

Sexting Trends Among Makassar Adolescents: What's Really Happening?

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Abstract

The development of technology and digital communication has transformed social interactions among adolescents, particularly through sexting behavior, defined as the sending and receiving of sexually explicit messages, images, or videos via electronic devices. This study aims to explore sexting trends among adolescents in Makassar City. The research method employed is a survey, systematically collecting data from a representative sample of adolescents aged 12 to 18 attending various junior high and high schools. The results indicate that sexting behavior is relatively common among adolescents, with factors such as peer influence and access to social media significantly contributing to its prevalence. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of education and policy implementation in schools to address sexting issues, as well as the need for effective prevention programs. The contribution of this research lies in providing a better understanding of sexting behavior among adolescents and offering recommendations for interventions that can be undertaken by educators and parents.

Keywords: *Sexting; Adolescents; Digital Communication; Social Media; Prevention Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and digital communication has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including adolescents' social interaction. One phenomenon that has emerged as a result of this technological advancement is sexting behavior, which is defined as sending and receiving messages, images, or videos of a sexual nature through electronic devices such as mobile phones and the Internet (Doyle et al., 2021; Gassó et al., 2019). Sexting is a serious concern because it involves adolescents who are still in

the process of psychological and emotional development.

Sexting is not a new phenomenon among adolescents. Previous research has shown that these behaviors have become part of the dynamics of adolescent social interaction in different parts of the world. In the United States, research found that about 15% of adolescents have sexted in the past six months (Hinduja & Patchin, 2022). A recent meta-analysis showed that 19.3% of young individuals under 18 in Australia reported sending sex messages (via messages, images,

or videos), while 14.5% forwarded sex messages without consent (Howard et al., 2023). According to this study, sexting is influenced by factors such as self-esteem and thrill-seeking.

In Indonesia, although official data on the prevalence of sexting among adolescents is not yet available, some preliminary surveys show a worrying trend. In Indonesia, based on data from the National Police Criminal Investigation Branch and the NCMEC report (National Center of Missing & Exploited Children), in 2015, it was found that approximately 299,602 Internet Protocol (IP) addresses carried out the act of uploading and downloading child pornography content through social media platforms. This number declined in 2016 through March, with around 96,824 IPs engaging in similar activity (Rahma Siregar, 2024). This data shows that sexting behavior is a phenomenon that needs serious attention from various parties, including parents, educators, and the government.

Sexting has become a broad research topic in different countries, with various methodological approaches being used to understand this phenomenon. Sexting is influenced by gender dynamics, where pressure from the partner is the main factor that encourages adolescents to engage in sexting (Dully et al., 2023). This study contradicts the findings of other researchers who say that there is no significant difference between men and women in sexting (Gassó et al., 2020). Adolescents who engage in sexting are more likely to engage in risky sexual activities, such as unprotected sex (Ng et al., 2022).

Adolescents who sexted were seven times more likely to be sexually active than adolescents who didn't sexting (Ruvalcaba et al., 2023). An exploratory study in Ghana revealed that 84.8% of adolescents have received sexts, and 61.8% have sent sexts at least once in their lives. The reasons for sending sexts vary from flirting and having fun to being a request for sexual activity (Twumasi-Ankrah & Gyanvi-Blay, 2021). More than 20% of adolescents engage in sexting in Peru, with a higher prevalence in boys than girls (Urrunaga Ramírez et al., 2022). Parents who have strict rules about sending or receiving sexual messages are also associated with a decrease in the likelihood of adolescents sexting.

Sexting in adolescents can be explained through several psychological and sociological theories. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory states that adolescents seek self-identity and experience pressure from the surrounding environment to adjust to social norms (Emmanuel Tettey et al., 2023). In this context, sexting can be seen as an attempt by adolescents to express their sexual identity and gain recognition from peers. Bandura's Social Learning Theory is also relevant in explaining sexting behavior. According to Bandura, human behavior is studied through observation and imitation of social models around it (Attila et al., 2023). Adolescents who are exposed to sexual content through social media or peers are more likely to imitate such behavior. Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory suggests that individuals with low self-control are more likely to engage in risky behaviors (Gulledge et al., 2023). Adolescents who have

low self-control may be more likely to be tempted to sexting without considering the long-term consequences.

This study focuses on examining adolescent awareness of sexting in Makassar City and exploring the sexting behaviors exhibited by adolescents, the sources they rely on for information, the consequences of engaging in sexting, and the measures taken to prevent it. This study aims to assess the degree of awareness among adolescents, examine their sexting behavior, identify factors that influence sexting behaviors, evaluate the impact of sexting, and identify prevention initiatives among adolescents in Makassar City. This study uniquely focuses on adolescents in Makassar City, using a quantitative descriptive approach with an online survey method for extensive and representative data collection. It contributes to the literature by identifying information sources, impacts, and prevention efforts specific to Indonesia that differ from Western contexts.

This study specifically focuses on sexting behaviors among adolescents in Makassar City and does not address the use of technology in preventing sexting. While it is crucial to explore prevention strategies that involve technology, particularly for younger children or elementary school students, this research is limited to examining sexting trends among adolescents. However, we recognize the need for ongoing research that could extend to broader prevention and intervention strategies, encompassing all ages and contexts.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative paradigm with a descriptive approach to provide a clear picture of sexting behavior among adolescents in Makassar City. The research method used is a survey, which allows for systematic data collection from a representative sample (Adinugroho et al., 2019). The subjects of this study are adolescents aged 12 to 18 residing in Makassar City, and the focus is on their sexting behavior. Data were collected from various junior high schools (SMP) and high schools (SMA) in Makassar City during a specific period determined by the researcher. A questionnaire was used as the research instrument, containing sections on demographics, knowledge about sexting, behavior, sources of information, and the impact and prevention of sexting.

Sampling was conducted using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected, resulting in a sample of 192 adolescents. This technique ensured the samples were representative and unbiased.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Results of Research

The character of respondents is important because it ensures a representative sample, confirms the validity and reliability of the data, allows for proper data analysis, identifies factors that affect the results, provides information for further research, and increases transparency (Maslovskaya et al., 2019). Demographic information such as age

and gender provide a richer context for analysis and help understand how these characteristics affect the behavior studied.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on the Age of Adolescents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
13 years old	8	4,2
14 years old	35	18,2
15 years old	54	28,1
16 years old	23	12,0
17 years old	32	16,7
18 years old	40	20,8
Sex		
Girls	97	50,5
Boys	95	49,5
Education		
Junior High School	96	50,0
Senior High School	96	50,0
Total	192	100,0

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of adolescent respondents in Makassar City based on various variables. The data shows that the 15-year-old age group has the highest number of respondents, namely 54 people or 28.1%. The distribution of the sexes is relatively balanced between women and men. In terms of religion, the majority of respondents are Muslims. At the level of education, there was equality between respondents who were still in junior high school and high school, each of which was 50.0%. This data provides a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of adolescents in Makassar City who are the subject of the study. This analysis shows that the majority of respondents in this study are in the age range of 14-15 years, which indicates that this age is the peak of sexting behavior among adolescents in Makassar City. The reasonably high frequency in the 17-18-year

age group also shows that this behavior is still quite common among adolescents approaching adulthood.

Table 2 displays the frequency distribution of adolescent knowledge of sexting behavior.

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Good	25	13,0
Fair	106	55,2
Poor	61	31,8
Total	192	100,0

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

According to Table 2, most adolescents in Makassar City have an adequate understanding of sexting behavior. However, a notable percentage need more knowledge of this phenomenon. Only a tiny percentage understand it, indicating room for improved instruction and comprehension. The presence of less informed groups emphasizes the need for additional efforts to increase adolescent awareness and understanding of the consequences and hazards of sexting.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents About Sexting Behavior

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sending Behavior		
Text Message	60	25,8
Photos	78	33,5
Videos	62	26,6
Feeling challenged posting sexy photos on social media	33	14,1
Total	233	100
Receiving Behavior		
Text Message	74	23
Photos	104	32,3
Videos	101	31,4
Requesting pictures live	24	7,4
Never		

Sending/Receiving Sexting Messages	19	5,9
Total	322	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 3 reveals sexting behavior among adolescents in two main aspects: sending and receiving. Regarding sending, photos are the most widely used medium among adolescents, followed by SMS and videos. A small proportion of adolescents feel challenged to post sexy photos on social media. Meanwhile, photos are the most commonly received content, followed by videos and SMS. Several adolescents directly request pictures from others; a small fraction have never been involved in sending or receiving sexting messages. This data suggests that sexting behavior is quite common among adolescents, with a clear preference for visual media such as photos and videos. Moreover, the behavior of receiving sexted messages appears to be more common than sending, indicating the potential social stress or expectations experienced by adolescents in the scope of digital communication.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Sexting Messages

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Deleting	41	19,8
Receiving / Watching It	72	34,8
Receiving and Forwarding It	94	45,4
Total	207	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 4 shows the attitudes of adolescents towards sexting messages. Most adolescents tend to receive and forward the

sexting messages, showing a passive attitude or an urge to share the content further. Others accept and observe the content without further engagement, demonstrating curiosity or interest. A few adolescents take a more active attitude by deleting sexting messages, which may reflect concerns about privacy or rejection of such behavior. This varied attitude indicates a variety of perceptions and responses to sexting messages among adolescents, with implications for how they view and interact with sensitive digital content.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Sexting Partners

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Friends	95	39,9
Boyfriend / Girlfriend	49	20,6
Met through social media	94	39,5
Total	238	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 5 reveals that adolescents tend to engage in sexting, especially with friends and people they know from social media. Friends and acquaintances from social media are almost as proportionate as sexting couples, suggesting that the social environment, both offline and online, plays a vital role in sexting behavior among adolescents. Meanwhile, only a few are sexting with boyfriends, indicating that romantic relationships are not the only context in which sexting occurs. This data shows the complex social dynamics behind adolescent sexting behavior, with interactions occurring in various types of relationships, both personal and digital.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Sexting Motivations

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Curiosity	64	25,0
Peer influence	81	31,8
To flirt or joke around	27	10,6
For Pleasure	35	13,7
To request sex	3	1,2
Coerced/threatened	5	2
To relieve stress/tiredness	34	13,3
Lack of parental supervision	6	2,4
Total	255	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 6 reveals the various motivations of adolescents to do sexting. Friends influence this behavior significantly, indicating social stress among adolescents. Curiosity also plays an important role, reflecting the natural desire of adolescents to explore new things. Some adolescents use sexting as a form of entertainment or joke, suggesting that this behavior is not always based on severe intentions. While a small percentage of adolescents admit to using sexting as a stress reliever or to feel happy, the majority engage in forced or threatened sexting, suggesting that this behavior is more often voluntary. Despite its low percentage, the absence of parental supervision also surfaced, implying that family supervision still plays a crucial role in preventing sexting. Overall, adolescent motivations for sexting vary, with social and psychological factors dominating.

Table 7. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Source of Information

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Healthcare Workers	17	6,9

Parents	3	1,2
Internet	36	14,6
Television	8	3,2
Pornographic Videos	32	13
Print Media	30	12,1
Friends	28	11,3
Not exposed to information yet	93	37,7
Total	247	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 7 reveals that most adolescents have not received information about sexting, indicating a lack of education or socialization surrounding this issue. The Internet became the primary source of information for those already exposed, followed by porn videos and print media. Traditional sources, such as television and health, have less influence. Parents hardly play a role in providing sexting-related information, indicating a communication gap between parents and adolescents on this sensitive topic. Friends are also a source of information, reaffirming the social influence of disseminating information about sexting. This analysis highlights the need for more significant efforts to provide adequate and comprehensive education to adolescents through various channels, including the active role of parents and health workers.

Table 8. Distribution of Social Media Frequencies Used in Sexting Behavior

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Facebook	109	31,4
Line	73	21,0
X (Twitter)	83	23,9
WhatsApp	71	20,5
BBM	6	1,7
Instagram	2	0,6
Youtube	3	0,9
Total	347	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 8 shows that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for sexting behavior among adolescents, followed by Twitter and Line. WhatsApp is also quite popular but has a slightly lower frequency than the top three platforms. A small fraction of respondents only use BBM, Instagram, and YouTube, indicating that the app is less popular for sexting behavior. The findings showed a preference for social media platforms with robust personal communication features when sharing sensitive content. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding the use of social media in adolescent behavior, as well as the need for appropriate intervention on the major platforms used for sexting.

Table 9. Distribution of Knowledge on the Impact of Sexting Behavior

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Aware	35	18,2
Not Aware	157	81,8
Total	192	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 9 reveals that the majority of adolescents do not know the impact of sexting behavior, with a substantial percentage not aware of its implications or consequences. Only a tiny fraction are aware of the effects of sexting. This condition indicates a significant gap in education and awareness of the risks and consequences of sexting among adolescents. It highlights the urgent need for more effective educational programs and advocacy campaigns to increase adolescent awareness of the negative impact of sexting behavior. This effort is essential to protect them from the potential dangers that may arise from a lack of

understanding of such behavior.

Table 10. Frequency Distribution of Sexting Prevention Measures

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sexting Education	181	31,9
Religious Education	179	31,5
Increased parental supervision	144	25,3
Public campaigns	31	5,5
School policy developmen	33	5,8
Total	568	100

Source: obtained from primary data, (2024)

Table 10 demonstrates that the frequency of sexting education and religious education is nearly equal as a means of preventing sectarian behavior among adolescents. It shows that both approaches are important and influential in addressing this problem. Increased parental supervision is also significant, indicating the importance of the family's role in preventing sexting. Although they occur less frequently, public campaigns and school policymaking remain integral to preventive strategies. This data highlights the need for a multi-dimensional approach that includes education, family surveillance, and comprehensive policies to prevent sexting behavior among adolescents.

Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

A study involving 192 youths in Makassar revealed that most respondents were 15, with 54 respondents (28%). At this stage, rapid development of the sexual organs leads to significant hormonal changes, which affect

adolescent sexual behavior. Adolescence is a period of development characterized by the emergence of secondary sexual signs until sexual maturity, which is often associated with various sexual problems as a result of these changes

There are three stages of adolescent development. In early adolescence (10–13 years), there is a rapid increase in growth and physical maturity, leading to self-evaluation and identity restructuring, with acceptance by peers becoming crucial. In middle adolescence (14–16 years), puberty is almost over, new thinking skills appear, and adolescents begin to separate themselves emotionally and psychologically from their parents. Preparing for adult roles, which includes clarifying life goals, careers, and life views to form an integrated personality, characterizes late adolescence (17–19 years) (Hikmat et al., 2024; Tao et al., 2024).

Puberty becomes an important factor affecting adolescent sexual behavior, which explains why adolescents with a positive attitude toward sexuality are more prone to engaging in sexting. The second-highest respondents were 18-year-olds (20.8%) in the late adolescence or early adulthood phase. At this stage, adolescents show more mature physical and social development, leading to more real heterosexual behavior as well as increased sexual drive. Adolescents at this age are often apathetic and aggressive due to conflict with adult authority (Zhao et al., 2023). The majority of sexting perpetrators are adolescents who have entered early adulthood. The study also showed that most respondents

were women (50.5 percent) and mostly Muslims (81.8 percent).

Adolescent Knowledge of Sexting Behavior

The results showed that most respondents, 106 people (55.2%), had sufficient knowledge. Knowledge significantly influences attitude changes in adolescents. Thus, adolescents' level of expertise can affect their attitudes toward deviant behavior. Knowledge, which includes information perceived or known by an individual through observation or sensation, is important in shaping attitudes and behaviors.

The lack of knowledge about sexual issues among adolescents is often due to the minimal information they receive. This condition encourages adolescents to seek additional information from various mass media. Unfortunately, the information obtained is often inaccurate and incomplete, which can be more dangerous than total ignorance. Ignorance or half-knowledge can cause adolescents to have misperceptions and encourage them to try risky things

Knowledge is closely linked to health. A person with higher knowledge is more capable of accepting and implementing the concept of healthy living independently, creatively, and sustainably (Wamsler, 2020). We expect a high level of expertise to enhance adolescent health, as it can shape their behavior. Adolescents who possess a strong understanding of sexual health tend to exhibit better behavior when it comes to sexting, which can potentially lead to the initiation of free-sex behavior.

Adolescents generally enter adolescence without an adequate supply of knowledge

about sex. This lack of information can lead to a variety of problems, as adolescents need to prepare themselves to prevent unwanted sexual intercourse. However, this ignorance frequently engulfs adolescents, exacerbated by easy access to inaccurate information on the Internet. Adolescents' limited knowledge, high curiosity, and self-identity search efforts put them at risk of being negatively impacted by technological developments.

Adolescents Engage in Sexting

The questionnaire in this study allowed respondents to select multiple answers based on their personal experiences. The results indicate that 90.1% of adolescents have experienced sexting behavior. Photos are the most common form of sexting in delivery (33.5%) and receipt (32.3%), outperforming text, chat, and video messages. In addition, 14.1% of adolescents felt challenged to post sexy photos on social media, and 7.4% asked for pictures in person.

The urge to adjust toward maturity frequently triggers the narcissistic tendency that characterizes adolescence, in which adolescents tend to love themselves and are reluctant to lose to their peers. The stages of adolescent development include early adolescents surprised by physical changes, middle adolescents who desperately need the recognition of friends, and late adolescents who are preparing for adult roles.

Women often receive compliments from their partners after submitting sexual pictures, which encourages them to do so again. This study also shows that women usually do so at

the request of a male partner. At the same time, men are more actively asking and directing conversations in a more sensual direction, while males are more likely to engage in sexting than females.

Men are likelier to send and receive sexting messages. Sex-engaged adolescents are more sexually active. Sexting is also associated with risky sexual behavior, such as sex without a condom. Bad friends more readily influence men's self-control, making them less likely to engage in sex.

The adolescent response to sexual images or videos revealed that more individuals (45.4%) received and continued them compared to those who watched and deleted them. This fact is consistent with individuals who engage in sexting and sending back messages they receive.

The study also found that adolescents were likelier to sexting with friends (39.9%) than social media acquaintances or boyfriends. Factors that drive adolescents to sext include the influence of friends (31.8%), curiosity (25%), and the perception that sex is something pleasant (13.7%). The findings are consistent with research showing that adolescents who have negative friends are more likely to be involved in sexting, and technology has changed the way adolescents communicate and interact (Benvenuti et al., 2023)

Adolescents often sext because of the urge for curiosity, which can lead to the search for information to meet their sexual needs. Lack of parental supervision, peer pressure, and rapid technological developments put adolescents at risk for negative behaviors such as sexting.

Adolescents also engage in sexting to alleviate stress, attract attention, and adapt to societal trends. Motivation for sexting behavior includes sharing, seducing a partner or friend, initiating sexual intercourse, and acting at the request of a spouse or friend.

Factors that Influence Sexting Behaviors

The study identified multiple factors influencing sexting behaviors among adolescents, with peer influence being a significant one. Friends often encourage their peers to engage in sexting, showcasing how social dynamics play a crucial role in these behaviors. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to peer pressure as they seek acceptance and validation within their social circles, making them more likely to participate in such activities.

Access to social media platforms is another pivotal factor. The convenience of digital communication enables adolescents to share sexting content easily, emphasizing technology's transformative impact on social interactions. For many teenagers, platforms like Facebook and messaging applications provide a space to explore and engage in sexting, often without a clear understanding of the potential consequences.

Curiosity also acts as a driving force behind sexting behaviors. Adolescents naturally wish to explore their sexuality, and this desire can lead them to experiment with sexting as a form of communication. Their quest for information about sexual issues often pushes them toward these behaviors, reflecting

a blend of innocence and the desire to understand their emerging identities.

Furthermore, self-esteem and thrill-seeking behaviors are linked to the prevalence of sexting. Adolescents who are looking for excitement or who may have lower self-esteem might be more inclined to engage in risky behaviors like sexting, perceiving it as a way to boost their social standing or to obtain attention.

Gender dynamics also play a role in influencing sexting behaviors, as there can be differences in motivation and pressure based on gender. For instance, some individuals may feel compelled to sext due to expectations set by romantic partners, highlighting how societal norms can shape personal actions.

Additionally, the lack of parental supervision has been found to correlate with an increase in sexting behaviors. The study underscores the importance of parental guidance in setting boundaries and providing education about online behavior, suggesting that an absence of such oversight may lead adolescents to seek out risky interactions without adequate knowledge of the potential dangers.

Lastly, for some adolescents, sexting is perceived as a form of recreation or joke, indicating that their motivations are not always profound. This varied array of influences points to the intricate interplay between social dynamics, psychological needs, and the evolving trends of digital communication, reflecting the complexity of adolescent sexting behaviors. Addressing these factors holistically will be essential for implementing effective

interventions to mitigate the risks associated with sexting.

The Impact of Sexting Behavior

The study showed that out of 192 adolescents responding, 175 (81.8%) were unaware of the impact of sexting behavior, a higher number than those who were aware of the effect. These findings are consistent with Arruda and Moreira's study, which suggests that a lack of sexual knowledge among adolescents increases their tendency to engage in sexual intercourse (Arruda et al., 2020; Moreira et al., 2023). This lack of information adds to adolescent's curiosity, which can then encourage them to engage in sexting as a form of expression of sexual desire.

The questionnaires used in this study provide an open choice of answers on the impact of sexting, which allows respondents to answer according to their knowledge. Some of the answers given by respondents include "spoken, bullied, embarrassed, pregnant." Adolescents are more vulnerable to becoming victims and perpetrators of online crime as a result of sexting, such as cyberbullying and pornography.

Adolescents are often unaware of the negative consequences of sexting. Sending sexual or naked photos to others does not ensure their security and prevent their distribution. Frequently, people share these photos with others, particularly following a breakup or conflict with friends, as a form of retaliation. The adolescents who shared these photos faced humiliation, peer pressure, exclusion, and feelings of shame and guilt. These feelings can affect their self-esteem,

making them feel vulnerable and at greater risk of becoming sexual victims, as others make assumptions based on their willingness to take and distribute sexual photos. Some adolescents think desperate and consider suicide due to intimidation and shame.

The primary risk of sexting is the spread of shame, whether from the community, friends, or family. Sexting can cause perpetrators to become victims of online bullying, especially women, which can lead to psychological stress, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Although sexting does not lead to pregnancy, this behavior can be the beginning of risky sexual behavior in adolescents. Adolescents who engage in sexting have a higher likelihood of having sex than those who do not.

Adolescents who perform sexting were seven times more likely to be sexually active and twice as likely to have sex without a condom compared to their peers. Adolescents with friends who sent sex messages were much more inclined to engage in sexting and sexual activity. Sexting was part of a sexual experimental phase for adolescents who were not ready to engage in physical sexual activity.

Sexting Behavior Prevention

The study also found that 31.9% of adolescents recommended education on sexting. Parents, healthcare workers, or school authorities can deliver education to prevent or reduce sexting behavior among adolescents. This kind of sexual education can support the physical and sexual development of adolescents who need more information about

sexual health and the significance of the school's role in providing sexual health content to students.

Religious education should instill adolescents with upright morals, including decency, ethics, and morality. However, parents are more than just passive recipients of this education. They should be proactive in discussing online behavior, socializing with peers, and their children's sexuality. Parental monitoring of cell phone usage is essential to prevent sexting behavior in children.

Parents must pay close attention to their children's needs and development to ensure they grow up physically and mentally healthy. Adolescents should avoid interacting with strangers, even though having many friends can be enjoyable, as close companions have the power to reflect and influence one's identity. Humans choose friends with similar hobbies, inclinations, views, and thoughts.

Another step in combating sexting among adolescents involves implementing sexting policies in schools, including an educational program that discusses the impact of sexting and measures its involvement as an effective preventive effort. Therefore, it is important to implement a policy or educational program on sexting in schools to assist in practical prevention efforts.

Internet media can also carry out sexting prevention campaigns by disseminating preventive messages via the Internet or social media and through public campaigns such as watching short films about the impact and consequences of sexting behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study on sexting trends among adolescents in Makassar City reveals a concerning prevalence of the behavior, influenced by multiple factors, including peer pressure, unrestricted access to social media, and the rapidly evolving nature of digital communication. Many adolescents engage in sexting without a comprehensive understanding of its potential risks and consequences, mainly due to insufficient education on the subject and a lack of parental supervision. The findings highlight the urgent need for the implementation of comprehensive educational programs and institutional policies within schools to address the issue of sexting and to promote safer online behaviors. Moreover, the study emphasizes the vital role of parents and educators in fostering open and constructive dialogue about sexting, thereby cultivating an environment that supports responsible and ethical digital communication. A multifaceted approach is essential to increase awareness and empower adolescents to navigate digital social interactions with excellent safety and discernment. Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening educational initiatives within schools and communities to raise awareness about sexting and its broader implications. Parental involvement in monitoring and guiding adolescent's online behavior is crucial in creating a supportive environment conducive to healthy sexual development. In addition, developing and implementing structured sexting policies within educational institutions can provide clear guidance and support for both

students and educators. Leveraging the reach of social media and digital platforms for targeted awareness campaigns can further enhance adolescent's understanding and promote responsible digital engagement. Collectively, these recommendations aim to foster a safer online ecosystem and equip adolescents with the necessary knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills to manage the challenges associated with sexting more effectively.

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