

# Compulsive texting associated with poorer school performance among adolescent girls, study finds

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Credit: Petr Kratochvil/public domain

Teenage girls who compulsively text are more likely than their male counterparts to do worse academically, according to research published by the American Psychological Association.

"It appears that it is the compulsive nature of texting, rather than sheer

frequency, that is problematic," said lead researcher Kelly M. Lister-Landman, PhD, of Delaware County Community College. "Compulsive texting is more complex than frequency of texting. It involves trying and failing to cut back on texting, becoming defensive when challenged about the behavior, and feeling frustrated when one can't do it."

Texting has become teenagers' preferred method of communication, with adolescents sending and receiving an average of 167 texts per day, according to a Pew Internet and American Life Project study by Lenhart in 2012. Lenhart demonstrated that 63 percent of teens report texting on a daily basis, while only 39 percent use their mobile phones for voice calls.

For this study—which the researchers said was the first to identify compulsive texting as significantly related to poor academic adjustment - Lister-Landman and her colleagues surveyed 403 students (211 girls, 192 boys) in grades eight and 11 from schools in a semi-rural town in the Midwest. Most came from households with two parents (68 percent) and were primarily white (83 percent), which was representative of the demographic characteristics in the school district.

Lister-Landman and colleagues designed a Compulsive Texting Scale to examine whether texting interfered with study participants' ability to complete tasks; how preoccupied they were with texting; and whether they tried to hide their texting behavior, among other relevant factors. The students also completed a questionnaire that focused on their academic performance and how well-adjusted they were in school. Only girls showed a negative association between this type of texting and school performance, which included grades, school bonding and feeling academically competent.

Girls do not text more frequently than do boys, but they appear to text for different purposes, Lister-Landman said. "Borrowing from what we

know about Internet communication, prior research (e.g., Baron, 2004) has shown that boys use the Internet to convey information while girls use it for social interaction and to nurture relationships," she said. "Girls in this developmental stage also are more likely than boys to ruminate with others, or engage in obsessive, preoccupied thinking, across contexts. Therefore, it may be that the nature of the texts [girls](#) send and receive is more distracting, thus interfering with their academic adjustment."

The researchers noted that this study was limited by consisting of self-report responses from primarily white students in a small town in the Midwest. Future research could entail observing students while texting, scrutinizing monthly phone bills and interviewing parents, for example. "In addition, it would be interesting to study adolescents' motivations for texting, as well as the impact of multitasking on [academic performance](#)," Lister-Landman said.

**More information:** "The Role of Compulsive Texting in Adolescents' Academic Functioning," by Kelly M. Lister-Landman, PhD, Chestnut Hill College (when the study was conducted; now at Delaware County Community College); Sarah E. Domoff, PhD, University of Michigan; and Eric F. Dubow, PhD, Bowling Green State University and University of Michigan, *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, published online Oct. 5, 2015.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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