

Sexting Behaviour and Perceived Health Implications among Out-Of-School Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria

Titilope Felicia Taiwo¹, Oloruntomiwa Ifedayo Oyetunde², Oluwaseun Ayo-Dada³ & Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale

^{4,1,2 & 3} Social and Behavioural Health Unit, Institute of Child Health, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:** Mofeyisara Omobowale,
Institute of Child Health, University of Ibadan,
feyisarat@yahoo.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.64450/njsh.v3i1.013>

ABSTRACT

Sexting behaviour has gradually increased among adolescents especially with the advent and advancement of mobile phones and the internet, resulting in alarming rise of the behaviour among young people with the negative consequences of sexting. Thus, sexting has become a public health phenomenon among young people in Nigeria. A significant gap exists in the literature regarding sexting, as studies have predominantly concentrated on in-school adolescents, neglecting their out-of-school peers. This study examines the prevalence and perceived health implications of sexting behaviour among out-of school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted cross sectional design and through mix-method approach, a total of 401 adolescents participated in the survey, while 24 adolescents participated in the In-depth interviews. Sexting prevalence was determined using the adjusted Sexting Behaviour Scale created by Dir Coskunpinar and Cyders. Qualitative data were transcribed, sorted, categorized and analyzed thematically. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, chi-square and logistic regression. The mean age of adolescents in the study was 16.16 ± 2.0 years. The overall sexting prevalence among out-of school adolescents in the study was 28.4%. Many adolescents participated in sexting in exchange for material gifts and emotional gratification; they were ignorant of the associated dangers and consider known health implications, insignificant. Patterns of sexting among the study population include sexually explicit video, pictures and messages. Sexting was significantly associated with sexual harassment. Necessary interventions are needed to enlighten and educate adolescents on the health implications of sexting in order to reduce sexting behaviour and associated health risks among out-of-school adolescents.

Keywords: Sexting; out-of-school adolescents; health implications; sexting prevalence

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexting behaviour has gradually increased among adolescents especially with the advent and advancement of mobile phones and internet technologies (Balogun and Olatunde, 2020). It is a public health phenomenon of the millennium, as many adolescents, young people, youths and adults engage in the practice despite the negative health and social consequences (Dauda, 2012). Currently, the number of smartphone users in Nigeria has increased from the range of 25 to 40 million people in 2016 to close to 80.93 million users in 2021; a significant number of these are young users (Olatunde and Balogun, 2017; Kola, Abiona, Adefolarin, Ben-Zeev, 2021). There has been an exponential growth in the information and communication sector in Nigeria like other developing countries within the last decades. The proportion of internet users had increased from 0.06% to 3.6% between 2000 and 2005, to 24% to 32.9% between 2010 and 2012. In the past years there were almost 84 million internet users in Nigeria (ITU, 2017; Statista, 2022), and recently, it's been reported that Nigeria have around 107-108 million internet users (Jan 2025), with projections around 103.9 million for the year 2025 (Statista, 2025). Smartphone possession among the young people in African region has also increased (van Heerden *et al.*, 2010), even among those of lower socio-economic status (Swahn *et al.*, 2014). Young people are growing up in an increasingly sexualised world that is driven by technology (McGrath, 2009). New generation of mobile phones are developed with multiple capabilities; the conception of new applications and technology progress has enabled smartphones to send and receive pictures, and messages, and to create videos as well (Amoo, 2013).

Sexting behaviour entails the act of using mobile phones or electronic devices to send and/or receive sexually suggestive/sexually explicit images, texts or videos (Mitchell *et al.*, 2012). Sexting involves the self-production and delivery of images, text messages or videos, with informed consent through social networking sites via the mobile device (Morelli *et al.*, 2016). Many producers and receivers of these sexually suggestive messages and images use their mobile devices to share text messages, videos and photos in order to express their erotic feelings, and connect remotely with people so as to share romantic experiences. Sexting is a public health challenge among adolescents partly because of the negative consequences that may emanate and have emanated from the practices (Burić, Garcia, & Štulhofer; 2020). These include, creating and sharing images and videos that tally with the definition of child pornography, with attendant risky sexual behaviour by adolescents who are curious and want to explore their sexuality (Döring, 2014). The media and new technology also expose young people to sexually suggestive images, videos and messages. Online pornography and sexting are two areas of concern in the digital world, and these are harmful to young people (Owens *et al.*, 2012; Bailina *et al.*, 2014; Ukwuese and Abaneme, 2021). More cases of negative mental health outcomes such as depression and suicide ideation are found among sexters when compared to non-sexters. Thus, the implication is that sexting can expose individuals' mental health to life-threatening mental issues, additionally, it decreases the quality of life if it is not identified early and addressed effectively (WHO, 2016; Ukwuese and Abaneme, 2021; Parti, Sanders and Englander, 2022).

Many studies on sexting in Nigeria have concentrated on in-school and post-secondary school adolescents. For instance, Dike, Eke and Babarinde (2013) examined social media and reading among secondary school students in Enugu state and discovered that sexting is one of the resulting dangers of unregulated social media usage among adolescents. Mintogbe (2020) also examined children's online safety and called for government involvement in regulating sexting access among children in Nigeria. Likewise, Ogbada (2013), considered sexting (behaviour) among teenagers in Lagos and discovered parental bonding as a correlate. In addition, Oni-Buraimoh and Adeyelu-MaCauley (2018) investigated sexting language on social media and its impact on spousal relationship in Nigeria. In

furtherance to publications on sexting from Nigeria, Olabode and Olushola (2018) and Olatunde and Balogun (2017) reported sexting prevalence, predictors and associated sexual risk behaviours among secondary school students and post-secondary school students in Nigeria, respectively. However, there is a dearth of study and publications on sexting behaviours among out-of-school adolescents in Nigeria.

Out-of-school adolescents are vulnerable and belong to a neglected populace. Out-of-school adolescents and youth are adolescents and young people of lower or upper secondary school age who are not enrolled in primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary education(UNESCO, 2018) they likely have more free time and limited life skills and may resort to sexting as a means for fun and entertainment, a way to gain social validation and to boost their self-esteem (Cucci et al, 2025). For instance, research has shown that there is a high level of unprotected sexual activities and contraceptive use among out-of-school adolescents when compared to in-school adolescents (Araoye and Adegoke, 1996). At present, very little focus has been given to out-of-school adolescents who engage in sexting in health research in Nigeria, therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap.

Research Questions

Therefore, it is important to find out sexting practices among out-of school adolescent in Ibadan. Thus, the following questions were asked:

- i. How prevalent is sexting among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan south east local government area?
- ii. What are the reasons and motivations of sexting among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan south east local government area?
- iii. What are the perceived health implications associated with sexting among out-of school adolescent in Ibadan?

Research Objectives

The study aimed to:

- i. Determine the prevalence of sexting among out-of-school adolescents by gender in Ibadan south east local government area
- ii. Identify the reasons and motivations of sexting among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan south east local government area
- iii. Investigate perceived health implications among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan South-East local government area.

2. METHODS

This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study with a mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative). The study population were out-of-school adolescents in apprentice/vocational training in Ibadan South-East local government. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 410 consenting and assenting participants in Ibadan South-East local government. Twenty-four (24) adolescents were purposively selected from the twelve wards in the local government for in-depth interviews based on age, consent/assent and previous history of smart phone usage. The prevalence of sexting was measured using the Sexting Behaviour Scale (SBS) which was created by Dir Coskunpinar and Cyders (2011a) and was adjusted so as to ascertain the prevalence and frequency of sexting behaviours which include: sending sexts and receiving sexts (sexually suggestive images and/or sexually explicit text messages and/or sexually suggestive videos). The scale consisted of 6 items with responses based on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently or daily).

The qualitative data collected through pre-tested question guide were transcribed, sorted, categorized and analyzed thematically. A thematic analysis was carried out to establish meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, the generation of initial codes, the search for themes among codes, a review of themes, the definition and naming of themes, and the production of the final report. The quantitative data collected was collated, screened, scored and entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social science (SPSS) and was also analyzed. The respondents' sexting behaviours were assessed based on the sexting behaviour scale. Ethical approval was obtained from the Oyo State Research Ethical Review Committee before the commencement of the study.

3. RESULTS

Respondents' Socio-demographic characteristics

A total of four hundred and ten (410) adolescents were reached in the study. The respondents ranged from 12 to 19 years and the mean age was 16.16 ± 2.0 years. Most of the respondents (64.6%) were between 15 to 17 years. In this study, 63.9% of the respondents claimed that they were not in any relationship, while 32.2% of the respondents were dating. Most of the respondents (63.7%) live with both parents, 22.4% live with a single parent while 8.5% live with other relatives. Most of the respondents (73.4%) are primary school leavers, 24.1% of the respondents' formal education is limited to the secondary school leaving certificate while 2.4% have no formal education. Most of the respondents (81.0%) have a minimum weekly income of ₦1000. In the study, 32.2% of the respondents were learning tailoring; 12.7% of the respondents were learning car repairs, while 8.5% of the respondents were learning hair making and bag making, respectively, 7.8% were learning plumbing, 3.4% were apprentices in patent medicine dispensaries while 0.5% were photography apprentices. However, a total of twenty-four (24) respondents were reached for the In-depth interview (IDI); 13 of them were males while 11 of them are females. The IDI respondents ranged from 16-19 years, and most of them had a minimum of secondary school education and were in dating relationships.

Table 1: Respondents' socio demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic variables	No	(%)
Gender		
Male	220	53.7
Female	190	46.3
Age		
12 – 14	51	12.4
15 – 17	265	64.6
18 – 19	94	22.9
Relationship status		
Single	262	63.9
Dating	132	32.2
Cohabiting	10	2.4
Married	6	1.5
Religion		
Christian	212	51.7
Muslim	196	47.8

Who do you live with?

Both parents	261	63.7
Mother	82	20.0
Father only	10	2.4
Male friend	2	0.5
Other relatives	35	38.5
Boss	4	1.0
Fiancée	12	12.9
Husband	4	1.0
Education		
None	10	12.4
Primary	301	73.4
Secondary	99	24.1
Number of children		
0	387	94.4
1	23	5.6
Income (Naira)		
≤ 1000	332	81.0
1100 – 2000	36	8.8
2100 – above	38	9.3

Understanding Sexting among Out-of School Adolescents in Ibadan

The understanding and interpretation of sexting varies among respondents. There was no uniform interpretation of sexting among the respondents. This is evident in some responses as stated below:

It is a way to communicate sex between lovers (IDI, Ibadan).

Another participant said that it is the:

Exchange of words that leads to sex between lovers or that is capable of arousing their sexual urges and deep feelings (IDI, Ibadan).

Other informants revealed that sexting is a way of "expressing feelings to a loved one". Another participant expressed his understanding of sexting as: "a way of improving love by relaying messages through videos, pictures, and texts, and a way of showing love to the opposite sex". In addition, a male participant added that sexting is: "is done to give assurance of love in a relationship." For some other out of -school adolescents, sexting:

It involves sending messages before graduating to other things. It is done in order to know the kind of love that exists between two persons (Source: Out-of-school adolescent, Ibadan,).

Sexting is understood as expression of love among out-of -school adolescents in the study area.

The Prevalence of Sexting among out-of-school Adolescents in Ibadan

Most of the respondents (70.2%) claimed that they had never received nude images/nude videos on their mobile phones nor via the internet, so they are non-sexters. Few of the respondents (7.8%) rarely received nude images on their mobile phones, 7.3% of the respondents rarely received nude videos on their mobile phones and 4.9% of the respondents rarely received nude images or videos via the internet - thus, they are all referred to as mild sexters. About, 20.5% of the respondents occasionally received nude images on their mobile phones, 19.0% of the respondents received nude videos on their mobile phones, and 22.4% of the respondents had received nude image or videos via the

internet. Very few of the respondents (1.5%) often received nude images on their mobile phones, 2.9% of the respondents often received nude videos on their mobile phones while 2.4% of the respondents often received nude images or videos via the internet. Furthermore, 27.8% of the respondents sent sexts, 25.5% of the respondents received sexts while the overall prevalence was 28.4% (Table below). Also, from the prevalence, it was deduced that 17.4% of the males and 11.0% of the females were sexters (Table 2 below).

Table 2 : Sexting behavior item

	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Occasionally (%)	Often (%)	Frequently (%)
Receiving sexts and the contents					
How often have you received nude images on your phone?	288(70.2)	32(7.8)	84(20.5)	6(1.5)	
How often have you received nude videos on your phone?	288(70.2)	30(7.3)	78(19.0)	12(2.9)	
How often have you received nude images or videos via the internet? (Facebook, e-mail, twitter, instagram, snapchat etc)	288(70.2)	20(4.9)	92(22.4)	10(2.4)	
Sending sexts and the contents					
How often have you sent nude images via phone?	286(69.8)	14(3.4)	96(23.4)	8(2.0)	6(1.5)
How often have you sent nude video via phone?	288(70.2)	24(5.9)	88(21.5)	10(2.4)	
How often have you sent nude images via the internet? (Facebook, e-mail, twitter, instagram, snapchat etc)	290(70.7)	22(5.4)	88(21.5)	10(2.4)	

Table3: Prevalence of sexting

	No	%
Sending sexts	114	27.8
Receiving sexts	104	25.5
Overall prevalence	116	28.4

Reasons for Sexting among out-of-school Adolescents in Ibadan

The reasons and the motivations of sexting varied among the respondents. In the study, 37.1% of the respondents said that they participated in sexting in exchange for money, 22.7% of the respondents said that it was an exchange for favours, 26.1% of the respondents said that they did it to receive gifts and remunerations, 19.8% of the respondents said that it was for sexual pleasure, 11.7% of the respondents said it was for fun and excitement while 2.2% of the respondents said that they did not want to be left out of the trend as those who did not do it were made fun of. (Table below). Some respondents shared the same opinion on the motivations of sexting behaviour as stated by one of the participants below:

Exposure to unideal contents like pornography can lead to the inability to control emotions, because of the pleasure derived from it. Other factors are social media influence and distance (Source: Out- of school female IDI, Ibadan).

Another participant shared that sexting reason also emphasized that what motivated sexting for him:

It is about love and gifts; sexting made her come for sex afterwards, I mean loneliness, love, distance made us sext and my girlfriend derived courage to come for sex after sexting with her (IDI, Ibadan).

A participant said the following:

I sext in order to keep my relationship... (IDI, Ibadan).

Another participant said:

I sext because of loneliness; keeping such videos on the phone will help one deal with loneliness, it can also motivate one to forward it to loved ones in order to keep them close to your heart (IDI, Ibadan).

Some of the respondents were also motivated to sext as proof of love and affection for their partners. This was emphasized by another respondent who said- "I send him my nude pictures for him to know the kind of love that I have for him" (Source: Out-of-school adolescent, Ibadan).

Table 7: perceived reasons and motivation for sexting

Reasons	Frequency (%)
To feel sexually aroused	81(19.8)
To feel interesting and special	28(6.8)
To receive gifts and remunerations	107(26.1)
To increase intimacy in my dating relationship	32(7.8)
It's fun and exciting	48(11.7)
Those who do not do it are made fun of	9(2.2)
For flirting or hooking up	32(7.8)
To increase passion in my dating relationship	41(10.0)
In exchange for money	152(37.1)
As a result of being coerced	42(10.2)
In exchange for a favour	93(22.7)

To hurt or damage someone	16(3.9)
To see if I am attractive enough	28(6.8)
To verify whether I am sexually appealing	12(2.9)

Gift and remuneration were the most cited motivation for sexting among out-of school adolescents in Ibadan.

Perceived Health implications of Sexting among out-of-school Adolescents in Ibadan

The data revealed that 15.5% of the respondents reported that sexting was associated with sexual harassment and this was significant. Some of the IDI participants mentioned a few health implications. A female participant said that:

After sending such pictures and they (sexters) eventually break up, one of them might become sick (depression) due to blackmail from the other person (IDI)

Another participant mentioned that:

It could lead to sex, thereby, causing unwanted pregnancy and terminate my career and make my parents unhappy (Female Out-of-school adolescent).

Other participants said that sexting could lead to depression, blackmail/visual bullying, and embarrassment if it goes viral. Furthermore, exposure to a third-party could lead to harassment, violence, masturbation, infertility, infection, and negative impact on the emotion. A few of the participants narrated their experiences as to how their sexting practice led to sexual harassment, and how they had to break up with their lovers, eventually. Furthermore, one of the females among the IDI respondents reported that she was raped (sexually molested) after sexting with her partner.

Table 8: Association between sexting behavior and sexual harassment

Sexual harassment	Sexting behavior		χ^2	p-value
	Absent (%)	Present(%)		
Yes	4(1.4)	18(15.5)		
No	288(98.6)	98(84.5)	32.572	<*0.005

* significant

4. DISCUSSION

Sexting is a public health adolescent-related phenomenon that emerged with the millennium's ICT advancement. It is being driven and propagated by young people partly because it is a sexually-linked form of communication that allows for sexual fantasies. It also allows for the expression of the sexual urges and feelings, confirming the notion that sexuality is the "explanation for all things" as asserted by Foucault (1978). The phenomenon is gradually becoming a major topic for public health researchers. Sexting is rapidly growing into a global public health issue as it has impact on adolescent well-being. The knowledge about sexting especially among out-of-school adolescents is not adequate in Nigeria; there are only a few publications on sexting from Nigeria (Olatunde and Balogun, 2017). This study has broad objectives of determining sexting prevalence by gender, reasons and motivations, sexting patterns, as well as the relationship between sexual harassment and sexting behaviour among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan South-East local government. It also fills the research gap that exists in sexting behaviour studies among out-of-school

adolescents in Nigeria. About 64% of the adolescents in the study are single and “emancipated”, hence, this allows for unrestricted sexual related behaviours that may be risky. Furthermore, since 73.4% of this group have only primary school education, they are likely to be less tech savvy and ignorant about the dangers associated with sexting.

The prevalence of sexting in our study is 28.4% which seems lower than what has been reported so far in the few published studies in Nigeria. Dauda (2012) conducted a study among undergraduates in Maiduguri, North-Eastern Nigeria. He reported a prevalence of 31% for sending sexts and 39% for receiving sexts. Olatunde and Balogun’s (2017) study was carried out among post-secondary school youths in Ibadan. The prevalence of sexting was reported as 20.1%, although the age range used in the study was 14-24 years which was considerably higher than the respondents of the current study where the age range was 12-19 years, and also valid considering that their ages 18-24 were reported to have the highest mean of sending sext in Yisa and Orji (2024). (The higher prevalence could be as a result of the different contexts of the respondents (out-of-school adolescents versus pre-university students). Generally, a higher prevalence of sexting has been reported among older groups of youths in comparison to the younger adolescents (Mitchell et al., 2014). Also, the higher prevalence of sexting among the out-of-school adolescents when compared to the study among the pre-varsity students could be as a result of the lack of proper education or miseducation on sexual related matters as the latter are more likely to be better informed about sexual-related matters. In addition, sexting across gender lines in this study reveals that males sext more than females; this could be attributed to the patriarchal masculinity sexuality among the Yorubas of South-Western Nigeria which places males above females especially on matters regarding sex and sexual relations (Messerschmidt, 2019; Omobowale, Akpabio and Amodu, 2019)

In comparison to other studies, the difference in the prevalence could be as a result of environmental influence, indecent dressing, and uncensored sexually explicit images on internet sites (Dauda, 2012). With the trend in the ICT development in Nigeria, undergraduates have access to internet services on campus which allows them to have access to uncensored messages, pictures and videos on the internet. Also, indecent dressings on campuses as well as the lascivious contents from their peers could enhance the sexting activities of undergraduates (Okoli, 2015). Although, the post-secondary students are from different backgrounds, they are in the educational system, and their socio-cultural milieu might be different from that of the out-of-school adolescents who are mostly fixed in workshops.

Furthermore, when the prevalence of this study was compared to the larger context of global literature, the prevalence recorded in this study corroborates the findings from other adolescent studies, to a large extent. The sexting prevalence of 20% and above have been recorded in many studies carried out in America and other developed countries (NCPTUP, 2008; Strassberg et al., 2013; Benotsch et al., 2013; Reyns et al., 2014; and Strassberg et al., 2014). Findings from this study show that sexting behaviour is not limited to in-school adolescents and young people, but that out-of-school adolescents also practice sexting and are more vulnerable to the associated dangers. The study shows that most of the out-of-school adolescents are not aware of the negative consequences of sexting, instead, they believe that the benefits outweigh the negative consequences. Adolescents in Ibadan have different understanding of sexting; to some, it is a way of reaffirming love for one’s partner. This aligns with the previous study on sexting in which sexting was defined as the act of using mobile phones or electronic devices to send and/or receive sexually suggestive and or sexually explicit images, texts or videos (Mitchell et al., 2012). This study revealed that many out-of-school adolescents view sexting as a means of expressing of one’s thoughts to a member of the opposite sex, through messages, calls, videos, pictures that

depict 'expressions of love' (nudity). It was found out in the course of this study that sexting is often called; 'sex chat', 'sex call', 'sex talk', 'mojo talk'. Therefore, the out-of-school adolescents understand sexting to some degree.

Our data shows that sexting is more prevalent among the males in the study area. Sexting activity is divided along gender lines. The gender factors, as related to the current study, are evident in the reasons that were provided for sexting. The major reasons why out-of-school adolescents engage in sexting as enumerated by both the males and females is the exchange for money, favours (81.0% of the respondents earn about 1000 naira / less than a dollar which in turn places them in the poverty margin), and sexual pleasures. Based on gender dynamics, males view their collection of sexts from females as a thing of pride - a form of "sexual status trophy", which they brag about amongst their peers (Drouin, 2012). Ironically, males may acquire reputation boosts amongst their peers as a result of their involvement in sexting while the females suffer from reputational damage. This could explain the major motivations that enhance sexting as reported in here. Males use sexting to get attention and attain peer approval (Ringrose et al., 2013) despite the fact that they have to provide gifts (cash and others) to their female counterparts in exchange for sexts. Another motivation is the urge to satisfy sexual pleasure, especially by those who are emancipated, whose sexting serve as a prelude to sexual acts or romantic relationships (Lenhart, 2009).

Our findings revealed that, most of the respondents who claimed that they were involved in sending or receiving sexts were those in romantic relationships. This implies that romantic relationship seem to be a push factor for sexting activities among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan, corroborating the claims of Lenhart (2009), Ringrose et al. (2012), Levine (2013), and Lippman & Campbell (2014) on sexting and romantic relationship mechanisms. Thus, sexting may be regarded as a mechanism that can be used to maintain relationships. Therefore, sexting is a "relationship currency", or 'lubricating oil' for relationships in this digitalised global era (Swivelchair, 2011). Perceived reasons for sexting among the study group includes increase passion in dating relationships, fun & excitement, coercion, intimacy, flirting or hooking up, test for attractiveness, and to feel interesting and special. On the downside, it can also be used to hurt or damage someone as those who do not get involved are made fun of for being shy.

With the advent of internet, many out-of-school adolescents can easily access sexually explicit materials through their mobile phones, and perhaps, these pornographic materials motivate sexting. Although, a researcher reported that young people who show and send sexual photos of themselves are much more likely to engage in sexual behaviours, even though it could be an experimental means of seeking sexual attention and romance (Lenhart, 2009; Wolak et al., 2012; Mintogbe et al 2020). As highlighted in one of the IDI respondents' comment: *I have taken the nude picture of my chest muscle as well as my private part and sent it to my girlfriend twice through facebook and whatsapp.* This could be an experimental and sexual attention seeking mechanism. Also, the sharing of sexual photos forges intimacy with romantic partners in the absence of physical intimacy (Mitchell et al., 2014; Setty and Dobson, 2024). Another IDI respondent stated: *I take pictures of my private part and send it to him, I also make videos of myself and send them to him.* Many of the self-produced sexually explicit content materials that are being sent do not show the subject's face. Sexual extortion ("sextortion") is a prevalent and pernicious form of coercion that refers to making threats to share nude or sexual images to coerce the victim into complying with certain behavioural or financial demands. These demands may include monetary payment, intimate images, engagement in sexual acts, or compliance as part of a pattern of power and control. However, this might not be possible if the facial identity of the subject is not known (Mayol et al., 2011; Ray and Henry, 2025). An example of sextortion was reported by a researcher, who claimed that the subjects' self-produced nude images were shared on

the internet and that they were later coerced into producing hardcore pornography (Soyingbe, 2012).

Sexting patterns recorded in this study include; sexually explicit messages, sexually explicit pictures, sexually explicit videos and nude pictures. These patterns also correlate with patterns recorded by some other researchers (Lenhart, 2009 Mitchel et al., 2012; Strassberg et al., 2013, Ray and Henry, 2025). According to the respondents, sexting benefits include fun, happiness, improved passion in dating relationships, enhanced romantic relationships and sexual activities. Specifically, some females derive financial gains and material gifts from sexting, which may cater to the immediate needs of girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds. There is also a tendency for respondents to over-rate the benefits of sexting and under-rate the risks that are associated with it (Spear, 2013). Additionally, youths can be short-sighted in that, they might not see a situation from another person's point of view or erroneously believe that negative occurrences may happen to others but not to them (egocentrism).

Out-of-school adolescents identified some possible health implications of sexting, which include: depression, blackmail, embarrassment, raging of the brain, masturbation, negative impact on the brain, violence, harassment. A good number of the respondents believe that sexting is harmful yet they indulge in it. This shows that this category of adolescents were aware of sexting's health risks but tend to believe that the benefits outweigh the risks. Our study is limited in that it is a cross-sectional study and as a result of this, causality or directionality cannot be assumed or determined. Social desirability bias in the responses is possible. This current study is at risk of social desirability bias hence, the out-of-school adolescents might have under-reported their engagement in sexting behaviour. Although, in order to reduce the likelihood or minimize the impact of such bias, the interviewer administered questionnaires did not bear any personal identifiers and all interviews demographics were anonymized. However, the results from this study has potentials for use in Nigeria, Africa and beyond as it addresses the growing issue of technologically-driven adolescents and their health concerns by its application to programme policies and planning.

5. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan South-East local government area, of Ibadan, engage in sexting, with a prevalence of 28.4%. A higher proportion of male out-of-school adolescents were involved in sexting when compared with the female counterparts. The leading perceived reasons for sexting by the out-of-school adolescents are exchange for money, gifts, remunerations, sexual pleasure. Most sexting activities among the out-of-school adolescents take place in the context of romantic and/or sexual relationships. The uncensored sexually explicit contents that are available on media, social media and internet were also identified as factors that motivate adolescents' engagement in sexting. Sexting is a complex social and health issue that calls for a multi-system, multidisciplinary and holistic approach to help design and re-strategize effective policies and intervention programmes that will reduce health challenges of sexting in the contemporary society.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Out-of-school adolescents need to be educated about sexting related health implications, its social, psychological and relational consequences. In addition, relevant programmes must be initiated to provide support for out-of-school adolescents who may be under pressure by partner or peers to engage in sexting. Health and social workers need to be trained and orientated to screen and counsel out-of-school adolescents on sexting related challenges. Also, policymakers need to update existing policies and programmes to

include out-of-school adolescents. Evidence-based policies and programmes on the issue of sexting need to be enforced through amendments of lawful acts like the VAPP act 2015(Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015). Finally, more studies are needed to interrogate sexting related research as the data on the subject matter is still very limited in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Amoo, E. O, (2013) Social media and adolescent sexuality: implications HIV/AIDS incidence in Nigeria. *Social Media, Adolescents Sexuality & HIV/AIDS. Readings in Social Sciences*, 1-17.
- Araoye M., Adegoke A. (1996) .Sexuality, Contraception and Reproductive Health among Secondary School Students in Ilorin. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19(3):179-181.
- Balogun, F. M., & Olatunde, O. E. (2020). Prevalence and predictors of problematic smart phone use among pre-varsity young people in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Pan African Medical Journal*, 36(1).
- Benotsch E. G., Snipes D. J., Martin A. M. and Bull S. S. (2013) Sexting, substance use, and sexual risk behavior in young adults. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 52 (3): 307-313.
- Dauda, S. (2012) 'Sexting' Trends among Selected Nigerian Undergraduate Students. Definition Issue. *Journal of Adolescents Health*, 61, 544- 554.
- Dike, E., & Babarinde, E., (2013). Social media and reading among secondary school students in Enugu State. *South African Journal of Information Studies*, 31 (1), 60-81
- Dir, A. L., Coskunpinar, A., & Cyders, M. A. (2011). Sexting, alcohol, and impulsivity. Paper presented at the meeting of RSA, Atlanta, GA.
- Dir, A. L., Coskunpinar, A., Steiner, J. L., & Cyders, M. A. (2013). Understanding differences in sexting behaviors across gender, relationship status, and sexual identity, and the role of expectancies in sexting. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(8), 568-574.
- Döring N. (2014). Consensual sexting among adolescents: Risk prevention through abstinence education or safer sexting? *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* 8.(1):1-9.
- Foucault, M. (1978). The history of sexuality volume I. In *Feminist Studies* (pp. 61-66). Routledge.
- International Telecommunication Union, 2(017) ICT Facts and Figures 2017 [Online]. Available: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf> [Accessed 5 January 2018].
- Internet World Stats, (2017). Internet Users Statistics for Africa (Africa Internet Usage, 2017 Population Stats and Facebook Subscribers) [Online]. Available: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm> [Accessed 5 January 2018]
- Internet pornography on adolescents: a review of the research. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 19, 23 internet: the perspective of European

children: key findings from the EU Kids Online survey of 9-16 year olds and their parents in 25 countries.

- Kola, L., Abiona, D., Adefolarin, A. O., and Ben-Zeev, D. (2021). Mobile phone use and acceptability for the delivery of mental health information among perinatal adolescents in Nigeria: survey study. *JMIR Mental Health*, 8(1), e20314.
- Lenhart, A. (2009). Teens and Sexting: How and Why Minor Teens Are Sending Sexually Suggestive Nude or Nearly Nude Images Via Text Messaging. Available: www.pewinternet.org/files/old/media//Files/Reports/2009/PIP_Teens_and_Sexting.pdf [Accessed July 30, 2016].
- Levine, D. (2013). Sexting: a terrifying health risk... or the new normal for young adults? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52,257-258.
- Lippman, J. R., and Campbell, S. W. (2014). Damned if you do, damned if you don't... if you're a girl: Relational and normative contexts of adolescent sexting in the united states. *Journal of Children and Media*,8(4), 371-386.
- Mayol, A. V., Matus, C.L (March 4, 2011). "Lady judges: 'End Sextortion". *Cebu Daily News*. Archived from the original on May 12, 2012. Retrieved 2012-10-05.
- McGrath, H., & Van Vugt, J. (2009). Young people and technology. A review of the current literature.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2019). The salience of "hegemonic masculinity". *Men and Masculinities*, 22(1), 85-91.
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978)
- Mintogbe, M. M. M., Amadou, M., Dougnon, V., Gnoumou, B., & Ahoussinou, C. (2020). Dynamics of onset of fertile life among adolescents girls in Benin, 1996-2017. *African Population Studies*, 34(1), 5062-5081.
- Mitchell K. J., Finkelhor D., Jones L. M. and Wolak J. (2012) Prevalence and characteristics of youth sexting: A national study. *Pediatrics* 129. (1): 13-20.
- Mitchell K.J., Jones L.M. (2014) Youth Internet Safety (YISS) Study: Methodology report. Durham, NH: Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire. Available at: http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/YISS_Methods_Report_final.pdf; 2011. Accessed September 5, 2014.
- Morelli M., Bianchi D., Baiocco R., Pezzuti L. and Chirumbolo A. (2016) Sexting, psychological distress and dating violence among adolescents and young adults. *Psicothema* 28.(2):137-1452
- Suellentrop, K. (2005). Pregnancy among sexually experienced teens, (2002) National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.
- Ogbada, A. E. (2013). Determinants of Risky Sexual Behaviour Among Senior High School Students, in La Dade-Kotopon Municipality(Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).
- Okoli, E. (2015) Sexting and Anambra State University Students' Sexual Behaviour. An Unpublished B.Sc. Project, Department of Mass Communication, Anambra State University.

- Olatunde O and Balogun F. (2017) Sexting: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associated Sexual Risk Behaviors among Postsecondary School Young People in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Front Public Health*. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2017.00096. PMID: 28534023; PMCID: PMC5420550.
- Olushola, A.O. and Olabode, K.T., (2018) Prevalence of sexting among students in selected secondary schools in Southwestern Nigeria. *Gender and Behaviour*, 16(1), pp.11011-11025.
- Omobowale, M. O., Akpabio, O. E., and Amodu, O. K. (2019). Masculinity and Neighborhood Bullying among Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria: A Research Note. *Boyhood Studies*, 12(1), 1-16
- Oni B. A and Adeyelu-Macaulay C.O (2018). Investigating the Language of Sexting on the Social Media and Its Impact on Spousal Relationships in Nigeria, *Journal of Sexuality & Culture*, Vol 22, pages 391-404, url={<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:148894227>}
- Owens, E. W., Behun, R. J., Manning, J. C., & Reid, R. C. (2012). The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 19(1-2), 99-122.
- Parti, K., Sanders, C. E., & Englander, E. K. (2023). Sexting at an early age: Patterns and poor health-related consequences of pressured sexting in middle and high school. *Journal of school health*, 93(1), 73-81.
- Ray A and Henry N. (2025) Sextortion: A Scoping Review. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2025 Jan;26(1):138-155. doi: 10.1177/15248380241277271. Epub 2024 Sep 25. PMID: 39323232; PMCID: PMC11558931.
- Reyns, B. W., Henson, B., & Fisher, B. S. (2014). Digital deviance: Low self-control and opportunity as explanations of sexting among college students. *Sociological Spectrum*, 34(3), 273-292.
- Ringrose, J., Gill, R., Livingstone, S. and Harvey, L. (2012). A qualitative study of children, young people and "sexting": A report prepared for the NSPCC. London, England: NSPCC.
- Ringrose, J., Harvey, L., Gill, R., Livingstone, S., (2013). Teen girls, sexual double standards and 'sexting': gendered value in digital image exchange. *Feminist Theory* 14, 305-323.
- Setty, E. and Dobson, E 2024. Young Love "Locked Down": Adolescent and Young Adult Perspectives on Sexting During the Covid-19 Pandemic in England. *Arch Sex Behav* 53, 481-495 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02734->
- Soyingbe, Anthonia (July 4, 2012). "Sextortion: Checkmating this new alias for bribe in Nigeria". *Daily Independent.Nigeria*. Archived from the original on December 24, 2012. Retrieved 2012-10-05.
- Spear, L. P. (2013). Adolescent neurodevelopment. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52,S7-S13.
- Statista (2022). Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2018 to 2022, with forecasts from 2023 to 2027 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria/>
- Statista (2025) Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2018 to 2022, with forecasts from 2023 to 2027. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183849/internet-users-nigeria>.
- Strassberg D. S., McKinnon R. K., Sustaíta M. A. and Rullo J. (2013). Sexting by high school students: An exploratory and descriptive study. *Archives of sexual behavior* 42.(1): 15-21.
- Strassberg, D. S., Rullo, J. E., and Mackaronis, J. E. (2014). The sending and receiving of

- students' romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28 ,444- 449.
- Swivelchair (2011). On the biology of sexting, a monograph systematic literature review. *Clinical psychology review*,34(1), 44-53.
- Ukwueze, C. A., and Abaneme, E. C. (2021). Sexting: A Self-Portrayal Trend Among Youths On Social Media?. *Socialscientia: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1). Retrieved from <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/article/view/1302>
- UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Team(2018). Global education monitoring report, 2019: Migration, displacement and education: building bridges, not walls. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.54676/XDZD4287>. ISBN:978-92-3-100283-0
- Wolak, J., Finkelhor, D. and Mitchell, K. J.(2012). How often are teens arrested for sexting? Data from a national sample of police cases. *Pediatrics*,129,4 -12.
- Yisa. V and Orji R. (2024) Hidden desires, echoed distress: Dissecting Nigeria's sexting landscape and its ties to depression. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, Volume 16, December 2024, 10842

FUNDING DETAILS: No funding was received for this study.