



Sexting Behavior Among Teens: Implications for Counseling Therapy

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Date of Submission: 13-06-2025

Date of Acceptance: 27-06-2025

Abstract

Sexting, a deviant and risky vice, is becoming prevalent among teens in Machakos County due to digital involvement and peer pressure. This study aims to aid in exploration of the aspects of teenage involvement with explicit digital material, especially through the practice of sexting repercussions and its therapy. It will explore motivations that encourage this practice and the unintended exposure heavily influenced by the media.

Key Words: sexting, internet, depression, therapy

I. Introduction

Globally, there is a higher digital culture of using technologies to send private messages and more so smart phones and other media outlets. The evolution of technology has led to diverse impacts across different ages and more so the teens. Due to the secrecy of sexting behavior, high prevalence of internet, and intensive peer pressure, it is becoming hard to contain this vice in Kenya. The teens have many chances to send privatized messages to their peers.

Sexting Causes

There are both intrinsic and extrinsic factors which trigger sexting. On peer culture, J Bryant notes that girls are introduced to the vice by boyfriends while boys are pushed by other exposed boys in most cases (Bryant, 2009, 46).

The major trigger of sexting behavior is the digital culture and availability of mobile phones (Smith, 2011). This has been the dominant avenue for the teens that are curious to explore themselves and the world around them.

Katarina Holla et al in their study note that 'as for children, the main motives for exposing oneself in the cyberspace are primarily related to drawing someone else's attention, as well as getting tangible things in return. The study also indicates sex-bullying as a major avenue to harass and humiliate others online (Holla, JIR).

Sensation or lust was reported too in that 'young people with higher sensation seeking tendencies are more likely to receive and/or to send sexts (SE Baumtager, D Bianchi, 2014). Lohmann states further factors as infatuation, curiosity, peer pressure, and distraction as possible triggers (Lohmann, 2012). Further causes have been identified as identity formation, sexual exploration, attitudes towards sexting and subjective norms and relationship formation, including flirting (Burkett, 2015; Hudson & Fetro, 2015).

Impulsivity behaviors were noted by Habil Otanga and Hannah Aslam as causative triggers of sexting in their paper on impulsivity traits (Otanga, 2020).

Some negative outcomes of sexting are relationship between sexting, depression and stress (Klettke, Hallford et.al.,2019). Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward proved too that being depressed, having contemplated or attempted suicide in the past year, or having been cyber or indirectly bullied were significantly correlated with sexting (Dake, 2012). The Australia Institute notes further outcomes as public humiliation, damaged reputations, and social ostracization (AI, 2002). According to Deborah Gordon et al in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* it leads to unhealthy impulsive behaviors, emotional blackmail and also weaponizing of girls in revenge porn (Gordon, *JAH* 52, 2013). This proves the negativity that comes from sexting which leads to addiction and impulsive sex.

Therapy

Compulsive and impulsive sexual behaviors like sexting require Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. These two therapies mostly engage the teens in psycho-education on sex that provides key advisory information to the teens. Thomas Durham lists some of the compulsive behaviors like compulsive affairs, porn, voyeuristic club sex, and consensual sexting. The study suggests that the treatment is multimodal (Durham, NAADAC).



II. Conclusion

The triggers and impacts of sexting have been discussed and proven as relevant in the context of the study. The therapy design needs to be implemented to assist the addicted teens and the ones at high risk of impulsive behaviors.

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