Young people’s views on sexting education and support needs: findings and recommendations from a UK-based study

# Details

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Learning

## Sample

14 students, aged 13 to 15, recruited via a UK secondary school

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Sex education

# Abstract

Young people’s sexting is an area of increasing concern amongst
parents, educationalists and policy makers, yet little research has
been conducted with young people themselves to explore their
perspectives on the support they need to navigate relationships in
the new digital media landscape. To address this absence, an interdisciplinary team of researchers undertook a participatory study
with students, aged 13 to 15, in a UK secondary school. This paper
outlines key study findings, including young people’s views on
sexting, their recommendations for improved education around
sexting in schools, their preferred sources of support, and their
perspectives on the way adults should respond to young people’s
sexting. Findings indicate that sexting education needs to be
developed within the context of wider relationship issues, such
as gender, power dynamics and trust between peers, and
improved communication between students and teachers or
other responsible adults. Findings may be used to consider ways
of designing and communicating messages around sexting to
young people within and beyond educational settings.

# Outcome

"A key finding from the project was the importance of the style and content of
communication between young people and relevant adults. The young people in the
study repeatedly stated that they would like teachers, parents and others to respond to
sexting practices by talking with them (e.g. in a class) rather than at them (e.g. in
assemblies). Participants were not particularly interested in web applications (apps) or
websites on this matter, but preferred a more personal and relational communicative
approach. They also emphasised the importance of teachers and parents not ‘shouting’
or ‘having a go’ at them.
Most participants reported that they had only been taught about sexting through
assemblies led by community police officers presenting a cyber-safety film... Most participants reported that they had only been taught about sexting through
assemblies led by community police officers presenting a cyber-safety film. As has been
reported elsewhere (Dobson and Ringrose 2016) such initiatives tend to construct
schools as sites for the policing of sex and gender norms. Additionally, such initiatives
tend to be based on problematic responses that criminalise sexting or adopt an
abstinence stance (Albury et al. 2013; Hasinoff 2013; Karaian 2014). Education concerning the potential legal implications of sexting may however, in itself, not prevent young
people from participating in the practice (Walker, Sanci, and Temple-Smith 2013).
Considering participants’ varied views on sexting, and their preference for a smaller interactive and gender-separated settings for discussing sexting practices, one key
recommendation from the study would be for schools to consider carefully the forum
in which material on sexting are presented, the methods by which it is communicated,
and the way the varied motivations for sexting can be acknowledged.
Trust and breaches of trust were recurring issues in young people’s narratives of why
nudes were sent and leaked and when talking about who to turn to for support if an
incident occurred. Concerns about confidentiality were also prevalent and some participants were worried that they could not trust their teachers with information about
sexting. " (Jørgensen et al, 2019: 35-6).