Receiving online sexual requests and producing online sexual images: The multifaceted and dialogic nature of adolescents' online sexual interactions

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## Sample

"The questionnaire was developed on the basis of feedback from 25 adolescents and tested in a pilot study for validity and reliability and, to refine question wording, sequence and questionnaire length. 442 adolescents participated in the pilot study. In total, 4538 adolescents filled in the online questionnaire. Validity checks for nonsensical answers resulted in the removal of 85 respondents of our dataset. The data-analysis was based on 4453 completed questionnaires filled in by respondents attending secondary schools (51.2 % male). The age range of the adolescent sample was 11 to 18 years (M = 13.9, SD = 1.48). Younger adolescents (11 to 14 years) were over-represented. Data were collected between January 2011 and April 2011. Parental consent and adolescents’ assent were obtained before participation." (Kerstens Stol, 2014)

# Abstract

This article describes the prevalence of receiving online sexual requests and producing online sexual images among adolescents, thereby focusing on the differences between problematic and non-problematic incidences. Data was used from a national survey conducted in 2011 among 4453 Dutch adolescents (51.2 % male), aged from 11 to 18 (M = 13.9, SD = 1.48). Results indicated that receiving sexual requests is quite common and that producing sexual images is relatively rare. From adolescents’ perspective most of the incidences were non-problematic. Negative experiences were more likely to occur when adolescents interacted with people they did not know and when an intrinsic motivation for engaging in sexual interaction was missing. There was a strong relation between bothersome experiences and being cyberbullied. Adolescents with a higher level of online disinhibition and with low self-control were more likely to engage in both sexual communications as well as in sexting. Identifying which incident characteristics and characteristics of adolescents are related to problematic online sexual interactions is a prerequisite to design more personalized tools for vulnerable adolescents.

# Outcome

"Our findings indicate that receiving online sexual requests is quite common among adolescents. Requests for information about sex had the highest prevalence."
"The levels of receiving requests did not differ considerably for male and female adolescents, although female adolescents more often receive requests to do something sexual. The likelihood of receiving sexual requests increases when adolescents get older. "
"One-fourth of the adolescents who received an online sexual request perceived this as bothersome. Looking back, one-third of the adolescents who exposed breasts and/or private parts in front of a webcam felt bad about their behaviour. Adolescents reported negative consequences such as sexual harassment, bullying and negative comments – offline as well as online."
"Online sexual requests originating from senders who are male and whose age and sex are unknown were more often perceived as bothersome. Requests originating from peers and senders adolescents were well acquainted with were more often perceived as pleasant or common. Although anonymity might be beneficial for adolescents who send sexual requests (Valkenburg Peter, 2011), our findings suggest that this is not the case for adolescents who receive these requests. The same picture emerges for adolescents who exposed themselves in front of a webcam. Not surprisingly, a negative assessment of this behaviour is related to negative motives such as social pressure and coercion. "
"Therefore, it is possible to give an overview of risk factors and protective factors. Firstly, bothersome and negative experiences do not stand alone. There is a strong relation with other negative online experiences, such as being cyber bullied. Secondly, there is a strong relation between adolescents’ Internet usage and receiving sexual requests or engaging in sexting. An above average score on online disinhibition increases the likeliness of being involved in bothersome and negative incidences. Conversely, very frequent internet use increases the likeliness of being involved in non-problematic incidences. Therefore, it seems that being frequently online is a protective factor."
"Thirdly, adolescents with low self-control are more likely to engage in both sexual communications as well as in producing online sexual material, whether this leads to bothersome incidences or not. However, adolescents who also score low on psychological well-being are more likely to perceive incidences as bothersome, although the direction of this relation is unclear. Lastly, age and taking initiative in online interactions are both very important factors in protecting adolescents from harm. The older adolescents get, the more they developmentally are interested in sex and, the more they voluntarily become involved in online sexual communications and activities. Conversely, younger adolescents who are passively confronted with sexual requests from others feel intimidated or bothered. Therefore, this group needs special attention."