Parental attitudes and young people's online sexual activities

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Content-related issues
* Risks and harms

## Sample

Parents and young people in 496 families in Sweden.

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

High-quality content online for children and young people

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Parental attitudes towards young people’s sexuality in traditional (i.e. non-online media) settings have been associated with young people’s sexual activities. In this study, we explored the association between key parent and youth characteristics and parental attitudes towards young people’s online sexual activities. We also examined the association between young people’s self-reported online sexual activities and parents’ attitudes. Questionnaires were completed by parents and young people in 496 families. Parents’ attitudes towards young people’s offline and online sexual activities were closely related, although parents are more accepting in an offline setting. Parents’ attitudes towards online sexuality are related to their sexual attitudes and their preferences with regard to the Internet. Parents’ attitudes differ depending on the sex of the parent and the sex and age of the child. The link between parents’ attitudes and young people’s online sexual activities appears to be mediated by parental rules.

# Outcome

"We found that parents' attitudes towards online sexual activities varied both with the sex of the parent and with the sex of the young person. Fathers had a less negative disposition towards online sexual activity than mothers, and parents of both sexes had more accepting attitudes regarding online sexual activity for their sons than for their daughters..... Parents of older teenagers had less negative attitudes towards online sexual activities than parents of younger teenagers.... Parents' attitudes towards online and offline sexual activities were highly correlated with each other, both for mothers and for fathers, meaning that parents who have more accepting attitudes towards offline sexual activities also have more accepting attitudes towards online sexual activities.... We found that parents' general view of the Internet, as well as how much time they spent on the Internet, predicted their attitudes regarding online sexual activities.... We hypothesised that parents with more accepting attitudes have children who to a greater extent take part in sexual activities online and that closer parent–child relationships and/or fewer parental rules will lead to fewer sexual activities online. This hypothesis was supported to some degree. We found that only fathers' attitudes correlated with young people's online sexual activities.... We did not find the parent–child relationship to mediate the association between parents' attitudes and young people's online sexual activities." (Authors, 139-140)