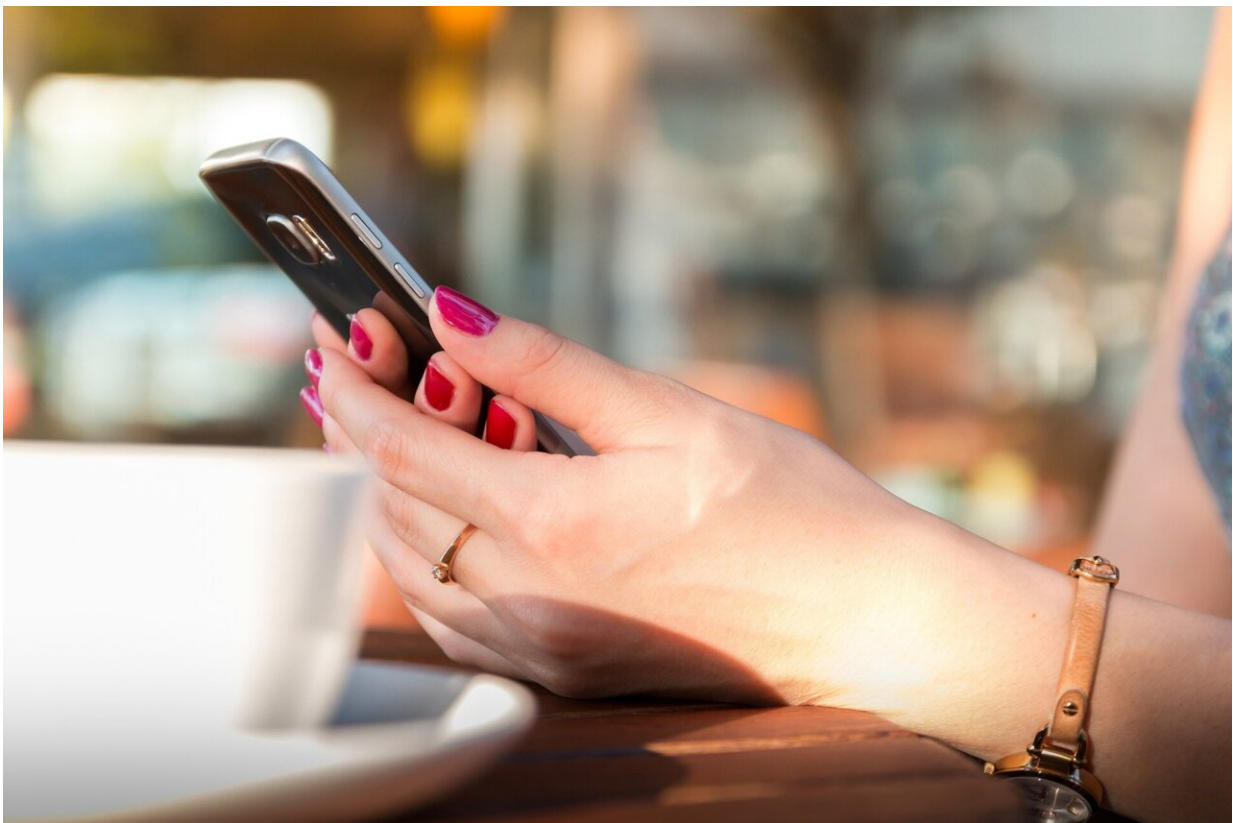


Teens with behavioral problems, particularly girls, more likely to sext: Study

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It's important that programs promoting safer sexting behaviors consider the specific needs of adolescents with behavioral problems, a new study by McGill University researchers suggests. The research is [published](#) in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*.

Adolescents with [behavioral problems](#) engage in elevated levels of sexting compared with their peers without such problems. While this is the case both for male and female teens, the researchers found, the link was stronger for the [young women](#).

The researchers also found that girls who exhibited behavioral problems as children engage in elevated levels of sexting as adolescents. For boys, however, behavioral problems in childhood are not a predictor of future adolescent sexting, their study indicates.

As part of a larger inquiry into the developmental trajectories of children with early behavioral problems, the study had sought to understand what kinds of sexting activity youth were engaging in (sending, receiving, forwarding or receiving forwarded sexts) and any [gender differences](#) in their sexting behaviors.

Exploring teen sexuality in the digital age

Digital technology offers a vast space where young people can explore their sexuality and identity. The researchers emphasize the need to include online sexual behaviors and gender nuances in sex education.

"This rapidly evolving digital landscape also brings forth novel and unique risks, such as sextortion and online [sexual violence](#). Through our research, we aim to guide efforts to promote safe and responsible online behavior among youth, with a specific focus on the needs of youth with

conduct problems," said Caroline Temcheff, Associate Professor at McGill University and Director of the Healthy Development Lab.

The researchers urge educators, parents and [mental health professionals](#) to have open, non-judgmental dialogues with youth to help guide and support them through the complexities of human interactions in the [digital age](#). The study contributes information about which youth might be at greater risk.

"They must recognize and support youth who may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing sexual victimization, such as girls with conduct problems," said Audrey Mariamo, the study's first author and Ph.D. student in Educational and Counselling Psychology under the supervision of Temcheff.

"These efforts are integral to promoting digital literacy and helping young people safely and responsibly navigate digital landscapes," said the researchers.

More information: Audrey Mariamo et al, Conduct problems and sexting: Gender differences, *Computers in Human Behavior* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2024.108152](#)

Provided by McGill University

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