

## Cyberpsychology: A Rapid Overview of Sexting

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### Commentary

Technology has revolutionized interpersonal relationships in many ways, including sexuality. Due to the interactivity that exists on the Internet and the accessibility of current devices, it is increasingly popular to experience sexuality through technology [1-3]. The term sexting came from the practice of sex or sex-activity related through text messages (texting) [4,5]. However, currently the practice of sexting is not limited to messages, since it can include videos, audios, photos, voice calls and video calls [6,7]. Young people are those who practice sexting the most and it has been related to the use of social networks [8,9].

Some authors questioned sexting as a risk behavior, since it is usually a common practice for young people. However, it is considered a risk factor since, although it could be shared privately and a person of trust, the intimate material can reach third parties, either by intentional or unintentional dissemination, so there is a vulnerability of its privacy, exclusion, work/academic consequences, and intimidation, with consequences of feelings of guilt and shame, depression, among others, including suicide [4,10-13]. Although there are more studies regarding sexting, its research is still very limited. Several authors point out that more research is necessary to know the impacts and consequences, since it could be constituted as a risk behavior associated with different problems, such as risky sexual behaviors [1,8]. One of the main problems that has been found is that studies of sexting has focused on the consequences and not on the behavior itself. One of the factors that has greater relation is the cybernetic harassment, nevertheless some authors analyze them like a same concept, reason why it is important to analyze to the conduct and not in its possible consequences [9]. It is important to note that sexting is seen as a voluntary act while cyberbullying is something involuntary [8]. For example, it was found that depression is not related to sexting as consequence but it is related to cybervictimization [8]. Sexting is a risk factor for cybervictimization, since the intimate material can be used to blackmail the victim or cause damage through its diffusion [2,9,14,15].

The relationship between risk behaviors in young people may be mediated by impulsivity. Impulsiveness has been related to sexting as well as other risk factors such as addictions and suicide [16-18]. Deepening on the explanations and consequences will be able to clarify the modern risk behaviors and it will be possible to deepen in its prevention and intervention [6,19]. Just as it can be treated as a popular and modern form of sexuality, mainly by young people, some studies relate it to negative aspects, and can be an

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important risk factor. For this it will be important that the studies focus on the behavior and not on the consequences of sexting, since the virtual harassment and not the virtual sexuality practice would be really being investigated. Once the operationalization of sexting has been identified, it should be divided into its different types, as well as the frequency and with whom they regularly practice it, since there could be a difference between those who do it with their partner and those who practice it with strangers through of websites or social networks. Although quantitative

research predominates in the subject, it will be important to prioritize a mixed research approach. That is, also include qualitative analyzes, which may be through interviews or focus groups, to determine and make more particular conclusions. So we can answer more questions, such as, Is every sexting practice a risk factor and is it related to negative aspects? Explore the

behavioral mechanisms and neuropsychiatric outcomes related to addictive behavior, may help understanding the different risk factors involved in brain disorders [20-22]. Sexting is one subdivision of cyberpsychology and with the growing literature on the area, more epidemiological research in the future should be done to explain these mechanisms.

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