

## **Sexting: A Self Portrayal Trend Among Youths On Social Media?**

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### **Abstract**

*Sexting is defined as the sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, images, or photos through electronic means, particularly between cell phones. Media Researchers have raised alarm on the prevalence of sexting among adolescents and youths generally and the negative consequences associated with it. This paper, –examines the prevalence and motivating factors for sexting among Nigerian youths to determine if it is a form of online self-portrayal. The study was anchored on two theories: The Uses and Gratification Theory and The Play Theory. The study area was universities in Imo state and three universities were sampled each from Federal, State and Private Universities which made up the study population. The survey design was adopted as the study methodology and the questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. A sample size of 300 undergraduates was selected from three universities selected from federal, state and private Universities through multi-stage sampling technique. Findings from the study revealed that, the popularity of sexting among Nigerian youths was very high and it serves as a form of self-representation online but they are not aware of the negative consequences. Most of the youths engage in sexting because they believe that sexting help them to be known and attracts more attention to their profiles. Based on these findings, the study recommends among others that an intensive sensitization should be carried out, either through seminars, campaigns or publications to inform these youths of the negative consequences of Sexting and that parents and families as agents of socialization should intensify their sexual socialization roles.*

**Keywords:** Nigerian Youths, Self-Portrayal, Sext, Sexting, Sexual Socialization, Social Media

### **Introduction**

Adolescents and youths generally have been considered as the highest users of the Internet. As digital natives who were born and raised in the age of computers and online communication, today's teens share self-created contents, post their opinions, and link to other contents online more than any other demographic group (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purdell, 2010).. Research also has shown that youths use the Internet for socialization, which is carried out on social media platforms.

Social media are web-based (and increasingly, mobile) services that allow users to connect and interact with friends, acquaintances, and strangers (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). Examples include Social Network Sites such as Facebook and Twitter, media-sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, blogs, and other web-based communication forums. Social media "build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated contents" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

Social media users post photographs, links and textual information to present an online self. Self-presentation is generally considered to be motivated by a desire to make a favorable impression on others, or an impression that corresponds to one's ideals. As such, self-presentation is centrally involved in impression management and the projection of an online identity (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). Self-portrayal can also be seen as a way in which a user introduces oneself to the social media world. This is done through the creation of online profiles on different social media platform and through the contents of the messages and pictures they communicate on the platforms.

Over a period of time, technology has altered the way youths communicate and interact with their peers. In many instances, the use of Sexting is a part of this form of communication and self-presentation. Sexting is often vaguely defined, yet considered a social phenomenon that generally refers to the sending and/or receiving of sexually suggestive images or messages to peers through a cell phone (Augustina & Gomez-Duran, 2012; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2012).

Sexting is the sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, images, or photos through electronic means, particularly with cell phones. During this period of fast-changing landscape of interpersonal communication, mobile technologies are increasingly being used to form and uphold social relationships. Text messaging is beginning to dominate the landscape of interpersonal communication, having surpassed phone calls in popularity, especially among teenagers and young adults.

According to Drouin & Tobin (2014), sexting can function as a reassurance seeking behavior and help alleviate relationship or sexual anxiety among anxiously attached individuals. Also attitudes towards sexting and attachment involved with it have both been found to be associated to sexting behaviour. The emergence of sexting has been regarded primarily as a sexuality-related youth phenomenon. The principal understanding is that sexting represents a high-risk sexualized media behaviour, and that the young internet generation is paying too little attention to its harmful consequences.

In recent years significant articles have been devoted on a number of cases of teenage girls who killed themselves after sexting they had sent to their current crushes or boyfriends became public and they were shamed, ridiculed, and harassed by their peers or they ended of being murdered by their online lovers with whom they have been sexting for a period of time. Sexting has received attention from parents, educators, researchers and legal scholars because some youths are creating and distributing images that meet definitions of child pornography. It is based on this that this research is conducted to find out if sexting is used by social media users to present online self and the dangers that might arise from such actions.

The rationale for this study is hinged on the fact that these youths who are considered the leaders of tomorrow are not aware of the privacy and security issues that come with the use of the Internet especially the social media. Information shared on social media can be easily accessed by someone, and on the long run might have a negative effect on them. Hence, this work will help inform and guide them on the proper ways to portray themselves online and communicate with others online. Also, it will help sensitize parents and guardian to monitor and checkmate what their children or wards post online.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sexting is gradually becoming a global problem in this period of technological advancement. Most teens and adult youths are using the Internet as a means of escapism. Research has shown that an individual (youth) spends nothing less than an average of 10 hours on the Internet daily and majority of these hours are spent on the social media platforms. Social media has made the world a global village which has broken geographical barriers. It has also provided a platform for one to meet a lover or make new friends or enemies as the case maybe. In order to join moving train, people are willing to join the sexting bandwagon not minding the negative consequences of such behavior. Some have lost their jobs, job opportunities, marriages and in extreme cases their lives on the umbrella of sexting.

Though the media have reported such cases, especially the one of Cynthia Osokogu who was murdered by a lover she met on Facebook, teens and young adults still do not want to pull out from this vice. In-fact, profiles are created everyday on different social media platforms with sexually explicit profile pictures and textual messages, to create this online self that they believe is in vogue. It is based on these we ask; who among these Nigerian youths participate in this sexting behaviour? Are they predisposed to information on the harmful consequences involved with such act? Does sexting make them feel represented online? What motivates them to sext?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to find out the prevalence and motivating factors for sexting among youths and how informed these youths are of the negative consequences of sexting and portraying oneself online in a sexual way. Based on this, the general objectives are, to; (a) determine the social media use pattern among Nigerian youths (b) determine how prevalent sexting is among Nigerian youths (c) find out if sexting makes these youths feel self-represented online (d) ascertain factors that motivate them to sext (e) ascertain if they are exposed to sexting-risk prevention messages.

### **Research Questions**

To help guide this study, these questions were posed; (a) What is the social media use pattern among Nigerian youths? (b) How prevalent is sexting among adolescents? (c) Does sexting make these youths feel self-represented online? (d) What motivates them to sext? (e) Are these youths exposed to any sexting-risk preventive messages?

### **Literature Reviews**

Recently, a new phenomenon has emerged as part of adolescent risk behaviour – “sexting”. The term sexting, a hybrid neologism, combines the method of technology (texting) with the subject (sex) (Day, 2011). It refers to using a digital medium (e.g. a cell phone camera) to take nude or semi-nude images (NSNI) of oneself and send them to others, via a cell phone or Internet-based social media sites (Chalfen, 2009).

According to Jaishankar, 2009 and Lenhart, (2009), the term sexting, a unification of the word sex and texting, is an activity specifically engaged in through cell phones. For this reason, sexting studies have generally used broad definitions to measure the

prevalence of sexting behaviours among youth sending and/or receiving sexually suggestive images or messages to peers through a cell phone.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com (2008) conducted one of the first studies to examine the prevalence of teen and young adult sexting behaviours. This study (*Sex and Tech*) relied upon a non-probability sample ( $n=1,280$ ) of U.S. participants (i.e., 653 teens age 13-19, 49% male and 51% female; and 627 young adults age 20-26, 51% male and 49% female). Sexting was defined as sending or posting nude or semi-nude photos or videos. Overall, 20% of teenagers reported sexting in the past, while 33% of young adults reported engaging in this type of behavior (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014).

Ringrose, Gill, Livingstone and Harvey (2012), undertook to understand sexting directly from adolescents and went so far as to not develop constructs in order to keep the dialogue and findings as participant-driven as possible. Their methodology included semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups and online ethnology via Facebook. Their sample comprised 35 adolescents (years 8 and 10) from two mixed socio-economic status (SES) London schools. The findings of the study extend those of the quantitative research in suggesting that several intrapersonal, psychosocial and relational factors contribute towards adolescent sexting. They include but not limited to; relational dynamics, sexual exploration, gender politics, technology and merged online/offline worlds, demographic and predisposing psychosocial factors, mass media and hypersexual norms etc. Negative consequences of sexting can include humiliation, shame, friendship exclusion, sexual solicitation, increased risk of online sexual victimisation, scholastic suspension, school transfer, depression, anxiety and in extreme cases, suicide (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Chalfen, 2009; O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). It is the mass-forwarding and uploading potential of sexted images that seems to render adolescents most at risk of exploitation; as the number of sexting recipients increases, compounding the psychosocial risks to the person pictured, so do the legal risks for those who forward or retain the image (Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaíta, & Rullo, 2012). Sexting images "gone viral" (i.e. being widely disseminated on the World Wide Web) could further the market for child pornography (Shafron-Perez, 2009). Some studies have also found a link between sexting and sexual violence where girls were coerced into sending naked pictures (Flood, 2007; Powell, 2009).

According to Kumari and Srivastava (2017), sexting has become a mode of involving impulsive sexual behavior which creates a problem for teens. In their study, Effects of sexting on self-esteem and body image among teenagers, they found out that teenagers involved in sexting have high rates of sexual activity, which may put them at further risk of unwanted pregnancy. The major consequences according the authors is that it leads both females and males involved in sexting to have low self-esteem and they perceive more dissatisfaction for their own body and have negative body image. Also females are more likely to have low self-esteem when they engage in sexting more than their male colleagues.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Play theory. Uses and Gratifications Theory was propounded by Katz in 1970 and it concerns with how people use media for gratification of their needs. This theory basically stresses how and why the

audience use the media (Klapper, 1963) as cited by Haridakis & Hanson (2009, p.7). Also, expatiating on the theory, McQuail (2010, p.423) states that "the central question posed is: why do people use media, and what do they use them for?" He further posits that:

Functionalist sociology (see Wright, 1974) viewed the media as serving the various needs of the society-e.g. for cohesion, cultural continuity, social control and a large circulation of public information of all kinds. This, in turn, presupposes that individuals also use media for related purposes such as personal guidance, relaxation, adjustment, information and identity formation.

Uses and gratification theory seeks to understand why people seek out the media and what they use it for. It differs from other media effect theories in that it assumes that individuals have power over their media usage rather than positioning individuals as passive consumers of media. The theory recognizes and maintains that the audience has various needs that prompt them to expose themselves to any media or media content. Therefore, the link between this theory and the study is that there are distinct benefits the media audience or consumers envisage to get from any medium they would want to expose themselves to. This means that Nigerian youths use the social media to gratify some needs which could range from sexual socialization, leisure, escapism, etc. The predisposition of the social media due to lack of regulation to accommodate pornographic contents make them ready choices of youths to use them for sexting.

Play Theory was propounded by William Stephenson based on the precedent work of J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, and of the Hungarian psychiatric T.S. Szasz. The concept has been explained in his 1967 book "The Play Theory of Mass Communication" University of Chicago Press, USA. The author developed the concept to contrast those who argued about the harmful effects of the mass media and the information-based vision of media.

According to the theory, Play is an activity pursued for pleasure. The daily withdrawal of people into the mass media in their after-hours is a matter of subjectivity. The effect of mass communication is neither escapism nor seducing the masses. Rather it is seen as anti-anxiety producing, and is regarded as communication-pleasure. The theory emphasizes on how individuals use the media for their satisfaction and also how the media brings change in their lives according to its content (Akinjobin & Kayode 2011). The first step in understanding Play Theory is to understand Stephenson's notion of play. Stephenson grounds his theory along a continuum with pain placed on one side and pleasure on the other. In this model, work leans toward pain, while play leans toward pleasure. This means that most social media users use it to gain some sort of gratification.

This theory is relevant to the study as it explains how Nigerian youths use Facebook or Whatsapp or any other social media site to communicate pleasure. This is done when they produce or consume the messages or information they receive on their social media accounts. Also the theory explains how the social media is used to gratify some sort of pleasure such as, friendship, romantic relationship, among others.

### **Methodology**

The survey design was adopted for this study. It was essentially considered as the most suitable design for the work because students' opinion would be the main source of

primary data collection. The universe of the study comprises of all the universities in Imo state. The population for this study comprises all the undergraduate students of the selected universities from Federal, state and Private. The population of undergraduate students of the selected universities in Imo State is estimated to 57,763.

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions. The sample size for this study is 300. This was determined using the suggestion by Comrey & Lee (1992) that in a multivariate study like this: 50=very poor; 100=poor; 200=fair; 300=good; 500=very good; 1,000=excellent" (Comrey & Lee, 1992). The sample elements for this study were drawn by the application of multi-stage sampling technique. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select Federal university of technology Owerri (FUTO) for federal University, Imo State University for State University and Hezekiah University, Umudi for Private Universities. The second stage was the random selection of one faculty from each of the three selected Universities whereby faculty of Engineering was selected for FUTO, Faculty of Natural Sciences for IMSU and faculty of Social Sciences for Hezekiah University. The third stage was the random selection of one department from each of the three faculties and Civil Engineering, Microbiology and Political science were selected for FUTO, IMSU and Hezekiah University respectively. Another balloting was conducted where two levels from each department were selected for instrument administration and final and second year students from Department of Civil Engineering, Third and first year students from Microbiology and fourth and third year students from the department of Political science were chosen from the FUTO, IMSU and Hezekiah University respectively. To ensure that those that would fill the measuring instrument were actually from the classes and departments chosen; the students were given questionnaire to complete immediately after lectures. The entire questionnaire were filled by the respondents and returned immediately after completion. Data generated from the close ended questions were analyzed using simple percentages and tables.

### **Data Presentation and Analyses**

**Questionnaire number 1-7:** This was used to ascertain the gender of the respondents, the availability of Internet-enabled phone and their use of social media. The items were also used to find out the number of social media sites in which the respondents are registered on, how frequent they use their social media accounts, the use of the social media sites and the most visited social media site. This was presented in the tables below

Table 1: RESPONDENT'S SEX

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	101	34%
Female	199	66%
Total	300	100%

Table 1 examined the gender of the respondents. Findings show that 66% of the respondents are female and 34% are male. This result shows that ladies make up majority of the students found in higher institutions more that the male folks.

Table 2: RESPONDENT'S AGE

	Frequency	Percentage
16-21	238	79%
22- 26	49	16%
27 and above	13	5%
Total	300	100%

The aim of table 2 is to find out the respondents age. Data generated shows that 16-21 years made up the highest number being 79 percent of the sampled population, followed by 22-26 age which add up 16% of the population, while the least 27years and above made up 5% of the population. This data implies that, majority of the students found in these tertiary institutions are of the ages of 16-21 years.

Table 3: RESPONDENT'S MARITAL STATUS

	Frequency	Percentage
Single	265	88%
Married	35	12%
Divorced	0	0%
Widowed	0	0%
Total	300	100%

Table 3 above shows the respondents marital status. Findings show that 88percent of the respondents are single, and only12% are married. This result shows that majority of the students or young adults found in these higher institutions are single.

**Table 4: Research question 1,**

What is the social media use pattern among Nigerian youths?

Items	Yes	No	Frequency
Do you have an internet-enabled phone?	298 (99.33%)	2 (1%)	300 (100%)
Do you have a social media account	277 (92.33%)	23 (8%)	300 (100%)

The study revealed that majority of the sampled respondents has internet- enabled phones, which makes them Internet savvy. Also, due to the level of access to Internet among these students, a high number of them have at least one social media account. These findings

reveal that Nigerian youths have keyed into the digital world like the western or developed countries and their access to social media accounts means that they interact and access information on local and international news.

**Table 5: USE AND FREQUENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY THE RESPONDENTS**

Items	How many social media accounts do you have	How often do you visit your social media accounts	What do you do on your social media accounts	Which of your social media account do you visit frequently
<b>Responses</b>	1 =41 (17%)	Always = 239 (79.66%)	Chatting = 215 (71.66%)	Facebook = 106 (35.33%)
	2 = 54 (18%)	Often = 42 (14%)	Reading News = 54 (18%)	Whatapp = 145 (48.33%)
	3 = 176 (58.66 %)	Rarely = 17 (5.66%)	Research = 11 (3.66%)	Instagram = 17 (6%)
	4 = 12 (4%)	None =2 (1%)	Movies = 9 (3%)	Twitter = 15 (5%)
	5 and above =15 (5%)		Sports = 11 (3.66%)	YouTube = 7 (2.3%)
	None = 2 (1%)		Others	Others = 10 (3.33%)

In table 5 above, various variables were analyzed and the findings include; a high percentage of the respondents (58.66%), claimed to have at-least 3 registered social media accounts. The study also found out that as high as 79.66% of the sampled respondents use their social media account always. Findings from the study also showed that the students use their social media accounts for chatting more than researching, while WhatsApp and Facebook are considered as the most visited social media platforms.

This means that WhatsApp has taken over from Facebook as the most widely used social media site among youths, also the implication of these findings show that users of social media use them more for socializing than for studying or researching. Also the use of social media is high as most of them use on a daily basis and have more than one social media account. Hence, they can be said to be Internet savvy.



**Table 6 - Research question 2: How prevalent is sexting among adolescents?**

ITEMS	YES	NO	Frequency
While creating your profiles, is there a certain way you want to be perceived by others?	237 (79%)	63 (21%)	300 (100%)
Ever heard of the word Sexting?	98 (37%)	202 (67.33%)	300 (100%)
Have you ever posted or sent a message that can be considered sexual?	253 (84.33%)	47 (16%)	300 (100%)
Have you ever posted a picture or video that might be considered sexual?	232 (77.33%)	68 (23%)	300 (100%)

Research question two examined the prevalence of sexting among adolescents. Findings from the study shows that majority of the population (79%) before creating their profiles on the social media platforms choose certain pictures and words to put up in order other to be perceived as being in the Know by other social media users. The study also found out, though the word Sexting has been known for decades, these students have not heard of it. The table above also shows that 84% of the sampled population have posted messages that can be considered sexual on their accounts, while 77% have also posted pictures that can be considered sexual on their different accounts.

Data generated implies that Nigerian youths engage in sending sexually explicit picture or messages on their different social media accounts and majority of them are not aware of the implications of this action.

**Table 7: Research question 3=Does sexting make these youths feel self-represented online?**

	Yes	No	Frequency
Do sending sexual photos on your social media make you feel re-presented online?	217 (72.33%)	83 (27.66%)	300 (100%)
Do sending sexual messages on your social media make you feel re-presented online?	252 (84%)	48 (16%)	300 (100%)

The aim of table 7 above was to ascertain if the students sampled in this research work feel self-represented online by sending and posting messages or pictures that can be considered sexual. Findings from the study found out that majority of the sampled population (72.33%) feel that sending pictures considered to be sexual makes them feel re-presented online, while 84% also feel sending messages considered to be sexual makes them feel re-presented online.

This result shows that sexting is a form of self-portrayal among Nigerian youths. They engage in it by sending photos or messages that can be considered sexual.

Table 8: **Research question 4: what motivates them to sext?**

	What makes you post these contents?	Do these contents affect your sexual behavior, especially towards the opposite sex	Are you aware that sexting has negative consequences?
<b>Responses</b>	To gain likes and comments = 115 (38.33%)	Yes = 77 (26%)	Yes = 136 (45.33%)
	It is what is in trend = 53 (18%)	No = 223 (74.33%)	No = 164 (55%)
	Because of friends = 23 (8%)		
	To feel important and updated online = 109 (36.33%)		

The aim of the table above is to find out what motivates these adolescents to sext and how it affects their sexual behavior. Findings show that majority of the students sext to get more likes and comments from their online friends and a high number (36.33%) do it to feel important and updated online. Though a high number of the sampled population sext, majority of them said that it does not affect them sexually, especially when it involves the opposite sex (74.33%). Also a high number of them do not know that sexting has negative consequences that can affect them both physically and morally (55%).

The result shows that, there is an online lifestyle that these Nigerian youths have to conform and this leads them to sext without bearing in mind, the negative consequences. These lifestyles include but not limited to attracting the opposite sex, gaining likes from old and new friends, exposing themselves as the celebrities do among others.

Table 9: **Research question 4; which sexting-risk prevention messages are these youths exposed to?**

	Yes	No
Yes	27	9%
No	273	91%

Table 9 examined if the sampled population have come across information or campaign messages on Sexting and the source in which they accessed the information. Findings show that almost the entire population (91%) have not accessed or exposed themselves to information on sexting , while as low as (9%) have been exposed to sexting preventive messages.

This results show that majority of the youths are not exposed to sexting preventive campaign messages. This could be as result of the scarcity in such messages as the media focus more on fake news and hate speech.

Table 10: SOURCE OF INFORMATION

What is the source of the Information	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media	9	33%
Radio		
Television=	0	0
Newspaper, Fliers	0	0
Family and Friends	7	27%
	11	41%

It was already established in table 9 above that as low as 9 percent of the sampled population have either exposed or accessed sexting-risk preventive messages. Hence, the aim of this table was to ascertain the source of such information from this small fragment of the sample. Findings show that majority of the respondents who have accessed the information did so on either their social media account (33%) or from family or friends (41%). None of the respondents exposed themselves to the messages from the broadcast media, however the print media got 27%.

This result shows that the broadcast media is not being used to sensitize people on the negative implications of sexting. Also, since the population accessed the information from their social media account and also it has been established that these youths utilize the social media frequently, hence, media experts should utilize the social media to sensitize the Nigerian youths on the negative consequences of sexting.

### Discussion of Findings

Preliminaries analysis of the data obtained shows that 66 percent of the respondents were females while 34 percent were male. This signifies that the use of sexting is more prevalent among the females more than the male. This is in concurrence with a study carried out by Fisher, Sauther, Slobodoniul and Young (2012), on Sexting in Australia: The Legal and Social Ramifications. The study in their 2010 poll found out that 588 of the girls sampled had been involved in sexting.

The study revealed that Nigerian youths are very active on the Internet, especially on the social media platforms. A good number of these youths, who in this study are students from selected universities in Imo state have at least one or more social media account, WhatsApp and Facebook being the most frequently used social media.

The researchers found out that the use of sexting is very prevalent among Nigerian youths. Firstly, this can be seen while creating an online profile. It could be the type of picture they select as their profile pictures or the content of the information they use to introduce themselves to the cyber world. A good number of these youths create their profiles in this manner to attract the opposite sex and this is most common among the females sampled for the study. Also, the respondents believe there is an expected way in which they should create their online profiles to be noticed by previous or old users, hence they have to key into that trend or belief.

The study also revealed that majority of the sampled population have either posted a message or picture that can be considered to be sexual on their various profiles and most of them do it because they believe it is what is in vogue (trending). They also do it because they believe it will attract the opposite sex to like or comment on the message or picture and possibly pick an interest in them.

Furthermore, the study found out that sexting, though majority of the respondents are not familiar with the word makes them feel important and represented online. When they post such pictures especially on Facebook and Instagram, they get more followers and friend request from both old friends and new admirers. Findings also showed that what motivates these adolescents to sext ranges from wanting to be noticed or feel important online. According to them, when you post a sexy picture online, you will get more likes than when you post an ordinary picture. Also, majority of them said they joined the social media to make new friends, which in the long run might blossom into a romantic relationship, hence, they have to position themselves properly and the only way to do that is by posting sexy pictures and messages.

Finally, literature has shown that sexting is becoming a global phenomenon which requires massive campaign to kick against before it goes beyond control; the study revealed that the students are not exposed to any message or information on sexting. This could be the reason why majority of them are not familiar with the term nor do they know that there are negative consequences associated with sexting. The researchers went further to investigate or ascertain if there are media messages or campaign information kicking against sexting and none was discovered. The ones that were found were mostly on hate speech and cyber-crimes, none was on Sexting.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study reveals that Nigerian Youths have effectively keyed into the capabilities and potentials of social media, especially on Whatsapp and Facebook. More than 50 percent of the sampled population use their social media account for interactivity and socializing than for academic purposes. The terrifying thing about this, is that these Nigerian youths have keyed into the Sexting ideology, which they believe is what is trending and helps them create an online self which in reality they might not be able to express themselves. They send messages and pictures believed to contain sexual meaning to gain online popularity and attract the likes opposite sex, without bearing in mind that it has its negative consequences. These consequences could range from attracting the wrong person to your prolife which could lead to “cyber bullying or Hate speech”, to stalking (when you post pictures and messages on a daily basis, one can easily decode your lifestyle) and it could attract predators.

In line with the above, the researcher recommends intensive sensitization among Nigerian youths to help them understand what sexting is all about and inform them of the negative effects of sexting. The social media which the youths are highly exposed to should be extensively deployed in risk communication about sexting. Parents, families, friends and peers as agents of socialization should intensify efforts on sex education of their children and wards or associates and as well monitor their social media use.

The study **also** recommends that these social media platforms as a form of regulation should put in place a security code that will be able to identify key words that may suggest

sexting or sexual explicit pictures and either block the picture/message from being viewed or block the account. This will serve as a punishment for those who break the rule and it will help limit the amount of sexual suggestive messages or pictures posted online. Instagram has recently installed an anti-bullying restrict features as a check for online bullying by users.

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