

WHY DO MINORS PUBLISH THEIR SELF-GENERATED SEXUAL IMAGES IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT? REPLIES FROM RUSSIA

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Abstract

The paper explores the topic under study on ground of international practice and focuses on Russian national state of affairs. The research hypothesis states that the activities under study, while being individual and emotional steps at the beginning, further go beyond individual wishes ad tend to be a sort of organized activities which use the material under study for further pressure. The research goal is to consider cases of youngsters who reveal that they publish their self-generated sexual resources in digital environment with the view to identify the target audiences' reasons for such activities. The above goal is reached through the consideration of the following research questions, related to statistics, minors' cases, psychologists' point of view. Research materials include data from academic publications, law enforcement, official social media. The research methods rest on a qualitative paradigm. The study combined theoretical analysis of statistic data and academic publications, empirical analysis of teens' first hand stories about their sexting experience.

The research used ground theory principles and inductive method to implement case-based analysis of particular data from those who survived harm of sexting.

Keywords: minors' self-generated sexual content, sexting, ICT-facilitated sexual abuse

1 INTRODUCTION

Modern digital networks have become a kind of non-boundary space for human self-representation and promotion (van Oosten et al 2018).

Young generation representatives post sexually objectifying self-images on social media to get positive feedback ("likes") from their peers (.Bell, et al 2018). Such behaviour is often viewed as normal among young peers (Phippen, 2018).

However, such kind of materials become subject to minors' further sexual abuse. ICT-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation take top lines in the international agenda on minors' protection against sexual exploitation (May-Chahal, Palmer, 2018).

Educators, researchers, law enforcement officials try to make their best to raise public awareness of the need to protect minors from themselves (Cullen, 2018).

The above confirms the current importance of the research topic.

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The research hypothesis states that the activities under study, while being individual and emotional steps at the beginning, further go beyond individual wishes ad tend to be a sort of organized activities which use the material under study for further pressure.

The above goal requires replies to a number of research questions, namely the following:

- What statistics is available with regard to the topic under study?
- Why do teens engage in sexting?
- What is psychologists' point of view on the topic under study?

Research materials include data from academic publications, law enforcement, and official social media.

The research methods rest on a qualitative paradigm. The analysis combined theoretical analysis of statistic data and academic publications, empirical studies of teens' first hand stories about their sexting experience.

The research used ground theory principles and inductive method to implement case-based analysis of particular data from those who survived the harm of sexting.

2 STATISTICS WITH REGARD TO THE TOPIC UNDER STUDY

In 2008 the Pew Research Centre published the data on their research that stated that 4% on youngsters between 12-17 sent self-generated sexually explicit images to other peers; while 15% of the same category confirmed they received such kind of data; as far as the teen are older the percentage goes higher (Lenart, 2009)

Another study showed that although girls and boys send similar photos to each other, boys are 4 times more likely to aggressively insist on this. That means that it is not enough to talk to the girls that sending naked candid photos is dangerous. Boys should be told that insisting on such photos being sent from a girl is wrong (Reed, et al 2017).

Similar data was gathered during the study which was conducted in Russia by the research team headed by Galina Soldatova (Soldatova, & Zotova, 2013). Russian scholars discovered that "if compared with European children, teenagers in Russia see sexual content online and offline twice more often. Over one third of children (41%) have been exposed to sexual content on the internet... More boys than girls report about having seen something like this on the internet" (12% vs. 6% respectively) (Soldatova, et al, 2014).

When addressing the latest sources, one can find out that According to the UK organization EU Kids Online Survey, in 2014, 20% of minors published their photos on the Internet. At the same time, 20% of children from 14 to 16 years old published their images on the Internet with a sexual context. A study by Dr. Shari Madigan from the University of Calgary, which covered 110 thousand children from 11 to 17 years old from around the world in 2018, showed that every seventh teenager sent photos of an intimate nature, and every fourth received them (Kurilova, 2019).

3 WHY DO TEENS ENGAGE IN SEXTING: FIRST HAND STORIES?

3.1 Anne's story

Anne studied in the 10th grade and, like all her friends, met with a guy. Their relationship developed slowly: they met on vacation (their families were vacationing in Thailand), began to correspond, and only after a few months of communication did they realize that they had some special, warm feelings ... Anya and Vlad started dating, but about sex speak only six months later (she was a virgin).

Over time, they immediately proceeded to send sexual photos to each other. According to the girl herself, she wanted to show, "how beautiful she is with him, how she can be desired ...". A schoolgirl sent photos to her boyfriend in underwear, then - without.

However, further she began to notice increased attention from peers. As one of her friends told her, her erotic pictures went hand in hand in high school guys. It turned out that the drain was not from her boyfriend. The source of the pictures was classmates whom she trusted.

Once, Anya gave a mobile phone to one of the guys, and while she was in the toilet, the latter opened the gallery and, finding her erotic photographs, sent to others. Initially, it was understood that this would remain between the two boys, but, as it happens, photos began to appear on the phones of other high school students. Anna was very afraid that her boyfriend would think that she was a minor prostitute.

This story ended well. The guys apologized, deleted all the photos (if they didn't lie). Anna now is happy with her boyfriend. However, she still thinks that compromising material might come up somewhere (Ostanina, 2016).

3.2 Lera's Story

Often teens take part in sending their self-generated nude images as a tool to counter body shaming aggression from their classmates. according to the story of Lera, she was called as "too skinny", "legs-sticks" and suffered from constant body-shaming in the class.

When in the 10th grade, the girl sent her erotic pictures in underwear to the guy, and he was the first to say that she had a beautiful figure. After that, she started to take such photos and thus even ceased to be shy about talking about sex.

She liked the adrenaline when her mother entered the room, and she could hardly get dressed and hide the webcam, as Lera recalls. (Kozachenko, 2017).

There explicit use of the same word can make a translator believe that the above units belong to similar

3.3 Anastasia's Story

In Yekaterinburg, one of the groups on the social network posted sexual photos of a ninth grade school girl. All her classmates and teachers saw the naked photos, and the director filed a complaint with the police.

The Internal Affairs Directorate said that the statement had indeed been received, and the case was subject to the investigation.

The girl explained that she had taken the photos by her own, and sent them to the guy with whom she had a relationship. Recently, a conflict occurred between the couple due to the fact that the schoolgirl saw a photo on the guy's page with another girl and felt deeply jealous. The couple broke their relations.

Then the guy forwarded her photos to the above mentioned girlfriend, and she forwarded them to another girlfriend, who posted everything on the Internet.

However, the guy himself has a different version. He reports that the girl wrote that she would kill herself if they were not together. When she sent him photos, he was just in shock and sent everything to a friend so that she showed everything to the girl's mother for her further discussion with her daughter.

The girls who uploaded the photos claim that they do not understand how the photos got into the group and why they are blamed for everything. One of them stated that she had indeed received photos, but did not forward them anywhere. And the second one, from whose page the pictures were posted, claims that her account was hacked and promises to write a statement about slander, should anyone accuse her of distributing photos.

Meanwhile, subscribers to the group in which the sexual photos are posted comment on the girl's features and behavior in the most offensive wordings (Balov, 2019).

3.4 Asia's Story

This story happened in one of the towns of the Kaliningrad region in northwestern Russia. In the spring of 2013, 14-year-old Asia, in the company of her schoolfriends, spent time near the river in the suburbs. At some point, Asia's ex-boyfriend, threatening to dump her into the river, dragged the resisting girl into the crane cabin and forced her to take off her clothes. Almost immediately, his friend took several pictures in which Asia was partially undressed. The next day, the friend of the "photographer" began to distribute photos among classmates. The ex-boyfriend and his friend, who took the photo, repeatedly insulted the girl publicly. There is information that they took her mobile phone and made her keep silence about it, threatening to show pictures to her mother and post photos on the Internet. According to Asia's friends, the boys also tried to persuade Asia to have an intimate relationship with her former young man. On May 19, the day when Asia was last seen, her friends became witnesses of a telephone conversation. Through a speakerphone, a female voice threatened to upload photos to the network. Asia burst into tears and ran towards the river. Her body was later found in the river. The Regional Investigative Committee opened a criminal case on the death of a 14-year-old schoolgirl in Sovetsk. The case was initiated on the basis of Article 110 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation - "Bringing to Suicide".

4 PSYCHOLOGISTS' POINTS OF VIEW ON TEENS' SELF-GENERATED SEXUAL CONTENT

The above stories confirm the data from researchers' conversations with teens on conditions of anonymity. According to respective publications, many teenagers admitted that they are sexting with friends for fun and almost do not think about the possible consequences. Some girls said that they sent intimate photos under

pressure from young men, but did not consider this a problem (Kozachenko, 2017).

The wide attention to the phenomenon led to the conclusion that "Texting explicit photographs have become a common part of courtship among teenagers. But the consequences can be tragic" (Barbieri, 2009).

Psychologists consider teen sexting as a common behavioral practice for adolescent audiences, such behavior should not be considered as either poor mental wellbeing (Temple, 2014). Youngsters do it as a kind of personal self-compensation, an objective to win another person's attention, etc. (Kozachenko, 2017).

Taking into account the above, it seems urgent to pay systemic attention to psychologists' recommendations for the parents to engage in systemic conversation with their children on the issues regarding sexual relations, their specifics, role and consequences for human life and safety. Moreover, we support the view of who underlines that such kind of communication should avoid mentoring. Parents are recommended to step aside from teaching towards asking their child's opinion about the topic, his or her vision of the phenomenon under study with further careful comments on possible limitations and necessary precautions (Kramer, 2018, Prokopenko, 2012).

5 CONCLUSION

The research findings lead to the conclusion that minors' self-generated sexual resources in digital environment should be subject to educational management along with other aspects of the management of non-consensually shared youth-produced sexual images (Quayle, Cariola, 2019).

The relevance of the research refers to further development of legal-educational studies on the topic under consideration. The research findings reveal that minors should be taught about legal and public consequences of their behaviour. School curriculum and disciplines aimed to foster the concept of human safety are supposed to include a module on self-generated sexual material production and distribution. Moreover, parents should bear primary responsibility for raising their children's awareness of sexual relations, their specifics, limits and formats.

The theoretical relevance of the research is related to a number of points, including new empirical data that has been added to already existing study, further development of methodology for the research in the considered domain.

The practical importance of the data shows concrete cases that can be subject for materials that are used for CPD courses that target stakeholders who engage in the problem under study consideration and solutions.

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