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Sexting among adolescents: examining the association between sexting and self-esteem

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Sexting among adolescents: examining the association between sexting and self-esteem

Hanaah Fannin, PA-S2

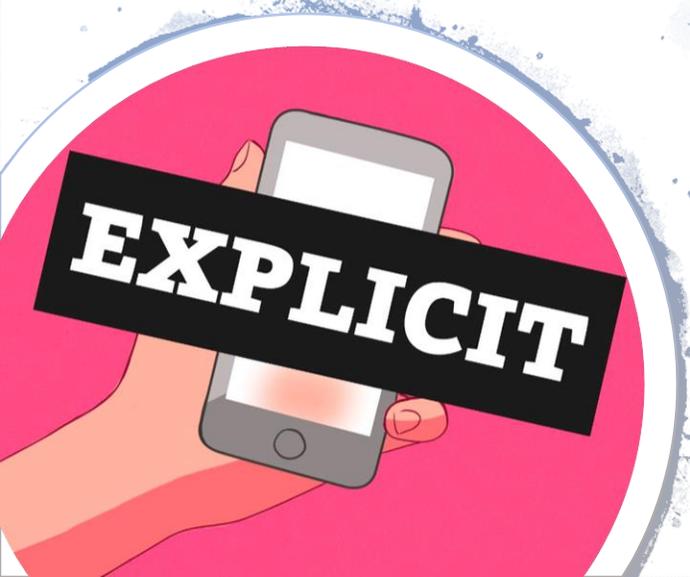
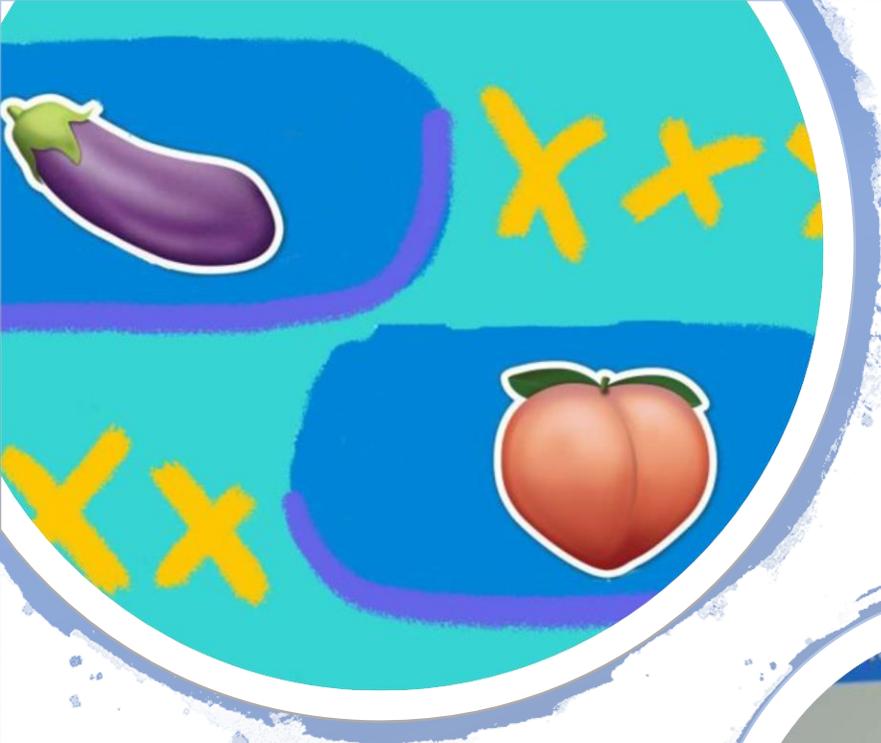
PA 5900 Capstone

Dominican University of California

MSPAS Program, Class of 2020

What is “sexting”?

- “Sexting” is the exchange of sexual material through electronic means
 - images, videos, or text/email messages





Media-based Communication

- Technological advancements → innovative ways to manage social interactions and relationships
- Vehicles for exploring and expressing sexuality
- Makes sharing easy
- 4 out of 5 adults reported sexting in the last year (Stasko & Geller, 2018)
- Sexting is becoming a more common practice among adolescents

Current Literature

- More is known on the legal implications of sexting vs clinical implications
- Prevalence rates increasing in recent years and as youth age
- Sexting is a predictor of sexual behavior and may be associated with other health outcomes and risky behaviors
- Focus on clinical implications of sexting, intervention, education, and policy efforts



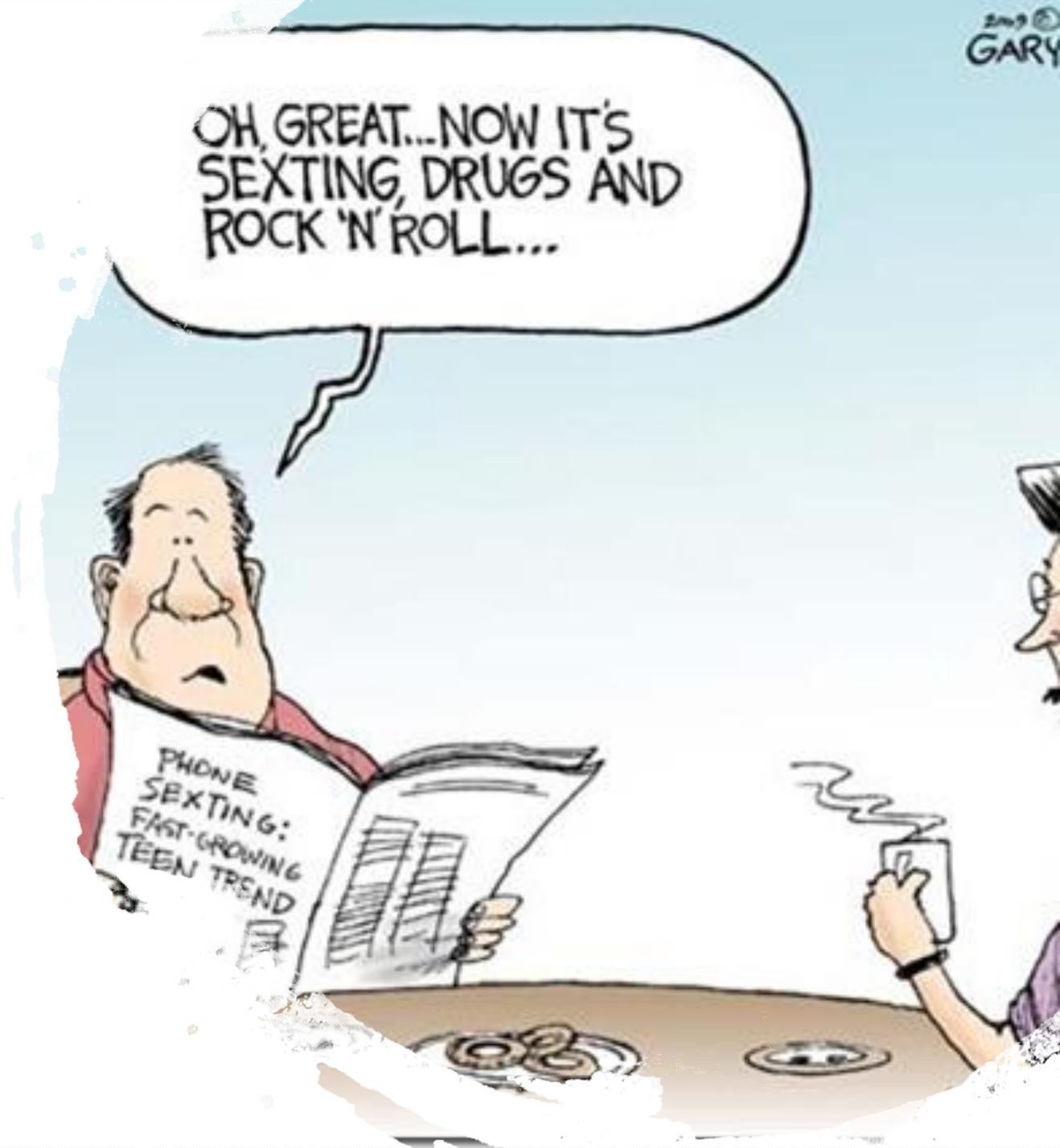


Redefining “Sexting”

- More specifically defined in the past decade
- “Sexting” now includes:
 - the behavior in question
 - the type of material exchanged
 - the recipients of the material (intimate partner, third parties, social peers).

Health Implications of Sexting in Adolescents

- **Can affect adolescent's physical and psychosocial well-being**
- depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation
- more substance use
- impulsivity, aggression
- conduct issues (e.g., delinquency)
- risky behaviors, multiple sexual partners, lack of contraceptive use
- cyberpornography
- domestic/dating violence victimization
- relational issues
- body dissatisfaction
- low self-esteem



Why is Adolescent Sexting an Issue?

- **The adolescent brain = work in progress**
 - Exploring and testing new experiences are very important to development
 - Some may lack ability to put the “brake” on impulses or consider consequences
- **Consequences of sexting:**
 - 1 person → unintended larger audience
 - Digital footprint
 - May lead to embarrassment, humiliation, and loss of self-esteem
 - May set adolescents up for being bullied, objectified, being depressed and suicidal
 - School and legal-related consequences



Current Progress

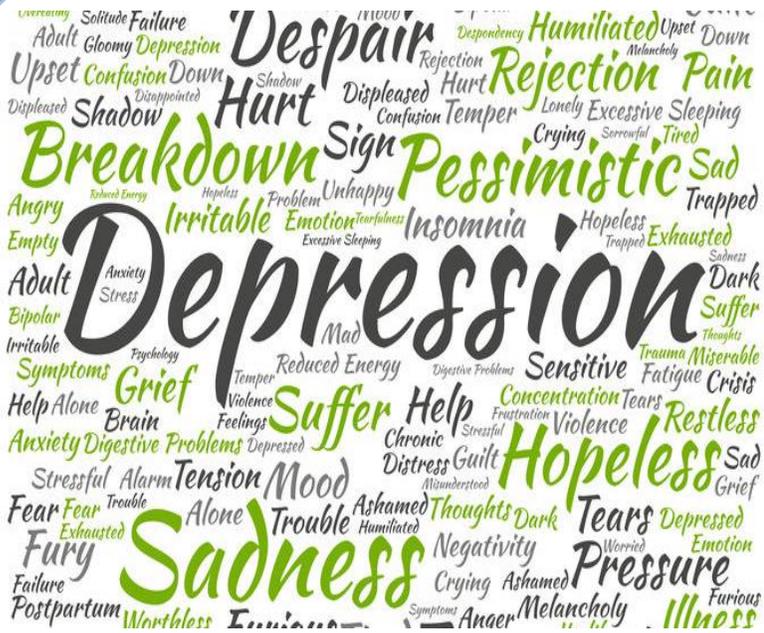
- Multiple systematic reviews on how sexting affects the adolescent's physical and psychosocial health
- Associated risks and sexting motivators
- Peer acceptance = important component to adolescent's psychosocial development
- Self-esteem and its association to sexting
 - Important determinant in adolescent mental health and development
 - Not included in previous systematic reviews and meta-analytic syntheses of literature relevant to sexting



Low self-esteem

- Associated with a variety of **physical**, **psychological**, and **social** consequences that can transition into adulthood

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicide
- Eating disorder
- Obesity
- Violent behavior
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Substance use
- Greater likelihood of joblessness and financial difficulties



Objective of This Study

- The primary objective of this study is to provide a systematic review of the published literature, examining the association between sexting and self-esteem in adolescents, and to identify gaps in existing knowledge to provide recommendations for future research.



Study Protocol



- The current systematic review was conducted in concurrence with Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.



Database Search Strategy

- The following electronic databases were searched to locate peer-reviewed studies without any language restrictions:
 - CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Iceberg, and PsycINFO
- Publication dates between January 1, 2014 and September 30, 2019
- The keywords used were:
 - “sexting”, “adolescents”, “teenagers”, “youth”, “self-esteem”
- The reference lists of the included studies and prior systematic reviews and meta-analyses on the same topic were also screened for studies not included by this search strategy

Database Search Strategy

- A stepwise approach used for including the final studies:
 1. All records screened by title and abstract
 2. Potential records evaluated to ensure that they satisfied inclusion criteria
 3. Only studies that included a comparison between sexting and self-esteem were included

Selection Criteria

“Sexting” defined as:

- The exchange of sexual material through electronic means
 - “material”: images, videos, or text/email messages
 - “exchange”: sending, receiving, forwarding
- Consistent with current literature definition of “sexting”

“Self-esteem” defined as:

- An overall reflection of self-worth, that involves beliefs about oneself as well as an emotional response to those beliefs.
- Had to be measured using a validated instrument (Rosenburg Self-esteem Scale)

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Study involves comparing sexting and self-esteem
- Articles written in English
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, reviews, and reports only
- Must include human subjects
- Age of subjects: 13-19 years

Exclusion criteria:

- Study outcomes not involving sexting
- Self-esteem measured using instrument not validated
- Cyberbullying as main component of study methodology

Data Extraction and Analysis

- Data extracted:
 - Study citation
 - Study objectives
 - Study design and recruitment process
 - Length of study
 - Time at which participants were assessed
 - Inclusion/exclusion criteria
 - Demographics of participants (age, gender, education, family and social background)
 - Measurements/screening tools used
 - Definition of exposure and outcome variables
 - Types of outcome variables assessed
 - Number of participants at baseline and study completion



results

Identification

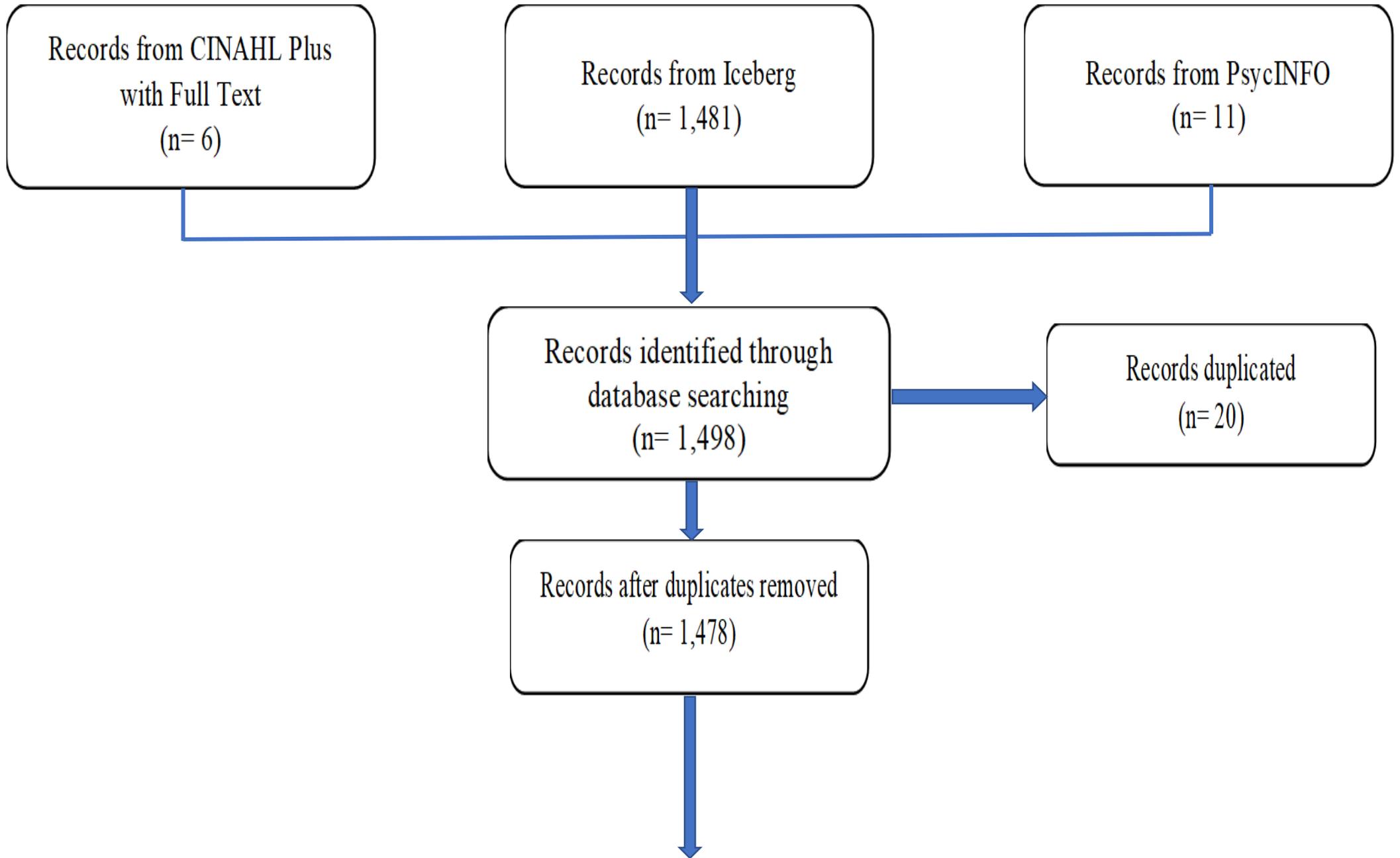


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart.

Screening

Eligibility

Included

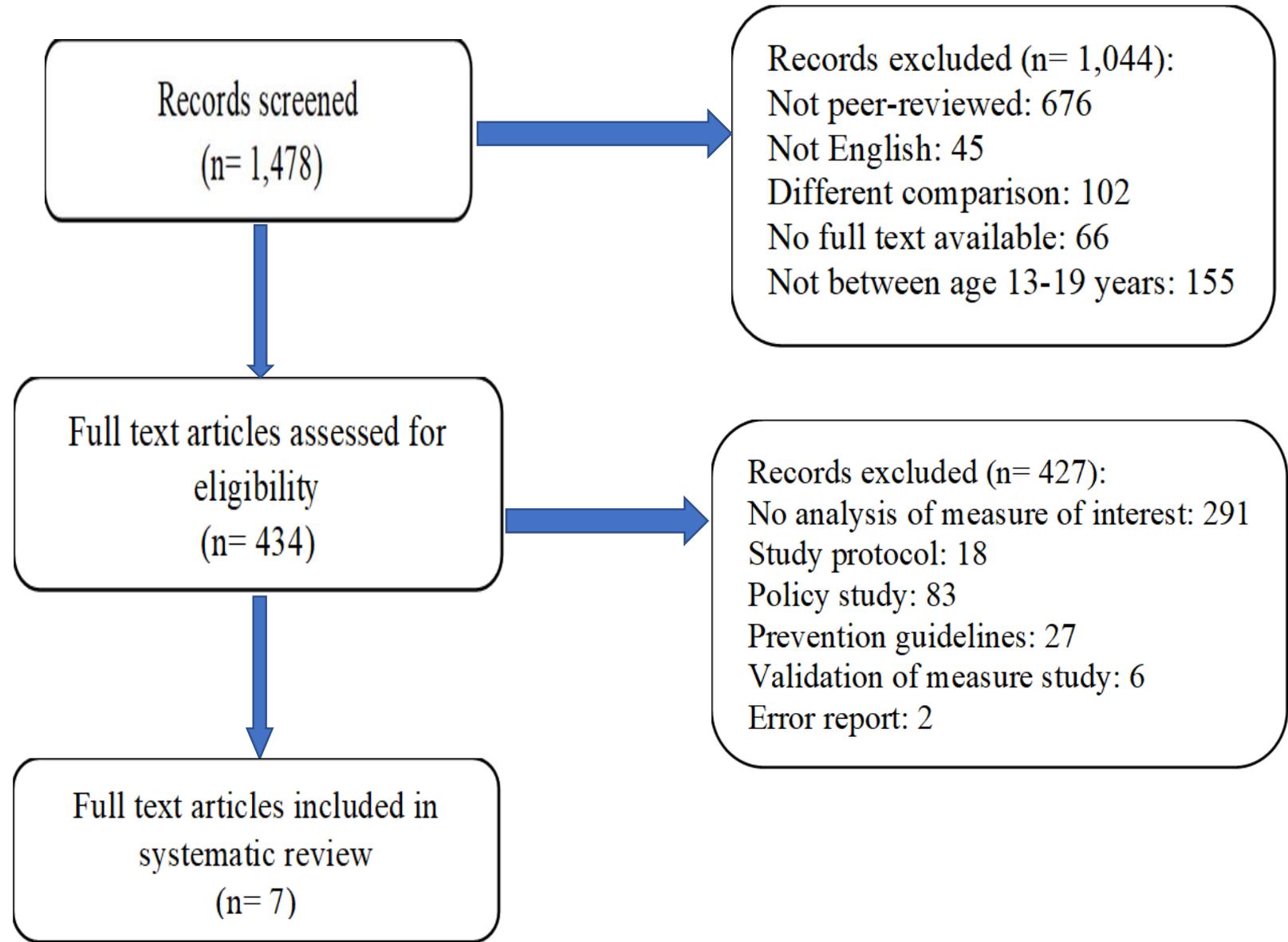


Table 1. Details of studies included in the systematic review.

#	Author	Year	Study Design	Location	Sample	N % males % females	Age range, Median (SD)
1	Houck et al.	2014	Quantitative; Cross-sectional	Rhode Island (U.S.)	NP; middle school students participating in Project TRAC ^a	N= 418 (/) % males (/) % females *not provided	12-14 years; / (/)
2	Hudson and Fetro	2015	Descriptive, cross-sectional, correlational	Midwest (U.S.)	NP; undergraduate students from 1 university	N= 697 49.8% males 50.2% females 0.6% unidentified	18-19 years; / (/)
3	Jonsson, Priebe, Bladh, and Svedin	2014	Empirical study; Quantitative study	Sweden	P; Swedish high school students	N= 3,288 45.8% males 54.2% females	16-22 years; 18.3 (/)
4	Jonsson, Bladh, Priebe, and Svedin	2015	Empirical study; Interview; Quantitative study	Sweden	P; high school students in Swedish Educational Registry	N= 3,432 46.4% males 53.6% females	16-18 years, 17 (✓)
5	Rial et al.	2018	Empirical study; Quantitative study	Spain	NP; high school students in 2 provinces (A Coruña and Pontevedra)	N= 3,772 49.8% males 50.2% females	12-17 years, 14.41 (1.64)
6	Wachs et al.	2016	Empirical study; Quantitative study	Germany, Netherlands, U.S., and Thailand	P; German, Dutch, American, and Thai middle and high school students	N= 2,162 45.4% males 54.6% females	11-19 years; 14.49 (1.66)
7	Ybarra and Mitchell	2014	Empirical study; Quantitative study	U.S.	P; adolescents across the U.S.	N= 3,715 43.4% males 56.6% females	13-18 years; / (/)

Table 2. Findings of studies examining association between sexting and self-esteem

#	Exposure	Outcome	Measures of Association		p-value; 95% CI (/ = not provided)	Statistical Significance
1	emotional self-efficacy	effect size for sexting vs no sexting	Cohen's δ = 0.42		p < 0.01; 0.22-0.61	✓
2	self-esteem	all sexting behaviors	B = -0.090, Std error = 0.054, β = -0.050		/	✗
3	low self-esteem	engaging in sexting	OR = 1.07		p < 0.05; 1.02-1.12	✓
4	low self-esteem	a) No sexting b) Met online, sex online c) Posted sexual pictures d) Sold sex online	a) 568 (19.9%) b) 19 (31.7%) c) 36 (29.8%) d) 12 (52.2%)	a/b (p < 0.05); / a/c (p < 0.01); / a/d (p < 0.001); /		✓
5	self-esteem	active sexting	t = 4.57		p < 0.001; /	✓
6	low self-esteem	likelihood of sexting	OR = 0.80		p = 0.024; CI: 0.65-0.97	✓
7	high self-esteem ^b	no sexting vs sexting	Males: OR = 0.3 No sexting: 268 (18.1%) Sexting: 5 (4.4%)	Females: OR = 0.3 No sexting: 299 (15.0%) Sexting: 9 (5.2%)	Males: p < 0.005; 0.1-0.7 Females: p < 0.003; 0.2-0.7	✓

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Summary of Main Findings

In this systematic review of 7 studies, the association between sexting and self-esteem was examined. Results suggest that sexting and self-esteem are associated, with an increased likelihood of sexting in persons with low self-esteem.



Public Health Implications

- Cell phones= ubiquitous
- Potential long-term consequences of sexting due to the impulsive nature of sexting and the belief that it is harmless
 - adolescents are more impulsive than adults
- Sexting and self-esteem fit within the context of adolescent sexual development and may be a viable indicator of adolescent sexual activity and a marker of other risk behaviors.
- Mean age of first smartphone acquisition is 10.3 years (Madigan et al., 2018)
 - Important for middle school educators, pediatricians, and parents to have ongoing and engaging conversations with adolescents (early & middle) regarding sexting
 - American Academy of Pediatrics- good resource

And... sexting?



- The following should be addressed at adolescent primary care health visits:
 - depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-esteem, body image/dissatisfaction, substance use/abuse, DUI/DWI, peer pressure, gang violence, bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Questionnaires used:
 - CRAFFT
 - AUDIT
 - CAST
 - DAST-20
 - PHQ-2, PHQ-9
 - Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale-30

Policy Implications



- Critical next step:
 - Separating consensual sexting from nonconsensual sexting and actual child pornography
 - Majority of current literature supports:
 - Consensual teen-to-teen sexting does not warrant law enforcement involvement
 - More a health and education issue that could be better addressed at home, in schools, and in primary care
- Efforts and resources to criminalize sexts should be redirected to educational programs on digital citizenship and healthy relationships

Limitations

Prevalence of Multiple Forms of Sexting Behavior Among Youth A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

Sheri Madigan, PhD; Anh Ly, MA; Christina L. Rash, BA; Joris Van Ouytsel, PhD; Jeff R. Temple, PhD

IMPORTANCE The existing literature on sexting among youth shows that sexting is a predictor of sexual behavior and may be associated with other health outcomes and risky behaviors. However, there remains a lack of consensus on the prevalence of sexting, which is needed to inform future research, intervention, and policy development.

- [← Editorial page 317](#)
- [← JAMA Pediatrics Patient Page page 400](#)
- [+ Supplemental content](#)

- The true prevalence of sexting is difficult to ascertain
 - Inconsistent reports of prevalence (range from 5% to more than 44%)
- However, the rates are far from negligible

Limitations

- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses are reliant on the methods used in the included individual studies
- A notable limitation of sexting research in general:
 - variability in definitions and sampling
 - “sexting” and “self-esteem”

Future Research

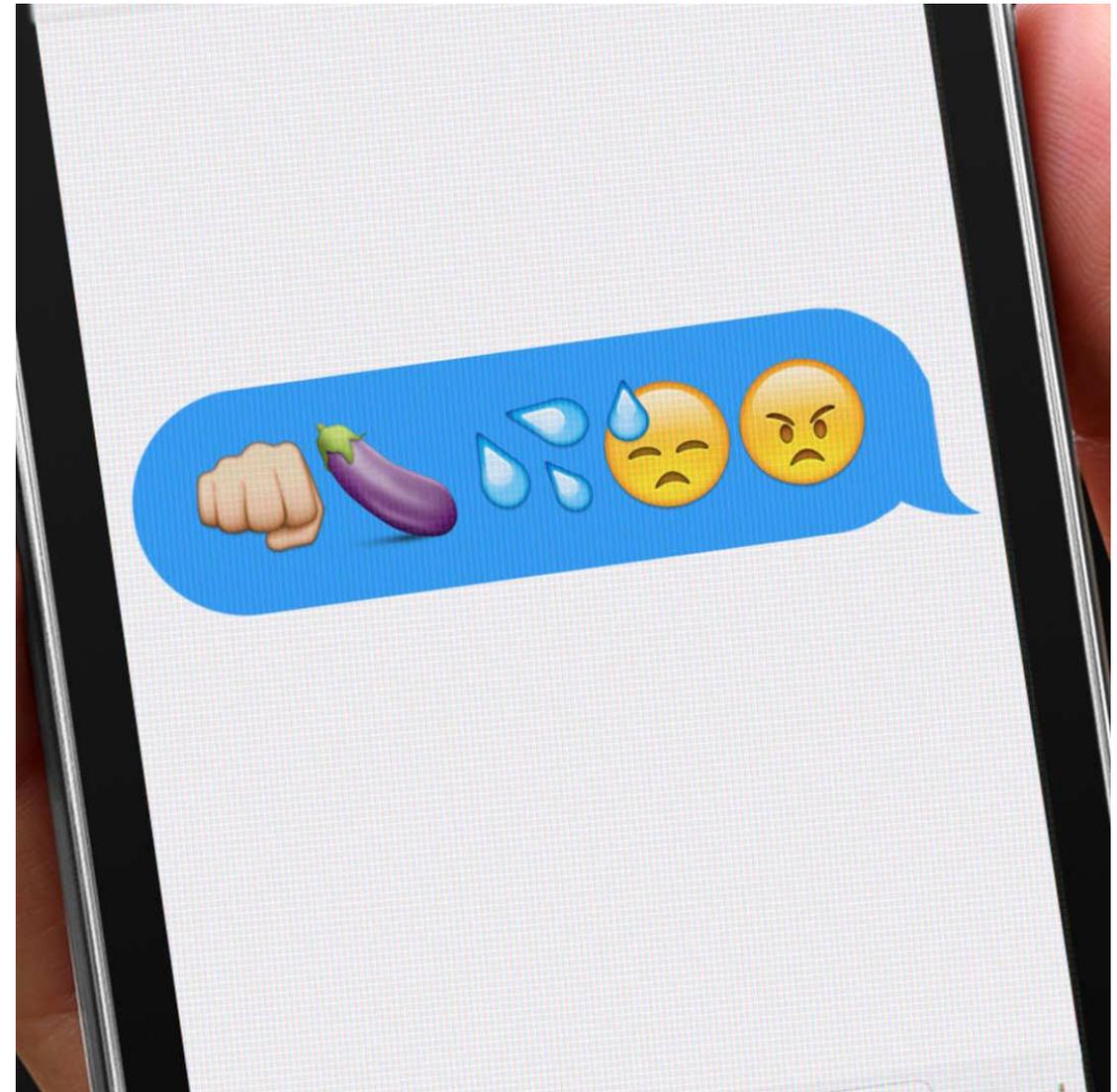


- Develop a uniform definition of sexting and present findings for each component
- Methodological clarity
 - Provide prevalence rates for each messaging method (images, videos, and texts)
- More studies examining the association between sexting and self-esteem
 - Primary interest \neq cyberbullying
 - Assess self-esteem at multiple timepoints
 - Stratify different age groups
- Develop age-appropriate screening questionnaires on sexting
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of educational campaigns and interventions surrounding sexting

SECRET TEXTING CODES YOUR KIDS COULD BE USING

LMIRL - Let's Meet In Real Life
Broken - Hung Over
CU46 - See you for sex
DOC - Drug Of Choice
NIFOC - Naked in front of computer
GNOC - Get Naked On Cam
GYPO - Get Your Pants Off
IWSN - I Want Sex Now
53X - Sex
LH6 - Let's have sex
TDTM - Talk Dirty To Me
8 - Oral sex
SUGARPIC - Suggestive or erotic photograph
IPN - I'm posting naked
PAL - Parents Are Listening
PAW or PRW - Parents Are Watching
PIR - Parents In Room
POS - Parents Over Shoulder
9 and CD9 or "Code 9" - parents are nearby
99 - Parents are gone
KPC - Keeping Parents Clueless
MOS - Mom Over Shoulder
P911 - Parent Alert or Parent Emergency
WTTP - Want to trade pictures?
KOTL - Kiss on the lips
PRON - Porn
420 - Marijuana
ZERG - To gang up on someone
AF - As F**k
WTF - What The F**
WUF - Where You From

WYCM - Will You Call Me?
WYRN - What's Your Real Name?
Q2C - Quick To Cum
RU/18 - Are You Over 18?
RUMORF - Are You Male OR Female?
RUH - Are You Horny?
S2R - Send To Receive
MPFB - My Personal F** Buddy
NALOPKT - Not A Lot Of People Know That
MOOS - Member Of The Opposite Sex
MOSS - Member(s) Of The Same Sex
MorF - Male or Female
C-P - Sleepy
F2F - Face-to-Face, a.k.a. FaceTime
HAK - Hugs And Kisses
ILU - I Love You
IWSN - I Want Sex Now
J/O - Jerking Off
KOTL - Kiss On The Lips
KFY -or- K4Y - Kiss For You
459 - I love you
ADR - Address
AEAP - As Early As Possible
ALAP - As Late As Possible
ASL - Age/Sex/Location
143 - I love you
182 - I hate you
1174 - Nude club
1337 or L337 - Leet, a coded alphabet
KMS - Kill Myself
KYS - Kill Yourself





Questions?

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