

Peer Victimization

My name is Shanna Anderson; I am from Jamaica and Waterbury Connecticut. I am a freshman Psychology major. Sexting may be a worldwide phenomenon. My colleague has mentioned instances in the U.S.; but, similar cases occur worldwide. When I was in high school, a student had a video of her circulated. The backlash was so great she fled the country to avoid peer victimization and stigma she received. Her name became synonymous with the word "slut", just like Kleenex is synonymous with tissues.

Peer victimization and stigma are linked to sexting. According to the Child Study Journal, peer victimization is negative actions that are repeatedly directed by peers at a person through physical, verbal, or relational aggression (Storch, Brassard & Masla-Warner 2003). The main type of victimization sexting deals with is relational victimization. This involves damaging relationships through manipulation and destruction (Storch, Brassard & Masla-Warner 2003)." She was a victim of this type of victimization. She was ostracized from school, friends and family and was sent to live in another country. Personal details of her life are public knowledge and she lost the people important to her.

According to the journal Educational Psychology, the threat of losing friends may contribute to problems for adolescents, especially girls because of preoccupation with relational concerns (Hoglund 2007.) The journal of Educational Psychology states preoccupation with peer approval, loss of relationships, and self-protection distract girls

from learning activities and drain mental energy needed to participate in class (Hoglund 2007.) Sexting victimization is spilling over into the classroom and affecting adolescents. Not only are these students, mostly female students, being victimized and struggling emotionally, their schoolwork suffers because they become obsessed with their own victimization and are unable to escape it long enough to learn in school.

Social anxiety is another effect. Research from the Child Study Journal show that social anxiety may be a conditioned response to exposure to peer aggression which results in avoidance of social interactions (Storch, Brassard & Masia-Warner 2003). Sexters whose pictures become public avoid social situations and sometimes avoid school. Anxiety is another consequence and research has associated victimization with distress, fear of negative evaluation, physiological symptoms, and social avoidance (Storch, Brassard & Masia-Warner 2003).

Redistribution of sexts sent in private from one person to another is often viewed as betrayal. Research shows that such betrayal can lead to anger, frustration, sadness, disappointment, mistrust, confusion, and insecurity (Feldman & Cauffman 1999.) Such distress can have deadly results.

References

Feldman, S., & Cauffman, E. (1999). Sexual Betrayal Among Late Adolescents: Perspectives of the Perpetrator and the Aggrieved. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 28(2), 235. Retrieved from SocINDEX with Full Text database.

Hoglund, W. (2007). School functioning in early adolescence: Gender-linked responses to peer victimization. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 99*(4), 683-699. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.99.4.683.

Storch, E., Brassard, M., & Masia-Warner, C. (2003). The relationship of peer victimization to social anxiety and loneliness in adolescence. *Child Study Journal, 33*(1), 1-18. Retrieved from SocINDEX with Full Text database.

