

**Comparative Study**

## **Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

Nilaksha Sen<sup>1\*</sup>, Kavya Suri<sup>2</sup>, Samiksha Jain<sup>3</sup>

### **ABSTRACT**

Sexting is an indicator of sexual conduct. The prevalence of sexting is increasing with every passing day. However, there appears to be minimal literature in existence for a rather popular concept among the youth in present times. This study aims to learn about the gender differences in sexting behaviours along with the dominance of the same in dating and non-dating young adults. It also identifies the prospective repercussions associated with sexting, consensual or otherwise. The study involved 200 working and non-working, heterosexual male and female participants between the age of 18 and 30 years. A survey including Sexual Behaviour Scale, Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, and Social Motivation Questionnaire was administered. Results showed that there exists a significant positive correlation between sexting behaviour and rejection sensitivity. Conversely, there is no correlation between sexting behaviour and social motivation. In addition to this, there exists a significant difference in sexting behaviours between the genders, although, there is no significant difference in sexting behaviours on the grounds of relationship status. Therefore, it is observed that higher the sexting behaviour, higher is the rejection sensitivity. Moreover, there is also a fluctuation in sexting behaviour with a difference in gender but no difference in sexting behaviours with variations in relationship status.

**Keywords:** *Rejection Sensitivity, Sexting, Social Motivation, Young Adults*

The ubiquity of sexting is progressively increasing as days pass by. For a notion so widespread, there is fairly restricted familiarity with it. Be that as it may, the present ideas surrounding the same is highly tabooed and frowned upon by society.

### **Sexting**

Sexting is sending sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos by means of phone, PC, or any advanced gadget. Sexting incorporates photographs and recordings containing nudity or demonstrating reproduced sex acts. It additionally incorporates instant messages

<sup>1</sup>Student, B. A. (H) Applied Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Student, B. A. (H) Applied Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>3</sup>Visiting Faculty, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India

\*[Responding Author](#)

**Received: September 25, 2020; Revision Received: November 13, 2020; Accepted: November 22, 2020**

## **Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

that talk about or propose sex acts. It is frequently done as a joke, a method of getting attention, or as being a flirt. (Moore, Hseih and Andrews, 2020)

There are multiple reasons an individual takes part in sexting, be it willingly, urged or forced to do as such. As per a study, half of the young adult women alluded to pressure from men of their age as motivation to send express messages. A dishabile photograph of another YA is a trophy that one can use to gloat to peers about the relationship. One may send a photograph of themselves as a method of flirting with a possible accomplice or to get praises from peers. Some may also send a photograph as a joke or on a challenge. Couples may trade photographs as confirmation of commitment or as a major aspect of their sentimental or sexual relationship.

Mori, Cooke, Temple, et al. (2020) conducted a research study to gain insight on the pervasiveness of sexting behaviours among young adults. The motive of this study looked to combine the pertinent discoveries inspecting the predominance of consensual and non-consensual sexting in a particularly formative period, growing into adulthood to try and elucidate incongruities in the literature. Educational cognisance activities and psychological repercussions of non-consensual sexting aimed at the emerging adults with the expectations of alleviating this plausibly harming and illicit conduct was concluded.

In certain circles, sexting is an acknowledged conduct that happens when individuals date or are invested in each other romantically. In different occasions, it is a lack of foresight. Notwithstanding the purpose behind it, the quantity of people utilising the inherent cameras on their electronic gadgets to take bare or explicit pictures is on the ascent. However, people partake in sexting without having thought of its consequences. But a momentary lapse of judgment may change their lives drastically (Matte, 2020).

### ***Social Motivation***

Social motivation manifests itself in the manner in which people engage with others. It is a repercussion of the human need to communicate and interact with others. Interaction is a critical need for survival in society that can be achieved by spending quality time or by working collaboratively. The way in which social motivation subsists in society can be observed by critically analysing human behaviour, in particular, how an individual behaves in relation to others. Visibly so, it can be seen in the way individuals respond to their desire to connect with other human beings. The enjoyment people may seek when spending time in someone else's company, the effort a person may put in trying to engage with other people and the time that a person may invest in social activities and settings as a way of developing interpersonal relationships with others are various ways in which social motivation can be observed.

Nikitin, Burgermeister and Freund (2012) studied the role of age and social motivation in developmental transitions in young and old adulthood. Two studies were held for the analysis of the job of social methodology and shrinking inspiration in significant formative changes. Study 1 involved a population of young adults who moved out and sample 2 comprised of more established grown-ups who moved into senior lodging. In the two examinations, it was revealed that the routine social methodology and shrinking intentions just as the daily social experience and abstract prosperity through the span of a fortnight of the members reported by themselves. Results showed emotional prosperity on higher

## **Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

subjects and social avoidance motives in the youngsters concluding that negative impacts of social avoidance diminished with time and vice versa.

Social motivation can be a driving factor behind the choices that people make considering the fact that the need for positive social acceptance is a much-preferred ideal by social isolation (Rudy, 2020)

### ***Rejection Sensitivity***

Rejection sensitivity (RS) is a defence motivation system that operates in inter-personal settings. It makes a person easily recognise and positively act in response to slightly negative interpersonal cues. Rejection can be painful for an individual if it comes from a known source. Some individuals look for signs of rejection as they are hyper-vigilant because they tend to perceive rejection more than acceptance. Such individuals react dramatically and impatiently to non-existent hints of being ignored and rejected. Individuals who demonstrate a condition of RS react to rejection with anger, hostility, anxiety and social withdrawal. Due to this, they push others away from them, which supports their self-fulfilling prophecy of seeking rejection (Downey and Feldman, 1996).

Rejection sensitivity is related to low self-esteem, high social anxiety, low self-worth and high insecurity in relationships (Morin, 2020). Rejection responses are essentially of two types that being cognitive and emotional. For example, when a friend does not pick your call, you feel rejected or ignored. The friend may be busy at that time, but the person with RS does not believe it. Even the likes and dislikes of others are viewed as cues of rejection (Bonior, 2019).

Assink, Chan & Gao (2019) studied the relationship between rejection sensitivity, victimisation, and aggression. The sample consisted of 66,405 young adults. The results indicated a small significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and aggression, and a poor but significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and victimisation. It was concluded that Rejection sensitivity was related to victimisation and aggression.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Aim***

To establish a relationship between sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults.

### ***Objectives***

1. To study the relationship between sexting behavior and rejection sensitivity and sexting behavior and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults.
2. To study the difference between sexting behavior and rejection sensitivity and sexting behavior and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults.

### ***Hypotheses***

1. There will be a significant relationship between sexting behaviour and rejection sensitivity.
2. There will be a significant relationship between sexting behaviour and social motivation.
3. There will be a significant difference between sexting behaviour and gender.
4. There will be a significant difference between sexting behaviour and relationship status.

## **Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

### ***Sample***

A sample of 200 young adults - 100 dating and 100 non-dating – of the age group of 18 to 30 years were taken.

### ***Participants***

1. Dating and Non-Dating Young Adults
2. Males and Females

### ***Tools***

#### **For Sexting: Sexting Behaviors Scale**

It was used to assess sexting behaviors. It investigates 3 sexting dimensions- receiving, sending, posting sexts. These items measured the identity of the individuals in the photo/video and whether sexts were sent or posted with their consent. The scale consists of 11 items with responses based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently or daily).

#### **For Rejection Sensitivity: Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire**

It's devised to measure rejection sensitivity in an adult population. It consists of nine hypothetical situations involving interactions with partners, family, friends, and strangers, with potential rejection. It is an 18-item inventory based on a 6-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1, "very unconcerned," to 6, "very concerned," and from 1, "very unlikely," to 6, "very likely"). For scoring, the formula was: rejection sensitivity = (rejection) \* (7-acceptance expectancy)

#### **For Social Motivation: Social Motivation Questionnaire**

It was used to assess information-seeking and emotional-regulatory social motivation among adults. For scoring, it was the sum of the scores of ER and IS motivation questions.

### ***Variables***

1. Dependent Variable: Sexting Behavior
2. Independent Variable: Rejection Sexting and Social Motivation

**Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

**RESULTS**

**Table 1- Correlation between Sexting, Social Motivation and Rejection Sensitivity**

		Total Score SBS	IS SMQ	ER SMQ	Total Score A-RSQ
Total Score SBS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.032	-.112	.141*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.651	.116	.046
	N	200	200	200	200
IS SMQ	Pearson Correlation	-.032	1	.716**	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651		.000	.985
	N	200	200	200	200
ER SMQ	Pearson Correlation	-.112	.716**	1	-.183**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.116	.000		.010
	N	200	200	200	200
Total Score A-RSQ	Pearson Correlation	.141*	.001	-.183**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.985	.010	
	N	200	200	200	200

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2- Group Statistics: Males & Females**

Group Statistics					
Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Score SBS	male	96	21.47	9.320	.951
	Female	104	17.28	7.110	.697

**Table 3- Independent Sample Test**

Independent Samples Test										
		Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interval of the	
									Lower	Upper
Total Score SBS	Equal variances assumed	10.040	.002	3.591	198	.000	4.190	1.167	1.889	6.491
	Equal variances not assumed			3.553	177.295	.000	4.190	1.179	1.863	6.517

**Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

**Table 4- Group Statistics: Dating & Non-Dating**

Group Statistics					
Current Relationship Status		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Score SBS	Single	100	17.02	7.285	.728
	inrelationships hip	100	21.56	9.018	.902

**Table 5- Independent Sample Test**

Independent Samples Test										
		Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interval of the	
Total Score SBS	Equal variances assumed	4.539	.034	-3.916	198	.000	-4.540	1.159	-6.826	-2.254
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.916	189.621	.000	-4.540	1.159	-6.827	-2.253

**DISCUSSION**

The present study was conducted to establish a relationship between sexting behaviour with rejection sensitivity and social motivation. After analysing the data collected, it was seen that there exists a significant positive correlation between sexting behaviour and rejection sensitivity. However, no correlation existed between sexting behaviour and social motivation. There also exists a significant difference between sexting behaviour and gender; nevertheless, no significant difference was found between sexting behaviour and relationship status.

Therefore, we can conclude that higher the sexting behaviour, higher the rejection sensitivity.

Through the review of pre-existing literature, we see that there was mostly no relationship between sexting behaviour and other variables, such as psychological well-being (Messer, Bauermeister & Grodzinski, 2013). It was also found that high self-esteem was associated with reduced number of sending nude photos/videos and high attention seeking was linked to an increased number of sending nudes (Balog, Francke & Hemphill, 2016).

The consequences of sexting could be long-term and have severe effects on a person, mentally and emotionally. It was also found that girls are more emotionally impacted than boys by the negative repercussions of sexting. (Del Rey, Odeja, Hunter, 2019) In case a scenario is presented concerning the same, the following measures could be shadowed:

1. Find out what has occurred and who else might be included. Who were the pictures sent to? Where are the pictures now? Who may have them? Is it accurate to say that they were constrained to send the pics?
2. Whenever presented on a web-based media webpage, report the pictures to the website for evacuation.

## **Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

3. Consider a report to the eSafety Commissioner.
4. Know that in certain occasions, the police may be included and there are certain commitments comparable to the announcing of occurrences. Kindly don't retain data from them since there is police inclusion. Police are trained to manage these issues and have devices to limit the effect.

As deduced from the present study, sexting behavior seemingly has an effect on rejection sensitivity. Following are the ways to manage the latter:

1. Recognise the symptoms and causes to treat them. It would help in reducing the tendency to develop a mental disorder and improve relationships.
2. Self-regulation- to control one's thoughts, actions and emotions to achieve the desired goal. For example, when you have a hint of being rejected, you should look for the other explanations of the same instead of thinking about being rejected.
3. Cognitive behavioural therapy is an effective method for reducing rejection sensitivity. It identifies destructive thought patterns, i.e. expectations of rejection, that leads to having a negative impact on behaviours and emotions. It helps to change the thought patterns and behaviour caused due to fear of being rejected.
4. Couples therapy helps in solving relationship problems. It helps in developing a healthy relationship.
5. Mindfulness helps to deal with anxiety caused by RS. It controls fear and feelings related to rejection sensitivity. (Bonior, 2020)

In order to avoid the potential adverse costs of sexting, it is advised to educate all regarding the same. Suitable intervention methods should be adopted by each and everyone and should be made aware of how to proceed in case something goes south.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sexting is sending obscene messages, photos, or recordings via telephone, PC, or any electronic device. To conclude, the results of the present study reveal that with increase in sexting behaviour, there will be an increase in rejection sensitivity. Despite the reason behind it, the number of individuals using the cameras on their electronic devices to share explicit content is on the rising. In any case, individuals participate in sexting without having thought of their outcomes. Yet, a fleeting failure to understand the situation may change their lives. The pervasiveness of sexting has expanded lately and increments as the youth age. Further examination zeroing in on non-consensual sexting is necessary to fittingly target and advise intercession, education, and strategy endeavours.

### **REFERENCES**

- Amy Morin, L. (2020, April 19). Why Some People More Sensitive to Rejection Than Others. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-rejection-sensitivity-4682652>
- Arshad, A., Khadim, R. A., & Masood, A. (2018). Explaining Rejection Sensitivity among Adolescents as predicted by Perceived Differential Treatment of Parents. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 623-631.
- Bonior, A. (2019, July 25). What Is Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria? Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/friendship-20/201907/what-is-rejection-sensitive-dysphoria>
- Brookings, J. B., Zembar, M. J., & Hochstetler, G. M. (2003). An interpersonal circumplex/five-factor analysis of the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire.

**Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

- Personality and Individual Differences*, 34(3), 449-461. doi:10.1016/s0191-8869(02)00065-x
- Dir, A. L., Cyders, M. A., & Coskunpinar, A. (2013). Sexting Behaviors Scale. *PsycTESTS Dataset*. doi:10.1037/t24132-000
- Dodson, W., Dodson, W., & Saline, S. (2020, August 11). How ADHD Ignites Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.additudemag.com/rejection-sensitive-dysphoria-and-adhd/>
- Downey, G., Berenson, K. R., & Kang, J. (2006). Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire. *PsycTESTS Dataset*. doi:10.1037/t20086-000
- Gao, S., Assink, M., & Chan, K. L. (2019). Associations Between Rejection Sensitivity, Aggression, and Victimization: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1524838019833005>
- Gardner, A. A., & Gembeck, M. J. (2018). Rejection Sensitivity and Responses to Rejection: Serial Mediators Linking Parenting to Adolescents and Young Adults' Depression and Trait-Anxiety. *Journal of Relationships Research*, 9 (9), <https://doi.org/10.1017/jrr.2018.8>
- Gong, X., Seaman, K. L., Fung, H. H., Loeckenhoff, C., & Lang, F. R. (2018). Development and Validation of Social Motivation Questionnaire. *The Gerontologist*, 59(6). doi:10.1093/geront/gny121
- Matte, C. (2020, June 09). What Is Sexting and Why Is It a Problem? Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.verywellfamily.com/what-is-sexting-problem-1258921>
- Mori, C., Cooke, J. E., Temple, J. R., Ly, A., Lu, Y., Anderson, N., . . . Madigan, S. (2020). The Prevalence of Sexting Behaviors Among Emerging Adults: A Meta-Analysis. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49(4), 1103-1119. doi:10.1007/s10508-020-01656-4
- Nikitin, J., Burgermeister, L. C., & Freund, A. M. (2012). The Role of Age and Social Motivation in Developmental Transitions in Young and Old Adulthood. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00366
- Ojeda, M., Rey, R. D., & Hunter, S. C. (2019). Longitudinal relationships between sexting and involvement in both bullying and cyberbullying. *Journal of Adolescence*, 77, 81-89. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.10.003
- Parenthood, P. (n.d.). Sexting: Facts, Information and Advice On the Consequences. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/bullying-safety-privacy/all-about-sexting>
- Rudy, L. (n.d.). How Lack of Social Motivation Impacts People with Autism. Retrieved September 21, 2020, from <https://www.verywellhealth.com/social-motivation-and-autism-4176314>
- Scholes-Balog, K., Francke, N., & Hemphill, S. (2016). Relationships Between Sexting, Self-Esteem, and Sensation Seeking Among Australian Young Adults. *Sexualisation, Media, & Society*, 2(2), 237462381562779. doi:10.1177/2374623815627790
- Sexting. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2020, from <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice sexting.aspx>

**Acknowledgement**

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

**Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis**

***How to cite this article:*** Sen N., Suri K. & Jain S. (2020). Sexting, rejection sensitivity and social motivation among dating and non-dating young adults: a comparative analysis. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(4), 428-436. DIP:18.01.052/20200804, DOI:10.25215/0804.052