

PREVALENCE AND DETERMINANTS OF SEXTING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE ON EMERGING DIGITAL BEHAVIOURS

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Sexting, a high-risk online behavior, poses significant challenges to mental and sexual reproductive health, making it an emerging public health concern. With the rapid advancement of digital technology, coupled with modernization and enhanced digital infrastructure and facilities, the prevalence of sexting has risen globally, particularly among young adults. OBJECTIVE: This study explores the prevalence and determinants of sexting behavior among undergraduate students, contributing to understanding this issue. METHODOLOGY: A cross-sectional study was conducted using validated self-administered questionnaires among 440 undergraduate students at a university in Selangor. Stratified random sampling with probability proportionate to size was used to select participants from 12 faculties. Local, on-campus undergraduate students aged 18-25 years were included. The factors studied included sociodemographic, internal, interpersonal, and digital behavior. Data were analysed using SPSS version 29, employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including Chi's Square, Simple, and Multiple Logistic Regression. RESULTS: The prevalence of active sexting behavior (initiating, sending, and responding) among undergraduate students was 24.8%. Determinants included being male (AOR 2.502, 95% CI: 1.436-4.359), favourable attitudes toward sexting (AOR 1.125, 95% CI: 1.081-1.169), high peer pressure (AOR 2.173, 95% CI: 1.255-3.763), romantic relationships (AOR 2.447, 95% CI: 1.393-4.298), online socializing for more than 3 hours (AOR 1.873, 95% CI: 1.095-3.205), and use of online dating apps (AOR 2.535, 95% CI: 1.474-4.361). CONCLUSION: These findings reveal the significant prevalence and determinants of sexting among undergraduates, highlighting the importance of integrating both traditional and digital factors in public health strategies. Sexting is a complex behaviour influenced by a combination of sociodemographic, internal, interpersonal, and digital factors, reflecting the challenges posed by the digital age. By exploring this 'unknown' yet critical aspect of youth behavior, the findings contribute to the ongoing challenge of developing effective public health interventions in an increasingly digital world.

Keywords: Sexting, Digital behavior, Attitudes toward sexting, Perceived peer pressure, Online duration
