Girls' and boys' experience with teen sexting in early and late adolescence

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data from the EU Kids Online II project (17,016 participants aged 11-16 from 25 European countries, 49.7% boys)

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

This study explored the extent to which sexting represents a problematic behavior in early and late adolescence. Using data from the EU Kids Online II project (17,016 participants aged 11-16 from 25 European countries, 49.7% boys), multilevel logistic regression analyses were conducted separately for four groups: younger girls, older girls, younger boys, and older boys. Irrespective of age and gender, sexting was associated with emotional problems and alcohol use. Its effect decreased in older adolescents, except for emotional difficulties, which remained relatively high in older boys. Vaginal sex was associated with sexting in both younger and older boys while, in girls, the association was observed only in the older group. Younger boys with higher self-efficacy were more likely to send sexts than those with lower self-efficacy. Although sexting is associated with psychological challenges and other types of risk behavior, sexting in some younger boys may not necessarily represent problematic behavior.

# Outcome

"To conclude, it has been shown that the profiles of younger sexters varied by gender while the profiles of older sexters
were similar. This study also provides evidence that sexting in younger girls is primarily associated with mental and
behavioral problems. In younger boys, their involvement in sexting seems more diverse: for some of them, it is associated
with mental and behavioral problems; for others, it may have an important function for positioning in their same-sex peer
groups. A similar conclusion could be made about older adolescents, for whom sexting is akin to having sexual intercourse
and may represent one possible way to express their sexuality." (Ševčíková, 2016, p. 161)