenly assume responsibility for a situation, or overestimate the suffering caused – is another matter entirely and can be very damaging which leads to sexting if they don't take steps to resolve it.

More so, isolation derives from the word isolate, meaning to separate, being alone, solitude (Grant, 2016). The feeling of being alone, with no outlet to escape to, can be detrimental to a human's mental and physical health which has been proof to predict sexting (Ene, 2017). Adolescence specifically felt the effects of the isolation. Social media is meant to be an interactive experience, a way to connect with others, become active in the community, and explore different hobbies, but when not connected with others as one feel or wised, they resort to sexting to get attention from friends and peers. Social isolation and loneliness have profound impacts on students' health, including increasing their risk of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. More specifically, peer isolation is associated concurrently and longitudinally with depression and loneliness. Some students' sext not to feel lonely and to be accepted by a friend or the community which lower self-worth. Feelings of isolation are also associated with self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts (Young, 2017). Some way to escape the isolation is or neglected is to feel belong by sexting.

Change of social and cultural structure in today's world and fast lifestyle resulting from technological improvements has brought about some difficulties (Kent, 2016). Having emotion, adolescence needs to establish close relationships with the others, to share the lives of the others, to prove him/herself within a social group during all age periods which may result to sexting. Feeling sad and empty, Anhedonia (unable to be happy), lethargy (decreased energy), difficulty concentrating, difficulty falling asleep or interrupted sleep, too much sleep, decreased or loss of appetite, low self-esteem, suicide thought, lack of confidence etc some adolescence sext to fill the void and to fill loved. Hence, it is pertinent to find out the determinate of sexting among adolescence considering the harmful effect of adolescence.

Statement of the Problem

The adolescent years are the time of rapid growth, exploration, and risk-taking. These have led to many adolescents face pressures to sext, use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs and to initiate sexual relationships. Some adolescence put themselves at high risk for intentional and unintentional injuries and blackmailing from sexting. Sexting has a significant effect on mental health and wellbeing. It is associated with many detrimental consequences that can lead to negative internalizing and externalizing behaviours. It has been seen that young adults are becoming victims of sexting which in turn leads to be the victim and other psychological consequences like depression, anxiety, mood swings, suicidal ideations and their complications

Hence, sexting is a potential risk, which starts as a fun and opportunity for sexual exploration, but can end up in a serious, out-of-control situation with serious social, emotional, physical, psychological and even legal consequences. Sexting has make people victim to life stolen habits and now these people depend over others to console. Having partners who sexts with their friends or others, sharing the nude pictures or videos outside to their friends or other social platforms go gain followers has become increasingly common among teens could be problematic and can lead to

blackmailing, bullying, emotional pain, shame and suicidal thought. Therefore, the problem of the study is to investigate the emotional determinant of internet sexting among adolescent in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the emotional determinant of internet sexting among adolescent in Rivers State. In specific terms, the objective of the study include to:

1. Ascertain the extent guilt emotionally determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State
2. Ascertain the extent loneliness emotionally determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State

Research Question

The following research questions will be used to guide the study.

1. To what extent do guilt determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State
2. To what extent do loneliness determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State.
2. Loneliness does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study was 50,568 adolescence students and sample size of 383 respondents. Multistage sampling was used for the study which involves stratified random sampling, simple random sampling by balloting method and proportionate random sampling. To draw the sample, three Senatorial Districts in the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State were randomly stratified. Then, simple random sampling by balloting method was used to draw 3 Local Government Areas in two Senatorial Districts to make up 6 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. Furthermore, proportionate sampling was used to drawn 383 Students from public secondary schools. The instrument that was used for this study is a researcher-developed instrument titled “Emotional Determinant of Internet Sexting among Adolescent Questionnaire” (EDISAQ) and was self-administered by the researcher. The instrument was validated and has high face, content and constructs validity and is suitable for the study. The reliability coefficient of the entire instrument was determined and found to be 0.72 using Pearson product moment. Mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the corresponding null hypothesis.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

Research Question 1: To what extent does guilt determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State

Hypothesis 1: Guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State.

Table 1: Showing analysis of guilt as a determinate of internet sexting

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Result
Guilt	107	84.82	16.17	381	1.07	1.96	N S
Internet Sexting	276	50.52	18.71				

The result of the data analyzed showed that guilt had mean score of 84.82 and SD of 16.17 while, internet sexting had mean score of 50.52 and SD of 18.71. Since the t-calculated of 1.07 is less than t-critical =1.96, this is rejected. Hence this implies that guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State

Research Question 2: To what extent does loneliness determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State

Hypotheses 2: Loneliness does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in Rivers State.

Table 2: Showing analysis of loneliness as a determinate of internet sexting

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Result
Loneliness	261	78.33	51.45	381	6.315	1.96	S
Internet Sexting	122	56.61	21.43				

From table 4.4, the result of the data analyzed showed that loneliness had mean score of 78.33 and SD of 51.45 while, internet sexting had mean score of 56.61 and SD of 21.43. The result showed that the t-calculated of 6.315 is greater than t-critical of 1.96, indicating that loneliness significantly determines internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State.

Summary of findings

The results obtained after data analysis are summarized below;

1. The result of the finding shows that guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State
2. The result of the finding shows that loneliness significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State

Discussion of findings

The result of the finding shows that guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State. This study is in disagreement with this present study by Young (2013) who suggest that the more people have affected the outcome of a sexting, the guiltier they will feel when the outcome is negative. However, more recent research argues that guilt student tend to blame their sexting on negative circumstances. The relationship of perceived negative behaviour and the unfavourable situation which justifies it can also be examined from the viewpoint of appraisals and construal levels.

Also, the result of the finding shows that loneliness significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence secondary adolescent school students in Rivers State. In agreement to the study, Ickes & Layden, (2016) noted that students with low self-esteem may interpret social interactions in self-defeating ways, and these individuals may be more likely to attribute social failures to internal, self-blaming factors. Lonely people often feel worthless, incompetent, and unlovable which makes them to seek attention by engage in sexting to feel wanted.

Conclusion

Base on the findings, it was concluded that guilt does not significantly determine internet sexting among adolescence in secondary adolescent school in Rivers State. Also, the result of the finding shows that loneliness significantly determines internet sexting among adolescence in secondary adolescent school in Rivers State

Recommendations

1. Schools should set up effective counselling units to counsel students on the dangers sexting pose to their sexual and social life.
2. Adolescence that feels lonely or isolated from loved once should talk to a professional. Psychologists and other mental health professionals can help you express and manage your feelings and find healthy coping tools.
3. Communication is important; families should talk with your children about digital citizenship and sexual internet-based preoccupations, including sexting and pornography
4. Adolescence should focus on developing resilience and maintaining emotional and mental well-being. This will help them to do the right things when they face with such request of sexting.
5. Intensive sensitization should be carried out, either through seminars, campaigns or publications to inform these youths of the negative consequences of Sexting and that parents and families as agents of socialization should intensify their sexual socialization roles.
6. Increase opportunities for the family to spend positive quality time together on a regular basis to make them feel loved and appreciated
7. Parents should be vigilant about what your child is doing online and keep an eye on your children's browser histories. Be familiar with websites your children are visiting, as this will help you know there activity online.

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