GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ADOLESCENT SEXTING: TOWARDS A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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DEDICATION

I may have done the work, cried the tears and, celebrated the breakthroughs, but this whole thesis is owed to my three girls, Tatum, Kyla, and Abby, who have shown me what courage is and exposed me to a love I could not have possibly fathomed! You are my inspiration; you bring meaning to my life and I love you!

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been submitted to this, or any other tertiary institution for such a doctoral degree and that, the thesis is my own work, and with regards to such publications of which I am the co-author, that my personal contribution to such works is clearly stated. I have given due recognition to the institutional policy on copyright.

Student Signature: Date: 8 November 2019

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SUMMARY

The evolution of media technologies provides innovative opportunities for sexual exploration and intimate communication, one of which is sexting. Sexting refers to sending, receiving, and distributing self-generated sexually explicit content such as texts, photographs, and videos across social media platforms and internet-based applications. Adolescence is a life stage in which considerable developmental changes occur, including sexual maturation. Therefore, the phenomenon of adolescent sexting needs to be understood in the context of sexual development and experimentation. The study investigated the gendered nature of adolescent sexting in order to develop a policy framework for secondary schools in South Africa. Relevant literature and theoretical perspectives contextualise adolescent sexting prior to revealing gender differences in online victimisation, sexting expectancies, internet usage, and opinions regarding sexting behaviours, and the consequences of sexting.

The mixed-method study followed a sequential design. For the quantitative strand, data was collected through a self-administered survey with standardised scales from 83 learners (average age of 14.74 years) in two independent schools in Gauteng, South Africa. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences which made comparisons between male and female learners possible by means of non-parametric statistical procedures. The quantitative findings were used to inform the qualitative policy analysis and the subsequent semi-structured expert and parental interviews. In total, there were 22 interview participants, 13 experts and 9 parents. Qualitative data was analysed using NVivo 12 to categorise emergent themes and sub-themes. The quantitative and qualitative empirical findings directed the development of the school-based sexting policy framework.

The empirical findings of the study revealed significant gender differences in terms of adolescent sexting, as well as adolescents' views on risk management and harm reduction strategies. Results showed significant gender discrepancies across mobile phone usage (p=0.049), online victimisation (p=0.005), being approached online for sexts (p=0.001), reporting online victimisation (p=0.049), and sexting expectancies (p=<0.001). The survey further accentuated gender differences in terms of sending (p=0.006) and forwarding (p=0.048) sexts, motivations for using the internet (p=0.016), opinions regarding sexting (p=0.003) and the negative consequences of sexting (p=0.002). The personal interviews with parents revealed diversity of opinions regarding best practice in terms of addressing adolescent sexting, while some experts advocated for less punitive and more risk-management and harm reduction options.

One of the predominant concerns around adolescent sexting is the apparent legislative lag. The current legal stance on adolescent sexting does not take the continuum of adolescent sexting into account, neither does it allow for a differentiation between consensual and coercive sexting. The result is that policy-makers are constrained in terms of developing policies which take the best interest of the adolescents into consideration. Furthermore, it is essential that the gendered nature and other complexities of the practice are contemplated when attempting to safeguard adolescents who are part of the technological revolution which embodies digital sexual cultures.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a stage of the lifespan that entails bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood. Generally characterised as a time of *Sturm und Drang*, the maturational changes which occur during adolescence affect the overall functioning of the adolescent (Bartollas, 1997:68). The process of growing up initiates psychosocial and psychosexual change, and is the stage at which norms and values of the peer network, the family, and society at large are incorporated into the behaviour of the adolescent. The adolescent developmental period is also the time when adolescents explore their sexuality (Santrock, 2016:159; Sternberg, 2001:336).

Amid the (sometimes confusing) sexual development and maturation, adolescents are confronted with new forms of media technology. In terms of constant connectivity, adolescents are the trailblazers in terms of their patterns of mobile and internet usage (Gunter, 2019:5; Sadlier, Duggan, Cortesi & Gasser, 2013:3; Sadleir & Harrison, 2017:6), and they are at the forefront of the debate surrounding new media technology and its rapid adoption worldwide (Kim, 2016:29; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone & Harvey, 2012:9). For adolescents, the internet and new media technologies have become tools of socialisation within an always-connected environment (Barrense-Dias, Berchtold, Surís & Akre, 2017:545). Furthermore, they have shaped how adolescents communicate, forge relationships, and relate to each other (Gunter, 2019:7). Moreover, the rapid development of smartphones and apps facilitate sexting. While new social platforms and apps such as Blackberry Messenger (now outdated) WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram Facebook and Telegram enhance social, economic, communication and globalisation opportunities (Gunter, 2019:1), it is crucial to consider the possible dangers inherent in the use of online and interactive technology, particularly those adopted by adolescents (Gunter, 2019:100; Ringrose et al., 2012:9).

One of the dangers may be the practice of sexting amongst adolescents. Sexting refers to any sexually explicit content (SEC) communicated across media platforms such as text messages, instant messaging, multimedia and visual messages, photographs, and videos (Gunter, 2019:103; Lenhart, 2009:3). The legal ramifications include the creation, distribution, and possession of child pornography and, therefore, sexting could result in adolescents being charged and convicted of a sexual offence (Sadleir & Harrison, 2017:39). However, there is a lack of research regarding the extent of and the issues that relate to sexting in the adolescent population of South Africa (Badenhorst, 2011:1). While sexting may dismay parents and educators, the transmission of sexually explicit material has resulted in much more severe consequences for some adolescents (Sadleir & Harrison, 2017:44; Wastler, 2010:687). Media reports titled "Pretoria girl commits suicide allegedly after cyberbullying" (Gous, 2019),

"Blackmailed: A schoolboy sexting nightmare" (Van Der Merwe, 2018), "SAPS sensitising parents, teens to sexting" (Maako, 2019) and "Sending a naked selfie can be a criminal offence – but not many teens know this" (Arthur, 2017) highlight the severe consequences sexting can have on adolescents. Although, it must be noted that research (*cf.* Bond, 2011; Englander, 2019; Hasinoff, 2013; Korkmazer et al., 2019) has also indicated certain benefits of the practice, and not all sexting can be considered as equal (Stasko, 2018:7). However, locally, the actual phenomenon remains unexplored, particularly from the gendered perspective of adolescents. A practical and restorative approach also remains under-researched, which is crucial in terms of the experimental and often consensual aspects of adolescent sexting, hence the necessity of the current study within a South African context.

ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND

Research (*cf.* Englander, 2019; Hunt, 2016) indicates that the primary educational strategy used to address adolescent sexting is fear and shame-based in nature. It is a strategy which follows the "deviance" perspective in terms of educating adolescents about sexting, and the result is that, while adolescents may be made aware of the negative consequences of sexting, they still engage in the behaviour (Englander, 2019:578). The present study originates from an interest in social media and deviant and normative adolescent sexual behaviour. Adolescent sexting combines the two areas of interest and thus the aim of the study is to investigate adolescent sexting within the South African context in order to develop a school-based policy framework to meaningfully and reasonably address the continuum of adolescent sexting.

Consent and South African sex education

The #MeToo era has sparked further debate around issues of sexual consent and victimisation (Lehmiller, 2019:47). Adolescent sexting is not excluded from these debates because in South Africa even consensual sexting is criminalised (Sadleir & Harrison, 2017:39, 41). Furthermore, sexting can begin as consensual, but the image or video could be non-consensually distributed to a third party. An example of a non-consensual aspect of sexting is upskirting[1], but cannot be classified as coercive. As such, consent is a vital element of adolescent sexting (Sadlier & Harrison, 2017:43), and sex education in South Africa should include the concept of consent

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[1] Upskirting, also referred to as video voyeurism, is the practice of using video cameras to record underneath women's clothing. The advent of smartphones increased opportunities for public voyeurism such as upskirting, particularly because videos can be recorded on a smaller device and have improved recording quality (McCann, Pedneault, Stohr & Hemmens, 2018:399). The use of smartphones to upskirt also brings with it ease of distribution. In essence, upskirting is a form of non-consensual sexting, in which the victim may not even know she has been victimised (McCann et al., 2018:399). The phenomenon of upskirting, and by extension the non-consensual third party distribution of images or videos speaks to the toxic masculinity discourse which objectifies female bodies (Davis, 2018:2).

within healthy, sexual relationships and responsible, digital citizenship (Sadleir & De Beer, 2014:146). The current state of the sex education curriculum has been viewed as controversial since it was revisited in 2019. The Department of Basic Education justifies their adaptations to the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curriculum implemented in 2000 by stating, "The core aim of CSE and the new structured lesson plans is to help learners build an understanding of concepts, content, values and attitudes around sexuality, sexual behaviour as well as leading safe and healthy lives" (Department of Basic Education, 2019). While the adage is admirable, the new CSE curriculum has been heavily criticised by teachers, parents, and politicians, labelled as "soft porn" and faces a Parliamentary Review (Head, 2019). The current debate in SA emphasises a "two camp" approach – one of which promotes abstinence, and the other advocates for a more comprehensive understanding of teaching children about sex, sexuality, and relationships (Glover & Macleod, 2016:2). The prevailing attitudes associated with educating young people about sex, healthy relationships, abstinence, and sexuality reach into the realm of adolescent sexting and the most appropriate way to manage it. Importantly, the negative response from parents to the new CSE underscores the necessity of parents being consulted in the development of new policies and programmes.

Adolescent sexuality in a technological era

The advent of the internet has provided new avenues for sexual exploration, and adolescents are often at the forefront of technological advancement (Ringrose et al., 2012:9). The development of internet and camera-enabled smartphones has led to a reformation in the initiation and maintenance of both romantic and sexual relationships (McCormack, 2015:1). The online realm has allowed for a more liberal interpretation of sexuality due to the anonymity created in cyberspace and the ease of accessibility through smartphones (Ballester-Arnal, Gil-Llario, Giménez-García, Castro-Calvo & Cardenas-López, 2017:140). Moreover, adolescents and young people who belong to the "net generation" use the internet as a sex-related knowledge base (Van Rosen, Van Rosen, Tinnemann & Müller-Riemenschneider, 2017:e379), to search pornography for enjoyment purposes, to seek out potential partners for casual encounters, and to engage in cybersex (Ballester-Arnal et al., 2017:140; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006:171).

It is apparent that adolescents are not immune to the vast array of sexually explicit content to which they are exposed online and specifically across social media apps, such as Snapchat, Tumblr, WhatsApp, and even distinct apps that are used for sexting such as Confide, Plenty of Fish, Kaboom, and Dust (Pitti, 2019). The inherent issues of premature exposure to sexual activity of past decades permeate further into the online realm because of the ease of access and volume of SEC available on the internet. Issues arising from such exposure include potential partisan attitudes and perceptions relating to the concept of love, a lack of personal

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boundaries, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and a possible lowering of internal sexual inhibitions (Hesselink-Louw, 2001:76). Furthermore, gender-specific issues of incongruous body monitoring, negative self-image and self-esteem, and risky sexual behaviour (Papadopoulous, 2010:5) appear to plague female more so than male adolescents. The prominent discourse around the sexual double standard experienced by females appears to have filtered into the adolescent populace and that, coupled with SEC exposure, may perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and encourage deviant sexual practices (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005:473), such as coercive sexting, upskirting and non-consensual third-party forwarding of sexts.

The psychological profile of adolescent sexting appears to be similar to that of adolescent sexuality in that sexting and sexual behaviour with the "right partner" can provide positive, healthy experiences, and the converse of engaging in sexting and sexual behaviour with the "wrong partner" could prove to be detrimental (Englander, 2019:578). The necessity of the current study lies in the fact that South African adolescents may well experience the same sexual development as their international counterparts and primarily the same access to the internet and smartphones (taking socio-economic disparities into account), yet there is a dearth of research on adolescent sexting within the South African context.

Research on adolescent sexting

It is approximately a decade since the emergence of adolescent sexting research (Mori, Temple, Brown & Madigan, 2019:771). Initially, the predominant focus was on the prevalence of the practice. Findings suggest that definitive prevalence rates are yet to be determined, primarily because of definitional controversies and methodological flaws (Barrense-Dias et al., 2017:552; Lynn, 2010:2). A 2018 synthesis of the results of 39 studies, which examined adolescent sexting prevalence rates, determined that 25% of teenagers are receiving sexts, and 14% are sending sexts (Mori et al., 2019:770). Moreover, the prevalence of sexting increases with age, over time (i.e., it is more prevalent in recent years), and according to mobile usage (Madigan, Ly, Rash, van Ouytsel & Temple, 2018:327).

Three distinct phases of adolescent sexting research have become apparent (Englander, 2019:577). Phase 1 was characterised by conceptualising adolescent sexting as a provocative behaviour which required a draconian response. Phase 2 highlighted adolescent sexting research that had progressed into the domain of the types of risks associated with the practice (Englander, 2019:577; Mori et al., 2019:771). Findings indicated that the severe negative consequences previously mentioned were not necessarily commonplace. A multitude of studies (*cf.* Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, Bull, 2013; Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward, 2012; Temple & Choi, 2014) concurred that sexting could not be

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strongly correlated with poor self-image, risky sexual behaviours, and sexual harassment. Furthermore, issues of coercion and the severe repercussions, such as partner aggression, physical coercion, and coercive sexting representing sexual coercion in general, became the focus of research (Englander, 2019:577). The excessively punitive legal responses, as well as the problematic extra-legal responses to adolescent sexting were also critiqued (*cf.* Albury & Crawford, 2012; Hasinoff, 2015; Karaian, 2012; Karaian, 2014). Sexting research moved into the domain of gender analyses regarding the practice as well as white privilege, class and heteronormativity (Chmielewski, Tolman & Kincaid, 2017:413; Karaian, 2012:58).

The current findings (Englander, 2019:577-578) of adolescent sexting are that:

- It is not unorthodox or necessarily deviant;
- It frequently occurs within sexual relationships, specifically for females;
- Adult-detection is rare and holds the most severe consequences, such as school or legal intervention;
- It can offer positive outcomes, such as strengthening romantic relationships and increased self-confidence;
- There are negative consequences, but these appear to be psychological (e.g. anxiety, regret, and suicide ideation) rather than legal;
- Adverse consequences are associated with individual sexting cohorts, such as adolescents not in a relationship;
- Sexting increases with age; and
- Not all pressurised sexting is perceived as unfavourable by the sender.

Overall, studies on adolescent sexting conducted in the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) reveal contradictory findings on the whole of the behavioural practice (Albury, Crawford, Byron & Mathews, 2013; Donlin, 2010; Karaian, 2014; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012; Mori et al., 2019; Phippen, 2009; Ringrose et al., 2012). Thus, the study focus, specifically gender and adolescent sexting, originated against the backdrop of research development because adolescent sexting research in SA is in its infancy, and could be regarded as within Phase 1. As such, the gendered aspect of adolescent sexting within SA has not been comprehensively researched as it has internationally (*cf.* Albury & Crawford, 2012; Bailey & Steeves, 2013; Karaian, 2015; Lee & Crofts, 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2019).

Gender and sexting

Quantitative studies have elucidated that adolescents experience the practice of sexting differently across age groups (Ringrose et al., 2012:8) and across the binary genders, but findings regarding this are mostly incongruous (Cooper, Quayle, Jonnson & Svedin, 2016:709). In terms of the gendered prevalence, nature, and consequences of adolescent sexting specifically, the findings of various international studies (*cf.* AP-MTV, 2009; Cox Communications, 2009; Dake et al, 2012; Jonnson, Priebe, Bladh and Svendin, 2014; Klettke, Hallford & Mellor, 2014; Lenhart, 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014; Mitchell et al, 2012) are contradictory. What is apparent is the necessity for the issue of gender to be part of the rhetoric of adolescent sexting because male and female adolescents appear to experience the practice differently and have different expectations regarding sexting, and motivations for sexting (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave & Heirman, 2018:3839).

Most obviously is the progression of the female sexual double standard into the online realm of sexting. Studies which have incorporated the gender construct (*cf.* Bailey & Steeves, 2013; Karaian, 2015; Lee & Crofts, 2015; McGraw, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2013; Setty, 2019; Springston, 2017; Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith, 2013) report that female adolescents are forced to contend with more pressure and coercion to engage in sexting than their male peers. The double standard is evident within the negative reactions to girls sexting – if they refuse, they are labelled as supercilious and coy, whereas if they submit, or even choose to sext, girls are slut-shamed, and labelled as irresponsible (Karaian, 2014:284; McGraw, 2013:134; Owens, 2017:9; Ringrose et al, 2013:314; Setty, 2019:593; Ševčíková, 2016:157; Walrave, Ponnet, Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Heirman & Verbeek, 2015:2). Conversely, male adolescents enjoy a level of status and popularity among their peers when they engage in the behaviour (McGraw, 2013:134; Owens, 2017: 9; Walrave et al, 2015:2). Headlines such as "Girls as young as 11 are filming themselves performing sexually at home as figures reveal over 100 cases a day" (Evans, 2019), "Self-generated abuse images fueling a record number of paedophile sites uncovered by UK watchdog (Wright, 2020), and "Upskirting of women and girls is a daily occurrence, new figures show" (Sawer, 2020), highlight two pertinent points, firstly, that girls are still at the forefront of the adolescent sexting debate; and secondly, that even if adolescent sexting is afforded the label of "normal", there are negative consequences that cannot be denied.

An understanding of the convoluted nuances of adolescent sexting is imperative to make sense of the behaviour, and how to most effectively address it. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as the deviance/normalcy discourses postulate. While it is possible to advocate for legislative changes, the decriminalisation of consensual sexting (within an appropriate age

group), and less punitive approaches to adolescent sexting, it is equally possible to recognise the negative consequences of the practice, the potential for coercive or non-consensual adolescent sexting, and the reality of victimisation. Gender-based and sexual violence is widespread in SA (Mpani & Nsibanda, 2015:6). This type of violence is rooted in gendered power inequities (Mpani & Nsibanda, 2015:9) and double standards which favour male dominance over females. Gender stereotypes and a sexual double standard are prevalent in adolescent sexting and thus a gendered exploration into adolescent sexting in SA is necessary.

The contradiction of the "deviance" versus "normalcy" discourses of adolescent sexting

Before elucidating on the specific laws that govern adolescent sexting in SA, it is essential to recognise the current debate framing the practice. There are conflicting views regarding whether adolescent sexting should be criminalised at all, and if it should be, which specific aspects of the behaviour? Fundamental tenets of the debate include the impact of sexting on adolescent mental health, the issues of consent, and privacy, the moral panic created by adolescent sexting, the criminal elements of adolescent sexting such as blackmail, sextortion[2], harassment, sexual exploitation and coercion, and the concept of normative sexual development when considering technological advancements.

The "deviance" discourse theoretically frames adolescent sexting as deviant sexual behaviour that carries with it a multitude of diverse risks. In contrast, the normalcy discourse recognises adolescent sexting as normal sexual communication within a digital age, which presents corresponding opportunities for adolescents (Döring, 2014:2). The deviance discourse highlights the extreme negative outcomes of sexting and concludes that it is almost inevitable that private, intimate communication will go viral (Korkmazer, van Bauwel & Ridder, 2019:56). From the deviance perspective, sexting is intrinsically coupled with other deviant sexual behaviours – unsafe sex, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, body objectification, sexual violence, and sexual exploitation (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014:757), and thus consensual and coercive sexting should be eschewed. The deviance discourse attempts to explain adolescent sexting through youth irresponsibility, peer pressure, and vulnerable personality traits (Korkmazer et al., 2019:56). Furthermore, proponents posit that education focused on the negative consequences of sexting is the ideal management method (Korkmazer et al., 2019:56).

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[2] Sextortion can be defined as "a form of corruption in which sex, rather than money, is the currency of the bribe" (Carnegie, 2019:8).

The normalcy discourse situates adolescent sexting within the framework of a "normal contemporary form of sexual expression and intimate communication in romantic and sexual relationships" (Döring, 2014:6). The central argument of the discourse is that sexual exploration and intimate communication have an alternative channel in the digital era (Korkmazer et al., 2019:57). However, it is not to say that sexual experimentation only takes place online, but rather that it occurs interchangeably and consistently both on- and offline (Korkmazer et al., 2019:57). The new-age form of sexual expression is facilitated by new media technology and apps. Various studies (*cf.* Bond, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013; Korkmazer et al., 2019) have highlighted the opportunities that sexting affords, such as increased sexual communication and acknowledgement of sexual feelings, increased trust and bonding, sexual exploration and expression, and increased self-confidence. The normalcy approach also advocates for less harmful institutional and legal responses to non-consensual sexting which are less stigmatising than current child pornography statutes dictate (Powell-Jones, 2018:134).

Problematically, these are two antithetical viewpoints that do not appear to take into account the complexities of the behaviour, particularly from a legal perspective in that the deviance discourse concludes all sexting as deviant and the normalcy discourse posits all sexting to be part of normal sexual expression, and yet not all sexting is equal, nor should it necessarily only be viewed from a risk perspective (Stasko, 2018:7). One fundamental argument is that experimental and aggravated sexting, and thus consensual and coercive sexting needs to be viewed and addressed differently (Englander, 2019:577). Moreover, the concept of digital sexual cultures and online communication cannot be excluded from the rhetoric of adolescent sexting when taking a standpoint on the best way to address the phenomenon (Hunt, 2016:3). In essence, it is not as simplistic as viewing the behaviour as either "deviant" or "normal". The fundamental aim of the current study is to develop a school-based policy framework to address adolescent sexting, and thus an exploration into the deviance/normalcy debate is critical. Moreover, from a gendered perspective, females appear to be more frequently characterised as sexually deviant, and sexting is viewed as more normative for males (De Ridder, 2019:568; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015:214; Symons et al., 2018:3839). Further, the issues surrounding consensual versus coercive sexting cannot be overly simplified.

Legal frameworks

Due to the lack of research on adolescent sexting in the South African context, the researcher has had to rely heavily on the latest work produced by Badenhorst in 2011. Legally, one of the main dilemmas facing the judicial system when dealing with adolescent sexting is that constitutionally, adolescents have the right to privacy, which includes communication privacy (Badenhorst, 2011:9; Swartz, 2013:161, Sadlier & Harrison, 2017:75). According to s28[3] of

the South African Constitution of 1996, adolescents have the same rights as adults in terms of freedom of expression, including the "freedom to receive or impart information and ideas". Any response to adolescent sexting must legally take cognisance of these constitutional rights (Badenhorst, 2011:7). Furthermore, South African legislation has not caught up with the fast-moving and ever-changing world of technology – currently, there is no law which deals specifically with the practice of illegal adolescent sexting, although Project 107: Sexual Offences: Pornography and Children, Discussion Paper 149 (2019) of the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) does heed the existence of consensual sexting within Chapter 3 of the Paper. Adolescents who engage in sexting can only be responded to in terms of the Films and Publications Amendment Act (s1 Act 3 of 2009) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (ss15-22 Act 32 of 2007), all of which prohibit child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:9; SALRC, 2019:126). The SALRC proposes that the term child pornography be replaced with child sexual abuse material (CSAM) "in order not to trivialize this form of abuse and to distinguish it from other types of pornography which are used for and by adults for their sexual pleasure" (SALRC, 2019:7). Project 107 is still a work in progress and is yet to serve before Parliament, and therefore, the term child pornography will still be used in the present study. However, the proposition of reviewing the terminology is noteworthy in that legal practitioners have recognised adolescent self-generated sexual material.

The main objectives of the Films and Publications Amendment Act (s1 Act 3 of 2009), in relation to children, are to protect children from material that is deemed to be disturbing or harmful to them. It also aims to protect children from premature exposure to adult experiences, in other words, to protect children from early sexualisation and to ensure that any exploitation of children (those under 18 years) in pornographic publications, films, or on the internet is legally punishable (Films and Publications Amendment Act 3, 2009:6). Any non-consensual third-party image dissemination could now be dealt with under Section 18F of the Films and Publications Amendment Act 11 of 2019, which makes it a criminal offence to "…expose, through any medium, including the internet and social media, a private sexual photograph or film if the disclosure is made— (a) without the consent of the individual or individuals who appear in the photograph or film; and (b) with the intention of causing that individual harm" (Films and Publications Amendment Act 11, 2019:28).

Adolescent sexting could also fall within the ambit of child pornography according to Section 19 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007) because it would expose the child receiver of the message, image, or video to child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:10). Moreover, it could also fall within the ambit of Section 22 of the Act, which prohibits exposure of the genitalia, anus, or female breasts to children (i.e.,

individuals under the age of 18 years). As such, any image or video exposing or displaying the genitalia, anus, or female breasts has contravened Section 22 of the Act, and those in possession of these images could be charged. Lastly, Section 54 of the Act states if any person has knowledge of a sex offence being committed against a child (as defined above), such knowledge must be reported to a police officer; failure to do so amounts to a criminal act (Badenhorst, 2011:10). Section 54 is problematic for the friend/s of an adolescent they know to engage in sexting because they are obliged to report the individual.

Due to their age, adolescents could further be responded to in terms of the Child Justice Act (75 of 2010), which deals exclusively with young offenders below the age of 18 years. The benefit of the Act is that it provides specifically for the specialised needs of minors. The main aim of the Act is to protect minors from the criminal justice process by relying on diversion[3]. The Act is not concerned with the nature of the charge, but rather the special considerations that need to be taken into account when dealing with young offenders. While the Act makes provision for diversion, it is essential to note that children engaging in sexting (and by definition child pornography) may not necessarily be diverted (Badenhorst, 2011:14). The police officer will decide the seriousness of the offence, and the child may be arrested and detained.

Victims of sexting may choose to claim damages in a civil court for which the offender would be liable. It has been highlighted that a criminal justice response only is not a sustainable solution to the problem of coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image sharing (Badenhorst, 2011:14; Sadleir & Harrison; 2017:61). The Child Justice Act makes it possible for offenders to be diverted, but these options need to be considered according to the seriousness of the sexting offence, in other words, it needs to take into account whether the behaviour was consensual or coercive and where it falls within the typology of sexting episodes: either experimental or aggravated (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011:1).

A challenge associated with the laws mentioned is that any person, regardless of age, who has engaged in any activity described in the definition of child pornography, is guilty of an offence. However, the legal age for engaging in actual sexual intercourse was a matter of debate and thus the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act Amendment Bill (18 of 2014) was written to address the issues of consensual sexual acts between children. Where previously sexual acts between an individual aged 12 but under the age of 16 were deemed criminal, the Constitutional Court ruled criminalising these acts unconstitutional after the Therefore, certain sections of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences

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[3] Diversion refers to diverting an accused child away from formal court procedures to developmental programmes that aim to address the behaviour of the child (Badenhorst, 2011:13, Child Justice Act, 2008:2,7; Swanzen & Harris, 2012:7).

and Related Matters) Act (32 of 2007) Act were deemed invalid, and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (5 of 2015) was promulgated (Du Preez, 2013:1; Mtshali, 2013:3). In essence, then, consensual acts of individual aged 12, but under the age of 16 years are no longer illegal in South Africa, but if one of the involved parties is 16 or 17 years old and there is an age gap of more than two years, then an offence has been committed (Republic of South Africa, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act, 2015:s16). While certain consensual sexual acts have been decriminalised after the Teddy Bear Clinic appeal case (Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children and Another v Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development and Another, 2013, CCT12/13). currently, children and adolescents may not receive or impart information of that nature because the Films and Publications Act (s1, Amendment Act 3 of 2009) criminalises the behaviour. Furthermore, charging children under these Acts can be seen as excessively harsh in that it is recognised that children are not fully mature or psychologically developed and, therefore, may not either fully understand or appreciate the consequences of behaviours such as sexting (Badenhorst, 2011:11). Nevertheless, the ruling of the Constitutional Court implies that they are mature and psychologically developed enough to engage in actual sex acts. As such, there should be some form of consistency from a legal perspective concerning sexual activity and sexting (Levesque, 2016:20). All policies are founded in law, and therefore, it is vital that adolescent sexting be explored to appropriately deal with the behaviour through both innovative policy imperatives and legislation. The current state of South African legislation which could be used to govern adolescent sexting is outdated. The present study explores the nuances of consensual versus coercive adolescent sexting, and this could be of value to legislators in meaningfully addressing which elements (if any) of adolescent sexting should be criminalised.

Criminalisation versus responsibility

The increased research on adolescent sexting over the last decade has led to increased controversy surrounding the illegality of the practice for adolescents. Laws created to protect children and adolescents have suffered a legislative lag in that technology has developed more rapidly than the laws have been amended. Currently, adolescent sexting contravenes relevant provisions within the existing criminal law legislation and is defined within precise crime definitions (Badenhorst, 2011:7). It is clear that the legislation outlined above was designed to prosecute adults who sexually exploit children through child pornography; however, the current law allows for adolescents who engage in sexting to also be criminally charged (Badenhorst, 2011:11; Karaian, 2014:283, 289). The predicament extends beyond challenging prevailing notions of childhood and sexuality into the criminalisation of what could be argued to be normative behaviour (Karaian, 2014:291; Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013:302).

The South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) has recognised that the prevalence of sexting in a South African context has increased, and there is a need to address the current legal standpoint of young people being charged with child pornography offences (SALRC, 2019:125). The Sexual Offences: Children and Pornography Discussion Paper Chapter 3 (SALRC, 2019) attempts to address the issue of self-generated sexts within intimate relationships or in terms of third-party distribution where there is consent between the parties. The Discussion Paper highlights two specific terms when referring to sexting: "CSAM" which encompasses any material obtained coercively, or used in a criminal manner, and "consensual self-generated child sexual abuse material by certain children" which would refer to non-contested consensual, self-generated or distributed sexts (SALRC, 2019:125). There is little agreement between the submissions on how consensual sexting should be managed. There are certain submissions which advocate for legal consequences, whereas others warn against the criminalisation of sexting (SALRC, 2019:130-131). The effect of the lack of research within the South African context is that the deviance/normalcy dichotomy is predominant within the Discussion Paper and reflects the developing perspectives surrounding adolescent sexting. The result of referring to consensual CSAM is an argument that is intrinsically contradictory and highlights a lack of comprehension regarding the complexities of adolescent sexting. However, certain submissions do fall into the middle ground, in that criminal sanctions are suggested, but in the sense of rehabilitation and diversion (SALRC, 2019:129). The concept of diversion as a legal sanction to coercive adolescent sexting is valuable in that diversion can assist them in learning age-appropriate sexual behaviour (Swanzen & Harris, 2012:12; Zimring, 2000:2479). The question of any form of legal sanction for consensual sexting within specific age groups remains at the forefront of the debate on the topic with South Africa. Moreover, the Discussion Paper recognises the privacy and freedom of expression rights of children, but not in terms of adolescent sexting, only in terms of their exposure to online pornography (SALRC, 2019:85, 212).

Legal cases regarding irresponsible and defamatory social media use are mentioned in public discussion forums, no details of such cases are reported. Furthermore, only one South African case of non-consensual third-party image dissemination can be found, and again, no details of the case are available (Sadlier & Harrison, 2017:44). This is possibly because of the constitutional privacy rights afforded to children in the country. As such, the present study is necessary in that it addresses the continuum of sexting behaviour, from experimental to aggravated, and moreover, explores the nuances of consensual versus coercive sexting.

THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

The importance of viewing adolescent sexting from different theoretical parameters cannot be underestimated (Van Ouytsel, Walrave, Ponnet & d'Haenens, 2017:294). The various

theories that may be applicable to the behaviour could provide partial or complete explanations to the motivations behind the practice. A more in-depth comprehension from a theoretical perspective could aid educators, practitioners, and policy-makers in relevantly addressing the behaviour through policy and prevention strategies (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017:294). The theories described below are further detailed in Part 2 of the thesis.

The synthesis of the Lifestyle Theory and Routine Activities Theory into the Lifestyle-routine Activities Theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) is valuable in its application to adolescent sexting. The central components of the theory, a) proximity to crime, b) exposure to crime, c) target attractiveness, and d) lack of guardianship (Finkelhor & Asigian, 1996:4) lend themselves to an explanation of sexting. The theory posits that victimisation occurs when there is a motivated offender, a suitable target and a lack of guardianship. While initially the theory was used to explain face-to-face criminal behaviour, it can be adapted to the online realm, and thus it was deemed an appropriate theoretical choice for Publication 1. Adolescents are a particularly vulnerable population with regards to online victimisation due to the amount of time they spend online – 45% of American adolescents reported being online "almost constantly" (Anderson & Jiang, 2018:2). Thus, the first and second components of the theory are accounted for. In terms of target attractiveness, the changing landscape of technology, and the evolution of social media apps allows offenders to prey on at-risk victims. The last component of a lack of guardianship could be seen as self-explanatory in that physical guardianship cannot take place online.

The relationship between general attitudes towards a specific behaviour and the prevalence of engaging in that behaviour has been well-documented (Oviedo-Trespalacois, King, Haque & Washington, 2017:12; Strickland, Wagan, Dale & Evanoff, 2017:9). The predictive value of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Azjen, 1967) is aptly suited to explain adolescent sexting. The Theory of Reasoned Action postulates that any behaviour, in which an individual is a voluntary actor, can be predicted by assessing the individual's subjective norms in conjunction to their attitude to the behaviour in question (Hudson & Fetro, 2015:615). The subjective norms and attitudes inform intentions of engaging in the behaviour – positive subjective norms and attitudes will produce a higher intention of participating in the practice and vice versa (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975:16). The Theory of Reasoned Action was specifically chosen because of the social learning aspect of the development of expectancies regarding behaviour. Furthermore, the theory speaks to the possibly deliberate choice to sext – be that consensually, within a relationship or casually, or coercively, for example using manipulation, or choosing to disseminate a sext to an unintended recipient.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) offers an explanation of the accumulation of social norms, and the internalisation of those norms during adolescence (Wild & Swartz, 2012:213). Moreover, the adaptation of Social Learning Theory to incorporate elements of differential association and differential reinforcement are suited to explaining the possible role of peer pressure or influence regarding interaction with and imitation of peers (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017:288). There is a positive, correlatory relationship between a) belief in a behaviour being favourable (definitions), b) peer associations with individuals who engage in certain behaviour (differential associations), c) an anticipated reward outweighing a potential consequence (differential reinforcement), and d) exposure to the behaviour (imitation), and actually engaging in a particular behaviour (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017:288). Social Learning Theory was chosen to describe adolescent sexting because of the developmental phase of adolescence and the maturation process that occurs during this phase. Furthermore, Social Learning Theory allows for the explanation of positive or negative expectancies regarding sexting as a practice, as well as the development of behaviour.

Similarly, the Prototype Willingness Model (Gerrard, Gibbons, Houlihan, Stock & Promery, 1998) emphasises the role of the peer group, and other role models in the adoption of sexting (Walrave et al., 2015:798). The perception of the influence of sexting behaviour on an adolescent's reputation may influence the decision to sext (Walrave et al., 2015:798). The Model considers the reasoned pathway from the Theory of Reasoned Action, but also integrates a social reaction pathway in an attempt to describe the cognitive components of risk-taking behaviour (Walrave et al., 2015:798). Adolescent sexting is seen as a behaviour which could include a level of risk, and therefore the Model may prove to be significant in explaining the practice.

By incorporating theoretically-based knowledge and the perspectives of adolescents who engage in sexting, a contribution to more effective intervention programmes, education regimes, and a more cohesive legal framework to deal with adolescent sexting could be made. If adolescents, families, and communities in South Africa were provided with information about sexting to make informed decisions, the potential adverse consequences associated with sexting may be minimised.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Local concerns relating to adolescent sexting within the context of online victimisation, sexting expectancies (sextpectancies), as well as the gendered opinions of adolescents with regards to sexting behaviours, internet usage, and the consequences of sexting, remain relatively unanswered. Although sexting may be a "hypersexualisation" of adolescents, it could lead to more serious risk-taking behaviours such as the creation, distribution and possession of child

pornography, early sexting debut or early engagement in sexual intercourse (and resultant issues of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy) and promiscuity (Mori et al., 2019:771). The possible risks and negative outcomes associated with adolescent sexting also seem to affect females more than their male counterparts (Betts, Harding, Peart, Sjölin, Wright & Newbold, 2019:39; Mori et al., 2019:775), although this could be related to negative, culturally engrained attitudes surrounding female sexuality as a whole. However, certain benefits such as heightened self-esteem and stronger romantic relationships have also been noted (Englander, 2019:577). As such, the research hiatus is evident because current South African legislation on the topic of adolescent sexual behaviour is contradictory and relies on common law definitions, civil remedies, and various Acts as described above. The phenomenon of sexting amongst adolescents has challenged social and legal definitions as to what should constitute normal adolescent sexual behaviour within a technological era and what should constitute child pornography offences. The continuum of adolescent sexting is a crucial aspect of policy development and thus both the deviance and normalcy discourses need to be explored.

Even though the phenomenon of adolescent sexting is apparent internationally (Ahern & Mechling, 2013:29; Mitchell et al., 2012:2; Ringrose et al., 2012:7), little is known regarding adolescents' specific perceptions, their expectations regarding sexting, the psychosocial consequences of sexting, including cyberbullying and/or online victimisation, whether sexting is, for the most part, consensual or coercive and if it can be differentiated across the binary genders of male and female within South Africa. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical work surrounding adolescents' knowledge of sexting being a criminal offence in terms of child pornography legislation and the legal and or school-based consequences of engaging in such behaviour. Moreover, there is no consensus regarding the "appropriateness" of adolescent sexting, and therefore there are polarised opinions regarding how to best address the practice. Finally, incongruent findings regarding almost all aspects of adolescent sexting, including gender differences, may impede the development and delivery of programmes and policy to raise awareness, communicate and educate youth around the subject and the potential risks attached to it, which further underlines the need for the current study. Adolescents must be one of the primary stakeholders in legislative and policy developments because they are directly affected by decisions made on their behalf. Furthermore, those that have a duty of care regarding children and adolescents, such as parents and educators, should also have a voice in the process.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims to investigate the gendered nature of adolescent sexting in order to develop a policy framework for secondary schools in South Africa. In pursuit of the aim of the study, the research objectives are to:

- Contextualise the gendered nature of sexting within relevant literature and theoretical perspectives;
- Determine the nature and extent of sexting amongst secondary school-going adolescents;
- Identify gender differences in online victimisation and sextpectancies;
- Identify gender differences in internet usage and opinions regarding sexting behaviours and the consequences of sexting;
- Integrate in-depth knowledge and understanding about expert and parent perspectives in the formulation of meaningful school responses to sexting, and
- Develop a policy framework for secondary schools to address sexting in the secondary school context.

CONCEPTUALISED DEFINITIONS

The following concepts have been identified as central to the current study:

Sexting

It is essential to define sexting in the context of adolescence because, as an adult behaviour, it is not deemed harmful or illegal. However, a precise definition has not been forthcoming since the growth of interest in adolescent sexting (Barrense-Dias et al., 2017:544). Adolescent sexting can be defined as "The phenomenon … of forwarding nude or semi-nude photographs of other students in school via cell phone or other electronic media" (Boucek, 2009:10) or as "nude photos taken by teens and posted or sent to others over the Internet or cell phone" (Shafron-Perez, 2009:433). These two definitions are specific in that they refer to photographs, but the definition of sexting should include the activity of sending, receiving, or forwarding both naked photographs and sexually explicit messages via cell phone (Dilberto & Mattey, 2009:263). The definition of sexting is problematic because certain definitions only include photographs – such as those by Boucek (2009) and Shafron-Perez (2009) – while others limit the definition to a particular digital medium, such as the definition offered by Dilberto and Mattey (2009). Sexting is an amalgamation of the terms "sex" and "text" (Gunter, 2019:103; Van Ouytsel et al., 2019:1), but with the advent of smartphones, which have the capabilities to capture photographs and videos, the terms "sexting" has extended to include all forms of visual imagery. The reasons for this is that while definitional issues plague the phenomenon and youth-produced sexual imagery is the international norm, to simply use youth-produced sexual imagery excludes the usage of acronyms such as CU46 (see you for sex), GYPO (get your pants off), TDTM (talk dirty to me) and RUH (are you horny), and sexually descriptive

messages, which all constitute SEC and are often used as a precursor to asking for sexual imagery and/or videos. Moreover, the use of acronyms allows adolescents to maintain private, even secretive communication because parents are unaware of the specific meanings of sexting acronyms. Although similar behaviour is described in these definitions, the conceptualised definition of sexting for the current study is the sending, receiving and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive photographs and/or videos and/or sexually explicit messages across social media platforms and apps such as Blackberry Messenger (BBM)[4], WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram and Facebook through any digital medium.

Child/adolescent

According to the Child Justice Act (s1 Act 75 of 2008) and the 1996 South African Constitution [Section 28(3)], a child is anyone under the age of 18 years. The Amendment to the Children's Act (38 of 2005) means that the age of majority is 18 years, and an individual can get married, sign contracts, and is deemed to be able to manage their affairs from the age of 18 years. In the present investigation, the term "adolescent" will be used in place of "child" and will refer to an individual up to the age of 17 years because once individuals turn 18 years old they are legally considered adults (Gallinetti, 2009:13) and within the realm of the current study would no longer necessarily be guilty of a sexual offence in terms of sexting unless the person was sexting with someone under the age of 18 years. The reason the term adolescent will be used is that the current study is interested in sexting in the context of sexual development, which takes place during the adolescent developmental phase of between 12-21 years of age (Whitmire, 2000:3; Wild & Swartz, 2012:204). For the current study, the conceptualised definition of an adolescent is any youth between the ages of 13 and 17 years, who is in the developmental stage referred to as adolescence.

Child pornography

Child pornography was defined by The Films and Publications Amendment Act (3 of 2009) as including "any image, however, created, or any description of a person, real or simulated, who is, or who is depicted or described as being, under the age of 18 years –

i) Engaged in sexual conduct;
ii) participating in, or assisting another person to participate in, sexual conduct; or
   showing or describing the body, or parts of the body, of such a person in a manner or in circumstances which, within context, amounts to sexual exploitation, or in such a manner that it is capable of being used for the purposes of sexual exploitation".

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[4] At the time of constructing the questionnaire, BBM was a popular app available on Blackberry smartphones and was therefore included in the questionnaire. However, due to online apps developing and changing rapidly, BBM officially stopped operating in May 2019 because users preferred other interfaces such as WhatsApp and Snapchat for instant messaging services.

However, the above definition was amended in Section 1(b) of the Films and Publications Amendment Act (11 of 2019) by the substitution of the definition provided by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007). The value of the amendment is that any possible contradictions, or behaviour not covered in one Act, has been negated.

Child pornography includes "a photo and any message or communication, including a visual presentation, placed on any distributed network including, but not confined to, the Internet" (Badenhorst, 2011:11). As such, then, the practice of adolescent sexting may fall within the ambit of creating, producing, possessing, or distributing child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:11).

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007) defines child pornography as "any image, however, created, or any description or presentation of a person, real or simulated, who is, or who is depicted or described or presented as being, under the age of 18 years, of an explicit or sexual nature, whether such image or description or presentation is intended to stimulate erotic or aesthetic feelings or not, including any such image or description of such person –

a) engaged in an act that constitutes a sexual offence;

b) engaged in an act of sexual penetration;

c) engaged in an act of sexual violation;

d) engaged in an act of self-masturbation;

e) displaying the genital organs of such person in a state of arousal or stimulation;

f) unduly displaying the genital organs or anus of such person;

g) displaying any form of stimulation of a sexual nature of such person's breasts;

h) engaged in sexually suggestive or lewd acts;

i) engaged in or as the subject of sadistic or masochistic acts of a sexual nature;

j) engaged in any conduct or activity characteristically associated with sexual intercourse;

k) showing or describing such person –

i) participating in, or assisting or facilitating another person to participate in; or

ii) being in the presence of another person who commits or in any other manner being involved in, any act contemplated in paragraphs (a) to (j); or

l) showing or describing the body, or parts of the body, of such person in a manner or in circumstances which, within the context, violate or offend the sexual integrity or dignity of that person or any category of persons under 18 or is capable of being used for the purposes of violating or offending the sexual integrity or dignity of that person, any person or group or categories of persons".

For this investigation, the term child pornography will be used as opposed to CSAM because the SALRC Discussion Paper has yet to stand before Parliament. Child pornography will be conceptually defined as any image or any description of an explicit or sexual nature of an adolescent, real or simulated, who is under the age of 18 years.

School

The South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) defines a school as "public school or an independent school which enrols learners in one or more grades between grade zero and grade twelve". Succinctly, a public school can be defined as one which is maintained at public expense for the education of children within a specific feeder zone. An independent school can be defined as "a school registered or deemed to be registered in terms of Section 46 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996". The Act stipulates that "Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, any person may, at his or her own cost establish and maintain an independent school". All independent schools have to be registered under Section 46 of the Act which stipulates that:

"(I) No person may establish or maintain an independent school unless it is registered by the Head of Department.

(2) The Member of the Executive Council, must by notice of the Provincial Gazette, determine the grounds on which the registration of an independent school may be granted or withdrawn by the Head of Department

(3) A Head of Department must register an independent school if he or she is satisfied that

(a) the standards to be maintained by such schools will not be inferior to the standards in comparable public schools;

(b) the admission policy of the school does not discriminate on the grounds of race; and

(c) the school complies with the grounds for registration contemplated in subsection (2)".

For the present study, a school is a defined as an educational institution, from grade zero to grade 12, which is responsible for creating a learning environment for learners, under the instruction of teachers, and is established and maintained at a private cost (Forstall, 2019). The research was conducted in two independent schools, and thus, the definition includes the constituent of private expense.

Policy

A policy is defined as "principles, rules, and guidelines formulated or adopted by an organisation to reach its long-term goals and typically published in a booklet or other form that is widely accessible" (Business Dictionary, 2019). The conceptualised definition of a policy for the thesis incorporates the element of the school into it. Thus, for the purposes of the current

study, a policy is defined as "the set of established expectations for specific behaviour and norms within a school", which are in a policy and procedures document accessible on the school's intranet or in hardcopy (Forstall, 2019). The established expectations relate to the specific behaviour of adolescent sexting.

VALUE OF THE STUDY

The critical divide between the two primary schools of thought regarding adolescent sexting, the "deviance discourse" and the "normalcy discourse" (Gassó et al., 2019:2364) means that there is a lack of consensus regarding the current method of attempting to manage and deter adolescents from sexting. The apparent issues with the management of adolescent sexting are both legal and moral which can result in the criminalisation of children as well as overly punitive recourse. Females are particularly susceptible to double standards regarding their sexuality, sexual behaviour, and sexual agency (McGraw, 2013; Ringrose et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2013). The value of the research lies in the elucidation of gender differences across online victimisation, sextpectancies, sexting behaviours, and opinions regarding sexting from a South African adolescent population. Furthermore, from the policy analysis, and expert and parent interviews, it was possible to develop a school-based policy that is more restorative in that it takes a risk management and harm reduction approach. Furthermore, the policy delineates between consensual and coercive sexting. The benefit of the research extends in terms of attempting to move away from ineffective abstinence-only, shame-based education towards rhetoric that appreciates adolescents as role players in decisions that affect them and that acknowledges the nuances attached to adolescent sexting.

RESEARCH METHODS

While the detailed research methods of the quantitative and qualitative strands are elaborated on in Part 2 and 3 of the thesis respectively, it is worthwhile to situate the research methods of the wider project in order to demonstrate methodological coherence. The section delineates the broader mixed-method study as sequential in that the data from the learner surveys not only expanded insight into the gendered practice of adolescent sexting, but it informed the semi-structured interview schedule construction. The themes which emerged from the policy analysis and expert and parental interviews further guided the development of the policy framework through incorporating those themes.
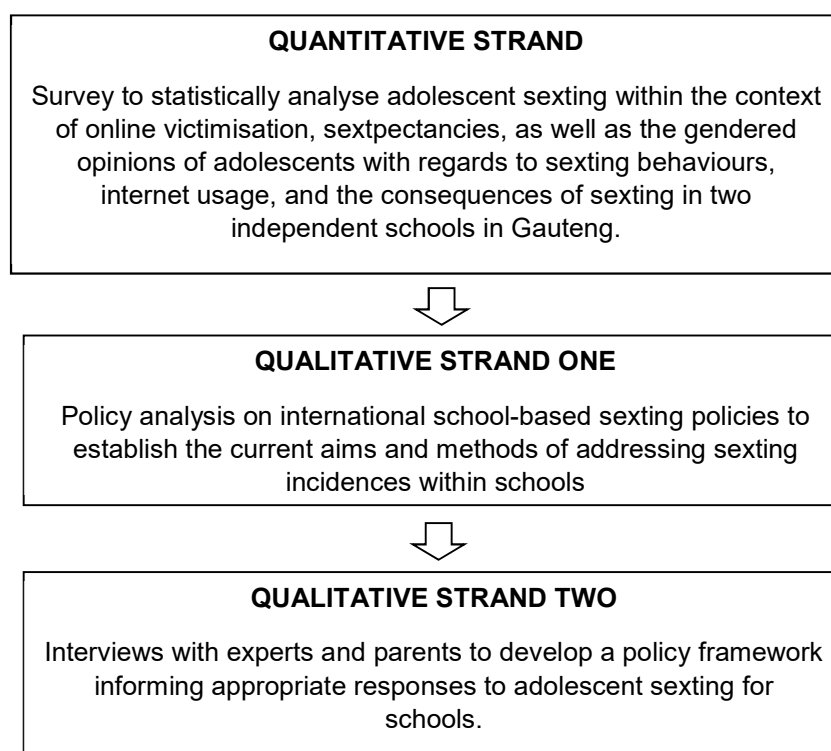
Paradigm and approach

A mixed-methods approach was followed in the current study because the knowledge claims are pragmatic given that adolescent sexting behaviour arises in certain circumstances and that the consequences for the adolescents involved may be dire (Creswell, 2003:11; Shaw, Connelly, Zecevic, 2010:514). Furthermore, the strategies of inquiry also fall into the mixed-

methods approach as sequential procedures were used in that the results from the quantitative strand of the research informed the subsequent qualitative strand (Creswell, 2003:16; Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009:181; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017:113). The quantitative method statistically analysed gender differences in adolescent sexting within the context of online victimisation, sextpectancies as well as the opinions of adolescents with regards to sexting behaviours, internet usage and the consequences of sexting. The qualitative method was used to conduct a policy analysis and expert and parent interviews in order to develop an inclusive policy which can be used to inform reactions to adolescent sexting, with the focus on, among others, the legalities surrounding adolescent sexting, the differentiation of consensual and coercive sexting, appropriate responses to adolescent sexting, remedies, risk management and harm reduction.

The study can be seen as exploratory because the researcher examined a new field of interest that is relatively unstudied, specifically in South Africa (Stebbins, 2011:5). Exploratory research can integrate both qualitative and quantitative data, for example by making use of descriptive statistics, as the current study did. The study is also descriptive in nature as it describes rather than explains (in the sense of ascertaining causality through experimental and follow-up procedures) the phenomenon of adolescent sexting and the gender differences associated with the behaviour (Stebbins, 2011:5). The outline of the research approach and data collection methods per strand is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The research approach and data collection methods per strand

| **QUANTITATIVE STRAND** |
| Survey to statistically analyse adolescent sexting within the context of online victimisation, sextpectancies, as well as the gendered opinions of adolescents with regards to sexting behaviours, internet usage, and the consequences of sexting in two independent schools in Gauteng. |

| **QUALITATIVE STRAND ONE** |
| Policy analysis on international school-based sexting policies to establish the current aims and methods of addressing sexting incidences within schools |

| **QUALITATIVE STRAND TWO** |
| Interviews with experts and parents to develop a policy framework informing appropriate responses to adolescent sexting for schools. |

Type

It is impossible to ignore the interdependence of basic and applied research – knowledge and information generated from basic research informs development and invention (Gersbach, Sorger & Amon, 2009:8). The present study can be viewed applied in nature because a policy framework to address sexting in the secondary school context was developed. The in-depth knowledge gained through a thorough literature review, policy analysis, and expert and parental interviews, as well as the information gleaned through the data collected in the survey, supported the necessary inclusion of certain aspects for a school-based sexting policy.

Design

Based on the data the researcher aimed to obtain and with the final outcome of the study in mind (a school-based sexting policy), sequential procedures had to be chosen ((Creswell, 2003:16; Doyle, et al., 2009:181; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017:113). In conjunction with the mixed-methods approach, the research can be seen as cross-sectional (Lamphere, 2012:59). Since the current study explored adolescent sexting within the context of online victimisation, sextpectancies, as well as the gendered opinions of adolescents with regards to sexting behaviours, internet usage and the consequences of sexting rather than determined patterns or changes over time, the cross-sectional design was deemed appropriate.

The current study is divided into a quantitative strand which aimed to examine a relatively under-researched area of interest (in South Africa) by means of statistical methods (Fouché & Delport, 2005:134; Neill, 2007). The data for this strand was collected using a self-administered survey (Appendix A). The disadvantages of the self-administered survey included the inflexibility of the survey design and the method of administering the survey, the possibility of data errors due to non-response items and incorrect question interpretation, and the possible halo effect given the sensitive nature of the topic of adolescent sexting. The survey was distributed to learners that had provided assent for themselves (Appendix B) and had signed parental consent letters (Appendix C). A pilot study was not conducted as standardised scales were used to gather data for statistical analysis. The gendered nature of adolescent sexting within the context of online victimisation, sextpectancies, as well as the gendered opinions of adolescents with regards to sexting behaviours, internet usage, and the consequences of sexting were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Detail on the procedures, constructs of reliability and validity, as well as the findings and interpretations of those findings, are detailed in Publication 1 and Publication 2 (Part 2 of the thesis). The findings of the quantitative survey informed the subsequent construction of the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

The qualitative strands aimed to gain insight into the current policy and school responses to adolescent sexting. The discernment and understanding obtained through the policy analysis, as well as the expert and parental interviews (Appendices D and E) was used to develop a comprehensive school-based sexting policy to adequately and reasonably respond to adolescent sexting incidents, and to guide schools, parents, and adolescents. All participants signed a letter of consent (Appendix F). The expert interview was piloted on one expert and because the interview schedule did not fundamentally change, the data from the pilot interview was included in the data analysis. An open-ended survey was designed on SurveyMonkey in order to draft the parental interview schedule, and was piloted on one parent. The pilot interview was also included in the data analysis in Part 3 of the thesis. Parental views were included because in South Africa, parents are key role-players in school decision-making (Mncube, 2009:84). Schools in South Africa are managed by School Governing Bodies (SGBs), in which parents of school-going children are stipulated as one of the crucial components (Mncube, 2009:83). Schools in South Africa also act as *loco parentis* (Segalo & Rambudo, 2018:1), and as such parents need to be involved in various aspects of school management to ensure the South African Constitution (108 of 1996) - which advances children's rights, including their right to privacy and "the best interests of the child" principle - are upheld. Lastly, parents and their role in addressing any issues relating to their children cannot be divorced from each other. The details of the exact methods utilised in the policy analysis and expert and parental interviews are outlined in the manuscript under review (Part 3 of the thesis). In terms of trustworthiness of the data (Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas, 2014:1; Tobin & Begley, 2004:392), the following were maintained within the policy analysis and expert and parental interviews:

- Sensitivity to context or transferability: The appropriate use of literature, an understanding towards the respondents and ensuring that all ethical considerations were upheld. The element of transferability was upheld by being mindful of the ethical considerations applicable to the present study.
- Commitment and rigour or dependability: A demonstration of a depth of knowledge on the topic to ensure commitment. Rigour entails the thoroughness of data collection and data analysis. To ensure rigorous research, the appropriateness of the interview participants (Table 1) and the method of policy analysis (Table 2) were assured.
- Transparency and coherence or credibility: Transparency refers to the clarity of the explanation on the topic, the research method and the sustained argument. In order for research to be transparent and coherent, the different aspects of the research process, such as the sampling method and the construction of the date collection instrument need to be relevant. Part 1 of the thesis provided an origin and rationale for the study and an explanation for the necessity of the study. It further presented a summary of the research

methods, and each of the publications and the manuscript under review (Part 2 and 3 respectively) provide a detailed account of the methods used in sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

- Impact and importance or confirmability: This could be classified as the main criterion on which the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is judged. Impact and importance in terms of trustworthiness refer to the effect and contribution that the study will have on the body of knowledge and in terms of application. Part 4 provides a school-based sexting policy framework for the management of adolescent sexting. Lastly, Part 5 of the thesis elucidates the contribution of the study to the discipline of Criminology.

In terms of dependability as an element of trustworthiness, Table 1 delineates the knowledge that each expert interviewee possessed and, thus, the motivation for interviewing them in the qualitative strand of the study.

Table 1: Interview experts

Expert	Knowledge
1	Expert 1 is an educational consultant and CEO. He has extensive knowledge of the South African education system having been both a deputy principal and principal at prestigious local independent schools. He has widespread experience in dealing with adolescent risk-taking behaviour.
2	Expert 2 is a professor, licensed psychologist and director of a behavioural health and research unit. He has a large number of publications, including adolescent sexting, in high impact journals and a particular research interest in adolescent relationships and abuse.
3	Expert 3 has a PhD in the field of adolescent sexting. She has two international publications on adolescent sexting in the UK.
4	Expert 4 is a professor with research interests which include children and technology, digital behaviours in the workplace, IT legislation related to social issues, and digital rights. He has an extensive publication record and knowledge in the field of adolescent sexting.
5	Expert 5 has been in education for over 20 years, both locally and abroad. He is a school principal specialising in change management.
6	Expert 6 is a CEO and leading expert on social media law. Her areas of expertise include managing sexting and pornography offences as well as educating young people about the risks of irresponsible social media and internet use.
7	Expert 7 is the Head of an international cluster of schools. He has more than 25 years' experience in international education, including the UK, South Africa, and

	Portugal. He has comprehensive experience in dealing with adolescent risk-taking behaviour from a senior leadership position.
8	Expert 8 is a CEO and cyber-safety speaker and public relations consultant. Her areas of expertise include responsible digital engagement and protection from cyberbullying.
9	Expert 9 is a professor and Director of Research. She is also a Senior Fellow of a prestigious Academy. She has over 16 years of teaching and research experience, including sexting and boasts an extensive publication record.
10	Expert 10 has a PhD in Criminal Justice. His areas of expertise include the intersection of teens and technology, cyberbullying, social networking, and sexting. He consults internationally on the prevention and response to adolescent technology misuse. He also has an extensive publication record in journals and books.
11	Expert 11 is internationally recognised as an expert on personality and relationships. He is a registered clinical psychologist.
12	Expert 12 is a professor who specialises in cyberbullying, adolescent mental health, and electronic intimidation. She consults with schools to prevent cyberbullying and to empower young people against the negative aspects of digital engagement. She has a considerable publication record, which includes the topic of sexting.
13	Expert 13 is a local Principal State Law Advisor with 20 years of legal and parliamentary experience, specifically in the area of sexual offences and child sexual exploitation.

Table 1 shows that the interviewees were competent in providing in-depth and rigorous data. All the experts provided valuable insight into the topic of adolescent sexting, the management thereof, and policy development. Researchers and academics (in criminology, criminal justice, political science, psychology, counselling, and information technology and digital rights), school management, and adolescent and sex offence legal specialists were chosen as interviewees. Their knowledge and expertise in adolescent sexting, adolescence as a developmental phase, and policy development was deemed crucial to achieving the aim of the study. Heterogeneity was further ensured in that seven of the experts were male and six were female.

The detail of the quantitative data analysis is included in the two publications in Part 2 and therefore, it is not repeated here. Table 2 outlines the specific steps taken in the policy analysis, which are not detailed in the manuscript under review (Part 3).

Table 2: Nvivo policy analysis

Content Analysis Steps	Explanation
Step 1: Policy upload	All relevant sexting policies were uploaded in a readable format such as .pdf
Step 2: Pre-coding	The sexting policies were read and re-read to ensure data familiarity. The query and word frequency commands were used to ascertain the frequency of word usage within all policies.
Step 3: Node creation	Nodes were created by assigning labels to them to code relevant themes.
Step 4: Node check	All the created nodes and sub-nodes were query run to ensure their relevance. Those that were not deemed relevant were deleted, for example, "recognition of development."
Step 5: Coding	All the sexting policies were analysed and coded into the relevant nodes and sub-nodes. The number of codes and references each sexting policy represented was checked. The percentage that each reference covered in the overall policy was analysed.
Step 6: Refinement	The nodes and sub-nodes were refined to represent themes drawn from the sexting policies.

Table 2 provides the detailed account of how the policies were analysed, in order to ensure dependability. The same six steps were followed in the analysis of the expert and parental interviews.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The goal of ethical considerations in research is to ensure that no research respondent is harmed by the research study (Bak, 2004:28; Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013:243). All researchers must consider ethics when conducting a study, but it is specifically vital in the current study because it focuses on behaviour which is classified as illegal. The study made use of a vulnerable group of respondents because they are adolescents, and the nature of the research is of a sensitive nature and, therefore, the respondents may experience anxiety, shame, or embarrassment when revealing their sexting behaviour (Levine, 2008:283). Ethical clearance was gained from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee (Appendix G) and the essential ethical issues (within the Nuremberg Code) of voluntary participation, the social value of the research, no physical and/or mental harm, potential gains outweighing potential risk, and confidentiality (for the interview participants) and anonymity (for the adolescent

respondents) were ensured (Levine, 2008:281; Moreno, Schmidt, Joffe, 2017:795; Vanclay et al., 2013:243). Specific attention was given as follows:

- Participation in the research was **voluntary**. None of the respondents or participants were compelled to participate in the study and they could withdraw at any point in the research.
- The adolescent respondents all had a signed parental **informed consent form**. Research which involves minors is governed by Section 71 of the South African National Health Act (61 of 2003). This Act stipulates that all minors (over the age of 12 and below the age of 18) seek parental consent for them to *choose* to engage in research studies. They also all signed an **informed assent form** prior to completing the survey to ensure voluntary participation. To promote honesty, neither of the forms contained information which could identify the respondents. The form clarifies the following aspects: purpose of the study, procedures, risks and discomforts, benefits, respondent or participant rights, confidentiality and/or anonymity, right of access to the researcher and contact details, and storage of collected data.
- **Anonymity** was ensured by not asking adolescent respondents any personal or identifying details. Neither the consent or assent forms contained any information which could identify the respondents. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis and research articles.
- The researcher ensured the **confidentiality** of all the expert and parent interviewees by using codes, such as Expert 1 (E1), when reporting the findings. None of the voice recordings or transcribed data was revealed to a third party.
- All respondents and participants were aware that there was **no compensation** for participating in the study.
- The researcher ensured that all respondents and participants are treated with **respect and dignity** throughout the data gathering process.
- **Potential harm** is an important consideration when conducting research of a sensitive nature. Adolescent respondents were provided with contact details to access support if the need arose.
- The researcher analysed and **reported the findings** without fabrication, falsification or bias. All shortcomings, negative findings and methodological constraints were reported.
- Data will be **stored safely** at the Department of Social Work and Criminology (University of Pretoria) for a period of fifteen years. The data will be stored for archiving purposes.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Publication can be seen as the "currency of academia" (Starrs, 2008:1), and as such internationally and nationally, the thesis in article format or thesis by publication has become increasingly popular (Frick, 2019:47; Mason & Merga, 2018:141). The format of the thesis comprises of a series of inter-related articles. Each article needs to stand alone but, within the

format of the thesis, needs to demonstrate the connectedness of all articles within the thesis; in other words, the thesis must represent an integrated, cohesive piece of work (Mason & Merga, 2018:143). As with the conventional thesis, the thesis by publication needs to make a significant and original contribution to the field of study (Mason & Merga, 2018:140).

The thesis by publication format aims to address certain core limitations of the conventional thesis format, such as lengthy literature reviews which are often simply a compilation of existing knowledge (Louw & Fouché, 2003:65-66), and the protracted task of thesis writing with no discernible audience outside of supervisors and examiners. The overriding attitude within academia is that the measurement of success lies in the ability to write high quality papers succinctly, and which stand up to peer review (Mason & Merga, 2018:140). Thus, for those individuals aiming to increase their publication record for academic employment and promotion opportunities, the thesis by publication is advantageous (Guerin, 2019). A further advantage is feedback from the discipline in the form of peer reviewers – such feedback allows for increased learning in terms of the skill set required for journal writing, but also regarding what is valued within the discipline more broadly (Frick, 2019:55; Guerin, 2019). A limitation to the thesis by publication format is that the articles cannot provide an extensively detailed account of the study, as a whole, because of the necessity to adhere to the publication parameters. To overcome this limitation more detail in terms of literature, theoretical justification, and methodology was provided in Part 1 of the thesis. A further restriction is the constraints on directional change in that there is limited scope to address a change of perspective, constructional framing or conclusions once an article has been published (Robins & Kanowski, 2008:16).

This thesis is structured into three articles (two published and one under review – Part 2 and 3 respectively) and a policy framework (Part 4) which are outlined by a comprehensive introductory Part 1 and conclusive Part 5. Each article has distinct objectives, a literature review, specific methods, discussion and recommendations. As such, a certain degree of overlap can be expected because the articles form part of the broader mixed-methods study. Part 4 addresses the main aim of the study in producing the sexting policy and procedures document for secondary schools. The specific demarcation of the thesis is as follows:

Part 1 has provided an introduction to adolescent sexting, the rationale for the study, a theoretical contextualisation, the aim and objectives, key conceptualisations, and a summary of the methodology used in the study.
Part 2 reflects on the gender differences in adolescent sexting, and consists of two articles, namely:

- Publication 1: Gender differences in adolescent online victimisation and sexting expectancies.
- Publication 2: THX 4 ITS ☺ GNOC L8R? Gendered behaviour and opinions regarding sexting among secondary school learners.

Part 3 has a manuscript under review, which comprises of a policy analysis, and considers the opinions of experts and parents in terms of policy development:
- An analysis of school-based sexting policies.

Part 4 provides the developed policy framework, titled:
- Sexting policy and procedures

Part 5 highlights the key findings of the overall study. It provides concluding thoughts on the topic of adolescent sexting, and the construct of gender within the context of adolescent sexting. Lastly, it reflects on the personal journey of the researcher.

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PART 2: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ADOLESCENT SEXTING

Prelude

The following section elucidates on the gender differences that became apparent through the quantitative survey administered to adolescents in two South African secondary schools. This part of the thesis is structured to into two sectors: 1) gender differences in online victimisation and sextpectancies, and 2) the gendered nature of adolescent behaviour and opinions regarding sexting.

The first article delivers the empirical results pertaining to the statistical differences in gender when measuring online victimisation and the sextpectancies of adolescents. The developmental stage of adolescence within the advent of technology and, in particular, social media, and, the inherent issue of adolescent sexting being legally classified as child pornography lend themselves to debate around gender stereotypes and archetypal discourse of female sexual development. The key arguments around female adolescents as a more at-risk population within the digital realm are highlighted in order to inform the policy framework to address adolescent sexting.

Secondly, the empirical results relating to the gendered nature of engaging in sexting and adolescent opinions regarding the practice are delineated with a proposed theoretical model. The developed Gendered Reason and Reaction Model is an attempt to comprehensively understand the practice of adolescent sexting within a gendered digital divide. The importance of highlighting gender differences in actual sexting behaviour as well as opinions around the topic articulate the necessity for gender to be at the forefront of policy making decisions.

The necessity of these articles is to provide a foundational comprehension of adolescent sexting as a gendered practice, the legalities surrounding the behaviour, and what that means for adolescents in the midst of sexual maturation in a technological revolution. It further offers the necessary contextualisation of sexting as a gendered phenomenon prior to the subsequent policy analysis and development of a sexting policy for secondary schools.

The footnotes in Publication 2 continue from the footnotes provided in Part 1. They have not been changed for the sake of consistency.

Post-examination, amendments to Publications 1 and 2 have been made.

Gender differences in adolescent online victimisation and sexting expectancies

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Adolescence, as a stage of life, initiates psychosocial and psychosexual changes in teenagers. Amid the (sometimes confusing) process of sexual development and maturation, many adolescents have access to cutting edge media technologies and could access or be exposed to content which is sexual in nature. Sexting refers to the sending, receiving and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive photographs and/or sexually explicit messages across social media platforms. In the case of minors, sexting is considered a criminal offence. This article describes the gendered experiences of secondary school learners regarding online victimisation and the expectancies (positive and negative) of sending and receiving sexts. Data was collected from 83 learners (mean age of 14.3 years) attending two private schools in Gauteng. The self-administered questionnaire contained standardised scales that allowed for total scores to be calculated. Significant differences featured between male and female learners on 8 of the 14 variables measuring online victimisation, including "People have posted rude or mean things about me online", "People have asked me to send sexy pictures/photographs online" and "People have continued to engage sexually with me online, even after I asked them to stop". The sextpectancies measure revealed gendered differences insofar as positive attitudes towards sending sexts, but not regarding negative sentiments toward sending texts. However, gender differences featured across both positive and negative expectancies of receiving texts. The results suggest gendered policy responses to adolescent sexting. The challenges of gaining access to and participation by adolescents on topics of the present nature will also be discussed.

Keywords: online victimisation; cyberbullying; sexting behaviour; sexting expectancies; adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are at the forefront of the debate surrounding new media technology and its rapid adoption worldwide (Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone & Harvey, 2012:9). Technology and social media have become a major form of communication for adolescents and have transformed peer interactions and relationships (Harris, 2015:28). Moreover, one critical factor in online victimisation and adolescent sexting is access to and uptake of technology (Sadhu, 2012:76). While social media enhances social, economic, communication, and globalisation opportunities, it is crucial to consider the threats inherent in the use of online and interactive technology, particularly those used by minors. News headlines such as *Children as young as 10 are sexting as police reveal cases have DOUBLED in the last two years* (Paterson, 2017), *Her teen committed suicide over sexting* (Celizic, 2009) and *Sexting surprise: Teens face child porn charges* (Brunker, 2009) highlight the severe consequences sexting can have on adolescents.

Sexting refers to any sexually explicit content communicated across media platforms such as text messages, instant messaging, multimedia, and visual messages (Lenhart, 2009:3; Judge, 2012:87). Other definitions elucidate sexting as "The phenomenon … of forwarding nude or semi-nude photographs of other students in school via cell phone or other electronic media" (Boucek, 2009:10) or the sending, receiving or forwarding both naked photographs and sexually explicit messages via mobile phone (Dilberto & Mattey, 2009:263). The conceptualised definition of sexting for this article is the sending, receiving, and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive or pornographic photographs/videos of oneself or someone known to the sender and/or sexually explicit messages across any social media platforms using any digital medium.

Sexting by minors has various legal ramifications, most importantly the creation, distribution, and possession of child pornography, which is illegal regardless of age. Even though the phenomenon of adolescent sexting and the legalities attached to it are apparent internationally (Ahern & Mechling, 2013:29; Mitchell et al., 2012:2; Ringrose et al., 2012:7), little is known in relation to South African youth specifically (Badenhorst, 2011:1). The reality of sexting, particularly coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image dissemination, among minors, the decrease in age of those engaging in sexting and the possible link that may be present between sexting and adolescents engaging in actual child pornography offences, i.e. coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image dissemination, are all matters which should concern South African communities and society as a whole (Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward, 2012:1, Gillespie, 2013:630).

The present contribution aims to address the lack of knowledge on the experiences and perspectives of adolescents and whether these show meaningful gender differences. More specifically, the article describes the online victimisation and positive and negative expectations of sexting among learners attending two independent schools in Gauteng. A secondary aim is to contextualise online victimisation and sextpectancies amid theoretical frameworks. In addition, worthwhile methodology lessons will be shared when conducting research of the present nature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescent development and social media

Adolescence is a stage of the lifespan which bridges the gap between childhood and adulthood. The process of maturation initiates change psychosocially and psychosexually and is the stage at which norms and values of the peer network, the family, and society at large are incorporated into the behaviour of the adolescent. The adolescent developmental period is also the time when adolescents explore their sexuality (Barlow & Durand, 2002:311; Sternberg, 2001:336; Tracy, Shaver, Albino & Cooper, 2001:3). It is, therefore, not surprising that this developmental stage has been described as a stormy (or the *Sturm und Drang*) phase in the life stages chain (Louw & Louw, 2007:281; Louw & Louw, 2014:304).

Amid this sexual development and maturation, adolescents are confronted with new forms of media technology. The patterns of their mobile and internet usage represent the cutting edge of mobile connectivity (Davel, 2017:2; Gross, 2004:634; Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi & Gasser, 2013:3; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005:473). Some of the content to which adolescents could be exposed is sexual in nature. Premature exposure to sexually explicit content may cause distorted perceptions about love, a lack of personal boundaries, inappropriate sexual behaviour, and a reduction of internal inhibitions (Hesselink-Louw, 2001:76). Early sexualisation through the media and technological avenues may have negative effects such as inappropriate body monitoring, negative self-image, and risky sexual behaviour (Papadopoulous, 2010:5). Furthermore, early sexualisation may encourage deviant sexual behaviour, destructive outlooks towards women, approval of deviant peer sexual behaviour and, lastly, there may be negative effects on sexual development in the adolescent years (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2005:473). Moreover, teenagers now engage in "cyberdating," so they do not have to risk actual face-to-face contact (American Psychological Association, 2002:22; Temple, Choi, Brem, Wolford-Clevenger, Stuart, Peskin & Elmquist, 2016:341). This is disquieting as cyberdating puts youth at risk of both online victimisation and coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image dissemination.

Previously, one proposition concerning adolescent internet usage is that it can be differentiated by gender in that boys appear to spend more time online than girls do (Gross, 2004:634), however newer research suggests that boys and girls spend equal amounts of time online and they use the internet in similar ways (Van Bavel, 2016:14). However, girls engage more socially in chatrooms and across social media platforms, and boys engage more in activities such as gaming (Gross, 2004:634; Van Bavel, 2016:15). These gender specific activity choices are not surprising as male and female adolescents experience various differences during adolescent development. Physically, girls can begin puberty as young as eight years old, although the normal growth spurt, which is accompanied by the development of breasts, menstruation, and other physical changes normally begins at around age ten. Boys tend to only enter this growth spurt (characterised by the deepening of the voice, growth of pubic hair, and increased muscle mass) approximately two years after their female counterparts (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009:7). Sexually, it can be noted that girls tend to develop ahead of boys (McNeely & Blanchard, 2009:7). Pubertal timing affects male and female adolescents differently. Female early puberty carries higher risks, and girls experience more negative outcomes than boys do (Perry & Pauletti, 2011:69). Girls who develop earlier may be targeted for sexual harassment and tend to engage in sexual relationships earlier than their male counterparts. With this engagement comes the increased risk of online victimisation and cyberbullying.

Online victimisation (and cyberbullying)

The transferral to online communication from face-to-face communication has created a unique and possibly detrimental dynamic within social relationships (Nixon, 2014:143). Online communication refers to that which is done over the internet, whereas face-to-face communication refers to social interaction without any interceding technology. The anonymity afforded by the internet has led to a marked increase in online victimisation or cyberbullying (Bartlett, Gentile & Chew, 2016:172). Cyberbullying entails any form of harassment or bullying which occurs through the use of technology or electronic devices. It can take the form of text messages, instant messages, picture or video clips, email, and across social networks (Bartlett et al., 2016:171; Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009:2). Cyberbullying is also not restricted by time or space and, as such, has far reaching consequences for adolescents.

International research (conducted primarily in the United States of America) on general online victimisation and cyberbullying shows a prevalence of between 9% and 25.6%. In the Youth Internet Safety Survey I & II, one in eleven (9%) respondents reported being harassed online (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2006). A 2006 study on general online victimisation reported findings of 25% of male respondents and 25.6% of female respondents being cyberbullied (Li, 2006). A further study showed a lifetime prevalence rate of cyberbullying of 17.3% for

middle school students aged 11 to 14 years (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016). It is important to note that both definitional and methodological inconsistencies make it impossible to gain a true reflection of cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration prevalence rates, but what is clear is that cyberbullying is both prevalent and expected during adolescence (Nixon, 2014:144). A sample of 5593 learners between the ages of 12 and 17 was used to collect data on cyberbullying in 2016 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2017:2) Thirty-four percent of the sample indicated having been cyberbullied across their lifetime, with mean or hurtful comments or rumours being cited as the most common form of cyberbullying within the previous 30 days (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016). Interesting findings were also present when looking specifically at gender and cyberbullying. Female adolescents (36.7%) were significantly more likely to have experienced online victimisation than male adolescents (30.5%). Furthermore, boys were more likely to be perpetrators of cyberbullying than girls (12.7% vs. 10.2%). Lastly, the type of cyberbullying experienced seems to be gender specific. Girls reported more online rumour spreading while boys cited physical threats as the type of cyberbullying experienced (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016).

Sexting occurs across electronic devices and, therefore, the relationship between sexting and cyberbullying becomes apparent, for example, when sexts are consensually sent between those in a relationship but are then used to avenge a break-up or for profit - known as revenge porn or non-consensual pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:3). The impact of non-consensual pornography extends to mental health problems, relationship deterioration, social isolation, cyber-harassment, and even suicide (Kamal & Newman, 2016:362). Moreover, statistics relating to adolescent sexting in South Africa are unspecific. In this regard, when local research (*cf.* Badenhorst, 2011) is conducted on adolescent sexting, it is usually in relation to a confounding variable, such as cyberbullying.

Sexting

Existing quantitative studies have elucidated that adolescents experience the practice of sexting differently across age groups (Ringrose et al., 2012:8), but there is little data surrounding sexting as a gender-specific practice within the South African context. Studies conducted in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) reveal contradictory findings on adolescent sexting behaviour (Donlin, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012; Phippen, 2009; Ringrose et al., 2012). Studies conducted between 2008 and 2012 indicate adolescent sexting as a new area of research and a phenomenon that is under-explored. Respondents (aged 10-18) indicated prevalence rates of sexting as between 17% to 35%. Included in the definition were suggestive emails, unwanted sexual advances, exposure to sexually explicit material, and inappropriate messages (Cassidy, Brown & Jackson, 2009; Wolak et al., 2006; Ybarra, Espelage & Mitchell, 2007:S32).

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It is difficult to ascertain whether statistics on adolescent sexting are reliable because of under-reporting due to discomfiture of the respondents or over-reporting due to respondent biases, and thus the extent of the behaviour is incorrectly represented (Ringrose et al., 2012:12). Reasons for the resultant lack of research include: no national crime statistics on sexting; coercive or manipulative sexting may be reduced to sexual experimentation; consensual sexting may be over-policed; victims of coercive sexting do not necessarily recognise that they are being victimised; adolescents may not be aware that the behaviour can be regarded as criminal and methodological flaws of previous studies (Lynn, 2010:2).

The gender divides within the Australian, American, and Canadian adolescent populace have been extensively researched (Albury, Crawford, Byron & Mathews, 2013; Donlin, 2010; Karaian, 2014; Lee & Crofts, 2015; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012; Mori et al., 2019; Phippen, 2009). A 2011 American study highlights gender differences in adolescent sexting (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). The research findings were that males were more likely to have received an image sext than females – 16% in comparison to 10%. Moreover, they were more likely to have sent an image sext, a comparison of 8.2% versus 7.2%. Both of these findings were statistically significant within the sample of 4400 students, evenly split between boys and girls (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). Such statistics emphasise the necessity of educating adolescents about responsible technology usage because, while sexting may seem like innocent fun or a way of being intimate, the negative consequences of sexting can be far reaching. One study concluded that girls who engage in sexting behaviours are more likely to engage in other high risk behaviour such as alcohol and drug use as well as high risk sexual behaviours including multiple partners (Temple, Paul, van den Berg, Le, McElhany & Temple, 2012:831).

The vast incongruities in statistics of adolescents engaging in sexting range from 4% to 20%, which supports the need for more research to be conducted. International studies with high estimates (20% of minors) often have methodological limitations and may be exaggerated by the media, while those presenting conservative estimates (4% of minors) are not as extensively published (Lounsbury et al., 2011:4). Such research could ascertain whether adolescent sexting is simply media hype or a moral panic about the sexualisation of adolescents or whether it is, in fact, a legal issue that needs to be addressed in order to protect adolescents (Lamphere, 2012:2; Lynn, 2010:2). Although there are contradictions in terms of the extent of adolescent sexting, what is clear is that it is a ubiquitous phenomenon which affects both male and female adolescents (Temple et al., 2012:830).

Sextpectancies

Expectancies relate to an individual's perception of the consequences associated with a specific behaviour and therefore have a predictive value for behaviour (Bushak, 2013). Sextpectancies are specific expectations related to sexting behaviour and can be positive or negative in the context of sending or receiving sexts. Expectancies have been used to predict risk-taking behaviours such as alcohol consumption, drug use, gambling, and sex (Reich, Below & Goldman, 2010:13). Three common outcomes associated with sexting are the expectancy that sexting will lead to sexual encounters, negative expectancies in terms of effect, and positive expectancies in terms of effect (Dir & Cyders, 2015:1675). Recent work on American college students and sexting highlighted certain gender differences, and while the age group studied is problematic for the current survey, it is noteworthy that in older females, a key finding is that females report more negative expectancies relating to sexting (Dir & Cyders, 2015:1675). Positive or negative expectancies of sexting could influence an adolescent in terms of engaging in sexting behaviour or not. Findings indicate that positive expectancies of sexting impact behaviour in terms of more frequent engagement in sexting, and there is a negative relationship between negative expectancies and sexting behaviours (Dir, 2012:41). The Sexpectancies Measure developed by Dir (2012) provides pragmatic information surrounding the expectations, both positive and negative, that individuals have in relation to the rewarding or consequential outcomes of sexting. Positive expectancies and sexting beliefs seem to be predominantly sexual in nature, and potentially there is a relationship between sexting and subsequent sexual behaviour (Dir, 2012:41-42). Negative expectancies and beliefs support media reports of the emotional distress that can be caused by sexting (Dir, 2012:42). Thus, it appears that positive expectancies have more of a predictive value in terms of behaviour, but negative expectancies highlight the serious consequences that could be the result of sexting.

Social learning seems to play a role in the development of expectancies, both directly and indirectly (Dir, 2010:15). For adolescents, this is important because of their developmental phase. Their expectancies of sexting could form out of their own experiences with sexting, their peer group's experiences, and from the media regarding the social acceptance and possible risks, benefits and/or consequences associated with sexting (Dir, 2010:15). The negative consequences associated with adolescent sexting include peer rejection, peer pressure to engage in sexting, intimate information being shared, and legal action for creating, being in possession of, or disseminating child pornography (Setty, 2019:593; Weiss & Samenow, 2010:244). However, research (*cf.* Bond, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013; Korkmazer et al., 2019) has also demonstrated certain positive outcomes of adolescent sexting such as increased intimate communication and connection, increased validation of sexual desires, enhanced trust and bonding, as well as increased self-esteem. Adolescents' positive or

negative experiences of sexting may change their expectancies, or their expectancies of the behaviour could impact their experiences.

Legal frameworks

Legally, one of the main problems facing the South African judicial system when dealing with adolescent sexting is that constitutionally, adolescents have the right to privacy, which includes communication privacy (Badenhorst, 2011:9). According to the South African Constitution (s28[3] Act 108 of 1996), adolescents have the same rights as adults in terms of freedom of expression, including the "freedom to receive or impart information and ideas". Any response to adolescent sexting must legally take cognisance of these constitutional rights (Badenhorst, 2011:7). Furthermore, South African legislation has not caught up with the fast-moving and ever-changing world of technology – currently, there is no law which deals specifically with the practice of illegal adolescent sexting, be that consensual or coercive sexting. Adolescents who engage in sexting can only be responded to in terms of the Films and Publications Amendment Act (s1 Act 3 of 2009) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (ss15-22 Act 32 of 2007), all of which prohibit child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:9).

Adolescent sexting could, therefore, fall within the ambit of child pornography according to Section 19 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007) because it would expose the child receiver of the message to child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011:10). Moreover, it could also fall within the ambit of Section 22 of the Act, which prohibits exposure of the genitalia, anus, or female breasts to children (i.e., individuals under the age of 18 years). As such, any image or sext exposing or displaying the genitalia, anus, or female breasts has contravened Section 22 of the Act, and those in possession of these images could be charged. Lastly, Section 54 of the Act states if any person has knowledge of a sex offence being committed against a child (as defined above), then such knowledge must be reported to a police officer; failure to do so amounts to a criminal act (Badenhorst, 2011:10). Section 54 is problematic for the friend/s of an adolescent whom they know to engage in sexting because they are obliged to report the individual.

A challenge is that any person, regardless of age, who has engaged in any activity described in the definition of child pornography, is guilty of an offence. However, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (5 of 2015) was promulgated after the Constitutional Court ruled that the criminalisation of consensual sexual acts between children aged 12 but under 16 years old was unconstitutional. Essentially, consensual sexual acts in this age group are no longer illegal in South Africa, but if one of the involved parties is 16 or 17 years of age, and there is more than a two year age gap between the consenting

parties, then an offence has been committed (Republic of South Africa, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Act, 2015:s16). Problematically, while certain, actual sexual acts have been decriminalised, children and adolescents, as prescribed by the Films and Publications Amendment Act (s1, 3 of 2009) may not receive or impart information of a sexual nature.

Furthermore, charging children under these Acts can be seen as overly punitive in that it is recognised that children are not fully mature and/or psychologically developed and, therefore, may not either fully understand or appreciate the potential, negative consequences of behaviours such as sexting (Badenhorst, 2011:11). Moreover, Grudzinkas, Cody, Brady, Saleh & Clayfield (2015:19) argue that using child pornography laws to address cases of adolescent sexting is not effective in terms of responding to the social context of the problem in that sexting can be consensual or coercive, may initially be consensual and then become non-consensual, for example in the case of third-party image dissemination, may be non-consensual such as in the case of upskirting, and sexting can be viewed across a continuum of experimental to aggravated (Englander, 2019:577). The application of the mentioned Acts to cases involving sexting should, therefore, be considered with care, and reactions to coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image dissemination must take into account more developmental strategies in the form of diversion intervention.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theories are proposed to provide an explanation to online victimisation and adolescent sextpectancies.

Lifestyle-routine Activities Theory

The combination of the lifestyle and routine activities theories can be used to explain why adolescents are one of the most vulnerable populations when it comes to victimisation (Finkelhor & Asigian, 1996:4). To explain the relationship between lifestyle, routine activities, and victimisation, four central concepts have been formulated, namely: proximity to crime, exposure to crime, target attractiveness, and guardianship (Finkelhor & Asigian, 1996:4). In the case of youth victimisation, increased exposure, and decreased guardianship would increase vulnerability. The underlying premise of this theory is that the victim and the offender must converge in physical space for victimisation to occur (Reyns, Henson and Fisher, 2011:1150). According to the theory, victimisation takes place when an intersection between a motivated offender and a suitable target arises in the absence of a capable guardian. Adolescents are spending more time on mobile devices and the internet, which may increase their exposure to being victimised in chatrooms and on social media platforms. Moreover, there is a lack of guardianship both in terms of actual parental presence but also online

protection. Due to the anonymity of offenders online, it is easier for them to engage in online victimisation.

Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action (1979)

The key premise of the theory of reasoned action is that behaviour is the outcome of a rational decision dependent on the available information presented (Cummings & Corney, 1987:190). Three distinct components make up this theory: behavioural intentions, behavioural attitudes, and subjective norms (Fishbein, 1979). The attitudes towards sexting and the subjective norm related to sexting may provide insight into the reasons adolescents sext. In relation to the theory, variables such as gender are not seen to have a direct impact on a rational behaviour, but rather to have an impact on the individual attitudes and subjective norms linked to the behaviour (Cummings & Corney, 1987:191; Sarver, 1983:156). Fishbein (1979) proposed the following equation to explain the theory of reasoned action:

$$Behaviour = Behavioural\ Intentions = W1 \times A + W2 \times S$$

From the equation, it is clear that the relative important weights (W1 and W2) given to the attitudes (A) about the behaviour and the subjective norms (S) relating to that behaviour inform the behavioural intentions. From the sequential equation, it is clear that an adolescent's intent to engage in sexting precedes the actual action of sexting. The importance that adolescents place on their attitudes towards sexting and also to the subjective norms of the peer group may make adolescents more likely to engage in sexting behaviour. Not all adolescents will place the same importance on attitudes or subjective norms, so it becomes clear how behaviour intentions and thus, the practice of sexting becomes individualised.

METHODS

The present results form part of an applied, mixed methods study which aims to develop a comprehensive school policy, informing reactions to sexting in secondary schools, paying attention to, among others, legal matters, assessment, investigation, remedies, and prevention. The quantitative strand, which is reported on here, adhered to a descriptive research purpose in order to portray adolescent sexting in the context of online victimisation and sexting expectancies (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000:154). A cross-sectional design in the form of a self-administered survey was selected as this strategy promotes honesty in responses, reduces interviewer error, and is more cost-effective and expedient (Creswell, 2003:13; Lamphere, 2012:59, 68).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to select four co-educational and two single-sex independent secondary schools in Gauteng. Criteria for inclusion were similar access to mobile and internet technologies, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and English first language. The selection of respondents relied on voluntary sampling, where all Grade 8 to Grade 12 learners were asked to participate in the survey through their own choice. The anticipated number of respondents was approximately 1000, but unfortunately, only 83 respondents from one co-educational and one single sex school completed the survey. Regrettably, many learners did not take letters home to obtain parental consent, many could not see the inherent dangers, such as coercive sexting, upskirting, or non-consensual third-party image dissemination, of minors sexting and therefore chose not to participate, and many did not recognise the necessity of their responses, thus resulting in a low response rate. Another possible reason for the low response rate is that learners may not have wanted to arouse parental suspicion in terms of their online activity, including flirting, downloading, and viewing pornography as well as sexting. Further problems dramatically reducing the number of respondents comprised of managerial access to schools being denied due to the sexual nature of the topic, time constraints in the school calendar, and refusing the survey after initial approval was granted. The sampling process was a frustrating one, as the highlighted sample of schools could not see the benefit of the research, and those in managerial positions did not recognise the necessity of a policy that both protects a child's online rights and is not necessarily punishment-driven. There appeared to be a "head in the sand" approach to a topic that requires research in order to minimise online abuse, the need for a standardised approach to adolescent sexting and cyberbullying, and the need for information to be able to provide practical recommendations. The need for current research is highlighted by the ostrich syndrome displayed, in that adolescent sexting research in South Africa is still in Phase 1. Future research endeavours are advised to take note of these challenges when conducting research involving adolescents and online risk-taking behaviour.

Data instrument and collection method

A questionnaire was developed in order to produce numerical descriptions of adolescent sexting practices and online victimisation, as well as the positive and negative expectancies of sending and receiving sexts. The questionnaire was structured to cover a 14-item self-report measure on demographics. The Online Victimisation Scale was initially developed to address the growing concern surrounding the number of youths being victimised and engaging in online victimisation (Tynes, Rose & Williams, 2010). The scale was designed to address adolescents' experiences of general, sexual, and racial online victimisation. The adapted version of the Online Victimisation Scale was structured to cover internet usage and online victimisation in terms of general victimisation and sexual solicitation.

The Sextpectancies Measure was originally developed against the background of sex-related alcohol expectancies towards sexual behaviour (Dir, 2012:20). The central concept was that sexting beliefs would be based on expectancies of the individual and expectancies of other people (Dir, 2012: 20). Four factors were included for sending sexts expectancies: positive interpersonal-related expectancies, positive sexual arousal-related expectancies, negative self-consciousness related expectancies, and negative interpersonal-related expectancies. Three factors were taken into account for receiving sexts expectancies: positive affect-related expectancies, negative interpersonal-related expectancies, and negative affect-related expectancies (Dir, 2012:21). An adapted Sexpectencies Measure was used in order to assess adolescents' expectations of sending and receiving sexts. This 57-item Likert scale (of which 43 items are reported on here) was only adapted to fit the South African context and vernacular, and thus the content validity remained high (Punch, 2005:97). All Cronbach alpha coefficients for the adapted scales were above the minimum expected coefficient of 0.7 (Table 1) (Field, 2009:365)

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficients for Online Victimisation and Expectancy Scale and sub-measures

	n	Items	α
Complete Online Victimisation Scale	55	14	0.843
Complete Sexpectancies Scale:	65	43	0.867
Sending positive expectancies	76	15	0.947
Sending negative expectancies	72	9	0.866
Receiving positive expectancies	81	9	0.963
Receiving negative expectancies	79	10	0.941

Consent forms were handed out two weeks before data collection was scheduled to take place. On the day, assent forms were handed out to respondents who had obtained parental consent. These forms were collected prior to the self-administered questionnaire being handed out. Respondents were gathered in a central location but were asked to be seated with at least a one chair gap between them. The survey took approximately 45 minutes to complete. Respondents were requested to double fold their questionnaires as a safeguard to anonymity. The researcher was present to answer questions or address problems, very few of which arose.

Ethics

Research ethics are important to ensure acceptable conduct, protection of research participants, and unbiased, objective reporting (Anderson, 2015:11). The essential ethical issues that were adhered to were that respondents obtained parental consent and provided assent themselves, participated voluntarily, the social value of the research was apparent; they were not exposed to physical or mental harm, and both confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. Furthermore, arrangements were made with the schools for the school counsellor or psychologist to be available if debriefing was necessary. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, granted ethical clearance for the survey to be conducted.

Data analysis

The data was manually coded and captured in MS Excel, after which the dataset was exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM Corp, 2017). In addition to descriptive results, comparisons were tested between male and female respondents' experiences of online victimisation and sexting expectancies. Since the sample was not randomly drawn, and the data did not present a normal distribution, a non-parametric procedure had to be used, in particular, the Mann-Whitney U test. Where a significant difference between the two groups prevailed ($p<0.05$), effect sizes (r) were calculated (-0.1 indicates a weak, -0.3 denotes a medium, and -0.5 suggests a strong effect size) (Field, 2009:675). In addition to comparing each variable of the online victimisation and sexting expectancies scales, scores were calculated for every scale, thus comparing total scores across gender. The descriptive and bivariate data are presented mainly in table format. In the interest of space, for the Expectancies Scale, only the mostly true and true (combined) descriptive results are presented.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the sample

A total of 83 respondents completed the self-administered questionnaire. Three respondents (3.6%) did not indicate their sex, and the sample was equally divided in female and male respondents (n=40; 50.0% respectively). The average age of respondents was 14.74 years, with a standard deviation of 1.40 years. The home language of the majority of respondents (n=64; 77.1%) was English. Nearly 62.6% of the respondents were in grade 8 or 9, and the remaining learners were in grade 10,11 or 12. The vast majority (73%) of the respondents were White, 20.7% Black and the remaining 6.1% Coloured, Indian, or Asian. There were no respondents from a low income household. The majority (63.9%) rated themselves as coming from middle income and as high income (36.1%) households.

Table 2 highlights the respondents' internet and mobile phone usage. The vast majority of respondents (n=61; 85.9%) had internet access via their mobile phones of whom half (n=32; 51.6%) use it daily, nearly a third (n=18; 29.0%) three to six times per week and one in five (n=12; 19.4%) less than three times per week. Female respondents spent significantly more time using their mobile phones than their male counterparts (p=0.049; r=-0.22). Three quarters of the female respondents (n=30; 75%) spent six or more hours using their mobile phones in comparison to half of male respondents (n=22; 50%).

Table 2: Respondents' internet and mobile phone usage

	Female		Male		*P*	*r*
	n	%	N	%		
Internet use (hours/week):						
> 1 hour	3	7.5	4	10.3		
1 – 2 hours	10	25.0	9	23.1		
3 – 5 hours	7	17.5	10	25.6	0.224	-
6 – 10 hours	7	17.5	12	30.8		
> 10 hours	13	32.5	4	10.3		
Source of internet access:						
Computer at school	8	20.5	8	20.0		
Parents' computer	2	5.1	-	-		
Personal computer	1	2.6	-	-	0.188	-
Mobile phone	16	41.0	13	44.8		
Multiple sources	12	30.8	19	47.5		
Mobile phone use (hours/week):						
> 1 hour	1	2.5	1	2.6		
1 – 2 hours	6	15.0	7	18.4		
3 – 5 hours	3	7.5	11	28.9	0.049	-0.22
6 – 10 hours	10	25.0	8	21.1		
> 10 hours	20	50.0	11	28.9		

Table 3 provides the number of respondents and the percentage of the sample that responded positively to being victimised online. Eight of the 14 items presented significant gender differences.

Table 3: Online Victimisation Scale (n-values and percentages relate to "yes" responses)

	Female		Male		*p*	*r*
	n	%	n	%		
People have said negative things about the way I look/act/dress online	15	37.5	6	15.0	0.023	-0.25
People have posted rude or mean things about me online	13	32.5	3	7.5	0.005	-0.31
I have been harassed online for no apparent reason	10	25.0	2	5.0	0.013	-0.27
I have been harassed online because of something that happened at school	10	25.0	5	12.5	0.155	-
I have been humiliated or embarrassed online	16	40.0	6	15.0	0.013	-0.27
I have been bullied online	12	30.0	4	10.0	0.026	-0.24
I have been threatened online	10	25.0	8	20.0	0.595	-
People have asked me to engage in unwanted cyber sex	11	27.5	5	12.5	0.096	-
People continued to engage sexually with me online, even after I asked them to stop	9	22.5	2	5.0	0.024	-0.25
People have spread online rumours about my sexual behaviour	3	7.7	2	5.0	0.625	-
People have asked me to send sexy pictures/photographs online	25	64.1	10	25.0	0.001	-0.39
People have shown me unwanted sexy pictures online	16	40.0	17	42.5	0.821	-

I have received unwanted sexual images via email or text message	14	35.0	8	20.0	0.135	-
I have reported unwanted online attention to my parents or teachers	1	2.5	6	15.0	0.049	-0.21

Table 4 presents the total mean scores of the four sub-scales of the Sextpectancies Scale. The ranges of the sub-scales are also provided and vary depending on the number of items that constitute each sub-scale. A low range count lends towards the "Not at all/somewhat true" response categories, and a high range count suggests responses in the "Mostly/extremely true" categories. Female respondents generally expressed more negative expectancies about sexting than male respondents.

Table 4: Mean scores for sexting expectancies scale per sex

	Range	Female	Male	*P*	*r*
Sending positive expectancy	15 – 60	20.59	28.72	0.001	-0.38
Sending negative expectancy	9 – 36	25.81	21.30	0.017	-0.28
Receiving positive expectancy	9 – 36	12.45	19.34	<0.001	-0.43
Receiving negative expectancy	10 – 40	28.61	21.02	0.001	-0.37

Table 5 presents the gender differentiation in the positive expectancies in relation to sending sexts. Male respondents had higher positive expectancies in comparison to female respondents.

Table 5: Sending positive expectancy (n-values and percentages only relate to the "mostly/extremely true" categories)

Sexting makes/would make …	Female		Male		*P*	*r*
	n	%	N	%		
Me adventurous	1	2.6	8	20.0	0.001	-0.37
Me more open with others	1	2.5	6	15.4	0.004	-0.32
My relationship more interesting	5	12.5	15	40.0	0.016	-0.27
Me more intimate with the receiver	3	7.5	14	35.9	<0.001	-0.43

Me more affectionate	3	7.5	3	7.7	0.173	-
Me playful	7	17.5	11	28.2	0.028	-0.24
Me fearless	1	2.5	4	10.3	0.462	-
Me excited	7	17.5	20	51.3	0.001	-0.37
Me feel attractive	6	15.0	8	20.5	0.039	-0.23
Me attracted to others	3	7.5	14	35.9	<0.001	0.45
Me feel sexy	3	7.5	10	25.6	0.002	-0.34
Me likeable	3	7.5	6	15.4	0.069	-
It easier to flirt	6	15.4	10	25.6	0.154	-
Me happy	1	2.5	9	23.7	0.005	-0.31
Me aroused	5	12.8	16	41.0	0.001	-0.38

Table 6 presents the negative expectancies to sending sexts. The gender difference is pertinent in that the female respondents reported a higher level of negative expectancy than the male respondents.

Table 6: Sending negative expectancy (n-values and percentages only relate to the "mostly/extremely true" categories)

Sexting makes/would make …	Female		Male		*P*	*r*
	n	**%**	**N**	**%**		
Me immature	18	46.2	15	40.5	0.713	-
Me inappropriate	25	64.1	22	56.4	0.310	-
Me desperate	19	48.7	14	35.9	0.221	-
Me vulnerable	24	60.0	22	57.9	0.856	-
Me embarrassed	27	71.1	17	43.6	0.003	-0.33
Me ashamed	29	74.4	17	43.6	0.002	-0.35
Me feel dirty	31	77.5	25	65.8	0.280	-
Lower my self-esteem	20	54.1	15	38.5	0.129	-

Me feel awkward	28	71.8	18	46.2	0.011	-0.28

Table 7 details the positive expectancies relating to receiving sexts. A gender difference is noted herein that male respondents experienced more positive expectancies than female respondents. All items presented significant differences between male and female respondents.

Table 7: Receiving positive expectancy (n-values and percentages only relate to the "mostly/extremely true" categories)

Receiving sexts makes/would make …	Female		Male		P	r
	n	%	N	%		
Me attracted to the sender	1	2.5	12	30.8	<0.001	-0.51
Me feel more attractive	4	10.0	13	33.3	0.005	-0.31
Me feel sexy	3	7.5	12	30.8	0.002	-0.34
Give me confidence	2	5.0	16	41.0	<0.001	-0.44
Me excited	5	12.5	19	48.7	<0.001	-0.45
Me feel admired	5	12.5	13	32.5	<0.001	-0.40
Raise my self-esteem	5	12.5	13	33.3	0.020	-0.26
Me want to have sex	3	7.5	12	30.8	0.001	-0.36
Me feel wanted	5	12.5	18	45.0	<0.001	-0.39

Table 8 presents the data on the negative expectancies in receiving sexts. Female respondents expressed more negative expectancies of receiving sexts than male respondents did.

Table 8: Receiving negative expectancy (n-values and percentages only relate to the "mostly/extremely true" categories)

Receiving sexts makes/would make …	Female		Male		P	r
	N	%	N	%		
Me feel uncomfortable	27	67.5	17	43.6	0.027	-0.24

Me feel disgusted	25	62.5	9	23.1	0.001	-0.36
Turn me off	26	65.0	9	23.1	<0.001	-0.45
Me feel awkward	30	75.0	14	35.0	<0.001	-0.41
Me avoid the sender	28	70.0	17	42.5	0.012	-0.28
Me feel insulted	20	50.0	7	17.5	0.003	-0.33
Me feel vulnerable	18	46.2	11	27.5	0.025	-0.25
Me feel embarrassed	22	55.0	8	20.0	<0.001	-0.42
Me feel ashamed	20	50.0	10	25.6	0.014	-0.27
Me feel dirty	23	57.5	19	47.5	0.259	-

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to gender differentiate between online victimisation and expectancies regarding sexting. The authors are aware that the study relies on a limited number of respondents, and therefore generalisations should be made with caution. Nevertheless, the survey presents valuable insights in adolescents' experiences of online victimisation and sextpectancies.

The results propose that girls spend more time using their mobile phones than their male counterparts, which possibly ties with the finding that female adolescents are more at risk of being cyberbullied than male adolescents. The argument is supported by a study conducted in the Netherlands, where it was found that girls are more likely than boys to be victimised online (Van Bavel, 2016:13). A possible reason may be found in the online activities in which each gender engages. Girls use the internet more for chatting and engaging on social media platforms and boys in gaming (Gross, 2004:634; Van Bavel, 2016:15). As such, girls may reveal more personal information and sharing photographs, which in turn expose them to more situations in which they might be victimised online. The present survey further shows that girls experience more negative, rude, or mean commentary online than boys do and also that they have been humiliated or bullied online significantly more than boys have. These findings are supported by international research (*cf.* Van Bavel, 2016; Wurtele & Kenny, 2010; Zsila, Urbán, Griffiths & Demetrovics, 2019), which highlight that girls experience more verbal abuse online, whereas boys are still threatened physically, as is the case with conventional bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016). Strikingly, female respondents in the survey appear to have been targeted significantly more for sexual reasons than boys were. Moreover, females were also

less likely to report their victimisation, potentially due to fears of personal implications, for example, victim blaming/"slut-shaming," or they may be unsure of the reaction they may get from adults (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader & Cosby, 2018). Another reason for the under-reporting could be that they do not feel victimised – victimisation or even potential victimisation may well have become normalised when engaging in a virtual world (Lindeborg, 2017:32). Cyberspace, in itself, presents numerous challenges when it comes to protecting individuals online, and adolescents are no exception. The ease at which online harassment can be initiated between victim and offender, the spatial and temporal elements of the internet, and the anonymity afforded by the internet (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006:154) lend themselves to the theoretical discussion of whether traditional victimisation theories can be used to explain online victimisation.

It is argued here that the Lifestyle-routine Activities Theory cannot be fully applied to online victimisation. Adolescents are spending more time on mobile devices and the internet, which increases their exposure to victimisation in chatrooms and on social media platforms (Gross, 2004:634; Twenge & Campbell, 2018:271; Twenge, Martin & Spitzberg 2019:339). There is a lack of guardianship both in terms of actual parental presence, but also online protection. Due to the anonymity of offenders online, it is easier to engage in online victimisation, and even if there is parental supervision, the internet allows for password protection, fake profiles, and hidden file software, which in turn reduce guardianship. When the theory was first developed, cyberspace did not exist, and an actual physical interaction was necessary for victimisation to occur – this is not the case with online harassment, victimisation and cyberbullying (Reyns, Henson & Fisher, 2011:1151). In addition, the temporal aspect of the Lifestyle-routine Activities Theory needs to be revisited since interconnectivity is present at all hours of the day. As such, the temporal and spatial elements needed for victimisation are no longer applicable. Offenders and victims still converge in cyberspace, and therefore the potential for victimisation remains.

The element of guardianship takes on a new dimension when referring to online victimisation and as such, loses much of its value because the term no longer encompasses that which the authors of the theory intended. Furthermore, South African adolescents have privacy rights (Skelton, 2015:898) which need to be upheld, and thus, the role of the guardian in terms of online activity is diminished. When looking at target attractiveness, the dynamics relating to online popularity also differ (Figueirido, Almeida, Matsubara, Ribeiro & Faloutsos, 2014:386). With conventional bullying, those who are popular are not often victimised, so the question raised here is whether those with higher online profiles are more seen as more suitable targets in terms of target attractiveness or not. Moreover, exposure to criminal activity – a key tenet in the original theory – is no longer necessary for victimisation to occur. The arguments raised

here regarding the ability of traditional Victimology theory to explain online victimisation, particularly in adolescent populations, warrant further theoretical development and testing.

The Sextpectancies Scale used in the survey highlight significant gender differences in relation to positive and negative expectancies regarding sexting. The results indicate that, overall, girls have more negative expectancies for sending and receiving sexts than boys do. Significant differences and medium to strong effect sizes were noted between male and female respondents when the expectancies for both sending and receiving sexts were divided into positive and negative expectancies. The gender differences could be a result of sexting conforming to a sexual double-standard in that girls are perceived as being "slutty" if they engage in sexting whereas boys secure a pathway to higher social status (Lippman & Campbell, 2014:374; Ringrose et al., 2013:12). Although, there is some evidence (*cf.* García-Gómez, 2017) that girls who exchange sexually explicit images with their female friends experience a positive impact on their sexuality and a higher social status among their female friends. Boys reported that sending sexting made them *adventurous, affectionate, excited, attracted to the recipient,* and *aroused.* Girls, on the other hand, reported feeling *embarrassed, ashamed,* and *awkward*. In terms of receiving sexts, boys felt they would be *attracted to the sender, sexy, confident, excited, admired,* and *wanted.* Furthermore, boys reported experiencing higher *self-esteem* and would *want to engage in sexual intercourse.* Conversely, it is not surprising that girls reported that receiving sexts would make them feel *disgusted, turned off, awkward, insulted,* and *embarrassed.* These results are supported by Dir's 2012 research, which indicated similar discrepancies when using the Sextpectancies Measure. Moreover, Dir's study proposed that sexual arousal expectancies could influence sexting behaviour, which could provide insight into the frequency of male and female sexting behaviours (2012:42-43). The argument correlates with the Theory of Reasoned Action in that behavioural intentions based on attitudes, and social norms lead to a specific behaviour. In other words, positive expectancies associated with the sending and receiving of sexts would increase the likelihood of an individual engaging in the behaviour.

It is noteworthy that behavioural intentions are dynamic, and thus an adolescent who sexts a romantic partner may not necessarily sext a friend or an acquaintance. Furthermore, in order to comprehend behavioural intentions, the contributing factors of attitudes towards sexting and subjective norms relating to sexting have to be taken into account. The attitudes that an adolescent may have towards sexting are determined by certain beliefs specifically associated with the consequences of sexting (Cummings & Corney, 1987:193). Simply put, positive expectations lead to an enjoyment in sexting and vice versa. The final component of the Theory of Reasoned Action – subjective norms – is particularly pertinent to adolescents because of their developmental life stage. Behavioural intentions are influenced by an

individual's reference group (Cummings & Corney, 1987:195), which is important in adolescent sexting because if the behaviour is viewed as acceptable, the adolescent may be more likely to engage in the behaviour. The motivation to comply is valuable in understanding adolescent sexting because not all individuals feel the same amount of pressure to follow others, but adolescence is a period characterised by peer pressure and this pressure extends to the online realm (Bapna & Umyarov, 2015:1903; Setty, 2019:593; Vanden Abeele, Campbell, Eggermont & Roe, 2014:7), and this may influence the decision to sext or not.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this research, it is clear that there is a need to protect female adolescents, particularly in the domain of cyberbullying. It is imperative that safe avenues are created for girls to report the online abuse they face both at home and in schools. Moreover, we should look to focus awareness about the dangers and consequences of cyberbullying and sexting through existing educational opportunities, in particular, Life Orientation curricula. Moreover, education surrounding the negative impact of sexting should be directed predominantly to male adolescents who reported more positive expectancies of sexting. Also, access to social media, technology in general, and specifically sexually explicit content needs to be more stringently regulated by parents being well informed regarding the apps, specifically that adolescents use. Lastly, policies designed to address online victimisation and adolescent sexting should be gender specific.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The major limitation apparent is the small sample size in relation to the anticipated number of respondents. The effect is that generalisations can only be made with caution regarding the geographic location, access to technology, and social media, as well as the age of the respondents. The privileged demographics of the sample vis-à-vis access to technology must also be acknowledged. In terms of future research, researchers should pay attention to the shortfalls presented in terms of access to minor respondents as well as their perceived non-co-operation apropos responding to topics of a sexual nature. A larger sample could provide more answers regarding online victimisation and sexting expectancies in South Africa.

Adolescent sexting contravenes relevant provisions within the existing criminal law legislation and is defined within certain crime definitions. It is, therefore, imperative that the matter be explored further in order to appropriately deal with adolescent online victimisation as well as their expectancies regarding sexting because these expectancies could influence actual sexting behaviour. Further qualitative research is needed to ascertain the perceptions and attitudes minors have vis-à-vis sexting behaviour. Furthermore, it is vital to further research

the online victimisation of girls in particular as the findings of this study clearly indicated a significant difference in the victimisation of girls versus boys.

CONCLUSION

This research article explored the lack of South African research surrounding online victimisation and positive and negative expectancies regarding sexting in the adolescent populace. Interestingly, the finding that female respondents experience higher negative sextpectancies could possibly be linked to their increased risk of being victimised online. They may be pressured into sexting and thereafter be the victim of online harassment or revenge porn, or they may be bullied for not conforming to their peers' accepted practices. Research of this nature is important in order to contribute to more effective intervention programmes and a more cohesive legal framework to deal with adolescent sexting.

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THX 4 ITS ☺ GNOC L8R?[5] GENDERED BEHAVIOUR AND OPINIONS REGARDING SEXTING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

Tara Harris-Cik[6] and Francois Steyn[7]

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a phase characterised by self-discovery and physical, cognitive and sexual development. The current generation of adolescents are forging identities not only through traditional means, but also through the use of the internet and social networking platforms. Adolescents are not exempt from being exposed to sexually explicit content online, or to new forms of sexual exploration such as sexting. Sexting refers to sending, receiving and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive photographs and/or videos and/or sexually explicit messages across social media platforms or internet-based applications. The exchange of sexually explicit content by minors is considered illegal and is governed both internationally and locally by laws often pertaining to child pornography. The present study explored the gender differences reported in terms of internet use, sexting behaviours and opinions regarding sexting. Data was collected from 83 learners (average age of 14.74 years) who attended two private schools in Gauteng. The self-administered questionnaire included the Sexting Behaviours Scale and the Internet Use and Sexting Opinions Scale. Data reduction took place in order to draw meaningful comparisons between male and female respondents. The Sexting Behaviours Scale revealed significant gender differences; for example, male respondents were significantly more likely to have sent a written sext and to have had a sext shared with them when they were not the intended recipients. Significant differences were further noted in terms of internet usage where one in four male respondents agreed using the internet to learn about sex-related topics and nearly half have used the internet to flirt with someone. The majority of male and female respondents agreed that both boys and girls sext,

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[5] Texting language meaning "Thanks for the intense text sext ☺ Get naked on camera later?"

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but significant differences were noted regarding sentiments and perceptions towards sexting. Girls experienced more negative consequences, in particular, that "sexting made them feel unhappy with their bodies". Interestingly, no gender differences were reported for the reasons behind adolescent sexting. Overall, the results speak to the need for a gender specific policy to effectively address the problem of adolescent sexting. Challenges regarding access to adolescent respondents and important themes for future research will also be discussed.

Keywords: adolescence; sexting behaviour; sexting opinions; social media; child pornography

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INTRODUCTION

The transition between childhood and adolescence is multidimensional and complex and is marked by numerous biological, cognitive and socioemotional transitions. Biologically, adolescents move towards sexual maturation; cognitively, they begin to think more egocentrically and may see themselves as invincible; and socioemotionally, they begin to desire independence, intimacy and romantic relationships (Santrock, 2008:469). Adolescents also have to contend with the dramatic developments in social and communication dynamics which have come about in the last decade due to a significant technological evolution (Rodríguez-Castro, Alonso-Ruido, Gonzalez-Fernandez, Lameiras-Fernandez & Carrera-Fernandez, 2017:375). Amid traditional understandings of adolescence, one cannot divorce the impact modern technologies have had on adolescent development. These advancements have created a trend of cyber-socialisation which occurs across social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and through mobile phone applications such as WhatsApp and Snapchat. Virtual methods of communication have challenged conventional ideas of appropriate socialisation with the appearance of phenomena such as sexting. In previous investigations, the definition of sexting has been limited to solely text messages or through the medium of a mobile phone (Dilberto & Mattey, 2009:263; Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:375). However, new generation mobile technology has introduced photo and video material, and with these advancements, the definitions of sexting has had to be revisited. Sexting, from a broader perspective (Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:375), refers to sending, receiving and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive photographs and/or videos and/or sexually explicit messages across social media platforms or internet-based applications.

Sexting may have numerous negative implications for adolescents and newspaper headlines such as "Thousands of children sexting, police say" (BBC, 2017), "Chances are, your teen has sexted" (Wallace, 2015), and "Sexting becoming 'the norm' for teens, warn child protection experts" (Weale, 2015) highlight that adolescents are not exempt from virtual methods of communication and intimate engagement and that sexting is an integral part of adolescent

communication and behaviour. The reality of sexting among minors, the decrease in age of those engaging in sexting and the possible link that may be present between sexting and adolescents engaging in actual child pornography offences are all matters which should concern South African communities and society as a whole (Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward, 2012:1). Adolescent sexting needs to be appropriately and effectively dealt with by schools and community agents in an attempt to minimise the numerous negative consequences sexting may have on adolescents.

To the authors' knowledge, there are no studies which have addressed the gendered nature of adolescent sexting within the South African context. A local search on SABINET featuring the key words of "adolescent sexting" yielded 74 results of which many were irrelevant to the topic. There were articles which addressed the legal issues of sexting and articles published in popular scientific magazines such as *Servamus*, but only one study conducted on the topic of adolescent sexting in schools in Nigeria. The overall aim of the present study was to investigate sexting amongst adolescents in order to develop a gendered, comprehensive school policy informing reactions to sexting in secondary schools, paying attention to, among others, legal matters, assessment, investigation, remedies and prevention. The present contribution presents new insights on adolescent social media usage and gender differences in both sexting behaviour and opinions surrounding the practice of sexting in two independent schools in Gauteng.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescents and social media

A social media site can be defined as any website which allows for social interaction to take place (Costello, McNiel & Binder, 2016:313). Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are frequently used by adolescents for educational, communication and entertainment purposes. With the advancement of technology came numerous benefits such as being connected in a global world, reducing the carbon footprint, self-learning and global awareness. However, there are also several inherent risks, for instance, online victimisation, "Facebook depression", sexual solicitation and predation, and adolescent sexting which carries legal implications of creating, distributing and possessing child pornography (Costello et al, 2016:314). Employers and universities may make use of the social media accounts of individuals to review applications, and poorly advised posts can have severe negative effects on one's application and reputation (Ronson, 2015). Adolescents either do not know about or are not concerned about, the consequences of using social media sites.

The evolution of the mediums used to sext means that the practice of sexting has also evolved – more specifically to include picture and video material. The three most used social media

platforms by adolescents are Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat (Lenhart, 2015:3; McGraw, 2013:69). There appear to be some gender differences when it comes to social media usage. An American 2015 study on social media usage which surveyed 1060 adolescents aged 13-17, reports that boys log on to Facebook more often than girls do (45% vs 36%), and girls make more use of Instagram and Tumblr (23% vs 17% and 6% vs 1% respectively) than boys do (Lenhart, 2015:3). Adolescents share personal information such as photographs, dates of birth, addresses, telephone numbers and full names openly on social media sites without fully comprehending the inherent risk. A study conducted by Pew Research Center in 2012 on a representative sample of 802 adolescents aged 12-17 and their parents, reported significant percentages of adolescents shared their photographs (91%), real name (92%), birthdays (82%), school name (71%), city (71%), email address (53%) and mobile phone number (20%) (Madden, Lenhart, Cortesi, Gasser, Duggan, Smith & Beaton, 2013). Interestingly, while male and female adolescents generally share personal information at similar rates, this is not the case when it comes to mobile phone numbers – boys share their numbers more on social media sites (26%) than girls do (14%) (Madden et al, 2013). Although these percentages are relatively low, they still show that girls appear to be more aware of the dangers of sharing such personal information. One in six adolescents in the Pew study had received unwanted online contact that made them feel scared or uncomfortable, and girls were more likely than boys to have encountered such unwanted contact (Madden et al, 2013). Lastly, a third of adolescents report receiving advertisements that was clearly not age appropriate (Madden et al, 2013) – a further concern for parents, youth advocates and policy makers in terms of adolescents' online activities.

Adolescents make use of social media sites, and some of their online activities can be viewed as risky in nature. Adolescence is a time of significant development, and in a technological world, both online and offline risk-taking behaviours are now prevalent in the lives of adolescents. Laws cannot, and more pertinently do not, offer faultless protection to minors for "offline" risky behaviour such as early sexual engagement, underage drinking and smoking (Costello et al., 2016:320) or for online risk-taking such as sexting.

Adolescent internet use and sexting behaviours
Adolescents online
A consistent finding relating to adolescents and the internet is that approximately 95% of adolescents are online (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi & Grasser, 2013:3). What has changed recently is roughly 25% of these adolescents are "cell-mostly" internet users (Madden et al, 2013:7), which increases privacy because they can lock their phones or make use of locked or hidden folders. Moreover, emerging technologies and the internet may influence adolescents in terms of sexual script building (Simon & Daneback, 2013:305). Research on

adolescent internet use (Jones & Fox, 2009; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006) has reported that adolescents make use of the internet to view sexually explicit material as well as for educational and entertainment purposes. Adolescents appear to use the internet as a sex education resource because it is perceived as more private and allows for anonymity (Nwagwu, 2007:364; Simon & Daneback, 2013:306). Adolescents can experiment with various identities (Valkenbueg & Peter, 2008:209), including forming a sexual identity online without the embarrassment of having to engage in face-to-face contact with peers or adults. The internet's appeal as a resource for sex education and as a place to meet new people and practise relational skills, such as flirting, may be based on various factors, such as perceived anonymity, user friendliness, and availability to peers (Simon & Daneback, 2013:306). Previous research on adolescents using the internet as a source of sexual information indicates a prevalence rate of between 20% and 76.5% (Simon & Daneback, 2013:307). A New York based study with a sample of 412 ethnically and socioeconomically diverse adolescents with a mean age of 15.8 years reported 31.6% of the participants made use of the internet to glean information on birth control and safer sex options and "sex" as a topic was the most popular search on the internet (Borzekowski & Rickert, 2001:815). A more recent 2011 study conducted in California with low-income adolescents aged 14-19 indicated that 40% of adolescents in the sample reported searching sexual health information online (Ralph, Berglas, Schwartz & Brindis, 2011:42). A study conducted in Nigeria on a sample of 1011 school-going and 134 non-school-going adolescent girls, reported that both school-going and non-school-going girls use the internet as a source of reproductive health information (Nwagwu, 2007:359). Topics searched included HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, sexual activities and sexual abuse. It is clear then that adolescents use the internet for experimenting with identities as well as a resource for sex-related information. The fact that a quarter of adolescents access the internet on their phones is striking when looking at adolescent sexting because of the privacy and anonymity afforded by owning and using a personal mobile device with access to the internet.

Adolescent sexting and negative consequences

Adolescent sexting has received a vast amount of media coverage and is generally discussed alongside the negative consequences associated with the phenomenon (Klettke et al, 2014:45; Van Ouytsel, Ponnet, Walrave & d'Haenens, 2017:287). The costs linked to adolescent sexting include the dissemination of a compromising photograph or video to a wider audience, cyberbullying, legal implications as those capturing and distributing sexts are under the age of majority, deleterious mental health ramifications including, but not limited to, depression and even suicide and other risk-taking behaviours such as early-debut sexual activity (Klettke et al, 2014:45; Van Ouytsel et al, 2017:287). However, while there is little research linked specifically to gender differences in terms of prevalence, nature and

consequences, the issue of gender has become progressively more relevant to the discussion of adolescent sexting (Cooper, Quayle, Jonnson & Svedin, 2016:712; Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:376).

Gender prevalence of sexting

Studies conducted with adolescents aged 10 to 18 in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) between 2008 and 2012 report that the overall prevalence rates of adolescent sexting range from 17% to 35% (Donlin, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012; Phippen, 2009; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill & Livingstone, 2012). Though various authors have included gender within their studies, findings regarding prevalence in relation to gender are at best contradictory (Cooper et al, 2016: 709). From a systematic literature review, three studies (AP-MTV, 2009; Cox Communications, 2009; Mitchell et al, 2012) reported that girls were more likely to send sexts than boys and one study (Patchin & Hinduja, 2011) indicated that while there was no significant gender difference in the sending of sexts, boys received more sexts than girls (Klettke et al, 2014: 46). Certain studies (Dake et al, 2012; Lenhart, 2009) have found similar rates of sexting for both adolescent males and females, while Jonnson, Priebe, Bladh and Svendin's 2014 study cited that boys were more likely than girls to engage in taking nude or semi-nude photographs. Conversely, there are also studies (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014; Mitchell et al, 2012) which indicate that girls show a higher prevalence in sexting than boys do. The prevalence and nature of adolescent sexting produces conflicting findings, but it would seem that gender can be used in predicting certain aspects of sexting.

The sexting "double standard."

Several studies (McGraw, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2013; Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith, 2013) show that girls experience more pressure to engage in sexting from their peers and romantic partners than boys do. There is also a reported "double standard" when it comes to adolescent sexting. Girls are pressurised into sending sexts, and yet when they relinquish and comply, they are then shamed and criticised (McGraw, 2013:134; Owens, 2017:9; Ringrose et al, 2013:314; Ŝevčíková, 2016:157; Walrave, Ponnet, Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Heirman & Verbeek, 2015:2). Boys are not criticised to the same degree and in fact often use sexts they possess as a type of "popularity currency" in order to increase their popularity and status within their peer groups (McGraw, 2013:134; Owens, 2017: 9; Walrave et al, 2015:2).

Attitudes towards sexting

While not a gender-specific finding, a study conducted in South-West America on sexting amongst 606 high school student participants reported that adolescents who reveal having sent a sext are significantly more likely to have a positive attitude towards sexting and view it

as acceptable (Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaı́ta & Rullo, 2012). Conversely, the same study reported that one in seven adolescents that reported they had sexted had negative feelings towards the behaviour and interestingly just over a third of the sample that reported never having sexted appeared to have positive feelings towards sexting (Strassberg et al, 2012). Prevalent findings indicate that girls are viewed differently for producing and distributing sexts and girls also have a more negative experience of sexting than boys do (Cooper et al, 2016:712-713; Owens, 2017:5). It appears that boys have a more positive attitude towards sexting overall and have greater relational expectations than girls do (Owens, 2017:33; Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:382). On the other hand, girls perceive sexting to be risk-taking behaviour and are more aware of the possible consequences associated with sexting (Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:382). The consequences of sexting also appear to affect girls more adversely than their male counterparts (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014:32). How sexting is perceived across gender (Owens, 2017:8) and within the peer group plays a crucial role in the engagement in sexting behaviour.

Reasons for sexting

Understanding the reasons that adolescents give for sexting is important because it situates the practice of sexting as a social behaviour within the context of adolescent relationships, and could also highlight policy and educational implications in terms of addressing adolescent sexting (McGraw, 2013:25). Sexting can be used to initiate or even maintain a romantic relationship and adolescents are not exempt from this utility of sexting. Adolescents may use sexting as a learning and socialising tool and therefore engage in the behaviour (Lenhart, 2009). Sexting behaviour allows for an adolescent to "gain" sexual experience, albeit over a digital medium and also to maintain both interpersonal and sexual communication (Lenhart, 2009; McGraw, 2013:22). Adolescents investigate various sex-related topics online, and part of that exploration means forming a framework of what constitutes sexual attractiveness, intimate relationships and sexual behaviour (Brown, Keller & Stern, 2009:12). Sexting gives adolescents the time to compose intimate responses which in face-to-face contact they would not have, and the concept of hiding behind a screen or online disinhibition allows more freedom in terms of expression of feelings and desires (Hudson, 2011:23; Speno, 2016:113). In essence, sexting could provide for adolescents to be both social and sexual, but within a safe, non-threatening or embarrassing arena because they are able to avoid face-to-face communication. However, instances of revenge porn and slut-shaming within the context of sexting are not uncommon and can have severe negative consequences such as anxiety, depression and suicide ideation (Englander, 2016:S338). The very nature of adolescent sexting lies not only within the confines of technological affordability but also in cultural and gender acceptability (Ringrose et al, 2013:308) and within this the significant difference of social context and the gendered nature of sexting cannot be ignored. Theoretically, the role

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gender plays in peer dynamics, social learning and the rational and intuitive decision-making process cannot be underplayed.

Adolescent sexting and the law

Internationally, law enforcement agencies that have intervened in adolescent sexting cases have often disregarded privacy rights afforded to adolescents and the negotiations that are needed in order to recognise the technologically driven society in which adolescent sexual maturation and exploration take place (Ringrose et al, 2013:306). In the United States of America (USA), for example, each state has its own laws governing adolescent sexting and many of these fall within the ambit child pornography statutes (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). All states in the USA have variations of the law which govern the sending or depicting of explicit or indecent images of minors, and 20 states have specific "sexting" laws (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Specific sexting laws are important because there has been recognition of the fact that adolescent sexting cannot simply fall under child pornography legislation because of the negative consequences that this may have, especially considering their developmental life stage. In the USA, adolescent sexting carries a range of punishments, including informal, diversionary punishment, misdemeanour punishment and most severely the possibility of a felony punishment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Lorang, Dale, McNiel & Binder, 2016:74). The inclusion of a felony punishment seems overly harsh considering how common the practice of sexting is among adolescents and more so the fact that many adolescents may unknowingly, according to the law, be creating, distributing and possessing child pornography.

In England, in instances of adolescent sexting, the police may decide it is not within public interest to prosecute, but they can still record that a crime has been committed. British laws which could be applied to adolescent sexting include The Protection of Children Act of 1978, The Criminal Justice Act of 1988 Part XI, The Sexual Offences Act of 2003, Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act of 2015 and lastly Section 67 of the Serious Crimes Act of 2015 (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC, 2018). All of these laws govern elements of child pornography in terms of it being illegal to take, make, show, distribute or possess any indecent image or pseudo-image of a child under the age of 16 and which criminalises the sharing of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress or to engage any child in sexual communication (NSPCC, 2018). There are no sexting specific laws in England and as such, adolescents who sext are subject to the provisions stipulated within the laws that govern child pornography specifically.

South Africa similarly suffers a legislative lag concerning adolescent sexting – there is no law which deals specifically with illegal adolescent sexting, and as such, it falls within laws which govern the offence of child pornography. These include the Films and Publications

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Amendment Act (s1 Act 3 of 2009) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (ss15-22 Act 32 of 2007), both of which forbid child pornography (Badenhorst, 2011: 9). The fact that sexts are defined as explicit means that the creation, distribution or possession of a sext depicting a minor would automatically constitute child pornography and be punishable in the South African legal system.

The legal response to adolescent sexting has sparked much controversy (Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013:301). Many countries have not maintained pace with the ever-developing world of technology, and thus their legal systems are not equipped to effectively deal with adolescent sexting. This begs the question of whether a more integrated approach, including social and educational responses, would not be more appropriate when addressing adolescent sexting behaviours.

THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

There is a lack of specific theoretical contextualisation regarding adolescent sexting although the widespread nature of the phenomenon is apparent (Eraker, 2010:556; Lorang, McNiel & Binder, 2016:376-377; Klettke, Hallford & Mellor, 2014:46; Rodríguez-Castro et al, 2017:376), in particular within the South African context. Adolescent sexting can possibly be linked to various variables, including neurodevelopmental maturation, the sexualisation of girls, previous victimisation, strained parental relationships, cyberbullying and various other psychosocial and environmental factors (Judge, 2012:91-93). The authors amalgamated the Social Learning Theory and the Prototype Willingness Model into the Reason and Reaction Model to provide a more integrated explanation of adolescent sexting.

Reason and Reaction Model of Sexting Behaviour

Reaction (Peers) ⟷ Reason (Self)

COGNITION (Rotter)

Associations & identification (Sutherland)

Favourable attitudes (Sutherland)

Prototypes

Willingness (Gerrard et al)

Imitation (Bandura)

Sexting Behaviour

Reinforcement (Burgess & Akers)
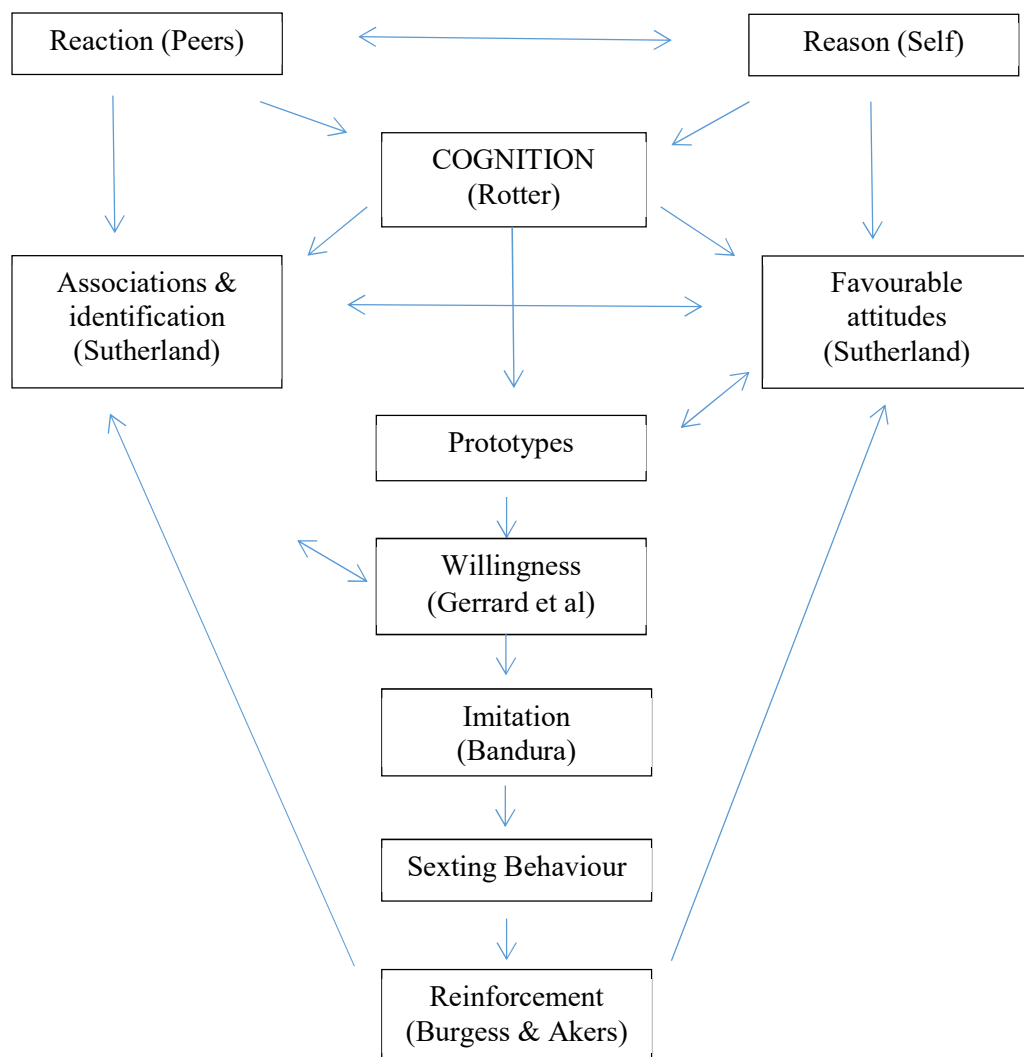
The Reason and Reaction Model attempts to explain the possible pathways of cognition which could lead to sexting behaviour. In this way, it takes into account both the reasoned pathway as well as the social reaction pathway. The reasoned pathway posits that decisions are made based on rational thought and a cost/benefit analysis, (Cummings & Corney, 1987:190; Walrave et al, 2015:7) which takes place within the self or individual. In addition, it also considers intentions, personal attitudes as well, as if the behaviour constitutes a subjective norm in a decision to engage in a certain behaviour or not (Fishbein, 1979; Walrave et al, 2015:8). The social reaction pathway assumes that there is an intuitive and spontaneous element associated with decision making (Walrave et al, 2015:7) and may be based on the reaction of the peer group. These two pathways allow for the various elements of cognition to be taken into account when reviewing decision making. In Rotter's (1954:240) adaptation of the social learning theory, it was posited that an individual's decision to engage in a specific behaviour can be determined by the individual's expectancy about the outcome of the behaviour as well as the value placed on that outcome. If an individual believes the act to be

justified or has a positive expectancy, it would result in favourable attitudes (Van Ouytsel et al, 2017:288; Williams, 2012:281). Favourable attitudes are informed by the reasoned pathway, as well as the associations the person has and whether or not they identify with those associations or peers. Sutherland outlined nine propositions within his Theory of Differential Association, and it is the third proposition which states that the learning of criminal behaviour occurs within close personal groups. The sixth proposition refers to favourable definitions in terms of violating the law (Sutherland & Cressey, 1970:75-76). Thus, associations with peers who engage in a certain behaviour would influence an individual, and favourable definitions would impact on an individual's attitudes. Furthermore, favourable attitudes about a behaviour would inform the prototype of the typical person who engages in such behaviour as well as be informed by the prototype. If someone associates with others who engage in deviant behaviour, they are more likely to identify with those peers and hold similar attitudes towards the behaviour that the peer group does (Van Ouytsel et al, 2017:288). Associations and prototypes thus speak to and reinforce each other. If the prototype is a favourable one, then combined with associations and favourable attitudes, an individual is likely to display a greater willingness to engage in a certain behaviour (Walrave et al, 2015:9). The chance of actually engaging in an at-risk behaviour is higher if an individual shows a willingness to do so (Gerrard, Gibbons, Stock, Vande Lune & Clevelend, 2005:306). From a willingness to engage comes the element of imitation in that adolescents, if they experience greater exposure to the deviant behaviour, are more likely to imitate it (Van Ouytsel et al, 2017:288). Bandura postulates that cognition serves as a guide for action and that individuals develop the ability to envision the likely outcomes of a particular behaviour (Bandura, 1997:35,116). In turn, the behaviour occurs. Differential reinforcement introduces the idea that individuals evaluate their own behaviour through interactions with significant others or groups (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce & Radosevich, 1979:638). Bandura (1969:118) further states that learning comes from actively imitating others' behaviour. In the case of adolescents, the peer group is the primary group which is imitated and plays a significant role in the sources and control of reinforcement as well as favourable definitions or attitudes towards a specific behaviour. Dependent on the reaction to the behaviour – positive or negative – the behaviour will impact the attitudes and associations of the individual. The behaviour will then either re-occur or will cease. The authors fully acknowledge that the Reason and Reaction Model proposed here represents preliminary theorising in an attempt to accommodate the numerous factors and processes that influence sexting behaviour.

METHODS

The present article stems from a broader mixed methods study, more specifically the quantitative leg, which aims to develop a policy for secondary schools on how to prevent and address sexting among learners. A descriptive research purpose was followed in order to

present the gendered opinions of learners regarding, amongst others, sexting behaviour, internet use and the consequences of sexting. A self-administered survey design was deemed appropriate as the strategy enhances honesty in responses, especially when dealing with sensitive matters such as the sexting behaviour of minors. In addition, the strategy reduces interviewer error, is more cost-effective and can be completed in a short space of time (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:176).

The sampling strategy amounted to the purposive selection of four co-educational and two single-sex secondary schools in Gauteng. Criteria for inclusion in the study entailed similar access to internet and mobile phone technologies, multi-cultural/racial and English as the language of tuition. The four schools could yield a potential 1 000 respondents. For various reasons, a much smaller sample (n=83) resulted from one co-educational and one single-sex school only. Firstly, although they initially agreed to participate in the survey, the management of two schools withdrew willingness to participate in the survey, at a very late stage, due to the sexual nature of the topic, and, allegedly, time constraints of the school calendar. Secondly, many learners did not take the letters of informed consent home for their parents to sign, possibly due to fear that the letter might arouse suspicion by their parents about their online activities such as viewing pornographic material and sexting. The sampling process was most frustrating and disappointing, and future researchers should take note of the challenges associated with gathering data on sex-related topics among school-going youth.

As to the data gathering process, consent forms were distributed two weeks prior to the scheduled surveys. On the day of data collection, assent forms were handed out to respondents who had secured parental consent. These forms were taken in before respondents completed the self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were gathered in one venue, and sufficient space was ensured between them so that they could not discuss the questions or look at each other's answers. The survey took 45 minutes, and upon completion, respondents were asked to double fold their questionnaires to ensure anonymity during the collection of the questionnaires. The first author was present during the surveys and clarified the questions that a few respondents had.

A questionnaire was developed to obtain numeric data on adolescents' sexting behaviour and perceptions toward sexting. The sexting behaviour scale (SBS) was developed by Dir, Coskunpinar and Cyders (2011a) to assess the prevalence and frequency of sexting in terms of sending, receiving, forwarding or sharing sexts. The SBS also measures the use of social media platforms to exchange sexts or to post sexually suggestive or explicit content online (Dir, 2012:30). The questions on teenagers' opinions and views about sexting stem from a survey instrument designed by Goodson, McCormick and Evans (2000). The instrument aims

to gauge adolescents' attitudes towards the use of the internet in order to obtain sex-related information, to establish relationships and for arousal purposes (Goodson et al, 2000:129). The section of the questionnaire which looks at the regulation of sexting was an adaptation of Goodson et al's (2000) survey instrument. It was included to aid in the development of a draft sexting policy for schools. The statements in the scale, relating to specific opinions regarding sexting, were developed in order to assess gendered attitudes and perceptions towards sexting. In terms of the internal reliability of the two scales, the SBS yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.935 and the Internet Use and Sexting Opinions Scale an alpha coefficient of 0.891 thus well above the minimum expected level of 0.7 (Tavakol & Duggan, 2011:54).

The data was manually coded and captured in MS Word Excel and exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM Corp, 2017). In light of the smaller than anticipated number of completed questionnaires (83 as opposed to roughly 1 000), the n-values per response category were at times very low, and the researchers opted for a data reduction strategy to more meaningfully draw comparisons between the sexting behaviour and sexting opinions of female and male learners. Therefore, the variables of both scales were recoded into new variables. For the Sexting Behaviour Scale, "Never" was recoded as "No" and the remaining categories (Rarely, Occasionally, Often and Frequently) were recoded as "yes" since they all imply that the respondent has in the past presented or engaged in such behaviour, regardless of the frequency of that behaviour. With the Opinions Scale, "Strongly agree" and "Agree" were recoded together to only "Agree", and similarly "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" were recoded into "Disagree". A visual inspection of normality curves and both the Kolmogorov-Smirnoff and the Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p<0.05$) showed that the data was not normally distributed. Also, a non-probability sampling approach was followed, which dictates that non-parametric measures had to be used to determine any statistically significant differences between female and male respondents' sexting behaviour and opinions about sexting. Following the data reduction process, the Sexting Behaviour Scale data was analysed using Pearson's chi-square or Fisher's exact test (depending on the number of responses per category), while the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare gender differences on the Opinions Scale. Effect sizes were calculated whenever a statistically meaningful gender difference featured in order to indicate any practical significance of such results (Pietersen & Maree, 2016:233). The results are presented in table-format; those of the Opinions Scale, due to its length (56 items), are clustered around particular themes.

Due regard was paid to responsible research practice throughout the study, in particular, obtaining parental consent and learners' assent to complete the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and both anonymity and confidentiality prevailed. The questions did not present

any physical or mental harm, although the first author made arrangements with the schools' counsellors to be available in case debriefing was necessary.

RESULTS

Background characteristics

The average age of respondents was 14.74 years with a standard deviation of 1.40 years. Three respondents did not specify their sex, with the remaining 80 equally divided between male and female learners (n=40; 50.0% respectively). Nearly a third of respondents (n=26; 31.3%) was in Grade 8 and Grade 9 separately, followed by 18.1% (n=15) in Grade 10, 12.0% (n=10) in Grade 11 and 7.2% in Grade 12. More than two-thirds of respondents (n=64; 77.1%) indicated their home language to be English with the remainder (n=19; 22.9%) spread across nine local and foreign languages. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (n=60; 73.2%) were White, followed by Black (n=17; 20.7%), Indian/Asian (n=3; 3.7%) and Coloured (n=2; 2.4%) respondents. The greater proportion of respondents (n=53; 63.9%) considered themselves to come from middle-income households and slightly more than a third (n=30; 36.1%) from high-income households.

Sexting Behaviour Scale

Nearly half of female respondents (n=19; 47.5%) have received a written sext, and nearly a third (n=12; 30.8%) have responded to a written sext (Table 1). More than half of the male respondents (n=21; 52.5) have responded to a written sext. Compared to their female counterparts, male respondents were significantly more likely to have sent a written sext and to have had a sext shared with them when they were not the intended recipients. One in eight female respondents (n=5; 12.5%) has posted a nude/semi-nude photo/video of herself on a social media platform.

Table 1: Sexting behaviour (results relate to "yes" answers)

	Female		Male		*p*	φ
	n	%	n	%		
I have received a:						
Written sext	19	47.5	25	62.5	0.178	-
Nude/semi-nude media picture	17	42.5	22	55.0	0.263	-
Nude/semi-nude photo/video of friend/acquaintance	12	30.0	19	47.5	0.108	-

I have responded to:						
Written sext	12	30.8	21	52.5	0.050	-
Nude/semi-nude picture/photo/video	8	20.5	13	33.5	0.202	-
I have forwarded a:						
Written sext	9	22.5	8	20.0	0.785	-
Nude/semi-nude picture/photo/video	5	12.5	5	12.5	1.000	-
I have sent a:						
Written sext	7	18.4	19	47.5	0.006**	0.30
Nude/semi-nude media picture	9	22.5	11	28.2	0.560	-
Nude/semi-nude photo/video of yourself	6	15.0	7	17.9	0.724	-
Someone shared a sext with me when I was not the intended recipient	8	21.1	16	42.1	0.048*	0.22
Someone responded to a written sext I sent	10	25.0	16	41.0	0.130	-
Someone responded to a nude/semi-nude picture/photo/video sent by me	6	15.0	11	28.2	0.153	-
I posted a nude/semi-nude media picture on BBM, WhatsApp, Snapchat or Facebook	3	7.5	4	10.0	0.692	-
I posted a nude/semi-nude photo/video of myself on BBM, WhatsApp, Snapchat or Facebook	5	12.5	3	7.5	0.456	-
* *p* <0.05; ** *p* <0.01						

Internet use and sexting opinions scale

Respondents were asked specific questions as to why they use the internet (Table 2). One in four male respondents (n=10; 25.0%) agreed to using the internet to learn about sex-related topics, and nearly half (n=19; 47.5%) have used the internet to flirt with someone.

Table 2: Reasons for using the internet (results relate to "agree" answers)

	Female		Male		p	r
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
To learn about sex-related topics	2	5.0	10	25.6	0.091	-
To learn about sex-related topics because I can remain anonymous	4	10.0	10	25.0	0.016*	-0.27
It is OK to use the internet to:						
Meet new people	9	23.1	13	32.5	0.415	-
Develop meaningful relationships	3	7.5	7	17.5	0.022*	-0.26
Meet a romantic partner	2	5.0	6	15.0	0.121	-
I have flirted with someone over the internet	11	27.5	19	47.5	0.159	-
Someone has flirted with me over the internet	18	45.0	22	55.0	0.494	-
* p <0.05						

In general, male respondents presented more positive sentiments toward sexting compared to their female counterparts (Table 3). Male respondents were significantly more likely to agree with the statement that sexting is used as a way to fulfil fantasies.

Table 3: Sentiments toward sexting (results relate to "agree" answers)

	Female		Male		p	r
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
Sexting is used as a way to fulfil fantasies	15	37.5	24	61.5	0.033*	-0.24
Sexting satisfies curiosity about sex	12	31.6	17	42.5	0.091	-
Sexting is an expression that poses no physical risk	4	10.3	10	25.0	0.716	-
Sexting is an expression that poses no emotional risk	3	7.7	1	2.5	0.517	-

	n	%	n	%	p	r
Sexting increases the older you are	7	17.5	11	27.5	0.156	-
Sexting increases the more sexually experienced you are	9	23.7	20	50.0	0.002**	-0.35

* *p* <0.05; ** *p* <0.01

The majority of male (n=35; 87.5%) and female (n=29; 72.5%) respondents agreed that both boys and girls sext (Table 4). Male respondents were significantly more likely to agree that it is in order for girls to send sexts, although nearly half of female respondents (n=18; 45.0%) agreed that girls who send sexts are sluts. Interestingly, none of the respondents agreed with the statement that sexting is okay when one cannot see the face of the sender.

Table 4: Gendered perceptions about sexting (results relate to "agree" answers)

	Female		Male		*p*	*r*
	n	%	n	%		
Teenagers often sext	26	65.0	27	69.2	0.731	-
Boys tend to sext more than girls	14	35.0	13	32.5	0.220	-
Both boys and girls sext	29	72.5	35	87.5	0.089	-
Girls send more sexts than boys	9	23.7	9	23.7	0.737	-
It is OK for girls to send sexts	3	7.7	12	30.0	0.033	-0.24
Girls who send sexts are sluts	18	45.0	14	37.8	0.530	-
It is OK for your boyfriend to ask for a sext of you	5	12.5	12	30.0	0.012	-0.28
It is OK for your girlfriend to ask for a sext of you	5	12.5	12	30.0	0.004	-0.32
Sexting is OK if you cannot see the face of the sender	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.503	-

* *p* <0.05; ** *p* <0.01

Seen broadly, respondents generally agreed that sexting can have negative consequences (Table 5). The greater part agreed that sexting can lead to risky/inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexually unhealthy behaviour in adolescence and bullying. Female respondents

were significantly more likely to agree with the statement that sexting makes them feel unhappy with their bodies.

Table 5: Negative consequences of sexting (results relate to "agree" answers)

	Female		Male		*p*	*r*
	n	%	n	%		
Sexting can lead to other risky behaviour such as alcohol or substance abuse	21	53.8	14	36.8	0.188	-
Sexting can lead to risky/inappropriate sexual behaviour	23	57.5	29	72.5	0.163	-
Sexting can lead to sexual violence	23	57.5	18	45.0	0.294	-
Sexting is a sexually problematic behaviour in adolescence	17	47.2	28	70.0	0.150	-
Sexting is sexually unhealthy behaviour in adolescence	21	55.3	22	56.4	0.561	-
Sexting can lead to bullying	30	75.0	31	77.5	0.907	
Sexting makes me feel unhappy with my body	23	60.5	8	20.5	0.003*	-0.34
I know someone who has been harassed by sexting	13	33.3	10	25.0	0.591	-
* *p* <0.01						

Very few respondents agreed with the statement that it would be okay if their parents found out they were sexting (Table 6). One in five female respondents (n=8; 20.5%) felt that teenagers should have access to sexually explicit material and a third of male respondents (n=13; 32.5%) agreed that sexting is normal sexual experimentation. Male respondents were significantly more likely to agree that sexting builds/maintains romantic relationships and that sexting is a form of intimate communication.

Table 6: Opinions about sexting (results relate to "agree" answers)

	Female		Male		*p*	*r*
	n	%	n	%		
It would be OK if my parents found out I sext	2	5.0	0	0.00	0.286	-
It would be OK for my parents to check my phone	20	50.0	24	61.5	0.337	-
Teenagers should be able to sext/have access to sexually explicit material	8	20.5	7	17.9	0.542	-
Sexting is a mutual expression of sexual desire	16	40.0	14	35.0	0.713	-
Sexting is normal sexual experimentation	11	27.5	13	32.5	0.214	-
Sexting builds/maintains romantic relationship	2	5.0	10	26.3	0.010*	-0.29
Sexting is a form of intimate communication	6	16.2	19	48.7	0.003**	-0.34
Sexting is part of teenage development	7	17.9	11	27.5	0.196	-
The media over-reacts about teenage sexting	7	17.9	8	20.0	0.728	-
I would like to know more about sexting	8	21.1	9	22.5	0.434	-
I know someone who sexts	23	59.0	24	60.0	0.857	-
* *p* <0.05; ** *p* <0.01						

Nine questions were posed to respondents who have engaged in sexting regarding the reasons they sext (Table 7). More than a third of respondents (n=33; 39.8%), of whom were 19 (47.5%) were male, and 14 (35.0%) were female, completed the questions. Since no gender differences featured, global responses are presented. One in four respondents (n=13; 39.4%) stated that they enjoy sexting and nearly a third of respondents (n=10; 30.3%) were ask to sext.

Table 7: Reasons for sexting

	n	%
I enjoy it	13	39.4
I trust my partner	12	36.4
It is easier than face-to-face contact	10	30.3
I was asked to	10	30.3
I am in a committed relationship	10	30.3
Even though I know, it is wrong	10	30.3
All my friends do it too	6	18.2
I am insecure/shy	6	18.2
To be popular	1	3.3

Respondents were asked to share their views on the regulation of sexting (Table 8). No gender differences prevailed; hence, the total number of responses is presented below. Less than half of respondents (n=34; 46.6%) agreed that government should regulate sexually explicit material on the internet. Slightly more than a third of respondents (n=29; 36.7%) agreed that sexting is against the law.

Table 8: Regulating sexting (results relate to "agree" answers)

	n	%
Government should regulate sexually explicit material on the internet	34	46.6
Government should regulate the age at which sexually explicit material can be viewed	47	58.8
Schools should ban all sexually explicit material	45	57.0
The media should be censored	35	44.9
Parents/schools/government overreact to sexting	18	22.8
Sexting is against the law	29	36.7

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to generate local insights into adolescents' gender differences in both sexting behaviour and their opinions regarding sexting. While the authors acknowledge that the limited number of respondents negatively impacts on the generalisability of the results, the study still provides noteworthy insights into adolescent sexting behaviour and their personal views surrounding the practice. Overall, the survey shows some gender differences which are supported by literature.

Very few of the surveyed adolescents were in committed relationships (7.2%) and yet a greater proportion engaged in sexting which suggests that adolescent sexting is not necessarily about forging intimate relationships or even introducing intimacy into a current romantic relationship, but rather that sexting should be linked to adolescent development and sexual curiosity during this life phase (Feldman & Middleman, 2002:489). The current study is inconclusive in terms of gendered reasoning for sexting, but it is evident that some girls do engage in sexting. García-Gómez (2017:396, 399) offers the narrative that girls may engage in sexting outside of relationships in order to enhance their self-esteem by taking control of their own sexuality and femininity. Girls, therefore, sext because they claim mutual ground with other girls where sexting is seen as a common practice, which highlights the importance of the peer group in sexting and because they feel liberated and sexually comfortable to do so (García-Gómez, 2017:396, 399).

Viewed broadly, the survey agrees with existing evidence (Johnson et al, 2014; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011) that boys engage more in general sexting behaviour than girls. More male than female respondents reported having received and responded to sexts which suggests that female respondents might have underreported their incidence of sending sexts since boys must receive sexts from somewhere. In fact, several studies (AP-MTV, 2009; Cox Communications, 2009; Mitchell et al, 2012) show that girls are more likely to send sexts possibly because they feel flattered when asked to despite them running the risk of being "slut-shamed" for doing so. The explanation is supported by the finding that 30% of the surveyed adolescents reported sending a sext because someone had asked them to which in part speaks to the view that sexting has become a new way of expressing feminine desirability (Ringrose et al, 2013:7), and from an adolescent perspective, is normalised behaviour (García-Gómez, 2017:392; Ringrose et al, 2013:15; Strassberg et al, 2012). Also, girls more readily find justifications for their sexting behaviour compared to their male counterparts (García-Gómez, 2017:400). The argument further links to the proposition that sexting is an expression of female sexual awareness and liberation (Vanden Abeele, Campbell, Eggermont & Roe, 2014:24; Campbell & Park, 2014:22). While female respondents in the present study did not necessarily describe such freedom or awareness, sexting may be used in an attempt

to be more liberated and in control of their femininity and sexuality, in other words, they attempt to move sexting from the realm of exploitation into the realm of emancipation (Vanden Abeele et al., 2014:24; Campbell & Park, 2014:22).

Notably, male respondents were significantly more likely to have had a sext shared with them even though they were not the intended recipients. Research refers to boys using sexts as a "popularity currency" (Owens, 2017:9; Walrave et al, 2015:2). They share pictures sent to them as a way of demonstrating their capacity to belong (McGraw, 2013:115) and thus indicate their status and popularity within the peer group. Girls are significantly more likely to have sent a photo of themselves which correlates with previous studies (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014; Mitchell et al, 2012) on the gendered prevalence of sexting and in particular the sexual double standard (McGraw, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2013; Walker et al, 2013). However, boys in the present sample were significantly more likely to believe that it is not problematic for girls to send sexts which possibly counters the argument of a sexual double standard thereby introducing the notion that girls respond to a perceived sexual double standard but not necessarily boys. While the survey revealed low percentages for both genders in terms of acknowledging posting a nude or semi-nude photo of themselves, the fact remains that some adolescents engage in the practice. Definitional issues can also not be ignored since different individuals may construe certain photos as sexually explicit, and others may not.

The vast majority of adolescents indicated that they do not want their parents to know about their sexting activities and practice notes that they make use of acronyms such as POS (parent over shoulder) and KPC (keeping parents clueless) in order to exclude their parents from their conversations (*cf.* https://www.ihatethemedia.com/99-texting-acronyms-parents-should-know). The finding is salient in that it could explain the under-participation of learners in the survey since they did not want to ask for parental consent and as such alert their parents to behaviour they may not otherwise have known about. Speculatively, the presence of the "Ostrich Syndrome" and not believing that adolescent sexting is a local phenomenon may be a result of a generation gap regarding technology abilities. This "head-in-the-sand" approach may have further resulted in the reluctance of some schools to participate in the study.

The survey indicates that some respondents use the internet to learn about sex and sex-related matters which is understandable given their developmental stage and the curiosity around sex during adolescence (Feldman & Middleman, 2002:489). A fifth of the sample reported that sexually explicit material is freely available on the internet. Both these findings support studies (Jones & Fox, 2009; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006) done on adolescent internet usage internationally. However, a prominent and significant difference was revealed in terms of the importance of anonymity. Boys appear to value the anonymity afforded by the internet

more than girls do. A tentative assumption is that boys do not openly communicate about sexual matters with parents or their peers for fear of embarrassment or ridicule or because they ascribe to the notion that they *should* be sexually knowledgeable and experienced. In addition, there is a significant difference present in male opinions that the internet is a good avenue to develop meaningful relationships. Another significant finding was that boys feel sexting can build or maintain relationships, and 50% see sexting as a form of intimate communication. These findings show a potential distortion of perception for some adolescent boys in terms of what constitutes intimacy (Van der Watt, 2012:13) and a valuable relationship, but moreover the possibility of enjoying an online reality more than an offline one[8]. In fact, boys present more online gaming addition and alternative digital realities (Gross, 2004:634; Van Bavel, 2016:15). Much of the time that adolescents spend on the internet is devoted to social communication and interactions (Mishna, McLuckie & Saini, 2009:107). The amount of time spent on the internet in an "alternative reality" could heighten distorted perceptions of actual social communication or interactions – a worrying notion in terms of future relationships and adolescents' expectations thereof.

Roughly half of the boys in the current sample engaged in online flirting and sexting in order to fulfil sexual fantasies. The finding proved to be significantly different for female participants and could possibly be linked to the result that boys send more sexts, and they may ask for or even expect a photo sext in return. The results speak to boys feeling that it is acceptable to both ask and be asked for a sext within a relationship, but it would seem that considering most of the respondents reported not being in a relationship, that this is simply hypothetical. Interestingly, there was a significant difference in the finding that boys feel sexting increases as sexual experience increases which ties with evidence that adolescents use sexting to gain sexual experience (Lenhart, 2009; Mcgraw, 2013:22). The postulation is then that boys still value actual sexual experience and believe such experience to be important before initiating or engaging in online sex.

Approximately two thirds of the overall sample reported that adolescents often sext thus confirming that sexting is a part of their everyday lives (García-Gómez, 2017:392; Ringrose et al, 2013:15; Strassberg et al, 2012). As mentioned, the present study does not dispute the contradictory findings of existing evidence in terms of gendered differences in the prevalence of sexting. However, one in three boys in the survey placed more importance on sexting and

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[8] The suggestion here is not that online realities are fake, but rather that the online realm allows for adolescents to represent themselves in different ways across different social media, internet and gaming apps (Boyd, 2014:38). The different representations or "identities" provide the opportunity for adolescents to engage with different peer groups. Moreover, they can move easily between different social contexts (Boyd, 2014:39), and the anonymity the internet affords, allows one to explore and engage in a different way from offline reality.

see it as essential to adolescent development in comparison to female participants. A gender-neutral finding was that 60% of the sample knew an adolescent who sexts even if they did not report sexting themselves which again confirms the reality of adolescent sexting. A third of those respondents who acknowledged that they engage in sexting admitted doing so even though they believe the behaviour to be wrong. Roughly one in four adolescents surveyed stated that sexting is part of sexual experimentation which may well point sexting becoming normalised adolescent behaviour (García-Gómez, 2017:392; Ringrose et al, 2013:15; Strassberg et al, 2012), and it accentuates the leap in thinking about adolescent development in previous generations in comparison to the present-day technological era.

Both male and female adolescents reported being aware of the negative consequences of sexting. Three quarters of the sample cited cyberbullying as the most common negative consequence associated with sexting, a finding supported by existing evidence (Klettke et al, 2014:45; Van Ouytsel et al, 2017:287). It appears that some adolescents are not oblivious to the consequences of sexting. This type of information can direct schools, communities and policy makers in addressing sexting in an efficient and effective manner. Furthermore, the results show that girls experience higher sexting anxiety in relation to body image and the literature confirms that girls experience more negative consequences than boys do (Cooper et al, 2016:712-713; Owens, 2017:5). The survey found that one in four girls knew of someone who had been harassed as a result of sexting and girls also appear to be more afraid of sexual violence. Again, the question must be asked why girls engage in the practice of sexting when they are both aware of the consequences and potentially live to experience them first-hand. Lastly, as much as the surveyed adolescents reported certain positive sentiments towards sexting and engaging in sexting practices, approximately half of the respondents support Government and school regulation regarding sexually explicit material, a finding which bodes well for the implementation of a school sexting policy.

THEORETICAL APPLICATION

As indicated in the theoretical literature section of the paper, the authors recognise that the Reason and Reaction Model is a tentative attempt at explaining adolescent sexting behaviour and we fully acknowledge that the model may not encapsulate all variables involved in the phenomenon. In the Reason and Reaction Model, both the individual reasoned pathway and the social reaction pathway are taken into account when attempting to explain the cognitive process behind adolescent sexting. If an adolescent has a positive perceived expectancy towards the outcome of sexting, then the chances increase that that adolescent will engage in the behaviour. The claim is supported by the finding that one in three adolescents who reported engaging in sexting do so because they enjoy it. Similarly, nearly half of respondents stated that sexting fulfils sexual fantasies, and a third noted that sexting satisfies adolescents'

curiosity about sex. The positive expected outcome would result in the adolescent having favourable attitudes towards the behaviour from a personal standpoint, but could be further strengthened by associating with peers who sext. In this regard, the survey shows that a third of respondents who sext do so because they were asked to, so they are associating with adolescents who sext and are close enough to them to have exchanged personal information such as mobile phone numbers. Furthermore, 60% of the sample reported knowing someone who sexts. Considering the relatively private domain of sexting, if an adolescent knows of someone engaging in the behaviour, then they are probably acquaintances, if not friends. The influence of peers in sexting behaviour is further supported by the finding that nearly a third of respondents had a sext shared with them when they were not the intended recipient.

The Model continues that if no negative outcomes are perceived, then the attitudes become more favourable as does the expected outcome. Interestingly, adolescents in the study were aware of the negative consequences of sexting and yet still chose to engage in the behaviour. The finding then questions the role of the perceived outcome in the Reason and Reaction Model, which requires further exploration. Adolescents may learn from each other what is "acceptable" in terms of sexting, and importantly, because many of them either do not recognise the illegality of adolescent sexting or do not believe it should be illegal, they may not feel as though they are breaking the law. Again association with a peer group that holds the same values and opinions surrounding sexting would impact favourable attitudes directly. Roughly half of the surveyed adolescents believe that sexually explicit material should be regulated by the Government, which speaks to the illegality of sexting, but it is unclear whether these adolescents were referring to pornography itself or whether they were including adolescent sexting within the scope of sexually explicit material.

Positive perceptions, in turn, speak to a positive prototype or mental image of someone who sexts, and the result would be an identification with that individual, a willingness to engage in sexting and a possible desire to emulate the behaviour they condone (i.e. sexting). This is supported from the standpoint of the current study in which adolescents did not appear to experience "slut-shaming" to the same degree as their international counterparts (*cf*. Ringrose et al, 2013). Slightly more than a third of respondents – and more so female respondents – referred to those who sext as "sluts" or "skets". Therefore, the adolescents surveyed here do not appear to offer the same negative prototype compared to adolescents surveyed elsewhere. These associations and prototypes reinforce each other continuously until something happens, which would change the perception of the prototype or the associations kept. With sexting, if an adolescent was to experience something negative such as bullying or be a victim of revenge porn, then the prototype, associations and attitudes towards sexting would change through the process of negative reinforcement. Applying the Reason and

Reaction Model to adolescent sexting allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand which provides for policy makers to gain insight into the motives behind and the consequences of adolescent sexting thus innovating prevention and intervention practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the present study amount to the need for an inclusive definition of sexting in order to avoid misunderstandings in terms of what is considered sexting from both a policy making perspective, but equally important, from an adolescent perspective. Many adolescents consider sexting to be normalised sexual experimentation in a technological age (García-Gómez, 2017:392; Ringrose et al, 2013:15; Strassberg et al, 2012), and that needs to be taken into account by schools, communities and policy makers. Perhaps it is not so much a case of trying to prevent adolescent sexting, but rather to adapt prevention measures to the reality of the behaviour and to minimise the negative consequences associated with the behaviour by providing sound education and support for adolescents to make informed decisions. Also, it is apparent that the typical profile of male and female sexters differs which should be taken into account when drafting school policies regarding sexting.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations associated with the present investigation are inherently tethered to the research methods followed and the challenges experienced in securing the active participation of a large number of adolescents on a topic which they evidently did not wish their parents or school authorities to know about. Despite the researchers having followed an acceptable and methodologically authentic sampling strategy, very few learners volunteered to participate in the survey, which constrains the generalisability of the results and conclusions. It was equally alarming that some schools refused to accommodate the survey despite strong motivations that sexting is a reality that affects learners under their care. Further, the researchers acknowledge the shortfalls tied to self-report research, particularly so on sensitive matters such as sex and sexuality, which generally results in underreporting (Langhaug, Sherr & Cowan, 2010:2).

Future research should focus on the relationship between adolescent sexting and actual sexual behaviour, teenagers' motivations for sexting and the different online platforms that facilitate sexting, as well as the role of peers in shaping online sexting activities. The observation that sexting may well become a normalised part of adolescent sexual development in a digital world deserve particular research attention. Finally, the present survey was conducted at two private schools and should be extended to public schools where learners might, due to socioeconomic disparities, not have access to the internet via the latest, cutting edge online mobile technologies.

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PART 3: SECONDARY SCHOOL SEXTING POLICY ANALYSIS

Prelude

The article emphasises the international strategies employed to address adolescent sexting within the two prominent discourses - deviant and normative – that surround the phenomenon. Due to the privation of South African research on adolescent sexting, and the ensuing lack of South African policies or the inaccessibility of such policies, international secondary school-based policies are analysed. Furthermore, the results of expert and parental interviews on best practice and essential policy imperatives are outlined. The rationale behind the article is twofold, firstly, to analyse the assumed intent and possible structure committed to addressing adolescent sexting from a policy perspective, and secondly, to obtain opinions from important stakeholders with regards to the behaviour in order to include that interpretation in the development of a South African policy. The article provides the basis for the developed school-based sexting policy provided in Part 4 of the thesis. The formatting and the page numbers within the citations have been retained for the sake of consistency throughout the thesis.

Manuscript under review: The development of a school-based sexting policy

Statement of contribution: Tara Harris conceptualised the design and implemented the research. She conducted the policy analysis and data analysis for the expert and parental interviews. Tara Harris wrote up the full manuscript was responsible for the technical editing. Francois Steyn provided critical insight in his role as the academic supervisor.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL-BASED SEXTING POLICY[1]

Tara Harris[2]

Abstract

Adolescence as a developmental phase is characterized by physical, emotional, and sexual maturation, as well as sexual exploration. Adolescents use the Internet, social media platforms, and various apps as a means to explore their sexuality and to forge their identities. Part of this is done through the practice of sexting, defined as the exchange of sexually explicit messages or texts, images, or videos across a range of technological devices in South Africa. Adolescent sexting is problematic as it falls within the gambit of child pornography laws, and as such, it constitutes illegal behaviour. Internationally, various policies have been implemented to attempt to redress adolescent sexting, but there is little consensus on the best way to manage such incidents, especially at a school level. The present article provides data from a policy analysis of school-based sexting policies, as well as expert and parent interviews, to develop a sexting policy framework for South African schools. This is done in an attempt to support schools in maximizing risk management and sexting reduction as there is a lack of South African policies addressing the issue. While it is apparent that a school-based policy cannot be gendered in terms of response, the gendered dialogue of adolescent sexting needs to be taken into account when educating young people about the possible negative repercussions of sexting as well as gendered motivations for, experiences and expectancies of sexting.

Keywords: sexting, child pornography, policy analysis, adolescent, school-based sexting policy, qualitative

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INTRODUCTION

Sexting is at the vanguard of research around adolescent sexual behaviour, sexual development, and mental health. A decade has passed since the introduction of sexting research (Mori, Temple, Browne & Madigan, 2019:771) and the short and long-term impact of the practice on adolescents, as well as the prevalence of the behaviour and its correlation with cyberbullying (Springston, 2017:142). Moreover, there is a cornucopia of literature (Kushner, 2013; Levick & Moon, 2010; Lorang, McNiel & Binder, 2016) around the legal consequences of adolescent sexting, one of which being its classification as child pornography, but there is a research hiatus on how to incorporate the best interests of the child/children in official responses. Technology has advanced even further, with various new and improved apps which are geared towards private messaging – an ideal avenue for sexting. Sexting, which can be defined as the exchange of sexually explicit messages or texts, images or videos across a range of technological devices (Villacampa, 2017:10) and/or platforms or apps, has become a standard part of the mainstream adolescent culture (Mori et al, 2019:771; Springston, 2017:142).

Questions remain around the reasoning for the majority of adolescent sexting research is focused mainly on the prevalence and negative repercussions of sexting and why the view of sexting as normative sexual development, within a technological revolution, has mostly been ignored (Levine, 2013:257; Lippman & Campbell, 2014:373). Nonetheless, even if adolescent sexting is viewed as developmentally appropriate in terms of forging a sexual identity, or entering a period of sexual experimentation, the negative consequences of consensual sexting backfiring, non-consensual distribution of a 'sext', misinterpretation from the receiver of the 'sext', and revenge porn cannot be negated.

As with much research on adolescence and sexual behaviour, the importance of adolescent sexting as a gendered discourse cannot be ignored because it informs the educational strategies established in an attempt to address the practice. The matter here is that male and female image sharing garners different responses from a judgment or moral basis (Lippman & Campbell, 2014:379; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone & Harvey, 2013:312). Female adolescents seem to be the focus of attention within the debate around adolescent sexting (Lippman & Campbell, 2014:372) as they appear to be more vulnerable and experience more coercion and or pressure to comply to requests for self-produced sexually explicit content than their male counterparts (Choi, Van Ouytsel & Temple, 2016:166). Certainly, there are gender dynamics within the practice of adolescent sexting. However, these do not appear to be prevalence or frequency-based (Springston, 2017:149), but rather in terms of online victimisation, sexting expectancies, sexting behaviour, perceptions regarding sexting and as a predictor of digital dating violence and revenge porn (Choi et al, 2016:166; Harris & Steyn,

2018:15; Harris-Cik & Steyn, 2018:34; Lippman & Campbell, 2014:372) and the differing moral standard to which males and females are held.

Consequently, the double standard that female adolescents face does not seem to prevent them from sexting. Regardless of a female's engagement in the practice, there is a judgment placed upon her – if she shares a sexually explicit text, image, or video, she is slut-shamed. If she refuses, she is labeled as "frigid" (Lippman & Campbell, 2014:380; Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone & Harvey, 2012:45).

Adolescent sexting is a prevalent behaviour, with estimates of between 17% and 35% of adolescents engaging in the practice (Donlin, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012:18; Phippen, 2009; Ringrose et al, 2012:11), and thus policies must be in place to safeguard young people regardless of whether it is consensual or not. Given the prevalence of adolescent sexting, the fast-paced advancement of technology, the complexities of the behaviour, and the need to address the practice, it is vital that current policies are reviewed and input from stakeholders is considered.

From a South African perspective, the need for sexting policies is further highlighted because there are no sexting policies, or if there are, they are not publically available. It is acknowledged that adolescent sexting may be accommodated in other policies which address social media or responsible ICT usage or digital citizenship, but the phenomenon requires individualized attention and redress outside of other policies that govern online behaviour. Sexting, like other potentially harmful online behaviour, does not always occur on school premises and yet schools have a social responsibility, and a duty of care around issues that commonly affect adolescents (Shubert & Wurf, 2014:195) and a consequential policy can reinforce education outside of the academic curriculum. A policy is critical to adequately safeguard adolescents because it demonstrates school awareness and provides guidance on how to handle a sexting incident (Phippen, Bond & Tyrrell, 2018:11). The lack of South African policies meant that an analysis of international policies had to take place in order to explore meaningful policy initiatives for a South African context.

The research question positioned behind this paper is: 'what are the necessary policy imperatives in order to address the phenomenon of adolescent sexting?' Through the policy analysis and expert and parent interviews, the aim is to establish the core facets necessary in a school-based sexting policy to meaningfully manage the phenomenon.

METHODS

This paper is focused on an analysis of secondary school sexting policies as well as interviews with experts in the field of adolescent sexting, cybersafety, and policy-making. Further interviews were conducted with parents of adolescents to obtain their input on the management of adolescent sexting within the school environment. The analysis of policy documents, expert interviews, and parental interviews allowed for data triangulation in order to provide more corroborative findings.

Sample

Policies. Twelve policies were found through a Google search using the terms "sexting policy," "school-based sexting policy," anti-sexting policy," and "adolescent sexting school policy." Google was used as the search engine because it recognized as the market leader in search engines, holding 74.54% of market shares, 80% of individuals using it, and averaging 3.5 billion daily searches (Carter, 2020). All of the policies were from outside South Africa, either from the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States of America (USA), and it became clear that South African schools did not necessarily have sexting policies or that they are not publically available. The 12 policies publically obtained were analyzed, as they met the inclusion criteria of a) being written in English, and b) policy interventions for adolescent sexting within secondary schools. Twelve policies were analysed because at that point data saturation was achieved.

Experts. International and South African experts (individuals with specialized knowledge on the topic of adolescent sexting, cybersafety, and/or policy development) were contacted via email and asked to participate in a semi-structured interview detailing policy development to address adolescent sexting at a school-based level. Of the 24 experts contacted, 15 returned a positive response, three stated that either their schedules did not allow for an interview, or they did not feel qualified enough to give an interview, and six did not respond to the invite. From the 15 positive responses, two experts discontinued communication ex post facto, and therefore, 13 experts were interviewed. The experts interviewed comprised of six South Africans and seven experts based in Portugal, the USA, and the UK.

Parents. An open-ended survey was designed on SurveyMonkey and advertised on Facebook to reach parents of adolescents. Information from the survey was used to draft a basic semi-structured interview schedule to obtain parental opinion on a school-based sexting policy. Face-to-face interviews with eight parents of adolescents attending secondary schools in South Africa were conducted. One participant chose to email responses. In totality (experts and parents), 22 interviews were conducted, thus ensuring heterogeneity.

Procedure

The University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee approved the study, and all ethical aspects relating to the study were taken into consideration. All participants provided informed consent, and participation was voluntary. The nature of the interview questions did not pose a threat to the participants' physical or emotional health.

Policies. The 12 policies were uploaded into NVivo 12, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package, in order to qualitatively code the data. The advantages of using CAQDAS are data management in terms of both overview and access, ease of coding and recoding, relationship generation, and organisation between themes and time efficiency (Rodik & Primorac, 2015:14). The following were the steps taken in the qualitative coding process: step 1 involved uploading the policies to Nvivo in a readable format; step 2 comprised of pre-coding; step 3 and 4 were node creation and checking respectively; step 5 consisted of the actual coding process and lastly step 6 was refining the nodes and sub-nodes into themes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013:27). References, or the number of selections coded into a specific node, were checked across nodes and sub-nodes to establish their viability as themes.

Expert elicitation and parental input. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter Voice Notes. Initially, manual thematic analysis in Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the expert and parent interviews. The more conversational direction and the length of the interviews made manual analysis an appropriate method of analysis. Content analysis was used to identify common themes. Verbatim extracts of the interviews called "meaning units" were elicited according to the relevant questions. These meaning units were analyzed in order to determine the core message, and these were recorded as "condensed meaning units." Verbatim extracts within the condensed meaning units were assigned to codes. The codes spoke backwards to the sub-themes or categories, which in turn determined the overall theme. Thereafter, a data quality check was performed in NVivo 12. The excel spreadsheet was uploaded, and the same process used for the school sexting policies was applied. Quality control was ensured through member checking, where the developed policy was sent to two experts for input.

RESULTS

The policy analysis revealed 14 themes in total, 10 sub-themes, and three sub-sub-themes. The expert and parental interviews produced 12 themes, 14 sub-themes, and three sub-sub-themes. Ten themes, namely age differentiation, aim, consequences, definitions, duty of care, gender, legal implications, prevention, reporting of an incident, responding to an incident, and stakeholders were identical across the policies and interviews. The policy analysis had three themes that were not apparent in the interviews, namely, recording of an incident, risk

assessment, and useful resources. The interview data also revealed a theme that differed from the policy analysis, namely: lack of policy integration. An elucidation of the findings will be presented, with the common themes first, followed by the themes which were differentiated within the policy analysis and the expert and parent interviews.

Theme 1: Aim

Seven of the 12 policies analyzed provided an aim for the sexting policy, and eight references to the aim were made. Policy 6 provides the aim as "… created in order to provide a guide for both staff and pupils as to how the school will proceed and what steps will be taken should an incident of sexting be reported or suspected." Policy 5 refers to an inclusive aim, which "defines what sexting is and how it is best managed at the College. It is also important to state that sexting is contrary to the Pastoral Aims and School Rules of the College." Policy 11 made specific reference to "… the role of our schools in the awareness and prevention of sexting" within the aim of sexting policy. Between the expert and parent interviews, the aim of a school-based sexting policy was referred to 12 times. P2 referred to the necessity of the aim to be a "protocol, in terms of steps, that are clearly unpacked" and E10 believed that the aim of a sexting policy should be rooted in "a harm reduction model." Furthermore, E2 expanded by differentiating the aim in terms of consensual versus coercive sexting and by elucidating aspects that should be included to achieve the aim by stating, "Yeah, I would like it to be a bit two-prong. Education about digital citizenship, some punishment, and I think that the punishment should fit the crime and the other kids should see that there are repercussions for violating someone's, you know, rights."

Theme 2: Definitions

Eleven of the 12 policies defined sexting and not one of these definitions were identical, although most included similar features. Policy 1 defined sexting as "the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet." Policy 7 suggested the alternative term for sexting of youth-produced sexual imagery and defined it as "images or videos generated by children under the age of 18 that are of a sexual nature or are considered to be indecent. These images may be shared between children and young people and/or adults via a mobile phone, webcam, handheld device, or website/app." Policy 6 included written messages within its definition: "the term 'sexting' is a derivation of 'texting' but relates to the sending of indecent images, videos and/or written messages with sexually explicit content" and further provided details on the creation and distribution of sexts: "These are created and sent via electronic communication devices such as mobile telephones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. They are often 'shared' via social networking sites and instant messaging services." Specific experts were of the opinion that legality was the most critical element of the definition (E6, E8, and E13), other experts

and parents felt more strongly that it was an issue of intent (E1, Parent (P)9) and some respondents who believed the exclusion of pornography and anything that was not youth-produced or self-generated was vital (E4, E6). In total, 12 references were made to the inclusion of a definition within a school-based sexting policy. The following two sub-themes were deemed necessary as specific aspects relating to the definition of sexting:

Inclusion versus exclusion of pornography. Three policies made specific reference to the exclusion of pornography within their definitional outline of sexting. Policy 8 explained that the sexting policy did not cover the following, "Children sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which do not contain imagery. Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a pupil. Sexual imagery downloaded from the internet by a child and shared with a peer (also under the age of 18) or an adult." The exclusion of pornography was referred to twice from the expert and parent interviews. E4 had the opinion: "I'd say that self-produced is the thing around sexting nudes... if they're sharing porn and stuff, I think that's for a different policy." The difference in legality surrounding sexting as child pornography and pornography, in general, was highlighted by E6 in stating, "I don't think you can classify it in the same category… Legally it's different." Only one policy (Policy 3) included pornography within its definition of sexting, and one reference was made within that policy. The definition provided was "sending and receiving text-based messages relating to sexual behaviour by pupils which don't contain imagery and pupils sharing adult digital pornography." Across the interviews, 10 references were made to including pornography within the policy definition. E1 felt strongly that "For it to be a sound policy, it needs to be more inclusive than exclusive. Any sexual image that you send to somebody in that context, whether it's your own person or another, it's got the same intention."

Youth-produced sexual imagery. Half of the policies (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) referred to youth-produced sexual imagery as an alternative to the term "sexting," and in total, six references were made to this term. An explanation of the rationale behind using this phrase was apparent in Policy 7 "The phrase 'Youth Produced Sexual Imagery' is now used instead of 'sexting' to describe the practice because: 'Youth produced' includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves. 'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos." Within the expert and parent interviews, eight references were made to youth-produced or user-generated sexual imagery. E9 implicated that "…it should be user-generated... you talk to young people… and certainly from their point of view, the term sexting is around a self-produced, or you have taken a picture of somebody else that you are in a relationship with... When I wrote the article, and I looked into the definitions around sexting quite carefully, the consensus was that it was around self-produced imagery."

Theme 3: Consequences

From a policy perspective, six of the 12 analyzed policies included consequences within their policies, with a total of nine references. Policy 6 referred to the "extremely damaging and long-lasting consequences." In contrast, Policy 5 referred to "range of risks for the young people in our care," and lastly, Policy 4 outlined specific consequences such as "embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation." Eleven references were made to the consequences of adolescent sexting by the experts and parents interviewed. P4 felt strongly that in terms of adolescent sexting, "they should be taught consequences of their actions, being responsible for their actions." E5 highlighted the importance of adolescents understanding the repercussions of their actions by questioning, "how do we make sure that they actually authentically understand what's going on in terms of this and what the consequences of these behaviours are, rather than, you know, the big stick approach." P8 furthered this idea in highlighting the importance of "educating them on the dangers and the legality and the consequences" of adolescent sexting. E10 concurred on the importance of education around consequences: "I think you do need to, from a prevention standpoint, let them know what the potential consequences might be."

Theme 4: Legal implications

Out of the 12 analyzed policies, nine policies included the legal implications, and in total, 23 references were made. Policy 6 clearly stated that "It is an offense to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children." In terms of legislation, there were 15 references to the legal implications in the expert and parent interviews. E13 emphasizes a different legal implication in speaking to a specific section of the South African Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (32 of 2007) "If you look at Section 54, which deals of the obligation to report a commission of a sexual offense, and this [sexting] is a sexual offense. So a person who has knowledge of the sexual offenses being committed against a child must report such knowledge immediately." Another legal implication was mentioned by P2, who stated: "I think the one probably should allow someone to get the evidence to pursue a civil case, you know, in terms of whatever damage was done." This theme further extended to include that "very clear guidelines that come from legislation" (P2) were needed in the formulation of a sexting policy. There was one relevant sub-theme of criminalizing children.

Criminalizing children. Three policies made a total of five references to the danger of criminalizing children. Policy 3 highlights an essential point in recognizing "Laws were created long before mass use of the internet and so, therefore, the school should always take a measured approach and seek to avoid criminalizing children and young people where possible." Moreover, Policy 7 stated that "Professionals should be aware the prosecution or criminalisation of children for taking indecent images of themselves and sharing them should

be avoided where possible." From an expert opinion alone, three references were made to the criminalisation of children. E9 emphasized the extreme result of criminalizing adolescents in stating, "I just think what you don't want to say it's criminalized as a result of the policy which is what has happened in the UK and then ended up in the sex register, which is dreadful." E4 had a dual opinion in mentioning that a victim is "not going to go and talk to anybody because you are worried then that you're going to be criminalized," but also "not being against the criminalisation of children when they are behaving in a criminal manner."

Theme 5: Risk assessment

Fifteen references were made across five policies to risk assessment. Policy 4 makes provision for risk mitigation by stating that "Any relevant facts about the young people involved which would influence risk assessment" should occur within the initial review meeting.

Theme 6: Reporting an incident

Eight policies (18 references) strategized the reporting of a sexting incident. Policy 1 covered a variety of reporting mechanisms such as "The young person affected may inform a class teacher, the designated safeguarding lead, or any member of the school or college staff. The young person may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent may inform someone in school or college, or inform the police directly." Policy 10 placed the onus on "Staff, students and parents/guardians who become aware of an act of sexting" to "…report such conduct the same day to the school principal or his or her designee." Policy 11 furthered this by making provision for reports to be "made anonymously" and "Verbal reports shall be documented in writing within two days of the receipt of the report." Conversely, only one interview participant referred to how an incident should be reported, and the recommendation was to have a "template for reporting for teachers…there must be some other clear, protected way of getting the information from the start."

Theme 7: Responding to an incident

Overall, nine policies outlined how to respond to a sexting incident, and in total, 13 references were made to responding. Policy 8 briefly outlined their procedure: "When such an incident involving sexting comes to a member of staff's attention, this will be shared with a designated safeguarding lead with a view to referring to appropriate agencies following the referral procedures, where appropriate." Policy 3 followed a child-centered approach in that their "response to these incidents will be guided by the principle of proportionality and the primary concern at all times will be the welfare and protection of the young people involved." Across the expert and parental interviews, 16 references were made to responding to a sexting incident. E10 recommended a "continuum of response," and P2 suggested that "the severity (of the response) depends on content, intention." Context, parental involvement, police

intervention, and school discretion were sub-themes within this theme.

Context. Three policies each referred to the significance of the context of the incident. Policy 6 delineated the importance of the severity of the incident: "Depending on the specific circumstances and gravity, the incident will be investigated on the discipline-safeguarding continuum…" and Policy 2 identified that "It is necessary to consider each case on its own merit carefully." In total, 19 references were made concerning context from experts and parents. E10 asserted that in terms of responding, the school representative would have to "get through the aspects of whether it's aggravated versus experimental, consensual versus intentionally hurtful, coercive…"

Coercion. Eight policies (16 references) differentiated between coercive and consensual sexting. Policy 7 reiterated more severe consequences if there was "the presence of exploitation, coercion, a profit motive, or adults as perpetrators." Policy 6 also speaks specifically to the consequences differing "dependent on motive, intent, pressure or coercion." The element of coercion was mentioned 23 times in the interviews, and E4 confirmed that "if there is evidence of coercion, you should involve law enforcement..." and that it cannot be ignored that in certain instances "there's like really crazy predatory behaviour and the kids are really bullied into it."

Consent. Twelve references were made across six policies to the concept of consent. Policy 7 referred to "Offences involving self-generated images or images obtained with consent by other children may be dealt with differently." Eight references, across the expert and parent interviews, alluded to the element of consent. E6 specified the necessity of "differentiating between consensual and coercive" sexting behaviour.

Nature of the image. Three policies took into account the nature of the image, and in total there were five references made to this theme. Policy 3 specifically mentioned a different course of action if the "image is of a severe or extreme nature." Two interview participants considered the nature of the image. P2 believed a decision on response could only take place once the nature of the image was determined: "(Is it) a partial boob shot or a full-on vaginal shot, or is it a full-on sexual act? I think they should take it from there and base the decision on those criteria."

Parental involvement. Half of the 12 policies had an aggregate of 16 references to the appropriateness of involving parents when dealing with a sexting incident. The significance of informing "parents at an early stage and involve them in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm." (Policy

5). Within the interviews, 11 references were made to ensuring parental involvement, and P7 linked this to an age differentiation in stating, "Parental involvement for a 12 or 13-year-old is, is crucial, but not so much of an 18-year-old."

Police intervention. A composite of 34 references to police intervention were made in 10 of the 12 policies. Policy 7 referred to "Aggravated cases (which) should be discussed with specialist children's services and/or the police." Policy 5 provided various scenarios in which an "immediate referral to police and/or children's social care" was necessary. Four references were made to police intervention across the interviews. E6 clarified that schools have "a duty to tell the police." Moreover, E10 stressed the need for an agreement not to unnecessarily criminalize adolescents who sext: "So I think when it comes to a school policy, there has to be some agreement with kind of a local prosecutor slash law enforcement about how to handle these things, because technically, at least in the US, educators are mandatory reporters."

School discretion. Six policies made 17 references to schools being able to use their discretion in dealing with sexting incidents. Policy 5 dictated that the school "may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care…" Furthermore, Policy 7 advised that "the appropriate approach should be underpinned by careful assessment of the facts of the case…"

Theme 8: Prevention

Four policies made seven references to the theme of prevention. Policy 5 intimated to taking a "proactive, preventive and educative approach to safeguarding issues" and furthered the stance by stating "underpinning preventive learning about issues, such as consent, relationships, online safety, recognizing abusive and coercive behaviour may help to support learning on sexting." Eleven references were made to the theme of prevention throughout the 22 interviews. E2 asserted that ideally, "the policy move toward more of a health promotion, risky behaviour prevention model." P3 felt that for prevention, the policy should emphasize "awareness and open discussion with adults as well, who can give the proper guidance and knowledge." Two sub-themes were apparent in the theme of prevention: communication and education.

Education. Five policies (7 references) elucidated the value of education. Policy 11 affirmed that their school would "make available an educational program to students, parents, and staff on the prevention and awareness of sexting." Furthermore, Policy 8 outlines that their pupils are provided "opportunities to learn about the issue of sexting." Twenty-one references to education were made across the interviews. P2 suggested a "mandatory thing is around education. Education needs to be not only around legal implications, but the psychological

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implications, the spiritual implications, the employment implication, all of those things need to be included." E10 furthered the role and nature of education on adolescent sexting in describing that "we do need to educate them, you know, recurring education about the potential consequences."

Communication. Two policies spoke specifically to the use of communication within a preventative framework. Policy 1 emphasized parental communication: "Speak to parents about the dangers of sexting and the law concerning young produced sexual imagery" and Policy 6 proposed that sexting information "will be communicated to pupils during Professional Development (PD) lessons, tutor time, in assemblies and through parental information." A total of 23 references were made to communication as a primary resource of prevention. E5 recommended open and honest conversations in which "We've got to be aware of what the issues are, and we've got to confront them authentically in an open environment in terms of a conversation." The idea of early awareness became apparent when E11 stated: "My dream is to start the conversations early on enough in the children's lives, that they never become awkward."

Theme 9: Useful resources

Four policies each made a single reference to useful resources within their policies. These included elements of advice, such as "Advise parents and carers who are concerned about their child to contact the NSPCC Helpline by ringing 0808 800 5000, by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk, or by texting 88858." (Policy 1) and links to "Download the full guidance Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to Incidents and Safeguarding Young People (UKCCIS, 2016) at www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis." (Policy 12).

Theme 10: Gender

Only one policy referred to gender, and this was to advise that "there may be differences in policies and procedures regarding this (sexting)…" within the School Divisions. However, the issue of gender was extensively discussed in the expert and parent interviews. Fifteen references were made to this theme. E3 mentioned that "the context of sexting can differ between the genders…" and "identifying the circumstances in which the different genders are engaging in these behaviours and what are the particular risks that they face." P3 indicated the need for "understanding the kind of communication they're having through these platforms; the girls would probably understand it differently from the boys, or the girls will be more sensitive compared to the boys." Three sub-themes were prevalent within this theme:

Double standard. A total of nine references (across the interviews) were made to the double standard present in the practice of adolescent sexting. The overall perception was the negative repercussions for females who engage in sexting, such as the "element of slut-shaming" (E12) and that females who sext "lack self-respect" and that "there is something wrong" if females choose to express themselves sexually (E3). However, E3 also mentioned that "gender policing within the peer group seems to be an issue affecting both boys and girls." E4 agreed that males could not be ignored in terms of vulnerabilities by stating, "there's not very much work at all understanding the pressures boys are subjected to and why boys behave in these ways... If we're looking at vulnerabilities and things, we will generally look at girls as more vulnerable because they are generally pressured more now, coerced more and are far less likely to volunteer an image, but what we don't really do is try and understand why boys place themselves in what are potentially risky and harmful situations themselves in order to form a relationship."

Male versus female concern. From the interviews, nine references were made to the fact that there appears to be more concern regarding female adolescents and sexting than male adolescents. E5 referred to concern regarding "… girls. And I worry about schools. Boys' schools, particularly objectify women." E9 further highlighted, "…the resilience around sexting, boys do seem to see it much more as a joke, a bit of banter. And so, I think there is gendering around it."

Motivations. In total, nine references were made to the gendered motivations linked to adolescent sexting. E9 mentioned, "massive gender diversity in motivation, to share images, to send images." E2 reiterated that "talking about gender differences with respect to the reasons they sext and motivations for sexting, that would be important and it would be important for each gender to know about the other."

Theme 11: Age differentiation

Two of the 12 policies included an element of age differentiation within the policy. One in terms of recognizing the impact which a "Significant age difference between the sender/receiver" could have, therefore, chronological age was recognized. However, the other differentiation referred to taking into account the "young person's level of maturity" in terms of understanding the situation, thus more recognition of sexual maturation as part of normative development. In total, across the 22 interviews conducted with experts and parents, 23 references were made to age differentiation. Expert (E)7 stated, "I think what we need is a generic policy, which has sanctions with different age ranges... the age-specific boundaries would be helpful as well. So a boy showing a girl his private parts in year four should be very different to someone in year 11 or 12." Furthermore, E10 highlighted that "…there does have to be some recognition that

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a 17-year-old is different from a 13-year-old…it's tricky, because, again, you know, a 14-year-old is different from a 16-year-old and some 14-year-olds are very mature, particularly 14-year-old girls." Three sub-themes were included within the theme of age differentiation, namely, healthy sexual relationships, normative development, and moral panic.

Healthy sexual relationships. Across the 22 interviews conducted, five references were made to healthy sexual relationships. This sub-theme was included because adolescence is a time of sexual exploration and adolescent sexting recourse should take cognisance of this in the context of the practice. E2 mentioned, "I do think that just like with sexual activity, when I talked about normative sexual activity happens around the age of 15, if it's happening before, then I think it's more indicative of a problem. Now, that all being said, I still think that we need to talk about healthy relationships early on, with the whole idea of preventing early sexual debut or early sexting debut."

Normative development. Six references were made to the conceptualisation that adolescent sexting could be an element of normative adolescent development. E2 stated, "I think sexting is normal. I get pushback when I say 'normal.' I think it's normative in the sense that if we had smartphones 50 years ago, 100 years ago, 500 years ago, we would see the same rates of sexting as we see now, you know, it's just, that's when we start to develop sexuality, and we start to sport sexuality." E11 concurred: "I do sex education with teens, I always tell them a hundred years ago, more, you would've been married with children at the age of 14, and your body knows that and can't switch it off."

Moral panic. Overall, seven references were made to the idea that adolescent sexting may be a moral panic. E4 stated that "There's clearly a moral panic…" E9 furthered this by noting, "I think there is a moral panic around oh, my God, it's illegal... I think that there's a lot of moral panic around this idea, but we've had it for years. The best way to protect them is actually to give them good, honest information and have some open and robust discussions. So, yeah, I do think that there's a really unhelpful moral panic."

Theme 12: Duty of care

Five policies included the duty of care within their guidelines, and a total of six references were made to this theme. Policy 2 indicated, "The school recognizes its duty of care to its young people who do find themselves involved in such activity as well as its responsibility to report such behaviours where legal or safeguarding boundaries are crossed." Policy 4 extended their role in stating as a school, they "understand the need to respond swiftly and confidently to ensure that pupils are safeguarded, supported, and educated." Four references to the duty of care were made in the interviews. P9 acknowledged "that it is not the sole responsibility of

schools to curb sexting, but the schools have a huge role to play to ensure that children are in schools to learn." The overall idea of social responsibility was forthcoming from E7, who stated: "I think it's good to have a social responsibility to educate the kids to it and say, that even if you do that outside of school, it can still be punished in the school as well." One sub-theme linked to this theme was staff guidance.

Staff guidance. Within the concept of duty of care, nine policies outlined specific guidance for staff who have knowledge of or suspect a sexting incident (11 references). Some of the policies (4, 5, 6 and 12) included specific aspects linked to viewing the imagery and/or text message. In contrast, Policy 12 extended this to include a compassionate response to the incident by indicating that staff should "not share information about the incident to other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers" and "not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved. Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL." Other policies (1, 8, and 11) referred specifically to staff training in managing with sexting incidents.

Theme 13: Stakeholders

Only Policy 5 referred to stakeholders. Their view was an inclusive one, stating that adolescent sexting "needs careful management, including involvement from a variety of stakeholders." In total, 21 references were made throughout the expert and parent interviews with the important stakeholders in policy development. E1 specified that the school "leadership cohort have a role to play." Another salient point was "…a holistic approach, really, as in any policy, should reflect the views and experiences of those involved."

Theme 14: Recording of an incident

Five of the 12 policies highlighted the need to record a sexting incident, and 17 references were made. All five of the policies provided detailed guidelines for recording sexting incidents. An example is Policy 5: "All conversations and meetings to do with any incident should be recorded. Formal written records should be completed immediately or within 24 hours. Records should include the date, time, place, persons involved, nature of disclosure, and any relevant details. These should be emailed to the DSL immediately, and if not being completed by the Headmaster/Headmistress (HM), a copy also emailed to the HM. Records of safeguarding incidents are kept by the DSL."

Theme 15: Lack of policy integration

Across the 22 interviews, 17 references were made to a lack of policy integration, including an absence of integration with current technological advancements as well as the best

interests of all involved and the negative repercussions of a sexting policy. E2 pointed to "over policing something." It was stated by E9 that there is little integration across school districts in that "…extreme polarized responses around sexting in schools…" do not necessarily follow prescribed policy guidelines.

Very few participants (two of 22) questioned the need for a school-based policy at all. The general feeling was that for the school to manage an incident was outside of their duty of care and was "intrusive and abusive" in itself. One participant indicated that before discussing school policies, it is imperative to "define what's the school's business? And what isn't?" (E11) Moreover, one participant felt strongly around the case of consensual sexting that it was nobody's concern as it is (in E11's opinion) normative sexual development in a technological era, and P7 made reference to adults who "do not understand that that's the new way of communicating."

DISCUSSION

Before delving into the draft policy development, it is worthwhile to briefly reflect on the 12 analyzed school policies in terms of potential meaning and insight which can be applied to the results. Over half of the policies provided an aim indicating that a purpose statement is imperative. It is noteworthy that nearly all the analyzed policies provided a definition of sexting, although they exposed the contradictions of what sexting is, and the varying definitions contribute to the confusion surrounding the practice. Moreover, the specific definitional challenges of adolescent sexting are highlighted through the references to self-generated sexual imagery versus the inclusion or exclusion of general pornography. Policies need to highlight the consequences of sexting in order to raise awareness around the potential negative consequences so that adolescents can make informed decisions with regards to their own sexual agency. Nine of the 12 policies included the legal implications of adolescent sexting which is important as policy has to sit within statutory frameworks because in most jurisdictions adolescent sexting is classified as illegal behaviour. The fact that only three policies referred to the criminalisation of children indicates that the predominant thinking around adolescent sexting is that it should not be criminalised, and internationally, the normalcy discourse seems to have gained traction, and secondly, the best interests of the child are being taken into account. It is problematic that only five policies mention risk assessment because the risk management element of redressing adolescent sexting is being ignored. Reporting, recording and responding to a sexting incident are procedural issues, and in order to have a functional policy, procedures need to be included. The fact that only three policies made mention of the context of the incident, and the nature of the image, may indicate that overall, the finer nuances of adolescent sexting, and the uniqueness of each case, are not being incorporated into school policy development. Eight policies refer to coercion, while

six mention consent, indicating that there is some recognition of the continuum of sexting. Half of the policies mentioned parental involvement, which emphasizes that parents are key role-players in the lives of their children, and further it justifies the inclusion of parental interviews in this analysis. The inclusion of police involvement provides recognition of the legal framework and policy being situated within that framework. It might also point to a leaning towards the deviance discourse and a punitive rather than remedial response. Only half of the policies make mention of school discretion; it is speculated that perhaps the jurisdictions in which these policies fall may not allow for school discretion, hence the exclusion from the policy. Moreover, a lack of school discretion means an increase in police involvement in terms of mandatory reporting. Very few policies refer to prevention, perhaps because there is an increased understanding around treating adolescent sexting as a behaviour which requires risk management and harm reduction. While policy cannot only redress behaviour, there is a recognition of not being able to prevent adolescent sexting in its entirety. Education and communication may prevent or deter certain adolescents from sexting, but for those who still engage in the practice, risk management and harm reduction is vital. Gender is mentioned in one policy, which is unsurprising because as much as adolescent sexting is differentiated by gender, it is not possible to have a gendered response pathway. It is problematic that the developmental phase of adolescence, and the associated sexual experimentation which occurs in adolescence is largely ignored. Moreover, the age of consent the decriminalisation of consensual sexting within specific age groups is not addressed.

What is revealed from this study is that there is pluranimity on how to manage adolescent sexting. Certain policies seem to advocate for highly punitive measures and adopt a zero-tolerance standpoint, while others are more lenient in allowing for school discretion and the recognition of consensual or experimental sexting versus coercive or aggravated sexting. There is also little consensus amongst parents about the legal and social implications of adolescent sexting. The prevailing attitude appeared to be one of ensuring prevention and punishment rather than safeguarding young people from a practice that could potentially have long-lasting consequences such as risky sexual behaviour and mental health repercussions. The majority of the experts agreed that the nature of the image, and the delimitation between consensual or coercive sexting needed to be taken into account when addressing an incident of sexting. Furthermore, one of the main messages from the experts was that of education and teaching healthy sexuality, particularly in a digital age. A most important finding was that various factors need to be taken into account when attempting to redress a sexting incident such as: the nature of the text, image or video, consent versus coercion, revenge porn, the age of the parties involved, the motivation behind generating and distributing the text, image or video, and legal implications of sexting.

The aim of the developed policy seeks to raise awareness around a prevalent adolescent practice and to provide guidance on how to manage various sexting incidents within schools. The components included within the policy attempt to shift the zero-tolerance attitude to one of harm reduction and risk management as there are inherent flaws in an abstinence-only approach (Hunt, 2016:4; Zimlich, 2017). The abstinence-only approach is problematic in that it produces a discourse of female-based victim-blaming, harmful gender stereotypes and scare tactics in terms of risky behaviour and the threat of criminal prosecution (Döring, 2014:10; Zimlich, 2017). Moreover, the current approach of shame-based education criticizes and degrades adolescent girls more for engaging in the identical digital sexual cultures that boys do, and the sexual responsibility remains that of females (Hunt, 2016:5; Lippman & Campbell, 2014:374; Ringrose et al, 2013:55). The disassembling of sexual double standards, in which girls are slut-shamed, and boys are afforded increased social status for sexting, could prove to be invaluable in redressing adolescent sexting incidents.

As with the majority of sexting research, the definition to be included with a school-based policy proved problematic. Unsurprisingly, there was no consensus on what constitutes an adequate definition of sexting across experts, parents, or experts and parents. Part of the definitional issue is the fact that parents, in particular, do not have a clear grasp of the concept. There seems to be misinformation, and ambiguity surrounding the term and, therefore, addressing the issue in a policy framework may be hindered (Agustina & Gómez-Durán, 2012:1325; Harris, Davidson, Letourneau, Paternite & Tusinsky Miofsky, 2013:22; Salter, Crofts & Lee, 2013:302). Moreover, the findings indicate a concern surrounding a definition regarding adult involvement in sexting or sexual grooming of a child or adolescent. The issues of consent and coercion further complicate defining the term sexting adequately (Choi et al, 2016:165; Gassó et al, 2019:2364).

Internationally (Albury, Crawford, Byron, & Mathews, 2013; Calvert, 2009; Chalfen, 2009; Döring, 2014; Ferguson, 2011; Gassó et al, 2019; Katzman, 2010), there seems to be a general consensus that the definition of sexting should only include images and/or videos that are self-produced. However, in South Africa, sexting - even consensual sexting - is classed under the legal definition of child sexual abuse material (a new term which is recommended in place of the term child pornography) (South African Law Reform Commission, 2019:xvii), but this change in the law is pre-promulgation at present. However, regardless of the term child pornography or child sexual abuse, the major definitional issue concerns the inclusion or exclusion of traditional pornography and whether it only covers youth-produced sexting.

Based on the international standard, the definition aimed to include all possible alternatives of sexting so that the policy was general enough to cover most, if not all, possible sexting

scenarios. The definition included images and videos, but also text messages and acronyms as these could be seen as precursors to image or video messaging. It is clearly stated that it only deals with adolescents under the age of 18 years old because the age of majority in South Africa is 18 years old (Kruger, 2018:2). The policy does not include elements of pornography, but only self-generated images, videos and/or text messages by an adolescent or adult and not downloaded material that would fall into the traditional definition of pornography because the consequences of having personal images and/or videos shared across digital platforms far outweigh the distribution of adult pornography (Citron & Franks, 2014:364). The sharing of web-based child pornography is classified as an offense in and of itself (South African Law Reform Commission, 2019:xviii; Terblanche & Mollema, 2011:283). Lastly, it is difficult to forecast how technology will evolve, so the current definition has attempted to cover the possible methods of distribution broadly by alluding to social media and apps in general and by not stipulating a specific digital medium for distribution.

As noted, the concept of abstinence-only or shame-based education seems to be ineffective at best. Thus, the developed draft policy attempts to incorporate elements of risk-management and harm-reduction in the process of recognizing adolescence as a period of vulnerability, susceptibility, sexual curiosity, and sexual agency. As such, the developed draft policy outlines certain inevitable repercussions that are part of the "deviance discourse" within literature (Gassó et al, 2019:2364), so that all involved within the school are aware of the potential risks that could present as a result of sexting. These include, but are not limited to, risky sexual behaviours, adverse mental health corollaries, individual and school reputational damage, and possible exclusion from school. The highlighted consequences do not include the legal ramifications, as these are covered in a separate section of the developed policy.

A salient finding from the expert interviews was the discord around whether adolescent sexting should be seen as a criminal offense at all. Certain experts advocated for the "deviance discourse" and the fact that adolescents are not capable of consent and reinforced the potential negative consequences of the behaviour, while others were more prone towards the "normalizing discourse" in that sexting can be seen as sexual expression within a relationship and part of sexual development. All experts did agree that when coercion, blackmail, sextortion, bullying or grooming is present, it should then be seen as criminal behaviour, irrespective of the age of the perpetrator. While the two discourses highlight the current scientific debate around sexting, policy imperatives need to sit within the statutory frameworks of the country. As such, school discretion can be problematic if the law governing adolescent sexting within a specific country does not allow for it. Therefore, the developed policy stipulated that in accordance with the South African Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007) and the Films and Publications Amendment

Act (3 of 2009), all incidents of adolescent sexting have to be reported to the police as per the mandatory reporting regulations provided for in South African legislation.

The importance of differentiating between consensual and coercive sexting is apparent, but even that cannot be over-simplified. In some instances, the element of coercion is obvious; for example, in a sextortion case, and equally in some instances, such as a relationship, the element of consent may be evident, but sexting as with much adolescent sexuality-based discourse is complicated. Coercion may be present in a relationship, and the "victim" even after the fact may not recognize the exchange as coercive. Moreover, the concept of "non-consensual" sharing has to be acknowledged – initially, a sext may be sent consensually, but the subsequent distribution of the sext was non-consensual. The argument here is that despite the possible negative implications, *consensual* adolescent sexting could be seen as normative sexual experimentation, courting, and flirting within the 21st century (Choi et al, 2019:164; Levick & Moon, 2010:1054). Adolescent sexting continues to prove to be a complicated issue, and a "one size fits all" approach in dealing with the various scenarios would lend itself to inefficacy.

The developed draft policy thus incorporates questions relating to risk management in terms of the age of the involved parties, the nature of the incident with an infographic outlining experimental versus aggravated sexting, the level of consent or coercion, distribution of the sext, the impact on the parties involved and the intent or motivation behind the incident. Furthermore, two brief case studies are included in the policy for ease of reference and understanding of the possible response pathway a school may take.

A prevalent finding was that the age of the adolescents should be taken into account when responding to a sexting incident. Those who have entered adolescence may be exploring their sexuality (Cooper, Quayle, Jonnsen & Svedin, 2016:710; Döring, 2014:5; Levick & Moon, 2010:1054; Walker, Sanci & Temple-Smith, 2011:14) and, therefore, policy should address the age differentiation in terms of education, communication, and redress to allow for normative sexual maturation and exploration. Sexting below the age of 12 years is deemed to be problematic because it could be indicative of age-inappropriate sexual knowledge linked to abuse, and adolescents younger than 12 years of age are legally incapable of sexual consent in South Africa (Essack & Toohey, 2018:85). Various policies differentiated individual sections on recording, reporting, and responding to a sexting incident; for the developed policy draft, recording and reporting of an incident fell logically into the steps of responding to an incident, and thus, they were included in this section. The response section elucidated the initial response to an incident, the viewing of sexually explicit content, the deletion of sexually explicit content, the securing of the device, and containment strategies. The importance of mandatory

A major finding from the interviews in particular and to a certain degree from the policy analysis was that the redress on adolescent sexting needs to focus more on harm reduction and risk management through prevention strategies. As with most topics associated with adolescent sexuality and sexual development, the prevailing notion is that blanket bans are ineffective and that there is no real technological solution to eradicating sexting (Hunt, 2016:8; Zimlich, 2017). Adolescence is a period of sexual maturation and risk-taking, and sexting is the technological equivalent to physical, sexual experimentation that occurred in pre-online eras. The section on risk management within the developed policy aims to highlight the importance of education and communication in an attempt to create a framework for engaging adolescents within their world space, at their maturity level and by taking into account the complexities and nuances of adolescent sexting. This element of the policy asks schools to commit to harm reduction and safeguarding those in their care by taking the best interests of the adolescent into account. To aid adolescents, parents, and staff in educating themselves about adolescent sexting, the developed policy closes with a list of useful resources.

In conclusion, the debate continues in terms of differing opinions regarding adolescent sexting, the possible negative impacts thereof, and the best way to manage this prevalent adolescent behaviour. The importance of the gendered nature of the practice cannot and should not be ignored if there is a movement towards changing the narrative of adolescent sexting to minimize risk and reduce the potential harm of adolescent sexting. The importance of a school-based policy should not be underplayed in terms of providing guidance to schools and reminding them of their duty of care outside of a standard academic curriculum. Educating parents in the age of technology and digital sexual cultures and communication is seen as vital within a policy as parents are key stakeholders. Finally, the rhetoric of adolescent sexting can only be addressed by having robust, open, authentic conversations with the adolescents themselves as those are the very individuals that parents, schools, and policy-makers must protect.

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PART 4: POLICY FRAMEWORK

Prelude

As a continuation of the previous Part, this section delivers the developed policy, which aims to address adolescent sexting within the South African context, vernacular and, legal framework. The inclusion of all prevalent aspects is informed by the previous policy analysis and expert and parental elicitation. The policy is structured around South Africa's current legal framework, the school's position and the experimental versus aggravated continuum of adolescent sexting. The developed policy accounts for all the prominent themes outlined in the previous article, although not all are demarcated into specific sections of the policy, but are rather incorporated within the main components of the sexting policy. Ultimately, this Part of the thesis integrates the knowledge and understanding of adolescent sexting as a gendered paradox into a potentially functional strategy to manage the risk and reduce the possible harm of the practice.

Policy Framework: School-based policy on adolescent sexting

Statement of contribution: Tara Harris developed and wrote up the full policy document. Francois Steyn critically reviewed the policy in his role as academic supervisor.

[Name of school or Letterhead]

Policy #

SEXTING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Date of current revision or creation:

1. Position and values

[SCHOOL NAME] aims to protect the rights of all learners in its care and to foster a safe learning environment. [SCHOOL NAME] recognises that adolescents make use of technology as part of their communication and that adolescence is a period of sexual experimentation – the outcome of which is often sexting. Sexting can lead to negative consequences for adolescents and as such, requires strategies to deal with the behaviour and reduce possible harm. The school undertakes not to discriminate based on the gender of the victim or the perpetrator but acknowledges that the motivations and expectancies of sexting may be gendered. [SCHOOL NAME] endeavours to remain cognisant of the fact that girls may be more at risk and/or vulnerable and that their motives and the possible negative repercussions differ from boys. This does not discount vulnerable boys or detract from the victimisation of boys. However, the double standard around girls sexting - a global concern around the objectifying of female bodies and the continuing and stereotypical dialogue about female sexuality - needs to be managed within the realm of adolescent sexting.

If a case of sexting arises, the staff at [SCHOOL NAME] commit to following the appropriate steps laid out in the policy and to informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible. The policy outlines the definition of sexting and details how sexting incidents can be addressed and managed within the school. The policy should be read in conjunction with all relevant school policies if available.

2. Aim

The policy aims to provide an overview of [SCHOOL NAME'S] role in raising awareness around adolescent sexting and risk management and harm reduction thereof. It should be seen as a guideline for staff and learners as to how the school manages different incidents of sexting.

3. Clarification of terms

3.1 Definition of sexting

There are numerous definitions of sexting. For the policy, sexting will refer to the creation, sending, receiving and/or forwarding of sexually explicit text messages, instant messages, photographs and/or videos that are self-produced, across any social media platforms or apps using any digital medium. Therefore, the policy specifically covers:

- An adolescent under the age of 18, who creates and shares sexually explicit messages, images and/or videos with another adolescent under the age of 18;
- An adolescent who shares sexually explicit messages, images and/or videos created by another adolescent under the age of 18, with an adult or another adolescent under the age of 18; and
- An adolescent who has sexually explicit messages, images, and/or videos created by another adolescent under the age of 18.

Sexually explicit messages (as well as acronyms) are included in the policy as they are often used as precursors to sexually explicit images and/or videos. If a school-going adolescent is over the age of 18 years, he/she is legally an adult, and as such, the school has to report the incident as an adult perpetrated crime.

3.2 Actions not covered by this policy

The policy does not cover adolescents below the age of 18 who share adult pornography or sexual imagery downloaded from the internet or adults (employed by the school) who share sexual images and/or videos of children. The sharing of web-based pornography is covered in the school's [POLICY NAME], and adult-perpetuated child pornography is a serious offence that warrants immediate police involvement.

3.3 Consequences of sexting

Outside of the possible legal implications of adolescent sexting, there are potential negative consequences which include, but are not limited to:

- Risky sexual behaviour,
- Early sexual debut,
- Mental health repercussions such as anxiety and depression,
- Suicidal ideation,
- Online victimisation such as cyberbullying, sextortion and sexual grooming, and
- Reputational damage.

3.4 Nature of sexting incidents

The policy takes into account the nature of the incident(s) in terms of response. Whether the incident is consensual or coercive, experimental or aggravated informs the continuum of the response implemented by the school. The diagram below illustrates the variety of sexting incidents that could occur.

Diagram 1: Experimental and aggravated sexting
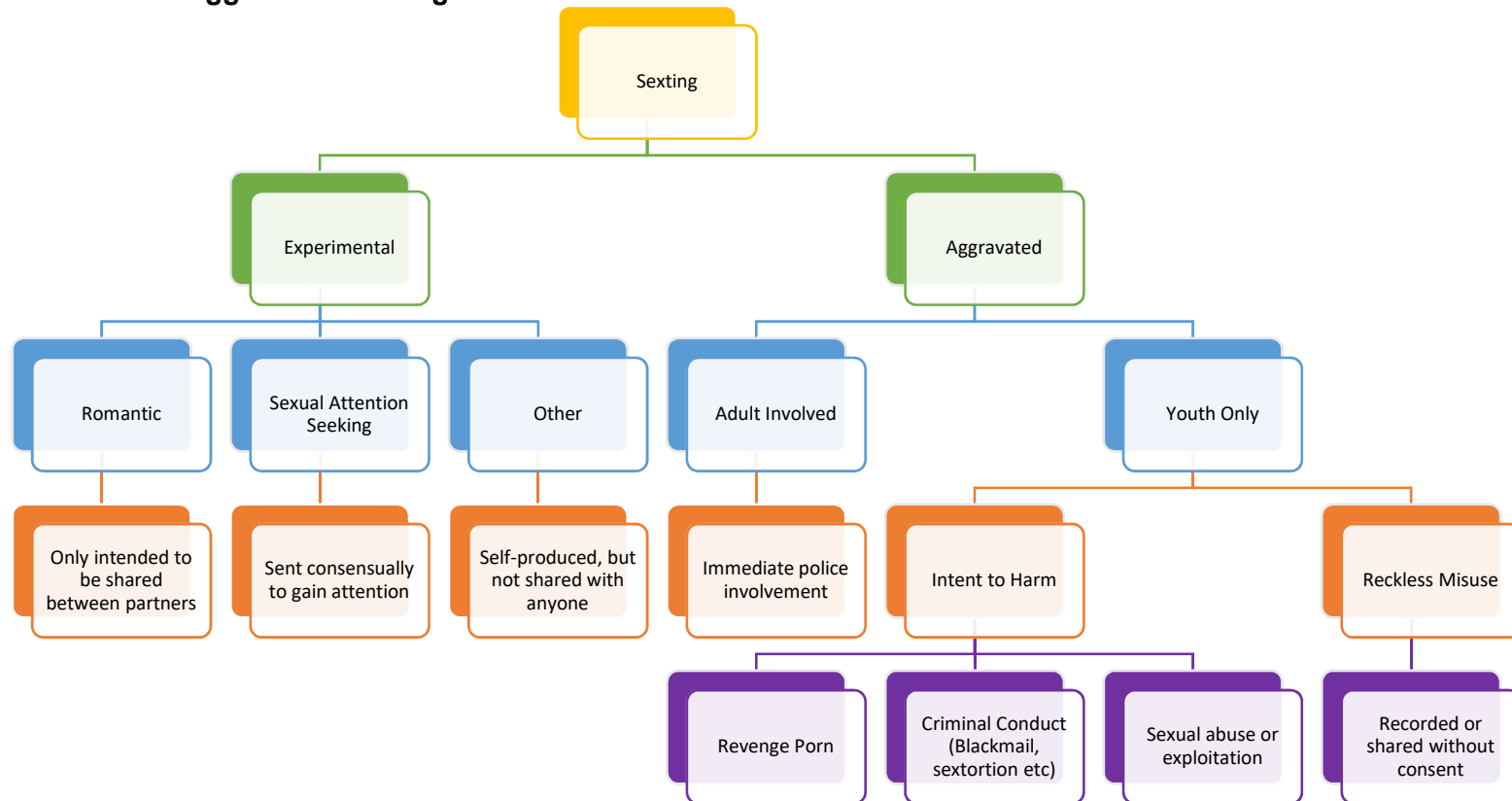
Adapted from: Wolak, J. & Finkelhor, D. 2011. Sexting: A typology. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center. p. 1

The following should be considered before deciding upon a response:

- Does the incident involving the creating and sharing of sexually explicit images raise other concerns regarding criminal behaviour (outside of the child pornography laws)?
- Is the incident-free from apparent malice, bullying, or revenge?
- Are the adolescents involved willing participants, in other words, have they provided consent?

These questions will guide the safeguarding team in terms of classifying the incident as experimental or aggravated. Refer to Appendix A for a guideline on responding to experimental and aggravated sexting incidents.

4. Legalities, roles, and responsibilities

Adolescent sexting contravenes both criminal and civil laws laid out to protect young people. Most importantly, it breaches the Films and Publications Amendment Act (3 of 2009) and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (32 of 2007) concerned with the creation, possession, and distribution of child pornography or child sexual abuse material. Thus, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to create, possess, or distribute any sexually explicit material, even if it is of themselves or a romantic partner, and done so consensually.

While the issue of adolescent sexting has been recognised in South Africa, the phenomenon is still under-researched, and there is a legislative lag in terms of technology. As such, ALL sexting incidents (experimental or aggravated) must be reported to the police as per the mandatory reporting provisions set out in South African law. This should occur after a risk management assessment has taken place in order to provide the police with factual information regarding the incident. The school cannot use their discretion regarding this as it is a legal requirement for them to report such incidents. The police must decide the severity of a sexting incident before a school-based response decision.

[SCHOOL NAME] has also adopted the sexting policy and procedure document, which can be accessed on the school website for staff, parents, and learners. School leadership teams will review all sexting incidents, and the effectiveness of the policy reviewed regularly.

4.1 The role of the school principal
- To implement the sexting safeguarding strategy,
- To ensure all stakeholders are aware of the policy,
- To nominate a DSL,

- To provide sexting education and communication opportunities for all stakeholders, and
- To provide adequate staff training to manage sexting incidents.

4.2 The role of staff

- To follow the policy when managing a sexting incident,
- To attend training opportunities,
- To foster a climate of respect and trust,
- To use their curriculum effectively to address adolescent sexting, and
- To provide support to all adolescents involved in a sexting incident.

4.3 The role of parents/guardians

- Report any suspected incidents of sexting to the DSL,
- To support the school's mandate in managing a sexting incident, and
- To foster transparent, authentic communication about the management of sexting with adolescents in their care.

4.4 The role of learners

- To report any suspected incidents of sexting to a member of staff they trust, and
- To participate in sexting education and communication initiatives.

5. Risk management

When responding to a sexting incident, first and foremost, the best interest of the adolescents involved should be taken into account. Professionals (such as child services or the police) should engage with the safeguarding team in an attempt to gain all the relevant information and context surrounding the incident. The following key questions should be asked:

1. What information is already available concerning the adolescents involved?
- Age of adolescents,
- Previous/current agency involvement,
- First time offender or repeat offender,
- Vulnerability, and
- The immediate risk of harm

2. How has the message, image, and/or video been shared?
- Public or private, and

- Apps or websites used

3. What information is already available regarding the intent or motivation behind the incident?
- Adult involvement,
- Coercion, extortion, bullying or cyberbullying, harassment or blackmail,
- Ability to consent, and
- Nature of the image

4. What is the impact on the adolescents involved?
- Emotional impact (for example, anxiety, depression, suicide ideation),
- Criminal consequences (for example, possible prosecution), and
- Potential long-term impact (for example, reputational damage, academic failure).

6. Reporting, response, and possible sanctions

[SCHOOL NAME] aims to provide a supportive, non-judgmental environment concerning sexting incidents. It recognises the sensitivity of the issue and undertakes to act with integrity for all concerned.

6.1 Reporting and initial response

- Any disclosure of a sexting incident should be reported to a member of the safeguarding team as soon as possible.
- A meeting with relevant parties should be held to determine if the incident is experimental or aggravated, and a risk management assessment should take place.
- The parents or guardians of the adolescents involved should be informed and involved in the response process unless informing the parents or guardians would place the adolescent at the immediate risk of harm, such as abusive punishment at home. The decision not to inform the parents or guardians should be made in conjunction with the relevant agencies such as child services or the police.
- If there is reason to believe that the adolescent/s involved have been harmed or are at risk of harm, child services and/or the police should be contacted immediately.
- Interviews with the adolescent/s involved should be conducted to assist in the risk assessment. This should take place with a member of the safeguarding team in order to establish the best course of action.
- Containment of the sexually explicit message, photo and/or video is vital and should be addressed immediately.

- Based on law, under no circumstances should any youth-produced sexually explicit messages, photos and/or videos be downloaded, shared, saved, forwarded, distributed, printed or deleted by any staff members involved in responding to the incident.
- All sexting incidents (experimental or aggravated) and the response to those incidents should be recorded, signed, and dated.
- These should be stored either in hardcopy in a lockable filing cabinet or on a secure cloud, in a password-protected folder.

6.2 Viewing of messages, photos, and/or videos

The safeguarding team or DSL should not view any messages, photos and/or videos unless:

- It is the only way to gain information and/or facts regarding the incident.
- It is necessary in order to report the sexually explicit content to the website or app host in order to have the content deleted.
- It has been directly presented to the staff member to whom the learner disclosed, and thus, it is unavoidable.

If viewing the content is deemed necessary, the following steps should be taken:

- Only a member of the same sex, as the adolescent involved, should view it.
- Another staff member should be present, but should not view the content.
- The viewing should take place on the school grounds and in a secure office.

6.3 Securing a device

Should it be necessary to hand a device over to the police, the device should be switched off and securely kept until it can be given to the police.

6.4 Deletion of sexts

No messages, images, and/or videos should be deleted until a decision in conjunction with the police is made.

6.5 Containment

- If the sexually explicit message, photo, and/or video has been shared on a website or social media networking site, it should be reported to the website host. Reporting to child services and/or the police may expedite this process if it is a safeguarding issue for the adolescent involved.

- If the sexually explicit message, photo and/or video has been shared across a personal device, the device should be confiscated and switched off to prevent remote removal of possible evidence.
- If the sexually explicit message, photo and/or video has been shared across the school network, block all users from accessing the network and isolate the image for removal after the police have conducted an initial investigation.

6.6 Possible sanctions

[SCHOOL NAME] will apply sanctions that are in proportion to the total context of the sexting incident. The sanctions may either be remedial or restorative or in particularly serious cases, may lead to suspension or exclusion from the school.

7. Prevention, risk management and harm reduction

Adolescence is a stage of growth, maturation, and experimentation, and thus, it is recognised that sexting cannot necessarily be wholly prevented or eradicated. However, as a safeguarding issue, both risk management and harm reduction are fundamental to minimising the negative consequences and/or injury that adolescent sexting can cause. Education and communication are paramount in addressing adolescent sexting.

7.1 Education

The school commits to educating the learners, their parents, and the staff to help all the key stakeholders to understand, assess, manage, and avoid the risks associated with adolescent sexting. The school maintains a proactive approach through talks, counselling (if necessary), and assemblies. Moreover, we aim to endorse healthy sexuality and relationship education as well as education around consent and the eradication of gender stereotypes.

7.2 Communication

The school endeavours to keep communication channels open regarding adolescent sexting and to speak to those involved with respect and dignity. The school also aims to serve the best interests of those involved at all times and will encourage the adolescents themselves to communicate with their parents/guardians regarding their involvement in a sexting incident. The communication extends to keeping all involved informed about the reporting, recording, and responding protocol.

[SCHOOL NAME] has also identified other possible strategies to reduce the prevalence of sexting, to raise awareness, and to support those involved in sexting incidents. These include:

- Valuing the school code of conduct which requires respect for the rights of others,

- Emphasising the possible negative consequences of sexting,

- Consulting with learners on appropriate responses to adolescent sexting,

- Other policies highlighting positive digital citizenship,

- Responsible mobile phone and internet usage,

- Software screening,

- Effective recording mechanisms,

- Building community relationships, including with the police and child services, and

- Addressing gender stereotypes, healthy sexuality, and respect for all genders.

8. Useful resources

8.1 Adolescents

www.childlinesa.org.za

https://cdn.netsmartz.org/tipsheets/sexting_teens.pdf

https://cdn.netsmartz.org/tipsheets/You_Sent_A_Sext_Now_What.pdf

8.2 Parents

https://www.thedigitallawco.com

www.cjcp.org.za

http://www.savetnet.com

www.saps.gov.za

8.3 International resources

www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis.

https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/resource-centre/poster-and-brochure-so-you-got-naked-online

9. Case studies and responses

Please see the following for specific adolescent sexting examples, and possible responses to various scenarios:

Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D., & Mitchell, K. 2012. How often are teens arrested for sexting? Data from a national sample of police cases. *Pediatrics,* 129(1):4-12

www.proceduresonline.com/kentandmedway/pdfs/sexting_kent.pdf

www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Sexting-in-Schools-UKCCIS.pdf

Signed by

Chair of governors/Department of Education Representative

Date

Principal/DSL

Date

Policy Revision Dates:

Scheduled Review Date:

DEVELOPED BY: TARA HARRIS

PART 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The study explored adolescent sexting within the South African context, more specifically, gender differences in online victimisation, sexting expectancies (sextpectancies), as well as the gendered opinions of adolescents with regard to sexting behaviours, internet usage, and the consequences of sexting. A mixed-method approach was adopted in order to statistically identify gender disparities from a quantitative standpoint, and to gain rigorous, in-depth knowledge and understanding for the development of a sexting policy from a qualitative standpoint.

The concluding part of the thesis reflects on the core findings from the two published articles and the manuscript under review. It highlights the strengths and limitations of the study, provides future research directions, and presents recommendations for policy and practice. Part 5 closes with concluding remarks about the intricacies of adolescent sexting and the researcher's personal reflections.

KEY FINDINGS

The publications and manuscript under review produced distinct findings in terms of gender differences across adolescent sexting, and best practice for addressing adolescent sexting. Publication 1 delineated that females spend more time on their phones, suffer more online victimisation, and have more negative online experiences than their male counterparts. Females also experience more sexual advances online and are less likely to report their victimisation. Finally, they have more negative expectancies regarding sexting.

The second publication reported that sexting appears to be a normative part of adolescent sexual exploration, and is seen by adolescents as a form of intimate communication and fantasy fulfillment. Adolescents of the "net generation" make use of the internet to learn about sexual-related topics. The adolescents in the study were aware of the potential negative consequences of sexting, but engaged in the behaviour regardless of that knowledge. The gender differences across the practice of sexting were revealed to include a higher prevalence of male sexting behaviour, and higher engagement of non-consensual distribution of sexts by male adolescents in comparison to female adolescents.

The results presented in the manuscript under review can be viewed as the antecedents to the developed policy. Overall, there is pluranimity with regards to addressing adolescent sexting which stems partly from the necessity (or lack thereof) of criminalising adolescent

sexting. The definitional ambiguity is problematic in terms of developing a meaningful policy. Moreover, the context of the incident is vital (age, aspect of consent, nature of the image, non-consensual distribution), and consensual and coercive sexting cannot be oversimplified. Lastly, the abstinence-only approach to adolescent sexting is innately flawed, and as such the focus should be on risk management and harm reduction.

The literature review in Part 1 of the thesis emphasised that much research has been conducted on adolescent sexting within the last decade (*cf.* Albury & Crawford, 2012; Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Bailey & Steeves, 2013; Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, Bull, 2013; Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward, 2012; Englander, 2019; Hasinoff, 2015; Karaian, 2012; Karaian, 2014; Karaian, 2015; Lee & Crofts, 2015; Mori, Temple, Brown & Madigan, 2019; Patchin & Hinduja, 2019; Setty, 2019; Temple & Choi, 2014), but for the most part, there are capricious findings. Moreover, the majority of studies are international, and within a South African context, adolescent sexting has only been researched within the realm of risky online behaviour, rather than as the nuanced practice that it is.

The aim of the thesis was, thus, informed by this evidence gap within the South African environment. The primary aim of the research was to examine gender differences in adolescent sexting in order to develop a secondary school-based policy framework. The purpose of the policy is to offer schools a guideline on best practices for managing sexting incidents.

A salient finding was that female adolescents appear to comprise a more vulnerable population than their male counterparts. A potential explanation for this could be that female adolescents report spending more time on their smartphones - which are internet, social media, and camera-enabled – and thus, they are exposed to more victimisation opportunities, including coercive or non-consensual third-party distribution of sexts (Gross, 2004:634). As such, it is expected that female adolescents report more negative expectations of online encounters, and this then equates to negative expectancies of the digital practice of sexting. The negative sextpectancies of females are strongly correlated with the perceived sexual double standard that predominantly pervades adolescent sexuality and sexual behaviour narratives (Setty, 2019:587). While male adolescents appear to engage more frequently in sexting, female adolescents experience more pressure to sext and to conform to the digital notions of female desirability and new-age methods to achieve sexual emancipation (Vanden Abeele, Campbell, Eggermont & Roe, 2014:24; Ringrose et al, 2013:7).

Although sexting is highly convoluted, it is apparent that it is relatively didactic in adolescent reality (*cf.* Setty, 2019), and they are aware of the intrinsic dangers and potential negative consequences associated with the behaviour. Significantly, within the framework of adolescent sexual development and adolescents being situated within digital sexual cultures, sexting is seen as a form of intimate communication, flirting, and as a precursor to physical sexual behaviour. Moreover, adolescents view sexting as a normative behaviour given their developmental stage (García-Gómez, 2017:392; Ringrose et al, 2013:15; Strassberg et al, 2012), and girls in particular navigate the gendered terrain of shame, risk, and sociocultural constraints placed on their own sexual expression, communication, and agency (Setty, 2019:586).

The assumption that adolescents perceive sexting to be normative highlights the necessity of a policy framework that attempts to safeguard adolescents within a technological revolution. The policy analysis was instrumental in uncovering the lack of unanimity in addressing adolescent sexting, and the vagueness surrounding the definition of sexting. Moreover, the expert and parental interviews could be separated into the principal, dual discourses of viewing adolescent sexting as either "deviant" or "normative." The salient findings of the interviews were that the context of the situation could not be ignored, and within that the key components to consider when addressing an incident include, but are not limited to, age, nature of the image, consensual versus coercive, experimental versus aggravated, and the possible far-reaching distribution of the sext. Furthermore, as much as gender cannot be specified within a recourse pathway (as initially suggested in Publication 1 and 2), it was emphasised that those aiming to manage adolescent sexting should be cognisant of the sexual double standard applied to females (*cf.* Ringrose et al., 2013; Lee & Crofts, 2015), female body objectification (*cf.* Speno & Aubrey, 2018) and formulaic narratives regarding female sexuality (*cf.* Setty, 2019), and sexual agency as a whole. However, this does not mean that male adolescents are discounted as potential victims, or unfairly labelled as perpetrators.

The empirical findings from the quantitative survey administered to adolescents in two independent schools addressed the research question, and confirmed statistically significant gender differences within the context of online victimisation, sexting expectancies (sextpectancies), sexting behaviours, internet usage, and opinions regarding the consequences of sexting. Moreover, the qualitative strand of the study provided insight into the inclusion of key components within a policy in order to meaningfully address adolescent sexting. The findings from both strands of the thesis contributed to the development of a policy framework for secondary schools to utilise as a guideline in managing sexting incidents.

From a theoretical perspective, it is determinable that conventional theories may not necessarily adequately explain behaviour in a digital domain. Challenges around proximity and exposure to deviant behaviour need revisiting for Lifestyle-routine Activities Theory to adequately explain deviance and crime within the online realm. Additionally, the concept of guardianship should be redefined as initially the basis for its inclusion within the theory spoke to physical guardianship (Harris & Steyn, 2018:25). Lastly, the geographical and temporal prerequisites necessary for crime to occur are invalid in cyberspace. A critical complication of the Theory of Reasoned Action is that it does not account for the practice of coercive sexting in that it negates the social pressure an adolescent may experience in that situation. From a legal perspective, the Theory of Reasoned Action is also problematic because if adolescents view the behaviour as acceptable, they are more likely to engage in it (Harris & Steyn, 2018:25), irrespective of the consequences. While the Theory of Reasoned Action allows for a valuable explanation of the pathway to decision-making, it, too, needs to be adapted for digital circumstances because of the constant connectivity and instant communication inherent to cyber cultures. The tentative development of the Gendered Reason and Reaction Model in the second publication (Part 2) attempted to address some of the shortfalls of distinct social and cognitive psychology theories by incorporating both cognitive and social pathways in the decision-making process of sexting. Thus, the necessity of an integrated model in order to explain the complexities of adolescent sexting was highlighted.

STAND-ALONE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is possible that the inclusion of a stand-alone sexting policy to other school policies may exceptionalise the behaviour of adolescent sexting as somehow riskier (or viewed as more "deviant") than other physical, offline forms of sexual experimentation and exploration which are not covered by school policies. As argued previously, policy must sit within the ambit of legal statures, and thus the necessity of a stand-alone school-based sexting policy is that it may not be successfully incorporated into other policies which manage digital citizenship and behaviour. South African laws governing other online offences, such as online harassment or cyberbullying, differ from those governing adolescent sexting. For example, both cyberbullying and online harassment are governed by the Protection from Harassment Amendment Act (17 of 2011), and currently victims of cyberbullying can lay civil charges in terms of *crimen injuria* (Sadlier & Harrison, 2017:71).

The spectrum of behaviour and the element of consent does not plague other online crimes such as cyberbullying and online harassment. Hence, a further complication which necessitates a stand-alone policy is that while currently *all* sexting is considered illegal in South Africa, not all sexting is equal (Stasko, 2018:7). The elements of consent and coercion,

the continuum of experimental versus aggravated sexting, and the move towards recognising adolescent sexting as a somewhat normal extension of the developmental phase of adolescence and sexual experimentation and maturation within the digital age must be taken into account in terms of risk management and harm reduction.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The major strength of this study is the mixed methods approach, which was adopted. An advantage was that the qualitative strand of the study built directly from the empirical results of the quantitative strand; thus, the quantitative results about gender differences could be further explained. The benefit was that the policy analysis and the subsequent development of the school-based policy were diametrically informed by the furthered explanation. Moreover, the key stakeholders within the phenomenon of adolescent sexting were able to provide insight, specifically in terms of addressing the practice. A second strength of the study was that triangulation was two-fold: firstly, by fostering the integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings to further the explanation of adolescent sexting, and secondly, within the qualitative data set itself in order to substantiate the findings so that a comprehensive policy could be developed. The final strength is that previously developed measures, already scored for internal consistency and validity, were used in the quantitative strand of the study. The scales were adapted to the South African context and vernacular, and thus the internal reliability remained high.

The most pertinent limitation is that the sample cannot be classified as representative of the South African adolescent population, and thus cannot be generalised. Firstly, a convenience sampling method was used to recruit schools which led to similar socio-economic backgrounds of participants (Bornstein, Jager & Putnick, 2013:361). Secondly, the inclusion of parental consent, as stipulated in South African law, meant that otherwise willing participants did not complete the questionnaire, most likely because they did not seek consent. This contributed to the issue of self-selection bias (Lavrakas, 2008:348). This limitation is, however, countered by the advantage of anonymous data collection. An inherent flaw in self-reported data is that of participant bias, and specifically for this study, social desirability bias (Althubaiti, 2016:212). This was partially overcome by making use of already validated measures. A further limitation was the exclusion of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, allies, asexual, and pansexual (LGBTQIA++) community within the realm of gender, in that the study only asked participants to indicate if they were male or female. There was no exploration into the identified gender of the participants, and the assumption was that they were cisnormative. The The concept of varying

gender identities[9] was not seen as salient since binary gender differences in adolescent sexting in South Africa were yet to be studied at the commencement of this research. The variable of race was also excluded because as the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) postulates, the use of racial descriptors in post-apartheid South Africa "lock us into categories of identity that we have rejected and yet continue to use without critical engagement post-apartheid" (South African Crime Quarterly, s.a.). A further suggestion is made that if race or racial injustices are not the topic of inquiry, they should not be reported (South African Crime Quarterly, s.a.). Socio-economic class was excluded as the sample included adolescents in independent schools and one of the inclusion criteria was similar access to internet and smartphones. Additionally, literature on sexting and romantic relationships within a digital age was excluded because the data collection instruments were standardised scales (Online Victimisation and Sextpectancies Measure). The aim of the study was not to elucidate on sexting within a romantic, adolescent relationship, but rather to address the gender differences across online victimisation and adolescents' positive and negative expectancies with regards to the practice of sexting. It is, nevertheless, acknowledged that sexting within a romantic relationship, and the possible benefits thereof, would provide a different data set, and perceptions regarding adolescent sexting. While the definition provided in the study for sexting was based on research and a thorough examination of literature, it is apparent that sexting is not the term South African youth use to describe the practice. It is thus possible that the participants did not provide accurate information based on a misunderstanding of the term and all that it encompassed. However, the definition provided in the survey and in the verbal explanation given prior to the distribution of the surveys was precise, so this may partially have overcome the limitation. The incorporation of mandatory reporting and police discretion is another shortfall of the policy, but it falls outside the scope of this study[10].

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[9] Research conducted on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, allies, asexual, and pansexual (LGBTQIA++) community and sexting has largely focused on the adult populace (*cf.* Hertlein, Shadid & Steelman, 2015; Smiley, Elmasry, Hooper Webb, Niaura, Hamilton & Milburn, 2017). Furthermore, it would seem that those who identify outside of the binary genders experience and engage in sexting differently from the cisnormative population, perhaps because of a perceived sense of safety the internet provides (Valentine, 2006:378; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014:762). The internet also affords those who identify with a minority group to meet like-minded people, and seek out relationships (Hertlein et al., 2015:344; Valentine, 2006:378; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014:762).

[10] The specific problems of mandatory reporting and police discretion within adolescent sexting are acknowledged and not unquestioned (*cf.* Crofts & Lee, 2013; Lee, Crofts, Salter, Milivojevic & McGovern, 2013; Wolak, Finkelhor & Mitchell, 2012). However, there is a lack of fundamental research on adolescent sexting within the South African context, and as such, the pertinent issues of problematic legislative necessities have not yet been explored. There are no South African guidelines, and as argued before, the draft policy must be situated within the ambit of legal statutes, even if legal stipulations may seem contradictory to the best interest of the adolescents involved. Hence the necessity for the inclusion of mandatory reporting and police discretion within the draft policy. Furthermore, evidence (Wolak et al., 2012:8) points to less punitive measures being employed with adolescents, and no over-policing of adolescent sexting.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The challenges experienced within the sampling process and the difficulty of obtaining respondents for adolescent and sex-based research should be noted for future research involving such topics, or the adolescent population. An area of future research may be to investigate the opportunities that consensual sexting may offer adolescents as a form of intimate communication, and within dating relationships as opposed to a sole focus on the legalities of the behaviour and the adverse consequences associated with the behaviour. Another area for exploration is the impact adolescent sexting may have on relationships with peers, and other significant others as part of the ongoing debate around adolescent sexting and mental health. Qualitative focus groups or interviews with South African adolescents would also be valuable in further gauzing perceptions around the practice and the best methods of addressing it, and their perceptions and experiences of the criminal justice system with regards to sexting. Adolescence is notoriously difficult, and boundaries can help bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood, but specific boundaries relating to sexting, that adolescents view as supportive, are unknown. Furthermore, research which aims to analyse the appropriateness of criminal law statutes to adolescent sexting in terms of consensual and coercive sexting in the South African context would prove valuable. A further salient area of exploration would be to gain the insights of legal, sexualities, and communication studies scholars in terms of the shifting concepts of privacy, communication, sexual agency, and sexual norms within the digital age. Lastly, sexting research that focuses on the non-gender binary community would also be noteworthy in terms of providing a holistic view of the behaviour in terms of gender differences, which could, in turn, inform policy imperatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

It is imperative that a consensus is reached regarding the definition of sexting because it impacts on determining accurate prevalence rates, as well as adapting prevention strategies, in terms of incorporating risk management and harm reduction, and thus policy (Barrense-Dias, Berchtold, Surís & Akre 2017:544). Moreover, policy and legislation should take into account the nature of sexting, both in terms of the nature of the image, and consensual sexting between two romantic partners, as this can be seen merely as another form of sexual behaviour, and sexual communication between adolescents. From a normalcy perspective, the focus of policy initiatives as well as prevention strategies should be on coercive, aggravated sexting, non-consensual sexting practices such as upskirting, and on the forwarding of images beyond the initial recipient, which in essence could constitute network or media rape. The challenge presented here is similar to that of offline rape in that there is an onus to prove consent. As such, a sexting policy cannot simply negate consensual sexting within its definition or recommendations for redress of sexting incidents. The element of

consent is imperative in all discourses of human sexuality and sexual behaviour (Lehmiller, 2019:47).

It is paramount that the best interests of the child be taken into consideration when drafting laws and policies which address adolescent behaviour. The current South African legal perspective on adolescent sexting and the "best interests of the child" legal prescription contradict each other. The developmental life stage of adolescence and the overall maturation process should not be ignored in the development of policy, risk management and harm reduction, and education initiatives. In order to adequately, reasonably, and fairly address adolescent sexting, as consensual sexual acts between the 12 to under 16-year-old age category were addressed, legal reform is essential.

In terms of educational efforts, the advancement of technology, digital sexual cultures, and the concept of healthy sexual relationships, including consent need to be incorporated into the school's mandate of being duty-bound to educate young people outside of the academic curriculum. This is crucial in terms of intervention, risk-management and harm reduction strategies attempting to manage adolescent sexting. The education initiatives need to extend to parents as it is clear that there is a potential generational and technological gap between parents and their adolescents.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The thesis uncovered the gender differential across various aspects of the practice of sexting within a South African milieu. It examined the prevalence of adolescent sexting and online victimisation, as well as adolescents' expectancies and opinions about sexting behaviour. The gender-constructed expectations of adolescents lend themselves to an explanation of the differing expectancies and experiences of male and female adolescents (Burén, 2018:40). The gendered nature of adolescent sexting is intrinsically linked to the stereotypical double standard attached to female sexuality in society, a notion highlighted throughout the expert interviews. The fact that girls are slut-shamed for engaging in the exact behaviour that boys use as a popularity currency is rooted in patriarchal notions of male dominance of female sexuality. The expression of female desirability has moved into the online jurisdiction, and adolescent girls are not immune to the knowledge of such desirability, nor the pressures to conform to the standards the media prescribe in terms of sex appeal. Sexting is another avenue for advertising one's desirability (Ringrose et al., 2013: 7). While girls may succumb to the pressures to sext, it appears that it is based more on a conscious decision rather than capitulating to their male counterparts' requests; adolescent girls have taken control of their

sexuality by sexting, in an attempt to liberate themselves and inculcate outdated social and cultural stereotypes (García-Gómez, 2017:400; Ringrose et al, 2013: 7).

Importantly, the thesis emphasises that sexual development and exploration within adolescence are normative and by extension, within a technological world, so is *consensual* sexting. This does not exclude the negative consequences or the harm caused by coercive sexting practices such as sextortion, upskirting, blackmail, adult-facilitated child pornography or CSAM, or "online rape" through the non-consensual distribution of images. What it does do is highlight that adolescent sexting is a complicated phenomenon that cannot be addressed adequately or effectively without taking the typology of experimental versus aggravated sexting (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011:1) into account or the ages of those involved.

The thesis falls into the broader debate of adolescent sexuality, healthy sexual relationships, feminist discourse, and the concept of gender neutrality in the expectations placed on adolescents. As with all discourse on adolescent sexuality and sexual behaviour, sexting is an uncomfortable topic for adults (Setty, 2019:586). However, adults must not lose sight of their role in guiding the adolescents in their care through a tumultuous developmental stage. The modern world and fast-paced technological advancements add to the challenges that adolescents face, and therefore, authentic, fact-based communication about the dangers of sexting is crucial. Adolescents should be encouraged to disbar gender-based stereotypes which perpetuate any form of sexual exploitation or violence regardless of the gender of the victim, and a safe, shame-free environment should be cultivated for open dialogue about sexting.

Moreover, essential stakeholders in the lives of adolescents need to acknowledge that certain adolescents will sext as part of their normative sexual development. It is not a behaviour that has a technological solution, and as such cannot be eradicated, there are circumstances in which harm reduction is essential, and overall, any attempt to address adolescent sexting should have risk management and harm reduction as core criteria.

The contribution of the study is that it has demonstrated the need to apply interdisciplinary, theoretical frameworks, including critical criminological, adolescent, feminist, communication and technology studies' perspectives, to the issue of adolescent sexting. It further exposes the limitations of traditional criminological theories of crime causation and victimisation in terms of understanding the continuum of coercive and consensual adolescent sexting in a contemporary, digital society. Furthermore, it has contributed to the debate around the unique South African legal context. The results of the study in relation to gender discrepancies have

important implications for educators, parents, and practitioners. Lastly, the insights gained are relevant to both policy-makers and legal practitioners in terms of the most appropriate and reasonable approach to adolescent sexting.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

When I started this academic pursuit, I was newly married. I envisioned that I would finish my thesis and then start a family. As it happened, my candidature and first daughter were conceived in the same year! I did not think being a new mom to a preemie baby would increase the challenges of a DPhil – in retrospect, I was naïve. That naivety prevailed after three children in under three years – all tiny, premature firecrackers! And right there is where I have garnered the strength to continue, not to succumb, not to become demoralised. They conquered prematurity-based challenges as tiny, dependent babies – and if they could do it, so could I! I have three beautiful *girls*, and maybe that is why, as a woman, it was so important for me to show them that you can be a mom, a student, and have a career. Maybe, it is also why so much of my thinking has changed around the topic of adolescent sexting – three girls growing up in a society which honours male strength, and female passivity changes your internal rhetoric. I have grown immensely in this process, on so many levels. My development as an academic, as a woman, and most importantly, as a mom! I am beyond proud of myself – what I have survived and what I have, therefore, accomplished. In some of the most challenging years of my life, a childhood goal has been achieved, and I will always have that and the belief it cultivated in me, to cherish.

The various nuances of adolescent sexting have become apparent in this research, definitional issues, conservative versus liberal opinions, the evolution of adolescent sexuality, technology, and feminist debate, and all of this has allowed me to broaden my worldview. Not only about the topic at hand, but in all aspects of life. I have had some fantastic opportunities to engage with experts in the field of adolescent sexting and to be part of local discussions by attending, amongst others, the South African Law Reform Commission Workshop on Children and Pornography and talks by leading digital law experts. The insight and input provided are invaluable to this thesis and my own personal growth, and for this, I am grateful.

My overall thinking about both managing adolescent sexting and the journey of parenting and life can be summed up as:

Do the best you can until you know better.

Then when you know better, do better.

~ Maya Angelou ~

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TEENAGE SEXTING IN SECONDARY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

PLEASE NOTE: All information provided is strictly confidential and your answers will be processed **anonymously.** Do NOT write your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

Please fill in the tick boxes, scales or complete the open-ended statements as honestly and openly as possible.

Please CIRCLE the corresponding number for your answer(s) or fill in the blank spaces.

A. <u>BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION</u>

A1. Are you 1. Male or 2. Female?	**A2**. How old are you? years.

A3. What form or grade are you in?
    1. F1/G8
    2. F2/G9
    3. F3/G10
    4. F4/G11
    5. F5/G12
	A4. What is your home language?
	    1. English
	    2. Afrikaans
	    3. Sesotho
	    4. Sepedi
	    5. isiXhosa
	    6. isiZulu
	    7. Other (please specify)

A5. What is your race or ethnicity?
    1. Black
    2. White
    3. Coloured
    4. Indian/Asian
    5. Other (please specify)
	A6. What is your relationship status?
	    1. Single
	    2. In a casual relationship
	    3. In a committed relationship

A7. What is the income group of your family?
    1. Low income
    2. Middle income
    3. High income
	A8. How popular are you?
	    1. Not that popular
	    2. Somewhat popular
	    3. Very popular

A9. How often do you use the internet in a week?
    1. I don't use the internet ➜ skip to A12
    2. Less than 1 hour
    3. 1-2 hours
    4. 3-5 hours
    5. 6-10 hours
    6. More than 10 hours
	A10. Where do you access the internet?
	    1. Personal computer
	    2. Parents' computer
	    3. Computers at school
	    4. Cell phone

A11. What do you usually use the internet for? (Please circle all that are relevant).
    1. Facebook/Twitter
    2. Homework
    3. Email

4. Live chat	
5. Google	
6. Games	
7. Other (please specify)	

A12. How often do you use your cell phone in a week? **A13.** What do you mostly use your cell phone for?

(Please circle all relevant options).

1. I don't use a cell phone ➜ skip to A14
2. less than 1 hour
3. 1-2 hours
4. 3-5 hours
5. 6-10 hours
6. 10+ hours

1. Phone calls
2. BBM/WhatsApp/Snapchat
3. Social media (FB/Twitter)
4. Internet access
5. Camera use
6. Email

A14. How would you BEST describe yourself?

Introverted (shy/reserved)	1
Extroverted (outgoing/social).	2
Neither introverted nor extroverted (a bit of both)	3

B. ONLINE VICTIMISATION

The questions below are intended to assess whether you have been victimised online – either through using the internet, on your cell phone or computer.

	No	Yes	How often do you use them?		
			Daily	3-6 times a week	Less than 3 times a week
B1. Do you use the internet on a computer (yours or someone else's)?	1	2	1	2	3
B2. Do you use the internet on your cell phone?	1	2	1	2	3

Please answer the following questions:

	Yes	No
B3. People have said negative things about the way I look, act or dress online.	1	2
B4. People have posted rude or mean things about me online.	1	2
B5. I have been harassed online for no apparent reason.	1	2
B6. I have been harassed online because of something that happened at school.	1	2
B7. I have been humiliated or embarrassed online.	1	2
B8. I have been bullied online.	1	2
B9. I have been threatened online.	1	2

Please answer the following questions:

	Yes	No
B10. People have asked me to engage in unwanted cybersex.	1	2
B11. People have continued to engage sexually with me online, even after I asked them to stop.	1	2
B12. People have spread online rumours about my sexual behaviour.	1	2
B13. People have asked me to send sexy pictures/photographs online.	1	2

B14. People have shown me unwanted sexy pictures online on their cell phones or computer.	1	2	
B15. I have received unwanted sexual images via email or text message.	1	2	
B16. I have reported unwanted online attention to my parents or teachers.	1	2	

C. SEXPECTANCIES MEASURE

The following scale is designed to measure your expectations regarding sexting. **We define SEXTING as: sending, receiving and/or forwarding of nude or sexually suggestive photographs and/or videos and/or sexually explicit messages across social media platforms such as BBM, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Facebook.**

Please respond to the following questions regarding sexting expectations based on how it has been defined above. Please rate each of the following items using the 1-4 scale.

Subscale 1: Please answer the following questions about **SENDING** sexts:

		Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Extremely true
C1.	Sexting makes/would make me adventurous.	1	2	3	4
C2.	Sexting makes/would make me more open with others.	1	2	3	4
C3.	Sexting makes/would make my relationship more interesting.	1	2	3	4
C4.	Sexting makes/would make me more intimate with the receiver.	1	2	3	4
C5.	Sexting makes/would make me more affectionate.	1	2	3	4
C6.	Sexting makes/would make me playful.	1	2	3	4
C7.	Sexting makes/would make me fearless.	1	2	3	4
C8.	Sexting makes/would make me excited.	1	2	3	4
C9.	Sexting makes/would make me feel attractive.	1	2	3	4
C10.	Sexting makes/would make me attracted to others.	1	2	3	4
C11.	Sexting makes/would make me feel sexy.	1	2	3	4
C12.	Sexting makes/would make me likeable.	1	2	3	4
C13.	Sexting makes/would make it easier to flirt.	1	2	3	4
C14.	Sexting makes/would make me happy.	1	2	3	4
C15.	Sexting makes/would make me aroused.	1	2	3	4
C16.	Sexting makes/would make me immature.	1	2	3	4
C17.	Sexting makes/would make me inappropriate.	1	2	3	4
C18.	Sexting makes/would make me desperate.	1	2	3	4
C19.	Sexting makes/would make me vulnerable.	1	2	3	4
C20.	Sexting makes/would make me embarrassed.	1	2	3	4
C21.	Sexting makes/would make me ashamed.	1	2	3	4
C22.	Sexting makes/would make me feel dirty.	1	2	3	4
C23.	Sexting lowers/would lower my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
C24.	Sexting makes/would make me feel awkward.	1	2	3	4

Subscale 2: Please answer the following questions about **RECEIVING** sexts:

		Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Extremely true
C25.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me attracted to the sender.	1	2	3	4
C26.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel more attractive.	1	2	3	4
C27.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel sexy.	1	2	3	4
C28.	Receiving sexts gives/would give me confidence.	1	2	3	4
C29.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me excited.	1	2	3	4

		Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Extremely true
C30.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel admired.	1	2	3	4
C31.	Receiving sexts raises/would raise my self-esteem.	1	2	3	4
C32.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me want to have sex.	1	2	3	4
C33.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel wanted.	1	2	3	4
C34.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4
C35.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel disgusted.	1	2	3	4
C36.	Receiving sexts turns/would turn me off.	1	2	3	4
C37.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel awkward.	1	2	3	4
C38.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me avoid the sender.	1	2	3	4
C39.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel insulted.	1	2	3	4
C40.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel vulnerable.	1	2	3	4
C41.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel embarrassed.	1	2	3	4
C42.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel ashamed.	1	2	3	4
C43.	Receiving sexts makes/would make me feel dirty.	1	2	3	4

Subscale 3: Please answer the following questions about **SEXTING**:

		Not at all true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Extremely true
C44.	Sexting causes problems with significant others.	1	2	3	4
C45.	Sexting causes problems/conflicts at school.	1	2	3	4
C46.	Sexting results in trouble with the police.	1	2	3	4
C47.	Sexting causes problems with friends.	1	2	3	4
C48.	Sexting causes ridicule from others.	1	2	3	4
C49.	Sexting results in unwanted attention.	1	2	3	4
C50.	Sexting results in unwanted sexual contact.	1	2	3	4
C51.	Sexting damages friendships.	1	2	3	4
C52.	Sexting damages intimate relationships.	1	2	3	4
C53.	Sexting is used for blackmail.	1	2	3	4
C54.	Sexting is used to bully others.	1	2	3	4
C55.	People regret sexting.	1	2	3	4
C56.	Sexts get around to other people.	1	2	3	4
C57.	Sexting makes it more likely for me to have sex.	1	2	3	4

D. SEXTING BEHAVIOURS SCALE

The following questions are designed to measure your own sexting behaviours. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer honestly.

Please read the following questions regarding sexting behaviours CAREFULLY, based on how it has been defined above. Please rate each of the following items using the 1-5 scale.

		Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Frequently
D1.	How often have you **received** a **written** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D2.	How often have you **received** a nude/semi-nude **media picture** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D3.	How often have you **received** a nude or semi-nude **photograph/video** sext of someone you know (a friend or acquaintance)?	1	2	3	4	5
D4.	How often have you **responded** to a **written** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D5.	How often have you responded to a nude/semi-nude **picture/photograph/video** sext?					
D6.	How often have you **forwarded/shared** a **written** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D7.	How often have you forwarded/shared a nude/semi-nude **picture/photograph/video** sext to someone other than the original recipient?	1	2	3	4	5
D8.	How often have you **sent** a **written** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D9.	How often have you **sent** a nude/semi-nude **media picture** sext?	1	2	3	4	5
D10.	How often have you **sent** a nude/semi-nude **photograph/video** sext of yourself?	1	2	3	4	5
D11.	How often have you had a sext **shared with you** when you were not the intended recipient?					
D12.	How often has someone responded to a **written** sext you have **sent**?	1	2	3	4	5
D13.	How often has someone responded to a nude/semi-nude **picture/photograph/video** sext you have sent?	1	2	3	4	5
D14.	How often have you **posted** nude/semi-nude media pictures on BBM, WhatsApp, Snapchat or Facebook?	1	2	3	4	5
D15.	How often have you **posted** nude/semi-nude photographs/videos of yourself on BBM, WhatsApp, Snapchat or Facebook?	1	2	3	4	5

D16. Who do you normally exchange sexts with? Please circle all relevant options.
1. I don't sext.
2. Strangers.
3. Friends or acquaintances.
4. Someone I am in a casual relationship with.
5. Someone I am in a committed relationship with.

The following questions are designed to gain your opinions regarding internet use and adolescent sexting in general.

Please respond to the following statements regarding general internet use and sexting based on how it has been defined above. Please rate each of the following items using the 1-5 scale.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
E1.	I use the internet to learn about sex-related topics.	1	2	3	4	5
E2.	I use the internet to learn about sex-related topics because it allows me to remain anonymous.	1	2	3	4	5
E3.	It is ok to use the internet to meet new people.	1	2	3	4	5
E4.	It is ok to use the internet to develop meaningful relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
E5.	It is ok to use the internet to meet a romantic partner.	1	2	3	4	5
E6.	I have flirted with someone over the internet.	1	2	3	4	5
E7.	Someone has flirted with me over the internet.	1	2	3	4	5
E8.	Sexting is used as a way to fulfil fantasies.	1	2	3	4	5
E9.	Sexting satisfies curiosity regarding sex.	1	2	3	4	5
E10.	Sexting is an activity/expression which poses no physical risk.	1	2	3	4	5
E11.	Sexting is an activity/expression which poses no emotional risk.	1	2	3	4	5
E12.	Teenagers often sext.	1	2	3	4	5
E13.	Sexting increases the older you are.	1	2	3	4	5
E14.	Sexting increases the more sexually experienced you are.	1	2	3	4	5
E15.	Boys tend to sext more than girls.	1	2	3	4	5
E16.	Both boys and girls sext.	1	2	3	4	5
E17.	Girls send more sexts than boys.	1	2	3	4	5
E18.	It's ok for girls to send sexts.	1	2	3	4	5
E19.	Girls who send sexts are called sluts.	1	2	3	4	5
E20.	It's ok for your boyfriend to ask for a sext of you.	1	2	3	4	5
E21.	It's ok for your girlfriend to ask for a sext of you.	1	2	3	4	5
E22.	Sexting is ok if you cannot see the face of the sender.	1	2	3	4	5
E23.	It would be ok if my parents found out I sext.	1	2	3	4	5
E24.	It would be ok for my parents to check my phone.	1	2	3	4	5
E25.	Sexting can lead to other risky behaviour such as alcohol or substance abuse.	1	2	3	4	5
E26.	Sexting can lead to risky/inappropriate sexual behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5
E27.	Sexting can lead to sexual violence.	1	2	3	4	5
E28.	Sexting is a sexually problematic behaviour in adolescence.	1	2	3	4	5
E29.	Sexting is a sexually unhealthy behaviour in adolescence.	1	2	3	4	5
E30.	Sexting can lead to bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
E31.	Sexting makes me feel unhappy with my body.	1	2	3	4	5
E32.	Teenagers should be able to sext/have access to sexually explicit material.	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
E33.	Sexting is a mutual expression of sexual desire.	1	2	3	4	5
E34.	Sexting is normal sexual experimentation.	1	2	3	4	5
E35.	Sexting builds/maintains romantic relationships.	1	2	3	4	5

E36.	Sexting is a form of intimate communication.	1	2	3	4	5
E37.	Sexting is part of teenage development.	1	2	3	4	5
E38.	The media over-reacts about teenage sexting.	1	2	3	4	5
E39.	I would like to know more about sexting.	1	2	3	4	5
E40.	I know someone who sexts.	1	2	3	4	5
E41.	I know someone who has been harassed by sexting.	1	2	3	4	5

If you **HAVE NOT or DO NOT** sext please skip to **E51.**

	I sext because…	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
E42.	I was asked to.	1	2	3	4	5
E43.	I trust my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
E44.	All my friends do it too.	1	2	3	4	5
E45.	It is easier than face-to-face contact.	1	2	3	4	5
E46.	I'm insecure/shy.	1	2	3	4	5
E47.	To be popular.	1	2	3	4	5
E48.	I am in a committed relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
E49.	I enjoy it.	1	2	3	4	5
E50.	Even though I know it is wrong.	1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the following statements on the regulation of sexting.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
E51.	The Government should regulate sexually explicit material on the internet.	1	2	3	4	5
E52.	The Government should regulate the age at which sexually explicit material can be viewed.	1	2	3	4	5
E53.	Schools should ban all sexually explicit material.	1	2	3	4	5
E54.	The media should be censored.	1	2	3	4	5
E55.	Parents/schools/Government over-react to sexting.	1	2	3	4	5
E56.	Sexting is against the law.	1	2	3	4	5

F. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS.

The following questions are designed to get your opinions on sexting regardless of whether you sext or not.

F1. Do you think sexting is **wrong**? Please explain.

F2. Is sexting **harmful?** Please explain.

F3. Should sexting in adolescence be **illegal**? Please explain.

F4. How should sexting be dealt with?

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Please feel free to make any additional comments or suggestions below.

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Department of Social Work and Criminology

Hillcrest

Pretoria

0002

Web: https://www.up.ac.za

Tel: (012) 420-3734 or (012) 420-2630

Dear Participant

Adolescent sexting in secondary independent schools: Towards the development of a policy framework

Researcher: Mrs Tara Harris

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the current study. The University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee requires that a researcher should ensure informed assent from research participants under the age of 18 years before commencing with the research. Informed assent entails the following:

1. Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to examine the nature and extent of adolescent sexting by obtaining data on what is actually occurring in relation to the topic amongst school-going adolescents.

2. Procedures: A self-administered questionnaire, together with an information letter and an informed assent form will be distributed in class to learners who have parental consent to participate in the study. Learners who voluntarily agree to participate in the survey will be asked to sign the letter of assent and to complete the questionnaire by themselves. No information should be shared with fellow learners. The completed questionnaire and signed informed assent form will be taken back once the survey has been completed in class. It will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete the survey questionnaire.

3. Risks and discomforts: Should you experience any discomfort or emotional distress as a result of your taking part in the survey, please make use of the contact numbers indicated in the information letter to access support.

4. Benefits: Please note that no benefits or gains are tied with participation in the research.

5. Participant's rights: You are free to withdraw from the survey at any stage. As participation is voluntary, no negative consequences will arise from your withdrawal. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, all data that you have provided will be destroyed immediately.

6. Confidentiality: The information collected will be used for research purposes only and your name, surname, or any private information which could identify you will not be recorded and should not be written on the questionnaire. No names will be revealed in the research report. Please be assured that all the information you provide is anonymous.

7. Right of access to the researcher: Should any questions or concerns arise, the researcher can be contacted on 071 891 5802.

8. Storage of research data: The data will be stored for archiving purposes in the Department of Social Work and Criminology for 15 years. It will not be used for future research purposes.

Please indicate your assent to participate in the study by signing a copy of this letter.

I have read this letter and understand what is requested. I hereby assent to my participation in the study.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

Department of Social Work and Criminology

Hillcrest

Pretoria

Dear Parent/Guardian

Adolescent sexting in secondary independent schools: Towards the development of a policy framework

Researcher: Mrs Tara Harris

I am a PhD student whose particular interest lies in youth crime and sex offences. I graduated cum laude from the University of Pretoria with a Masters degree in Criminology. I am currently a lecturer and Head of the Criminology and Criminal Justice section at Monash South Africa.

Thank you for your consideration in allowing your child to participate in the current study. The University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee requires that a researcher should ensure informed consent from the parent/guardian of an underage research participant before commencing with the research. Informed consent entails the following:

1. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study is to examine the nature and extent of adolescent sexting by obtaining data on what is actually occurring in relation to the topic amongst school-going adolescents.

2. **Procedures:** A self-administered questionnaire, together with an information letter and an informed assent form will be distributed in class to learners who have parental consent to partake in the study. Learners who voluntarily agree to participate in the survey will be asked to sign the letter of assent and to complete the questionnaire by themselves. No information should be shared with fellow learners. The completed questionnaire and signed informed assent form will be taken back once the survey has been completed in class. It will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete the survey questionnaire.

3. **Risks and discomforts:** Should you or your child experience any discomfort or emotional distress as a result of your child taking part in the survey, please make use of the contact numbers indicated in the information letter to access support.

4. **Benefits:** Please note that no benefits or gains are tied with participation in the research.

5. **Participant's rights:** You are free to withdraw your child from the survey at any stage. As participation is voluntary, no negative consequences will arise from his/her withdrawal. Should you choose to withdraw your child from the study, all data that your child provided will be destroyed immediately.

6. **Confidentiality:** The information collected will be used for research purposes only and your child's name, surname, or any private information which could identify your child will not be recorded and should not be written on the questionnaire. No names will be revealed in the research report. Please be assured that all the information your child provides is anonymous.

7. **Right of access to the researcher:** Should any questions or concerns arise, the researcher can be contacted on 071 891 5802.

8. **Storage of research data:** The data will be stored for archiving purposes in the Department of Social Work and Criminology for 15 years. It will not be used for future research purposes.

_____   _____

Signature of parent/guardian   Date

APPENDIX D: EXPERT SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE
SCHOOL-BASED SEXTING POLICY

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. My research focuses on adolescent sexting and the findings from the quantitative strand of the study showed some interesting gendered findings. The purpose of this interview is to gain your expert opinion on the development of a school-based sexting policy. With your consent, I would like to record this interview.

Please note that your participation is completely voluntary and you are within your rights to withdraw at any point. Briefly explain what is in the letter of informed consent and then have them to agree verbally or sign the letter.

If you don't mind, could you indicate which age category you fall into? I ask the question because it speaks to your experience within the field

GENDER	AGE CATEGORY

1. Could you briefly outline your position in your organisation and how long you've been there?
   a. *Areas of expertise?*

VERIFY, DEFINE & DETAIL THE PROBLEM
We recognise the problem of adolescent sexting and the associated negative consequences.

2. What is the current status of sexting policies in (UK/USA/South Africa)?
3. In defining sexting should all sexually explicit content or just self-produced imagery be included?
   a. *Why?*
4. Would you say there is a moral panic surrounding adolescent sexual development in a technological era?
5. Given the sex or gender differences in relation to sexting expectancies, practices and experiences, in your opinion, are we more worried about girls sexting than boys?
6. Who are the important stakeholders in the development of a sexting policy for schools?
7. Do you foresee any financial costs associated with implementation?
8. Given the nature of sexting, what is the power differential that needs to be considered in a sexting safeguarding policy?

only regarding dealing with incidents of sexting where the victim came forward? Power between victim and offender, school officials and parents? What power?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

9. What are the core facets, tenets or criteria that should be addressed in a school-based sexting safeguarding policy?

10. Research shows sex differences in perpetration, victimisation, attitudes and expectancies of sexting in teenage learners. Are there gender specific needs within a school-based sexting policy?
    a. *Why is this differentiation necessary?*
    b. *What are the implications of a gender specific sexting policy in terms of risk prevention? How should a school policy accommodate sex differences in terms of*
        i. *Prevention*
        ii. *Management/redress*

11. Age of sexual development and exploration differ between younger and older adolescents, which might have implications for a school policy. What are you views about two separate policies (primary and secondary), in other words policies targeting varying age groups? At what age level should this policy be pitched?

IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE POLICIES/MEASURES

12. In your opinion, what remedies or prevention strategies should be included in a school-based sexting policy to ensure the best interests of the child or children involved are met?

13. What is the most desirable outcome of a school-based sexting policy?

14. Do you foresee any undesirable outcomes of a school-based sexting policy?
    a. *What undesirable outcomes?*
    b. *How could these undesirable outcomes be addressed?*

ASSESS ALTERNATIVE POLICIES

15. In your opinion, how could the desired goal of a school-based sexting policy be met?

Before we conclude, do you have any further comments you would like to share? Is there any policy-specific perspectives that you would like to share? Thank you for your time.

Please may I, if necessary come back to you with some results before finalising the policy? This will allow me to member check and ensure trustworthiness of the data.

Parental Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1) What are the ages of your child/children?

2) Do you know if the school your child attends has adopted a sexting policy?

3) What is your understanding of the term sexting?

4) In your opinion, which of the following should determine the actions a school take if a sexting incident comes to light?
- Zero-tolerance
- Effect or severity of the violation
- Grade level of student
- Victim versus perpetrator status
- Repeat offender status
- Gender
- Consensual vs coercive
- None

5) In your opinion, are any of the following appropriate reactions to sexting?
- Referred to a school counsellor?
- Referred to a school administrator?
- Encouraged, but not required, to participate in an assistance program?
- Required to participate in an assistance program?
- Referred to legal authorities?
- Placed in detention?
- Suspended from school?
- Expelled from school?
- Reassigned to an alternative school?

6) When an incident arises, should the parents or guardians automatically be informed or does it depend on the nature of the incident?

7) What are the key areas that need to be addressed in a sexting policy for schools?

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Dear Sir/Ma'am

Adolescent sexting in secondary independent schools: Towards the development of a policy framework

Researcher: Mrs Tara Harris

Thank you for your consideration in participating in the current study. The University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee requires that a researcher should ensure informed consent from all participants prior to commencing with the research. Informed consent entails the following:

1. Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to explore the gendered nature of adolescent sexting by obtaining data in order to understand and describe the phenomenon as well as to develop a draft school-based sexting policy framework.

2. Procedures: An expert interview will be conducted with individuals with knowledge of and/or experience in adolescent development, specifically sexting and/or legal matters and/or school policy making will be conducted. Experts who voluntarily agree to participate will be asked to sign the letter of consent and to provide their insights and experiences of adolescent sexting, the legalities surrounding adolescent sexting and the necessary requirements for a draft policy. Each interview will take between 45 minutes to an hour and with the consent of the interviewee, they will be recorded.

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3. Risks and discomforts: Should you experience any discomfort or emotional distress as a result of your taking part in the interview, please make use of the contact numbers indicated in the information letter to access support.

4. Benefits: Please note that no benefits or gains are tied with participation in the research.

5. Participant's rights: You are free to withdraw at any stage. As participation is voluntary, no negative consequences will arise from your withdrawal. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, all data that you provided will be destroyed immediately.

6. Confidentiality: The information collected will be used for research purposes only and your name, surname, or any information which could identify you will be withheld at your request. Please be assured that you will be given a respondent code if requested to ensure that all the information you provide remains confidential.

7. Right of access to the researcher: Should any questions or concerns arise; the researcher can be contacted on +2771 891 5802 or tara.harris@monash.edu.

8. Storage of research data: The data will be stored for archiving purposes in the Department of Social Work and Criminology for 15 years. It will not be used for future research purposes.

Please indicate your consent to participate in the study by signing a copy of this letter.

I have read this letter and understand what is requested. I hereby consent to my participation in the study.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

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Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

2 June 2014

Dear Prof Lombard

Project:	**Adolescent sexting and sexualisation in secondary independent schools: towards the development of a policy framework**
Researcher:	**TF Harris**
Supervisor:	**Dr F Steyn**
Department:	**Social Work and Criminology**
Reference number:	**22166221**

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence of 2 April 2014.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 2 June 2014. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: karen.harris@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: **Dr L Blokland**; Prof M-H Coetzee; Dr JEH Grobler; Prof KL Harris(Acting Chair); Ms H Klopper; Dr C Panebianco-Warrens; Dr C Puttergill; Prof GM Spies; Dr Y Spies; Prof E Taljard; Dr P Wood

SMHE-D-19-00234 - Submission Confirmation
on behalf of
Thu 11/7/2019 8:12 PM

Submission ID: SMHE-D-19-00234

Dear Mrs Harris,
Thank you for submitting your manuscript, THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHOOL-BASED SEXTING POLICY1,
to School Mental Health.
The submission id is: SMHE-D-19-00234

Please refer to this number in any future correspondence.
During the review process, you can keep track of the status of your manuscript by accessing
the Editorial Manager website.

Your username is: Tharris18
If you forgot your password, you can click the 'Send Login Details' link on the EM Login
page at https://www.editorialmanager.com/smhe/

Should you require any further assistance please feel free to e-mail the Editorial Office by
clicking on "Contact Us" in the menu bar at the top of the screen.

With kind regards,
Springer Journals Editorial Office
School Mental Health

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to think about publishing your article as open access. With open access your article will
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Although for now you don't have to do anything, we would like to let you know about your
upcoming options.

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