

“SEXTING” CAMPAIGN

Sexting* involves creating, exchanging and sending photographs, videos and text messages with sexual content. Such content is usually created using smartphones and shared via messaging apps and social media platforms.

*Young people commonly refer to sexting using the terms ‘nudes’ and ‘dick pics’.

Sexting between adolescents of a similar age and developmental stage, where it is based on mutual consent, can represent a digital extension of flirting, sexual exploration and the development of intimate relationships [1, 2]. Alongside this developmentally expected exploration of sexuality, however, sexting can also occur in risky circumstances, where sending content is the result of peer pressure, coercion or blackmail (known as sextortion), or is used as a means of obtaining money or other material benefit (known as transactional sexting).

Regardless of the reason for sending the content, the online nature of this behaviour creates a risk of losing control over its subsequent dissemination. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images or videos can, among other things, expose an individual to (cyber)bullying and sextortion, which can cause severe emotional distress and affect their relationships and reputation.

A meta-analysis [3] found that 19.3% of adolescents had sent intimate images or videos, 34.8% had received them and approximately 14.5% had shared another person's intimate content without that person's consent.

Girls are more likely than boys to be asked to send intimate photographs (29.3% compared with 15.2%) and are more likely to receive unwanted intimate content, placing them at greater risk of emotional distress. Boys, by contrast, are more likely to use sexting as a means of asserting their masculinity and enhancing their status among their peers [2].

Among Slovenian pupils in the final three years of primary school, 1% of boys reported that their intimate images had been shared without permission (no girls reported such experiences), compared with 3% of girls and 2% of boys at secondary school. A total of 4.1% of boys and 1.6% of girls in primary school, and 5.2% of boys and 2.9% of girls in secondary school, reported having forwarded nude photographs of other people. Among primary-school pupils, 12% of girls and 7% of boys reported having received unwanted photographs of a sexual nature, compared with 17% of girls and 9% of boys at secondary school [4].

Preventive approaches based on prohibition, fear and shame are generally ineffective, as they may inadvertently place responsibility for the consequences on the person who created or sent the intimate content. This can intensify feelings of guilt and shame and deter individuals from seeking help if their trust is abused [5]. Instead, educational initiatives should foster open, non-judgemental dialogue and encourage clear communication and respecting of personal boundaries. It is also vital to emphasise the responsibility of those who exert pressure, engage in blackmail, or share intimate content without consent [6].

As part of the ‘Sexting’ prevention campaign, we have produced two posters and a set of educational materials for a lesson on intimacy online, which also addresses sexting. Primary schools will receive only the poster designed for primary-school pupils. The materials are intended to help teachers, school counsellors and other education professionals address this topic as part of sex education or online safety education.

POSTERS ON SEXTING

The posters convey the message that online relationships matter, while also highlighting how quickly private content can spread beyond our control. They prompt a number of essential questions, such as: Who do I trust? Where do I set my boundaries? How does peer pressure affect me? Where can I turn for support if something goes wrong?

POSTER FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The poster is intended for pupils in the final three years of primary school. However, as it may also be seen by younger children on school premises, its message is more general.

The poster encourages pupils to think about online privacy, peer pressure and the risks associated with sharing private content, without exposing younger children to content that may not yet be developmentally appropriate for them.



The posters should be displayed in settings where young people can expect a safe and supportive response from adults. We therefore recommend deciding in advance who will be available to talk to them about the topic. You should also consider whether it would be most appropriate to display the posters primarily in classrooms where the subject will be addressed as part of a lesson.

POSTER FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This poster takes a more direct approach, as the exchange of sexually explicit images and videos is more common among secondary school students [3, 4].

The title "SEKS-TANJE" accompanied by sketches of genitals and secondary sexual characteristics is designed to grab attention. These sketches resemble quick doodles of the kind often found in notebooks, on school desks, toilet or changing room walls. In this way, the poster uses a visual language familiar to students, reduces psychological distance, and clearly signals that it opens up a space for discussing sexuality without taboos [7].



The definition of sexting explains the poster's title and highlights the importance of consent and mutual agreement when engaging in sexting. The question "Are you sure this will stay between the two of you?" encourages students to reflect on trust and potential consequences of sexting.

As the posters do not explicitly address responsibility, adults discussing sexting with young people should make it clear that consenting to send sexually explicit images or videos does not constitute consent to their further sharing. Anyone who shares such content without permission, or uses pressure, threats or blackmail to obtain it, is responsible for violating the other person's boundaries and betraying their trust.

This does not, however, change the fact that once an intimate image or video has been sent, it is impossible to guarantee its complete security or retain full control over it. The content can be saved and forwarded, and may also become accessible to others if an account is hacked or another security incident occurs. Our position is therefore clear: there is no such thing as safe sexting. Discussions about sexting may also raise questions about its criminal-law implications, which are explained at the following link: <https://www.spletno-oko.si/seksting/pravna-podlaga>.

Children and adolescents experiencing distress can contact the child helpline TOM anonymously and free of charge by calling 116 111, emailing tom@zpms.si or using the online chat service at www.e-tom.si.

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