#(Me)too much? The role of sexualizing online media in adolescents’ resistance towards the metoo-movement and acceptance of rape myths

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.10.005

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

77

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Maes C.;Schreurs L.;van Oosten J.;Vandenbosch L.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Adolescence

## Publisher

Elsevier BV

## Topics

## Sample

586 respondents pupils between 15–18 years old recruited from ten different schools in Flanders through a convenience sample

# Abstract

The current study addresses how sexualizing online media practices, i.e., exposure
to sexually explicit internet material and receiving negative appearance feedback on social
media, relate to the acceptance of sexist attitudes among adolescents. Specifically, it extends
previous research on the acceptance of rape myths by exploring a construct related to these
beliefs, i.e., resistance towards the metoo-movement. The study is based on a cross-sectional paper-and-pencil survey among 568 Flemish adolescents (15–18 years old, Mage = 16.4, SD = .98, 58.3% girls) that measured adolescents’ sexualizing online media use, sexist attitudes and objectification processes.
The results showed that exposure to sexually explicit internet material, but not receiving
negative appearance feedback on social media, was related to more resistance towards the
metoo-movement and the acceptance of rape myths through notions of women as sex objects.
Self-objectification did not function as a valid mediator in the examined relations. Gender and
self-esteem did not moderate the proposed relations. The findings underline the role of media use in how adolescents develop sexist beliefs and, more precisely, beliefs about contemporary actions to combat sexism, i.e., the metoo-movement. The present study showed that sexual objectification fueled by sexually explicit in\_x0002\_ternet material may result in less positive attitudes and, thus, more resistance towards this movement.

# Outcome

"Exposure to sexually explicit internet material (SEIM) seems to operate as an educator in the adoption of sexist beliefs and resistance towards a movement which condemns sexual assault (#MeToo). This confirms the role of adolescents' media use as a significant sexual socialization agent. Moreover, it highlights the presumption of objectification theory that postulates that objectifying beliefs, i.e. notions of women as sex objects and activate dehumanizing ideas. Such a conclusion aligns with prior research among adolescents that documented associations between sexualizing media use, notions of women as sex objects and general acceptance of rape myths. This may have negative implications for adolescents' future sexuality given that the acceptance of rape myths is related to sexual aggression and rape proclivity. Additionally, sexualizing online media (SO) may first relate to the objectification of women and, subsequently, affect sexist beliefs, such as acceptance of rape myths (RMA) and resistance towards the metoo-movement.
Exceptionally, no significant differences were found between adolescent girls and boys. They both respond similarly to the use of sexualizing media, i.e. SEIM and NAFSM. Potentially, future research may consider addressing a hyper gender identity as a moderator as it may be the level of adoptions of stereotypical gender roles that can
change the relationships under scrutiny. Specifically, it is possible that adolescents with a higher hyper gender orientation are more susceptible for sexualizing media effects than adolescents with a low hyper gender orientation. For example, boys with a hyper masculine orientation and the assumption that they are more motivated to develop and express attitudes which align with these depictions, e.g. sexual aggression." (Maes et al., 2019, pp. 66-67)