SEXTING AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: Our study addresses sexting as the expanding online phenomenon that is now closely related to the adolescence phase of children and teenagers. The main research goal was to investigate the adolescents' family environment and quality of their relationships with parents, and analyze the subsequent differences of pursuing self - and peer-sexting behavior. We examined 790 respondents aged 12 – 18 who came from all parts of Slovakia. The achieved research results indicate that two-parent families where the stable environment and good relationships prevail can protect the adolescents and reduce the frequency of self - and peer-sexting. On the other hand, the adolescents who grow up in single-parent and reconstructed families or joint custody describe their relationships with parents as rather complicated or poor. As a result, they are statistically more inclined to pursue the individual forms of self and peer-sexting.

Keywords: family environment, adolescents, sexting, adolescent sexting, cyberspace.

1 Introduction

We can see that the characteristics of the 21st century and 'global world' are present in various spheres of our lives. Parents have to deal with new child-raising and adolescence-related issues their ancestors could have hardly imagined. Compared to the past, the family conditions these children are being raised in are now different in many ways. Their childhood and adolescence are significantly affected by means of digital communication that are also involved in the education and socialization process, development of relations with the outside world, free time, system of values, knowledge acquisition, etc. Such means of digital communication apparently have a number of positive effects; however, they also pose diverse risks the educators have to face.

Phenomena related to the digital world have become the current concern of experts, researchers and specialists working in different fields. Education and pedagogical studies (that cooperate with the other sciences) treat them as new unexplored risks to be encountered by children and youth as they enter cyberspace and perform online activities. One of such issues refers to the online sexual behaviors among youth today. The current research is being challenged by the relatively new adolescent sexting issue. J. Burén (2018), states that sexting has recently reached the attention and interest of many professionals and scholars. Rather positive contributions of related scientific studies are thus the research data which helps us better understand this phenomenon. The problem is that most theoretical knowledge and empiric findings are based in the US. It is therefore disputable to what extent this data is applicable for European countries (Baumgartner, S. E. et al., 2014).

In the above-mentioned context, the present study addresses sexting itself and the impact of family environment on sexting occurrence among children and adolescents. Our goal is to find the answers on the national level.

1.1 Sexting as a studied online phenomenon

Although the sexting activity is rather common for the adults and adolescents, the actual concept of 'sexting' is not as frequent in the pedagogical, education, psychological, medical or judicial sciences. The term itself combines two words: 'sex' and 'texting'.

Sexting is most often defined as sending/receiving sexual and sexually explicit electronic messages (e.g. SMS, MMS and emails), materials or contents (such as nude or half-naked photos and videos). The age of such communication actors has its pedagogical and psychological, as well as social, moral and legal aspects.

K. Martinez-Prather and D. M. Vandiver (2014) claim that the generally accepted definition of sexting does not exist yet. They draw attention to the severe methodological impacts the absence of specialized researchers' consensus has in this case (compare Barrense-Dias, Berchtold, Surís and Akre, 2017). Sexting generally includes the adolescents' activities (such as circulating sexual contents among peers) which seem to result from this millennium's hyper-sexualized culture. As the number of children and adolescents who regularly use their cellphones increases, the subsequent risks of such sexting activities also rise. Another tendency applies to the parental control and restrictions for the adolescents' use of cellphones, i.e. more frequent control reduces the chances of sexting behavior.

Digital communication media and Internet have considerably changed the way the adolescents communicate and make contacts. Apparently, sexting became one of these communication methods. Young people have their own intimate desires to share. If they want to express them harmlessly during their personal and sexual development or through sexting, we should be sensitive to their decisions. Yet, we must be aware that the misuse of such intimate materials can have serious consequences. From this perspective, the issue is indeed controversial and disputable. The perception of Internet as a popular way to pursue sexual activities is also supported by the Triple A Engine Theory (Cooper, A., 1998). It cites easy accessibility, affordability and anonymity as explanations. This theory was later complemented by other researchers. Hertlein & Stevenson (2010) related the Internet's popularity and the Triple A Engine Theory to intimacy problems in relationships and extended the original Cooper's concept to additional A-explanations – approximation, acceptability, ambiguity and accommodation (see Cooper, A. et al., 2000, Jonsson, L. S., 2015). K. Young et al. propose the ACE model, incorporating anonymity the Internet offers, convenience of performing such activities comfortably from home and immediate escape from sexting as factors salient to the Internet (Griffiths, D.M., 2017). The other Triple C Engine Theory (Reinhold, 2000) regards the Internet as an interactive medium in which all participants are not only recipients, but also potential senders. The Internet provides opportunity for communication, collaboration and social life, as well as construction of virtual communities (Leiblum, S., Doring, N., 2002, In Cooper, A. ed. 2002). To examine the motivating factors of sexting, K. Martinez-Prather and D.M. Vandiver (2014) apply Cohen and Felson's criminological Routine Activities Theory which holds that the criminal activity occurs when three essential elements of crime converge in space and time: the offender, an attractive target and the absence of capable guardianship. As for sexting, the offender is sext sender (sexter), the attractive target is sext receiver and the capable guardianship is provided by educator. Sexting is not possible if one of these elements is absent.

The adolescents' motives to perform sexting activities are of different kinds. Based on the extensive references, J. Burén (2018) states that sexting is often a fun way to flirt or attract someone, it can be also a constructive part of being in a romantic relationship. Some adolescents see sexting as a safer pursuit of sexual activities – compared to the offline interpersonal sexual interaction. Girls use sexting to gain popularity and boys' attention, i.e. to assure themselves of their good and attractive looks. Young men are not as urged to do such activities as girls. Teenage girls are often directly and indirectly pressured by their surroundings or boyfriends they fear to lose without sexting. Burén further explains that motivation is a significant factor in the evaluation of sexting as an acceptable, inappropriate or inacceptable activity. Sexting is now a natural part of youth's sexual development and rather frequent among the older

adolescents. As a matter of fact, this behavior mostly involves romantic couples and partners.

Similarly, K. Hollá (2017), who addressed the issue of sexting in Slovakia from the theoretical and experimental point of view and introduced the methodology of cyberbullying and sexting detection, states that sexting can be perceived as a part of relationships where partners want to flirt, develop romantic relationship, draw the attention or initiate sexual activities. However, Hollá also warns that sexting may occur as a short-term cyber aggression (the misuse of texts and photos to dishonor or humiliate someone) or a long-term cyberbullying (the intentional and repetitive misuse/abuse of intimate photos or information to dishonor the victim). Based on the works of K. Kopecký, R. Szotkowski and V. Krejčí, in most cases, Slovak and Czech adolescents use sexting to maintain romantic relationships, have fun, give in to social pressure of the consumer society and take revenge on the others.

1.2 Family environment as a possible adolescent sexting determinant

Although there are many scientific and theoretical works on the technological aspect of sexting (the use of digital media to send and receive sexts), various sexting forms and motivations or related risks, fewer sources deal with sexting predictors. These predictors can relate to the inner characteristics of individuals and to the influences of the social environment that shapes their personalities. Inspiring researches were carried out by Swedish author L. S. Jonsson. Even though Jonsson detected only small sociodemographic differences between the adolescent sexters and non-sexters, she indicated the existence of correlations between online sexual behavior and poor parental relationships. Still, this hypothesis requires further investigation. Jonsson says: „…multivariate analyses, however, did not support an association except for a correlation between sending a sexual picture and having a controlling and less caring mother (both genders) and experiences of voluntary online sexual exposure and having an overprotective/controlling father (boys)." Based on the work of S. E. Baumgartner et al., (2012), L.S. Jonsson states that her research „only partially confirmed other studies which found young people with online sexual behavior come from less cohesive families than those who do not take such risks." Based on the work of Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), she applies the attachment theory (J. Bowlby) in this context. The child – parent relationship is deemed to be significant as it affects the other interpersonal and close relationships of a child, such as relationships with romantic partners or peers. Similar findings are achieved in the research by Sorbring et al. (2014) that Jonsson mentions in her works. The research showed that young people with online romantic and sexual experiences had poorer relationships with their parents and peers. Additionally, certain research data gained by L. S. Jonsson suggest „that the group of youth with an online sexual behavior felt significantly lonelier than their counterparts without such experience (unpublished data). Their loneliness might lead them into a more social life online and where some contacts might results in sexual encounters, also sex selling" (Jonsson, L. S., 2015). We believe there are some parallels with our research findings, as well.

Many of our previous studies involved family and various aspects of its functions. We relied on U. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, U., 1979) which served as our theoretical background. According to Bronfenbrenner, child development is involved in the complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of environment – from the immediate family and school environment to the wider system of values presented to children. In case of family microenvironment, we have to account for the bidirectional and reciprocal relationships (parents affect children, but children's personalities also influence parents' behavior). As for the sexual development of an individual, we should keep in mind the complexity of such process incorporating biological, psychological, cognitive, socio-cultural and environmental factors. Each adolescent deals with them differently.

When addressing the adolescent sexting, we were inspired by L. S. Jonsson (2015) and J. Burén (2018) who had also applied Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2005). This model includes four important integrating components – process, person, context and time – which take part in adolescent development. There is a dynamic relationship between the individual and their social context, in which the biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioral characteristics of individuality interact with the social context at different levels. This model consists of a number of levels – the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem (original levels of system) and also the chronosystem.

The individual characteristics are shaped by the social environment. As a result, the adolescents actually use them to intervene with this environment. Sexuality-wide, these characteristics are also predispositions (such as hormonal changes and the onset of puberty) that affect the sexual development and behavior of the adolescents. The adolescence is predominantly influenced by family microenvironment. Family should answer the questions about adolescence, physical and psychological growth, sexual maturation and behavior, as well as related applicable norms. Parents are supposed to be the role models for their children in terms of such behavior and preserve the values they expect them to hold onto. The early sexuality of children usually depends on numerous factors, such as the quality of family relationships, mutual respect and tolerance, understanding, openness and honesty when discussing adolescent issues, support and specific parenting style. Families are now challenged by the new phenomenon of media (techno-microsystem) which is crucial for the observed issue. It is also important to take the adolescents' relationships and communication with their classmates, peers and friends into account.

L. S. Jonsson points out that multiple researches demonstrate the connection between poor parental interest/childcare and the online sexual at-risk behaviors, i.e. between less cohesive families and possible sexing. Researchers such as D. Wight, L. Williamson and M. Henderson (2006) also studied the power of parental influence and family environment over online sexual behaviors of adolescents. Their Scotland-based research results (but also the other investigations) suggest that several factors, e.g. family structure and relationships (in particular), bond between parents and their child, parental control and the ability to talk about children's sexual development and life, are highly important for the sexual behavior of adolescents. Wight, Williamson and Henderson, however, claim that most findings are disputable since they mainly result from the adolescents' insights and do not rely on their parents' point of view. This issue is rather complex so it is expected that quantitative but mostly qualitative strategies are to be used in the future researches.

Even though the subject matter of our study is first and foremost related to the family microenvironment, we would like to touch upon the other levels of Bronfenbrenner's model. The closest level to the microsystem is the mesosystem. It refers to connections among microsystems (home, school and neighborhood) that support and foster children. In other words, it functions as the connection between different parts of the microsystem. The exosystem is represented by settings that do not involve children and young people but affect their experiences (it is larger social surrounding). Its importance lies in the sexual education and influence of mass media on both normative and at-risk adolescent sexual behaviors. The exosystem also contains social networks for parents run by people who can provide parental advice and support. The macrosystem includes cultural values, agreed practices, customs and laws of particular society. Again, cultural values and existing laws can influence adolescent sexual development and behavior. Chronosystem as a final level covers major transitions in life of an individual and various environmental and historical events occurring in the personality development. These events (e.g. changes in family structure such as divorce, parents' separation, moving to another city, etc.) tend to change the

interactions of a child with the rest of the system (Jonsson, L. S., 2015).

In the next section, we took a number of foreign research findings into consideration and framed our own research goals. Although the issue of sexting predictors is examined and investigated abroad, it falls far below the other sexting researches. As for Slovakia, the systematic researches on this issue are likewise rather rare. We thus tried to explore one of the crucial determinants affecting the frequency and incidence of the adolescent sexting and identify its impacts on this at-risk phenomenon. Family structure and environment, as well as the quality of family relationships are all essential factors that influence sexting occurrence.

The main goal was to look into the structure of the adolescents' family environment, investigate the quality of their relationships with parents and analyze the subsequent differences of pursuing self- and peer-sexting behavior.

We wanted to find out what impact the family structure and quality of relationships with parents had on:

- self-sexting, i.e. online presentation of one's own sexuality via submission of the intimate material
- peer-sexting, i.e. submission of classmates'/friends' sexual or sexually explicit materials and requesting them for one's own account

2 Methods

Our research involved 790 adolescent respondents aged 12 – 18. The research sample consisted of 376 boys (47.6%) and 414 girls (52.4%). This selection is based on the applied stratified sampling strategy.

The results were obtained from the distributed custom questionnaire. The reliability of this research instrument was verified on the basis of Cronbach's alpha statistical analysis. Our questionnaire contained factual inputs and questions to help us explore the individual predictors of adolescent sexting. For individual scales, the research instrument reliability ranged from very good (0.936) to questionable (0.681). Distributed questionnaire embraced multiple interrelated problems. Given the subject matter of this research study, we only present results associated with the differences in adolescent sexting frequency that arise from particular typology of family environment and relationships. Adolescent sexting frequency was evaluated on the scale of 5 points: 1 – never, 2 – once, 3 – twice, 4 – multiple times, 1 – every day. ANOVA test was used as a test criterion to determine the statistical significance level of p=0.05.

3 Results

This section includes the above-mentioned results related to the differences in adolescent sexting frequency based on specific structure of family environment. Important findings were achieved for both self- and peer-sexting questions and their subsequent answers. Table 1 shows the data acquired from the investigation of self-sexting as sending and publishing sexual/sexually explicit photos of the adolescent. The achieved statistical significance of p=0.016 suggests that the frequency of forwarding one's own intimate photo at least once a month is higher for the adolescents who live in a less stable family environment and structure (e.g. joint custody, single-parent or reconstructed family). It further indicates that the stability of family environment is a protective factor that lowers sexting frequency. Considering the structure of family environment, it is interesting, yet not surprising, that posting/publishing one's own intimate material online is not statistically significant. This fact is rather reasonable as we know that social networks include profiles of respondents' friends, teachers, educators, parents and other acquaintances. As a result, pubescent children and adolescents do not share or post their intimate photos on the Internet. As opposed to the private romantic or serious

relationships and friendships, the previous research (Hollá, K., 2017) showed that the adolescents were more careful with public presentation of their intimate photos or videos.

Table 1. Impact of different family structures on self-sexting no.1

Sending sexts	Family structure	N	AM	SD	SEM	df	F	p
Sending nude photos	two-parent family	510	1.34	0.832	0.037	4	3.057	0.016
	two-gener. family	79	1.14	0.525	0.059			
	single parent	126	1.46	1.086	0.097			
	joint custody	28	1.71	1.301	0.246			
	reconstr. family	47	1.47	0.929	0.136			
posting one's own photo online	two-parent family	510	1.05	0.343	0.015	4	2.180	0.070
	two-gener. family	79	1.05	0.316	0.036			
	single parent	126	1.15	0.608	0.054			
	joint custody	28	1.14	0.591	0.112			
	reconstr. family	47	1.15	0.510	0.074			

Explanatory notes: N – number; AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; SEM – standard error of mean, F – test criterion; df – degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance level

Peer-sexting is defined as sending and circulating the intimate materials among peers. In Table 2, the achieved statistical significance of p=0.005 suggests the adolescents who live in a joint custody forwarded the nude photo of a classmate/friend or another person more often. The statistical significance of p=0.004 further implies that the frequency of requesting such intimate materials was also higher for this group. According to the research results, children raised in a joint custody sent their classmate's (AM=1.79), friend's or someone else's (AM=1.71) intimate material and requested it (AM=1.71) more often that children who are raised by two-parent or multi-generation families.

The adolescents from single-parent family (AM=1.44) also admitted to send the sexual photo of another person more often that respondents from two-parent (AM=1.15), multi-generation (AM=1.13) and reconstructed (AM=1.23) families. Worth to mention is this group's statistical significance of forwarding the intimate photos of familiar person. It turned out that children raised by one parent were more inclined to forward the intimate photos than children from the other types of family.

We can thus assume that two-parent, multi-generation and reconstructed families create the environment of higher parental control and better mutual communication between parents and their children. The adolescents raised in such families tend to give a different online self-presentation than those living in single-parent families or joint custody.

Table 2. Impact of different family structures on self-sexting no.2

Variable	Group	N	M	SD	SEM	df	F	p
sending nude photo of a classmate	two-parent family	510	1.23	0.737	0.033	4	3.776	0.005
	multi-generation family	79	1.16	0.492	0.055			
	single-parent family	126	1.26	0.718	0.064			
	joint custody	28	1.79	1.397	0.264			
	reconstructed family	47	1.28	1.036	0.151			
sending nude photo of another person	two-parent family	510	1.33	0.870	0.039	4	3.240	0.012
	multi-generation family	79	1.10	0.469	0.053			
	single-parent family	126	1.43	0.916	0.082			
	joint custody	28	1.71	1.329	0.251			
	reconstructed family	47	1.30	0.689	0.100			
requesting someone to send their photo	two-parent family	510	1.23	0.685	0.030	4	3.831	0.004
	multi-generation family	79	1.23	0.639	0.072			
	single-parent family	126	1.40	0.939	0.084			
	joint custody	28	1.71	1.329	0.251			
	reconstructed family	47	1.19	0.647	0.094			
forwarding nude photo of familiar person	two-parent family	510	1.15	0.591	0.026	4	5.745	0.000
	multi-generation family	79	1.13	0.435	0.049			
	single-parent family	126	1.44	0.984	0.088			
	joint custody	28	1.39	0.956	0.181			
	reconstructed family	47	1.23	0.633	0.092			

Explanatory notes: N – number; AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; SEM – standard error of mean, F – test criterion; df – degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance level

Following section contains self- and peer-sexting results based on the quality of relationships with parents. As shown in Table 3 and 4, self- and peer-sexting tend to occur if the respondents' relationships with parents are rather complicated and poor. The achieved statistical significance of p=0.000 and p=0.025 for self-sexting (Table 3) suggests the frequency of forwarding one's own intimate photo at least once a month is higher for the adolescents who have poor or complicated relationships with their parents, i.e. the quality of mutual family relationships is lower. The adolescent respondents with such poor or complicated relationships (AM=1.84) also requested the nude photos more often that those who specified a better quality of family relationships.

The achieved statistical significance of p=0.000 to p=0.013 for peer-sexting (Table 4) indicates that respondents who have poor or complicated relationships with parents sent and forwarded their classmates' or friends' intimate photos at least once a month.

Table 3. Impact of family relationships on self-sexting no.1

Sending sexts	Family relationships	N	AM	SD	SEM	df	F	p
sending one's own nude photo	very good	456	1.34	0.844	0.040	2	3.706	0.025
	average	281	1.33	0.894	0.053			
	complicated	44	1.70	1.112	0.168			
requesting someone to send their photo	very good	456	1.25	0.714	0.033	2	13.626	0.000
	average	281	1.21	0.715	0.043			
	complicated	44	1.84	1.219	0.184			
publishing one's own photo online	very good	456	1.06	0.349	0.016	2	1.244	0.289
	average	281	1.11	0.530	0.032			
	complicated	44	1.05	0.211	0.032			

Explanatory notes: N – number; AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; SEM – standard error of mean, F – test criterion; df – degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance level

Table 4. Impact of family relationships on self-sexting no.2

Sending sexts	Family relationships	N	AM	SD	SEM	df	F	p
sending nude photo of a classmate	very good	456	1.21	0.727	0.034	2	10.001	0.000
	average	281	1.20	0.685	0.041			
	complicated	44	1.73	1.208	0.182			
sending nude photo of another person	very good	456	1.31	0.816	0.038	2	4.621	0.010
	average	281	1.30	0.827	0.049			
	complicated	44	1.70	1.212	0.183			
forwarding nude photo of familiar person	very good	456	1.19	0.670	0.031	2	4.391	0.013
	average	281	1.18	0.626	0.037			
	complicated	44	1.50	1.045	0.158			

Explanatory notes: N – number; AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; SEM – standard error of mean, F – test criterion; df – degrees of freedom; p – statistical significance level

4 Discussion

Sending one's own intimate photo or sexual/sexually explicit photos of classmates, friends and peers has become a certain behavioral standard, common for the current generation of pubescent and adolescent children. This generation does not see sexting as the at-risk phenomenon that could be possibly dangerous. The adolescents rather think it is an opportunity to express their sexual interests and show their intimacy and self-presentation. Their decision to pursue the online sexual behavior, such as taking photos, recording videos or texting, is an outcome of the short-term thinking. Our research goal was to inspect the adolescents' family environment, observe the quality of their relationships with parents and detect the subsequent differences in self- and peer-sexting behavior. The quality of respondents' relationships with parents made significant changes to several areas – sending nude photos of themselves, classmates or another person, as well as requesting such materials and forwarding nude photos of familiar person.

We found out that children raised in joint custody had been more active in sending their own intimate photos than children growing up in two-parent and multi-generation families. They also sent their classmates' or friends' nude photos more often. It further turned out that, besides joint custody, the pubescent and adolescent children raised in single-parent and reconstructed families had been more engaged in the individual forms of self- and peer-sexting.

The cause supposedly lies in the lower parental control of single-parent and reconstructed families or joint custody. Another reason might be that pubescent and adolescent children from single-parent families who have poor or complicated relationships with parents desire to draw the online attention. In the world of online progress, self- and peer-sexting can be also treated as a part of natural maturation process. Nevertheless, the family situation seems to be more difficult for young people raised in joint custody when compared to two-parent families.
We realize the need to compare the family typology and quality of relationships with parents on one hand, and examine the correlations between the individual variables which will be tackled in the next study.

The achieved research results indicate that two-parent families where the stable environment and good mutual relationships prevail can protect the adolescents and decrease the frequency of self- and peer-sexting. Statistically speaking, the adolescents from the incomplete families are more inclined to succumb the online sexual behavior than respondents from the other family types. These findings are also supported by S. E. Baumgartner et al. (2014) who found out that the incidence of online sexual behavior was higher for young people living in less cohesive families as opposed to those who came from complete ones. Based on the quality of relationships with parents, the respondents' answers differed considerably in several observed areas. Lower quality of mutual family relationships (especially poor or complicated relationships) statistically enhanced the occurrence of adolescent self- and peer-sexting.

Such quality might result from lower parental control, trust and intensity of mutual contact in families where poor or complicated relationships dominate. Again, these findings are widely supported by foreign researches. Worth to mention is a Swedish research by L. S. Jonsson (2015) who detected the link between at-risk online sexual behavior of adolescents and poor relationships with parents. In fact, Jonsson states there is a correlation between sending one's own nude photo and authoritative parenting style. M. Temple Smith – S. Moore – D. Rosenthal (2015) also believe that individual parenting styles have a major impact on the level of adolescents' online sexual behavior. They emphasize the importance of the quality of relationships and the overall support of adolescents in this stage of life.

5 Conclusions

There are multiple motives for the adolescent sexting. Young people take it as the easier way of texting or chatting with people they trust. At the moment of sending sexts, they do not realize their inability to control what happens next with the message content. Sent and supposedly forgotten messages can reappear and impair one's life even after several years. Sexting might not at all end as an innocent activity should. As a matter of fact, it can have severe and damaging consequences for the adolescents. When defining the risks of sexting, the most frequent phenomena are as follows: cyberbullying, emotional distress (the adolescents who sexted start to realize these sexts might be published or forwarded which leads to constant worries, tension and subsequent impact on their mental health), blackmail (the blackmailer who received sexts threatens their sender and asks for money or other benefits in return for not publishing them) or unwanted attention (as stated on various parents-dedicated websites about sexting). Unfortunately, children and adolescents do not have sufficient cognitive capacity to account for all possible consequences of such abuse.

Many researches show that the tendency of sexting decreases if parents have a sincere and loving relationship with their children, apply desirable parenting methods and discuss the intimacy in an open and adequate way. Such parental approach is also required if a child has already sexted and finds it hard to deal with the incurred problems. Parents should discreetly solve the situation without being enraged or obviously disappointed in their children. The adolescents now live in the digital world that has a massive impact on their lives and experience things that are much different from their parents' childhood issues.

Parents should first find out who the recipients are (age and number of people who were sent the intimate material). If technically possible, the sext must be immediately deleted. Otherwise, it is necessary to ask the social media providers to remove it instead. Parents should also inform the school their child attends and discuss the issue with teacher, headmaster or guidance counselor. If required, the school might alert the police, as well. If, however, parents believe their child became the victim of a sexual predator and sexting is not an innocent outcome of the adolescence phase, the police should be called at once.

Such situations are more difficult to solve in case of children who are raised in reconstructed or remarried families and joint custody. Parents should therefore strengthen their empathy and deepen the emotional connection with their children or adolescents. Cooperation and mutual communication also need to be enhanced. We recommend parents to set their priorities in communication and activities that make children experience new things and help them develop their physical and emotional characteristics. Well-determined priorities might minimize the chances of using the unsafe and dangerous self- or peer-sexting to deal with emotional problems. In such cases, we need to accentuate the cooperation between family and school. This essential factor might prevent serious risks to be encountered by the adolescents using electronic devices to receive and send the information.

Teacher's duty is to enhance students' cooperation, e.g. by engaging them in various group activities that would focus on the development of pro-social and emotional aspects of their personalities. The adolescents should also work on their sense of empathy and responsibility to be able to use the modern online communication media in the appropriate and rational way. However, children's welfare almost always depends on the effective communication and cooperation between their parents and school workers.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AM