

Effects of Sexting on Self-Esteem and Body-Image among Teenagers

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Abstract: The study was conducted to find the effects of sexting on self-esteem and body-image among teenagers. Data was collected from a sample of 40 teenagers, 20 being males and 20 being females. Rosenberg self-report inventory and Body-Shape Questionnaire was administered to both the groups. The comparison of scores of both the groups was done using t-test. The results indicated that there is a significant difference in the self-esteem of males and females. The males were found to have higher self-esteem as compared to females. However, there is no significant difference in the body-image of both the groups.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's Era smart phones have made our lives easier for us to stay in touch with relationship partners, even when we are from them. Further, they have ensured us to convey messages which are sexual in nature i.e. sexting. Basically sexting refers to the sending, receiving or forwarding sexual photos or sexually suggestive messages through text message or email. It can be transmitted by means of: drawings, photographs and videos. Then the internet came through which electronic devices and social media outlets have changed the game of sexual exchanges. These technologies have made sexual exchanges much easier and more powerful than ever before. With just a click of a button a picture can be distributed to many people simultaneously. Nowadays, sexting has become common among teens. However, people are more likely to send sexually explicit texts than nude pictures. People are using inside cameras on their smart phones, I Pads and other electronic things to take nude or sexually exposing pictures. Then, they send these photographs to their partners, friends and other people. And when they do such things, this is called sexting.

Sexting is done when an individual feels secure and get attached to a person, need for love is there and of course the individual is having too much of trust on the another person. Sexting has some serious issues not only for the person who is taking and sending the pictures, but also for the person who is receiving. Sexting should be viewed within the framework of sexual health promotion which requires the recognition of the value of sexual pleasure and the promotion of sexual relationships that are safe, consensual, honest, and mutually pleasurable (World Health Organization, 2006). Sexting can also effect on teenage self-esteem and body-image (Salter, et. al., 2013).

Body image is the mental representation one creates, but it may or may not bear close relation to how others actually see you. Body image is the perception that a person has of their physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception. These feelings can be positive, negative or both and are influenced by individual and environmental factors.

Self-esteem refers to the extent to which we like, accept or approve of ourselves or how much we value ourselves. There are two types of self-esteem- high self-esteem and low self-esteem. High self- esteem includes self-acceptance, optimism, self-confidence and the people who have high self-esteem don't think about what others are thinking about them. Low self-esteem people have lack of confidence, lack of self-acceptance, pessimism and always worry about what others are thinking and also those people want to look or be like someone.

These are some reasons why teens are involved in sexting-

Teens may be curious. Teens may be curious as to what others look like naked and also easily surrounded by nudity. Teens may be pressured may be because of their peer pressure to participate in sex is the reason of teens for sending their pictures. Teens may be in love. Teens believe with all their heart to the person they love. To them that person is trustworthy and they would do anything for them. Getting involved in all such activities may lead a teen to regret it later. Teens may not be thinking, they want to show off. Sometimes teens send nude or sexual pictures of themselves to their boyfriends or girlfriends hoping to spark interest in a relationship. Teens are sending their pictures just to maintain a good relationship with their partners. Proving or commitment is also a reason. Couples sometimes share sexually attractive pictures as a part of, or instead of, sexual activity. Some studies show that boys often pressurize or even bully girls for sharing their personal photos. As a result, girls often worry that if they do not participate in sexting they will lose the relationship. Many go against their better judgment and send the photos. Sometimes, to embarrass or humiliate someone when a relationship ends, the partner for the sake of revenge sends pictures of their partner to others. They want their partner to get embarrassed and feel humiliated after their break-up (Englander & Elizabeth (2012).

There are some consequences of sexting-Teenagers involve and participate in sexting without being aware of the negative consequence it could have on their lives. Just one impulsive move and their lives would be altered drastically. Sending a sexual or nude photo to another person, does not guarantee that the picture would remain private. And in many cases these pictures are shared with others too. After a break up in a romantic relationship or due to a fight with a friend, the pictures are often mass distributed as an act of revenge. This leads to humiliation and embarrassment of the individual whose sexually exposed photos have been shared in the mass. Once these private messages become public, this often opens teens up to bullying, especially cyber-bullying. Jessica Logan and Amanda Todd are two stories involving sexting that ended with tragic results. These girls were called vulgar names in person and online. Additionally, they were excluded and ostracized by other students. Ultimately, both girls took their own lives. This also leads to the end of friendship. This experience makes the teens feel betrayed and alone. As peer pressure being a powerful force, the friends of the targeted person separate themselves. They also worry their reputations will be tainted by the relationship. Teenage also feel shame and guilt when their personal and private images shared with mass audience. As a result, teens who are involved in sexting often regret having done so. It also impacts self-esteem leaving them feeling vulnerable and exposed.

They also experience objectification. Girls, who take their nude pictures and then send them to their boyfriend, are at risk of being objectified. As a result, they are at a greater risk of victimization and sexual assault because others make assumptions about them based on their willingness to take and distribute the pictures. Feelings of hopelessness may also occur. Even some teens may contemplate suicide because of bullying and embarrassment (Nora R.A Draper, 2012)

OBJECTIVE

- To find the self-esteem and body image of males and females who involve in sexting.
- To find the difference in self-esteem and body image between males and females.

HYPOTHESES

- There will be a significant difference between the self-esteem of males and females. The self-esteem of females will be lower than their male counter parts.
- There will be a significant difference between the body image of males and females. The body image of females will be lower than their male counter parts.

II. Review

According to a 2008 study by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 20% of teens between the ages of thirteen and nineteen have sent or posted nude or semi-nude digital photos of them. 4 Of the 22% of teen girls that reported doing so, 11% of these girls were between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. 5 When asked whether they have seen nude or semi-nude photos that were not intended to be shared with them, 25% of teen girls and 33% of teen boys answered this question affirmatively (Sirlin, 2010). Studies of high school youth have suggested that sending nude or seminude photos is somewhat common, with 18% to 28% endorsing having done sexting. The only study that included early adolescents found that between 1% and

2.5% (depending on the definition of sexting) of Internet users aged 10 to 17 reported having appeared in or created a sexually explicit photo (Mitchell K.J., et. al., 2012). Rice and colleagues found that teenagers who sexted were 7 times more likely to be sexually active and nearly twice as likely to engage in unprotected sex than their peers (Rice E. et. al., 2012).

Similarly, a study by Temple and colleagues found 10th and 11th graders who sexted were more likely to have had sex. They also found that girls who had sent naked photos of themselves had a higher chance of engaging in risky sex, including having multiple partners and using substances before sex (Temple JR. et. al., 2012).

Findings from cross-sectional studies of high school students suggest that teenagers who sext engage in higher rates of sexual activity, which may put them at further risk for unintended pregnancy, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases (Strassberg DS, et., al., 2013)

A Canadian study found that 36 % – 50 % of the adolescents from Grade 6-10 are not satisfied with their body size (Boyce, et. al., 2008)

Body image is central to adolescent girls' self-definition, because they have been socialized to believe that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by others (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999).

A study shows that the body image dissatisfaction might lead to high level of school absenteeism due to social anxiety regarding one's appearance (Yanover & Thompson, 2008)

Young women desire to be perfect when it comes to their physical appearance, and describe their perfect ideal as tall, extremely thin, and slender (Parker, et. al., 2005).

The media not only emphasize that female self-worth should be based on appearance, but present a powerful cultural ideal of female beauty that is becoming increasingly unattainable (Richins, 1991).

A study shows that the perceptions of physical appearance and self-worth are inextricably linked, such that perceived appearance consistently emerges as the strongest single predictor of self-esteem among both male and female children and adolescents (Harter, 1999)

Body image dissatisfaction is also associated with negative or low self-esteem (Fabian, et. al., 1993).

A study found that adolescent's global self-esteem correlated most highly with physical appearance (Harter, 1999).

Sexting may also relate to difficulties with managing emotions. Adolescents who report more intense and labile emotions and less effective regulation of these emotions have been found to report more problem behaviors and more sexual partners (Hessler DM & Katz LF, 2010)

III. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted mainly because of the reason that very few researches have been done regarding the relationship of self-esteem and body-image and especially these dimensions are studied for the university students who deal with such societal issues and it is important to find the effects of sexting among teenagers.

IV. METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE:

Purposive or judgmental sampling has been used in the study, which is based on the typicality of the cases to be included in the sample. As the study is related to the effects of sexting, a sample from the population of teens who are involved in sexting has been taken. A sample of 40 individuals has been taken, with 20 males and 20 females. The age limit was 17-19 years. The data has been collected from Amity University, Lucknow.

TOOLS:

Data for the study was collected using Rosenberg's self-esteem scale to assess the self-esteem of the individuals and body shape questionnaire was used to assess the body image of the individuals. Rosenberg's Self

Esteem scale: A 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. For body image satisfaction the sum total of 34/14 items will be derived. The maximum score will be 204/84 points and minimum score will be 34/14 points. Higher scores will indicate higher levels of body image dissatisfaction and lower scores will indicate higher levels of body image satisfaction.

PROCEDURE:

The study was designed by reviewing the previous researches based on various aspects of sexting. The data was collected from the defined population of teens who are involved in sexting. A healthy rapport was established with the participants and both the groups of males and females were asked to fill the Rosenberg self-report inventory and Body Shape questionnaire. Scoring was done and the mean scores were calculated for both the groups. By calculating the standard deviation, the t-test was calculated and the results were interpreted and discussed.

STATISTICS:

The statistics used in the study was mean, standard deviation and t-test. Mean is the average score calculated by using the formula: x/N , where 'x' is the total score and 'N' is the total number of participants. The

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \mu)^2}{N}}$$

standard deviation was calculated using the formula , Where x represents each value in the population, μ is the mean value of the population, Σ is the summation (or total), and N is the number of

$$t = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu_0}{s/\sqrt{n}}$$

values in the population. The t-test is calculated using the formula , where s is the standard deviation of the sample.

V. RESULT

Table: 1.1 represents the comparison of self-esteem between male and females.

	GENDER	NUMBER OF POPULATION	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	t-Value
SELF-ESTEEM	MALE	20	19.3000	3.65772	- 3.698*
	FEMALE	20	24.5000	5.11448	- 3.698*

Table: 1.2 represents the comparison of body-image between male and females.

	GENDER	NUMBER OF POPULATION	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	t-Value
BODY- IMAGE	MALE	20	29.8000	13.26491	0.014
	FEMALE	20	29.7500	8.63820	0.014

*0.01

**0.05

Table 1.1 represents the comparison of self-esteem between male and females. And table 1.2 represents the comparison of body-image between male and females. The result indicates that there is a significant difference in the self-esteem of males and females. The self-esteem of males, who involve themselves in sexting is more than that of the females. The result is significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. This means that females have comparatively lower self-esteem as they are the most targeted population in the society and when something sexual about a female is exposed in public which leads to embarrassment and humiliation. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the body image of males and females. Though both the groups have negative body-image and they perceive their own body in a negative way and are not satisfied with it.

VI. DISCUSSION

In the contemporary scenario, there are a lot of teenagers who are involved in sexting. Sexting basically refers to sending and receiving sexually exposed photos and text messages through either social media like, facebook, whatsapp, emails etc. these teenagers get so much involved in exposing themselves that they seek pleasure in doing so and do not consider the negative consequence it can have in their lives. Sexting has become a mode of involving in impulsive sexual behavior which creates a problem for teens. Findings from cross-sectional studies of high school students suggests that teenagers who involve in sexting have higher rates of sexual activity, which may put them at further risk for unwanted pregnancy, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (Strassberg, et. al. 2013). These all consequences lead to lower self-esteem of these teens and they perceive more dissatisfaction for their own body, and have a negative body image. The study conducted reveals that both males and females who involve in sexting have low self-esteem. Apart from that, females are found to have lower self-esteem as compared to their male counter parts. The negative consequences are more affected to the females as compared to males because they are the one who are more humiliated and bullied after their sexually exposed photos are revealed in public. They tend to feel more worthless and lonely. The society sees them in a negative way and this makes them more conscious regarding their character and self-image. Sometimes this leads to suicide.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to find the difference in self-esteem and body image between male and female teens who are involved in sexting. The results indicated that self-esteem of females are lower than that of males but there is no significant difference in the body image of males and females.

LIMITATIONS

- 1) There is not much research done in the particular area. So, there is no background support for the study.
- 2) The sample is very small; therefore generalizing it to the whole population could not be done.

SUGGESTIONS

- 1) The study can be conducted to a large population of different schools and college students to get a more generalized result.
- 2) More variables such as emotional intelligence, perceived stress, depression and anxiety of teens involving in sexting could be measured.

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