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How Sexting and Mobile-Porn Use Affect Peer Pressure and Relationships Among Early High School Teenagers

In 2014, Mariek Vanden Abeele, Scott W. Campbell, Steven Eggermont, and Keith Roe conducted a psychological research study on sexting and mobile porn use and how that affects their peer group dynamics, need for popularity, and peer pressure. The study was conducted in Flanders, Belgium and the research focused on mid-adolescents, defined as ages 15-17. Prior to this study, a large number of previous studies showed that the regular pornographic images from mobile phones is common in adolescent peer groups. This study was conducted to see how peer acceptance and a desire to be popular influence adolescents' willingness to participate in sexting and mobile porn use, as they were described as anti social activities.

The researchers had several hypotheses, including that adolescents who consider themselves more popular with the opposite sex and who have a greater want for popularity, are more likely to engage in sexting. Regarding mobile porn use, they hypothesized that boys who encounter more peer pressure are more likely to engage in it. Before conducting the study, they noted that boys care more about competition and hierarchy and are most concerned with status-gaining, while girls are invested in intimate relationships with other girls. The researchers abided by ethical considerations by having anonymous questionnaires, guaranteeing that the students' answers would be confidential. The mean age of participants was 15.28 years, 50.6% being boys and 49.4% being girls. The culture in Flanders, Belgium is described as more nonrestrictive toward children and their sexual activity, as they begin sexual education at about age ten and the legal age for sexual activity is sixteen.

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The results of the study are mostly what the researchers suspected, with a few unexpected findings. In their total of 1,943 participants, 6.3% reported having used their phone to send a semi-naked picture of themselves to someone, while mobile porn, defined as having pornographic pictures or video content on their mobile phone, was a bit more at 8.7%. They were correct in finding that 13.9% of boys had pornographic images on their phone, while only 3.4% of girls did. The boys in the study were notably more likely than girls to send a nude photo or video of themselves to someone. All of their hypotheses were supported except that students who experienced more peer pressure were not more likely to engage in sexting, and instead reported having a higher use of mobile pornography.

The research concluded that peer group relationships is a key in comprehending sexting and mobile porn use behaviors. The findings from the study provided evidence that understanding of peer pressure, popularity, and same-sex or opposite-sex patterns, give leave to establish a better hypothesis about which teenagers are more likely to participate in these behaviors.

References

- Vanden Abeele, M., Campbell, S. W., Eggermont, S., & Roe, K. (2014). Sexting, Mobile Porn Use, and Peer Group Dynamics: Boys' and Girls' Self-Perceived Popularity, Need for Popularity, and Perceived Peer Pressure. *Media Psychology*, 17(1), 6–33.
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