



Social Media

Adolescents and Social Media: The Results of the JIM Study 2018

*Sabine Feierabend,
Thomas Rathgeb,
Theresa Reutter*

Sexuality Education in the Digital Media: The Present State of Development and Research

Nicola Döring

Loveline – The Youth Portal of the BZgA in Times of Changing Media Use

Mirjam Tomse

“The Internet is always there.” The Digital Worlds of 14–24-Year-Olds

Silke Borgstedt

The Portrayal of Gender on YouTube: The Narrow Spectrum of Female YouTubers and the Broad Field of Males

*Elizabeth Prommer,
Claudia Wegener,
Christine Linke*

Media Usage and Eating Disorders. From *Germany's Next Topmodel* to the Pro-ana Movement on the Internet

Christiane Eichenberg

Mobile Media: Selfies, Sexting, Self-Portrayal. The Results of a Quantitative Study on How Adolescents Approach Sexting

Verena Vogelsang

Social media have become fixed components of the everyday life of modern adolescents. On average, they daily spend some 3,5 hours online, a third of which is used to communicate with others. Social media applications such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat play a central role in these activities. These results of the newest JIM Study, which is described in the Introduction to this issue of FORUM, form the basis for many of the subsequent contributions.

The SINUS Institute questioned 14- to 24-year-olds concerning their opinions and attitudes regarding the internet and social media, and then prepared an analysis of the user types. Nicola Döring looks at the central question of what contents for sexuality education adolescents discover in their search for answers to their sexuality concerns. She concludes that professional institutions of sexuality education must step up to the task and become more visible in offering professional social-media strategies.

The video portal YouTube is extremely popular among adolescents. Elizabeth Prommer and her team examined gender relations on YouTube channels and examined the themes men and women present there. Their conclusion: astonishingly traditional female roles.

In her contribution, Verena Vogelsang scrutinizes how adolescents approach sexting and the phenomenon of victim blaming. Mirjam Tomse reports on the BZgA website www.loveline.de – the contents made available there, how they are used, and the questions adolescents are most interested in. Christiane Eichenberg studies the relevance of the TV series *Germany's Next Topmodel* and the so-called pro-ana forums. She asks to what extent modern body images and the phenomenon of anorexia nervosa are being influenced by such programs.

These comprehensive contributions are followed by some short project sketches, among others, the research project “Human,” the EU project “klicksafe,” the initiative “Stoppt Sharegewalt” (Stop Sharing Violence) from the group “Innocence in Danger,” the “pia” format from pro familia as well as a report on the challenges involved in developing legislation to protect youths.

The Editors

Adolescents and Social Media: The Results of the JIM Study 2018

Sabine Feierabend, Thomas Rathgeb, Theresa Reutter

For the past 20 years the “Medienpädagogische Forschungsverbund Südwest” (mpfs¹, Media Pedagogical Research Alliance Southwest) has studied how children and adolescents use media. Since 1998, it has carried out the JIM (“Jugend, Information, Medien”) Study to assess the everyday life of adolescents in Germany between the ages of 12 and 19. The last study made telephone inquiries of 1,200 adolescents during the summer of 2018.

The results of the JIM Study of 2018 show once again the major role the internet with all its various features plays in the everyday life of adolescents. This multifunctional platform offers a venue for communication and entertainment, such as music, videos, and games, as well as up-to-date news from around the world, from one’s own region, and for school purposes. Today, 98% of all German households have an internet connection available to them— two-thirds (68%) of households with adolescents use a music streaming service, three-fourths (77%) a video streaming service. The smartphone plays a major role in the life of modern adolescents: Nearly all (97%) adolescents have such a device, which is also their preferred means of accessing the internet. 88% of girls and 71% of boys report primarily using their smartphones to go online (see Fig. 1).

A total of 84% of the internet users access the internet daily on their smartphone. According to their own account, adolescents spend about 3.5 hours (214 minutes) daily online, a third of which (35%) is used for communication and another third for entertainment purposes (31%); a fourth of the time (24%) is spent playing games and a tenth (10%) for retrieving information. These ratios of time spent online are also reflected in the data concerning the most popular internet offerings: 63% say that YouTube is one of their three favorite online portals, two-fifths mention the messenger service WhatsApp (39%), 30% Instagram. The next positions are held by Netflix (18%) and Snapchat (15%).

When they are asked about their favorite smartphone app, a similar picture emerges, although we clearly see here that communication plays a greater role in mobile access than does watching videos. 87% of the adolescents who have

apps on their smartphones say that WhatsApp is the most important app in their repertoire, and every other adolescent mentions Instagram (48%). 37% consider the YouTube app to be important, and further 31% mention Snapchat, 10% Spotify. Apart from the near-universal presence of WhatsApp, we do find gender-specific difference in the evaluation: Whereas the more communicative apps such as Instagram and Snapchat are used more often by girls, boys prefer YouTube (see Fig. 2).

This review of the favorite online contents and the most important apps clearly shows that social media platforms play a central role in how adolescents use media. A closer look at the aspect of online communication reveals that WhatsApp overwhelmingly dominates, with 95% of all adolescents using this messenger service at least multiple times every week – with 85% of them using it on a daily basis. Here, boys and girls show no differences in their frequency of use. WhatsApp users report getting an average of 36 messages daily (see Fig. 3).

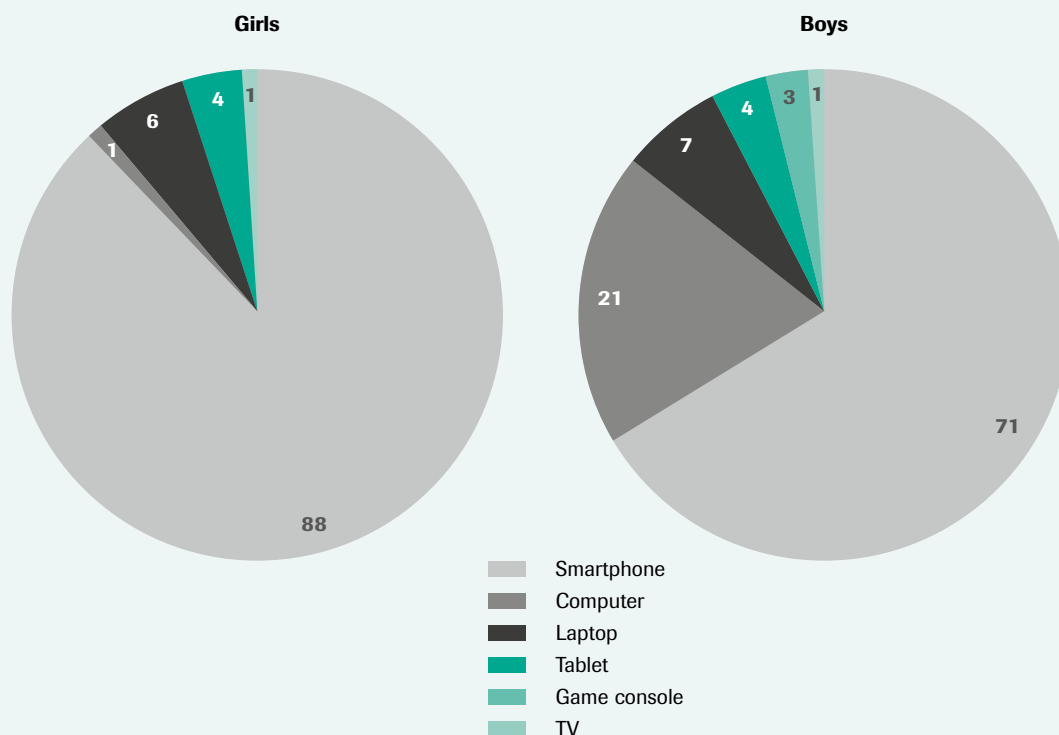
Instagram is a further communication platform that has now become firmly established among adolescents, with two-thirds of them (67%) using it regularly, half even daily (51%). Compared to the study conducted one year earlier, the percentage of Instagram users rose by about 10%. Girls (73%) use Instagram more actively than boys (61%). Adolescents tend to follow the accounts of persons within their own group of friends or peers: 82% follow persons they know personally, and one-third of users (32%) follow stars and celebrities. A fourth of the adolescents often comment on posts or photos, and 13% often post their own photos or videos; a tenth (11%) post Insta-stories. The use of Instagram does not change much as they get older, and boys and girls tend to use it equally. One exception is their interest in the Instagram messages of celebrities: Whereas about one-fourth of the boys using Instagram follow stars and other prominent persons, with girls the rate is twice as high (40%).

Another popular communication platform is Snapchat. 62% of the girls and about every other boy (47%) use this service at least once a week. Snapchat is particularly popular

¹ The mpfs is supported by the “Landesanstalt für Kommunikation (LFK)” (State Media Authority) Baden-Wuerttemberg (LFK) and the “Landeszentrale für Medien und Kommunikation (LMK)” (State Authority for Media and Communication) Rhineland-Pfalz. The studies were carried out in cooperation with the “Südwestrundfunk (SWR)” (Southwest Broadcasting System).

Fig. 1

Which device is used most often for internet access (2018)



Source: JIM Study 2018. All data in %. Based on number of persons interviewed who used the internet at least once every two weeks, n = 1,195.

among adolescents 14 and older, where the rate for regular use lies at about three-fifths (14–15-year-olds: 57%, 16–17-year-olds: 59%, 18–19-year-olds: 58%). Among the younger age groups, the rate is considerably lower (41% for the 12-13-year-olds). Snapchat allows the adolescents to record photos and videos, apply filters, and send them to a specific user group or to all users or even livestream. The special thing about Snapchat is that the photos/videos, so-called “snaps,” are available for only a limited period of time and are then automatically deleted. The users of Snapchat generally prefer to interact with their own friends and cliques. 86% of the Snapchat users often look at the snaps of people they know personally; about three-fourths (72%) send their own snaps. Snapchat users tend to look less at snaps from stars and celebrities, girls (15%) more than boys (9%). Snapchat plays a subordinate role in the brand communication of adolescents: Only 8% occasionally look at snaps concerned with particular brands, one-fifth rarely watch them, and three-fourths never watch such snaps.

Of central importance to adolescents on the internet is YouTube. The recent debate concerning Article 13 (now Article 17) of the EU copyright reform legislation so vehemently opposed by many adolescents revealed the great (emotional) meaning YouTube has for them. Generally speaking, the role of videos plays a major role among adolescents – and the options available to them has expanded greatly in the past few years. In addition to the classical format of broadcast television, streaming services such as *Netflix* and *Amazon Prime* are now available in some three-fourths (77%) of all households. A special role, however, is taken by YouTube as the internet’s public stage. Being a platform for all possible

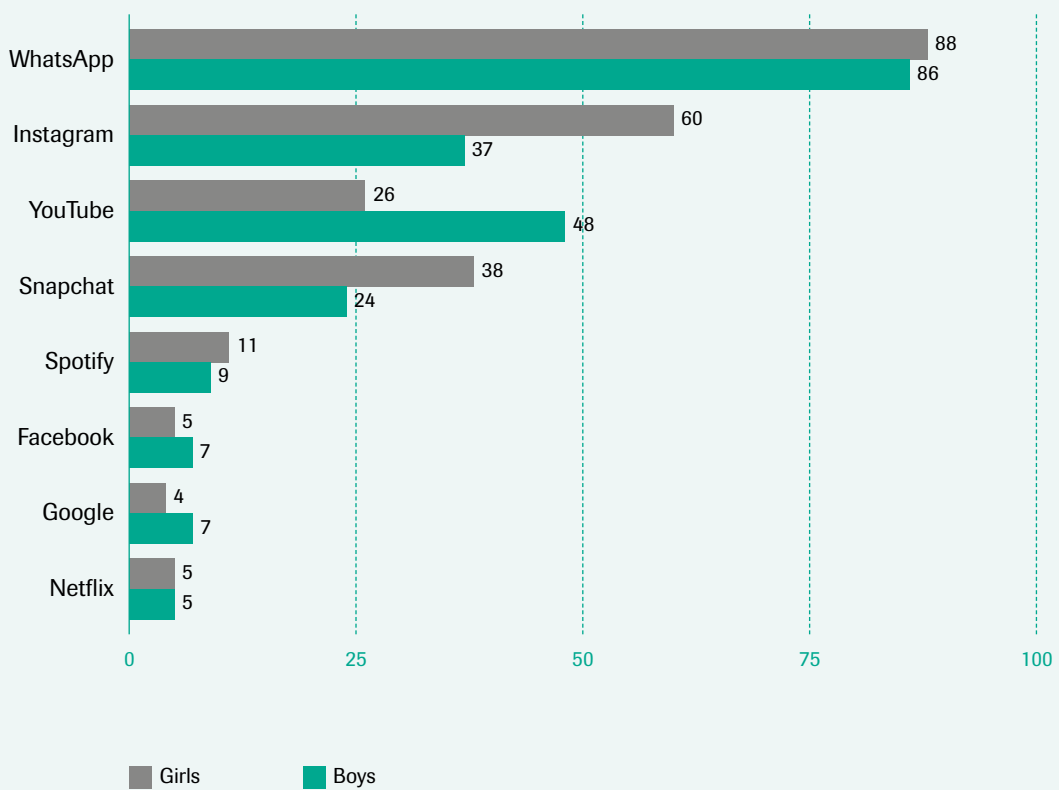
themes, from professionally produced to privately motivated videos, it is a conventional video library as well as a place where everyone can publish their own videos. 90% of adolescents use YouTube at least several times a week and two-thirds (64%) even daily. YouTube is especially popular as a mobile platform, with 89% of adolescents using their smartphones to access YouTube’s videos. The most favorite offers for adolescents are very diverse and tend to be oriented toward games or music. The individuals mentioned most often among the three favorites are the YouTubers Julian Bam (4%), Bibis Beauty Palace, LeFloid, GermanLetsPlay (3% each), and Dagi Bee, Gronkh, Pietsmiet and Joeys Jungle (2% each).

Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat offer their own proprietary means of communicating, expressing, and presenting oneself on the internet. In addition to the options available to individuals, whether within a closed set of friends or publicly for all internet users, these platforms can also be used by organizations, media companies, private initiatives, professional and nonprofessional reporters, music, sport, and art platforms – as well as extremists and conspiracy theorists. The consistency of appearance and uniformity of all content within the respective platform can make it difficult to distinguish between them or to differentiate real news from fake news. Also, the adolescents themselves are responsible for any problematic situations that may arise from their own communication, for example, when mobbing occurs.

The JIM Study regularly also reflects the problematic aspects of media use. One-fifth of the adolescents interviewed (19%) said they had – whether on purpose or by mistake –

Fig. 2

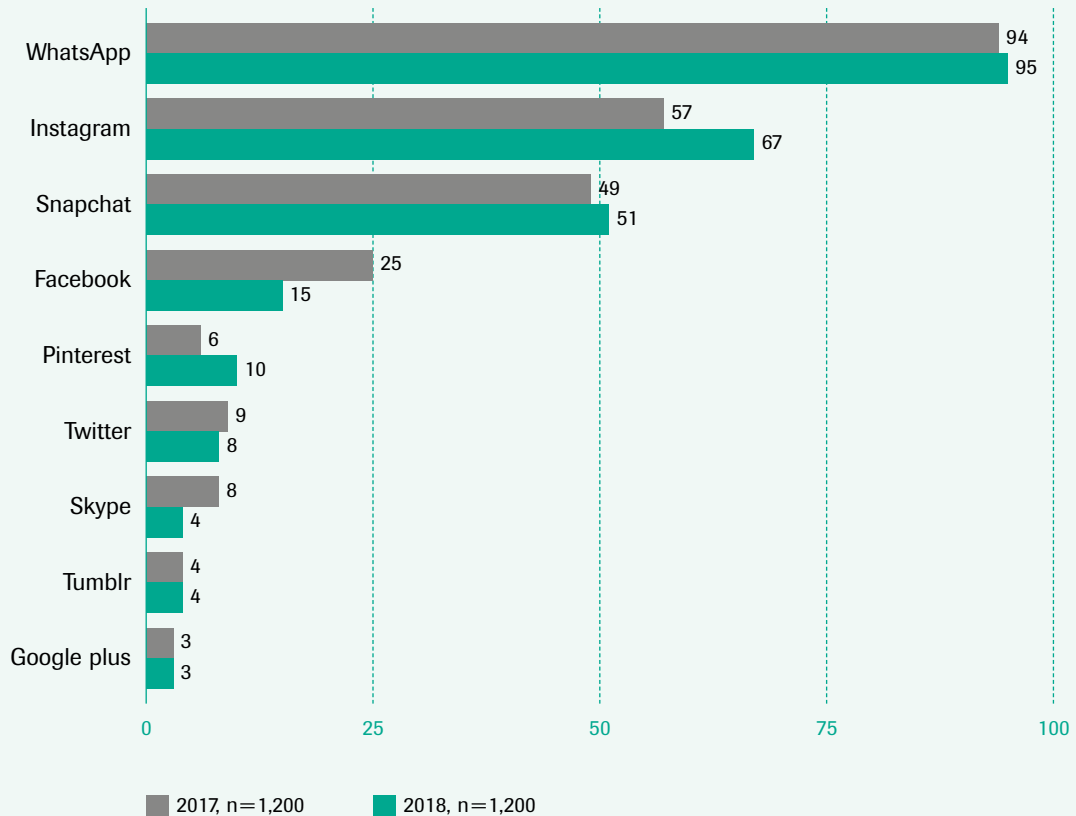
The most important apps, with up to three possible mentions (2018)



Source: JIM Study 2018. All data in %. Mentions of at least 3%. Based on number of persons interviewed who had the respective app on their device, n=1,149.

Fig. 3

Internet activities, main focus on communication (2018) – daily/multiple weekly use



Source: JIM Study 2018. All data in %. Based on all persons interviewed, n=1,200.

Fig. 4

Direct contact with hate messages – How often have you encountered hate messages while online?



Source: JIM Study 2017/2018. All data in %. Based on all persons interviewed.

experienced incorrect or offensive content about themselves via smartphone or the internet. This is true more for boys (22%) than for girls (15%). The largest group of victims was the 16–17-year-olds (25%), more than the 12–13-year-olds (13%), the 14–15-year-olds (20%), and the 18–19-year-olds (17%). Adolescents with lower educational backgrounds were more often involved (22%) than those with higher educational levels (16%).

Regarding concrete matters like exchanging photos and videos, 11% of the adolescents admit to having sent embarrassing or offensive photos/videos of themselves at least once. This is equally true for boys and girls. The largest group of victims were (again) the 16–17-year-olds.

When asked whether someone in their peer group had been victimized via smartphone or online, one-third (34%) said yes, with girls (39%) having witnessed cybermobbing more often than boys (30%). Here, too, the highest rate was among the group of 16–17-year-olds (40%; 12–13-year-olds: 28%, 14–15-year-olds: 32%, 18–19-year-olds: 35%). Adolescents with all levels of education were affected similarly. 8% of the adolescents reported having been victimized themselves, whereby girls (9%) were more often affected by cybermobbing than boys (6%), as were adolescents with a lower educational level (10%; high school: 6%).

Further, adolescents interviewed as part of the JIM Study 2018 were asked how often they had been confronted with hate messages online. One-fifth (17%) replied having often encountered such hostilities; another 17% reported sometimes reading hate messages, and 28% said this seldom happened to them. About one-third of all those interviewed reported never having read such hate messages. Boys tend

to have more contact with hate messages, and the chance of being confronted with hate messages increases with rising age (see Fig. 4).

When they were asked about the platforms or sites where they had been confronted with hate messages, adolescents mentioned mostly YouTube and Instagram, sometimes also Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, online gaming sites, and the commentary sections of news platforms. Those adolescents who already had contact with hate messages online were then asked how they reacted to such incidents, which resulted in a broad variety of different reactions. Most adolescents said they had chosen to simply ignore such messages or keep scrolling. Some, however, reported marking such messages with “dislike” buttons. Cases in which the persons being attacked were celebrities tended to be generally ignored, whereas hate messages directed at persons known to them or to themselves were more likely to be reported directly to the website in question. Further, in cases involving persons from one’s own personal surroundings, they tended to block the perpetrator and sometimes to get their parents involved.

The results of the JIM Study 2018 show that the spread of everyday use of the internet is accompanied by an increase in the risk inherent in new media content and social media platforms. From a media-educational perspective, the results of this study confirm that adolescents must be taught basic competencies if they are to recognize and reflect on the mechanisms of the existing media systems so that they can use such offers with competence and self-sufficiency.



Sabine Feierabend is a consultant for media research/program strategy at the Südwestfunk (SWR, Southwest Radio and TV Station).

Contact:
www.swr.de



Thomas Rathgeb is Head of the Department "Media Competence, Program, and Research" of the State Media Authority of Baden-Wuerttemberg (LFK).

Contact:
www.lfk.de



Theresa Reutter is a consultant for media and audience research at the State Media Authority of Baden-Wuerttemberg (LFK) and Head of the Office of the Media Education Research Association Southwest (mpfs).

Contact:
www.mpfs.de

“The Internet is always there.”

The Digital Worlds of 14–24-Year-Olds

Silke Borgstedt

For the second time (after 2014), the SINUS Institute examined the everyday digital life of adolescents and young adults on behalf of the “Deutsches Institut für Vertrauen und Sicherheit im Internet” (DIVSI, German Institute for Trust and Safety on the Internet). This study was centered around the following questions: How do the younger generations see the internet in general and social media in particular? What role do privacy and data security play in their lives? How do they see the coming online trends and innovations?

In order to answer these research-relevant questions, two-pronged survey procedures were needed in order to combine qualitative with quantitative methods. For this reason, ten age- and lifestyle-specific focus groups were queried and hypotheses concerning the subsequent quantitative investigation were generated. To this end, the survey conducted 1,730 interviews with 14–24-year-olds, 1,250 of them online and 480 personally.¹

The Ubiquity of the Internet in Everyday Life

When asked what the internet means to them, in 2019 adolescents often react with a shrug: “Well, the internet is just always there.” This is less a banal realization than the central key to understanding the digital lifeworld of modern 14–24-year-olds.

Modern 14–24-year-olds have never known a world without the internet; they are simply and naturally “always on.” However, this does not mean that they are necessarily “digital natives” competent at navigating the network. In fact, they are surprised to hear such attributions: 47% of them have never even heard the term. And some are outright annoyed: “I am not the internet.” Today, most adolescents are not euphoric about online innovations, but rather clearly understand that they have no other option than to come to terms with the demands of the digital society.

On the one hand, the ubiquity of the internet creates a pleasant feeling of routine and belongingness; on the other hand, it poses a challenge since it constantly demands some reaction. “The [internet] is everywhere. When I get up in the morning, I first write back to everyone who has written me. Only then do I get ready for the day. Then I listen to music via Spotify. At work whatever I do goes through the internet. So it’s always there. While sleeping I also get messages, though I can’t read them since I’m asleep” (23-year-old female).

For the 14–24-year-olds, it is important to note that in many cases they have no alternative to using the internet.

More than half of those interviewed (53%) said that without the internet they would be in the dark about what happens in their school or university. Digital participation means social participation – and vice versa.

“In the modern world we are more or less dependent on the internet, and even our schools presume that you know the ropes and that you have an email address. [...] And if you don’t, well, you’re in a fix. That’s just something you have to live with” (17-year-old male).

One matter crops up again and again in the statements of those queried: their concern about being or becoming addicted to the internet. 30% of those interviewed see themselves as having a problematic relationship with the internet and are unsure whether their user behavior is in fact healthy or whether they have already crossed a line.

“Sometimes I have the feeling that I have become addicted. I have the feeling that I look at my phone as often as possible. Whatever the situation, I’m always glancing at my fricking phone. It’s just awful!” (22-year-old female).

Messaging Instead of Networking

Social media are indispensable today for communication among 14–24-year-olds. 99% of them use the instant messaging service WhatsApp. In this age group, user application has thus risen by 38% within just 4 years. Almost as widespread in the everyday life of this age group is the video portal YouTube (96%). The increasing importance of the phenomenon of “influencers” has also made this platform significantly more important for this age group (increase of 15% since 2014).

Platforms with a more networking character, such as Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat, in turn, are receding. Especially Facebook has considerably surrendered meaning

¹ <https://www.divsi.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DIVSI-U25-Studieeuphorie.pdf>

among this cohort, since communication is now conducted preferably among more easily controllable communities (i.e., one-to-one instead of one-to-public). The big stage is now being turned over to (semi-)professional bloggers and influencers.

Many adolescents see themselves as “passive users” of social media. They read what others have posted, they view the videos others have uploaded – that is largely what the 14–24-year-olds do in addition to privately communicating with their friends.

“[...] well, I’m often a silent user, and if I do react then I comment on Facebook, but on Instagram [...] I follow a few people I already know, for example, travel bloggers. But I don’t actually interact with them at all. What would I write anyway? ‘Hey, sounds like a great place, I’d like to go there, too.’ That doesn’t really concern them much. No, mostly I remain quiet and just register what’s going on” (19-year-old male).

Both the qualitative and the quantitative interviews revealed that the internet (and particularly social media) are not seen as havens of free speech. Two-thirds of the 14–24-year-olds rather consider the internet a place where anyone who speaks up must count on being insulted or taunted. This “insult culture” is also one of the reasons why they prefer not to express themselves publicly: 38% agree somewhat or completely with the statement “I prefer not to express myself openly on the internet because I don’t want to be insulted.”

“I always feel like internet discussions are a difficult matter. I’ve never contributed myself, and you can see in the comments that whenever people discuss some political question people often get very offensive and personal since they can say anything they want to” (17-year-old female).

Influencers Have Limited Influence

In the advertising industry, influencers have become an important theme. But how relevant are they really in the

everyday life of persons under 25 years of age? The opinions expressed vary widely: Some 55% agree completely or somewhat that influencers are annoying since they are effectively only pitching products. Yet 47% have the feeling that they are getting good and helpful hints from influencers, and about half of those interviewed enjoyed being part of the life of such influencers online.

Nevertheless, relatively large educational differences crop up. Among the interviewees with a higher level of education, more than twice as many are annoyed by influencers than among those with a lower level of education (66% vs. 32%). Adolescents and young adults with a lower educational status agree to a much higher degree that they receive good and helpful tips from influencers (64% vs. 37% among person with higher educational status). The situation is similar concerning excitement about being able to participate in the life of the influencers online, with 66% vs. 41% of the less-well and well-educated interviewees, respectively.

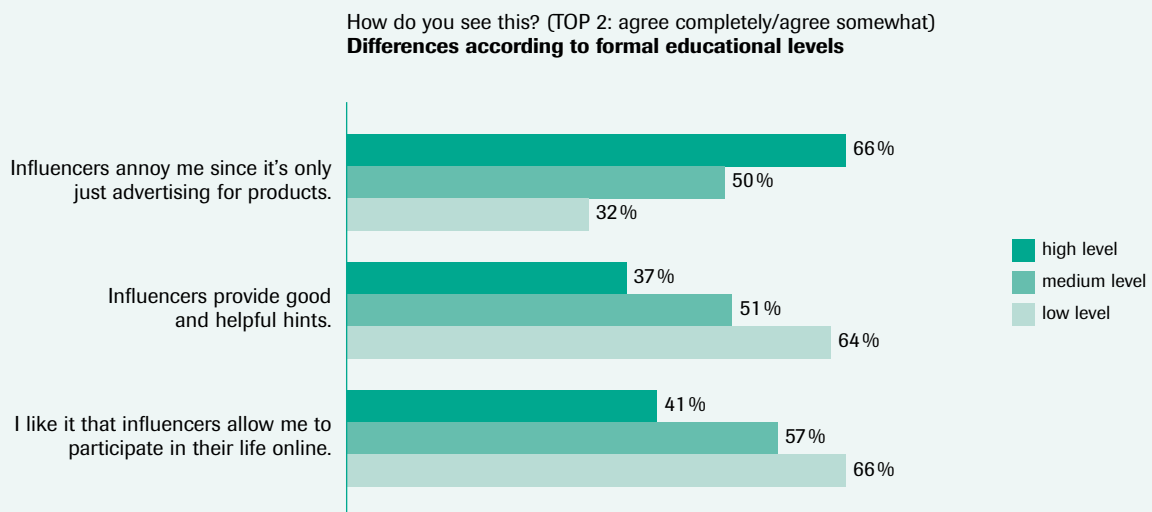
“Of course, a lot of things can be demonstrated to you via social media, but for me these influencers often seem just bought out [...]. Though there are some who are more reliable. Still, it seems like a lot of pushing is going on there, and you never really know how much truth is behind it, although it can be useful somehow” (21-year-old female).

“If you ask me, I like the new rule that anyone who is active as a blogger influencer has to identify themselves as such when their posts are paid ones. Now you can better see that they didn’t post a particular photo just because they wanted to but because they had to” (23-year-old female).

“I always enjoy it when someone reports on what they have experienced themselves and also shows what they did themselves. This allows you to recognize that there is truth there. For example, there are a number of fitness YouTubers who have been doing it for 20 or 30 years and are truly interested in nutrition and make it part of their daily routine. There’s one who lost 20 kg and then regained it and recorded it all. That’s interesting. You can really see what’s possible to accomplish” (22-year-old male).

Fig. 1

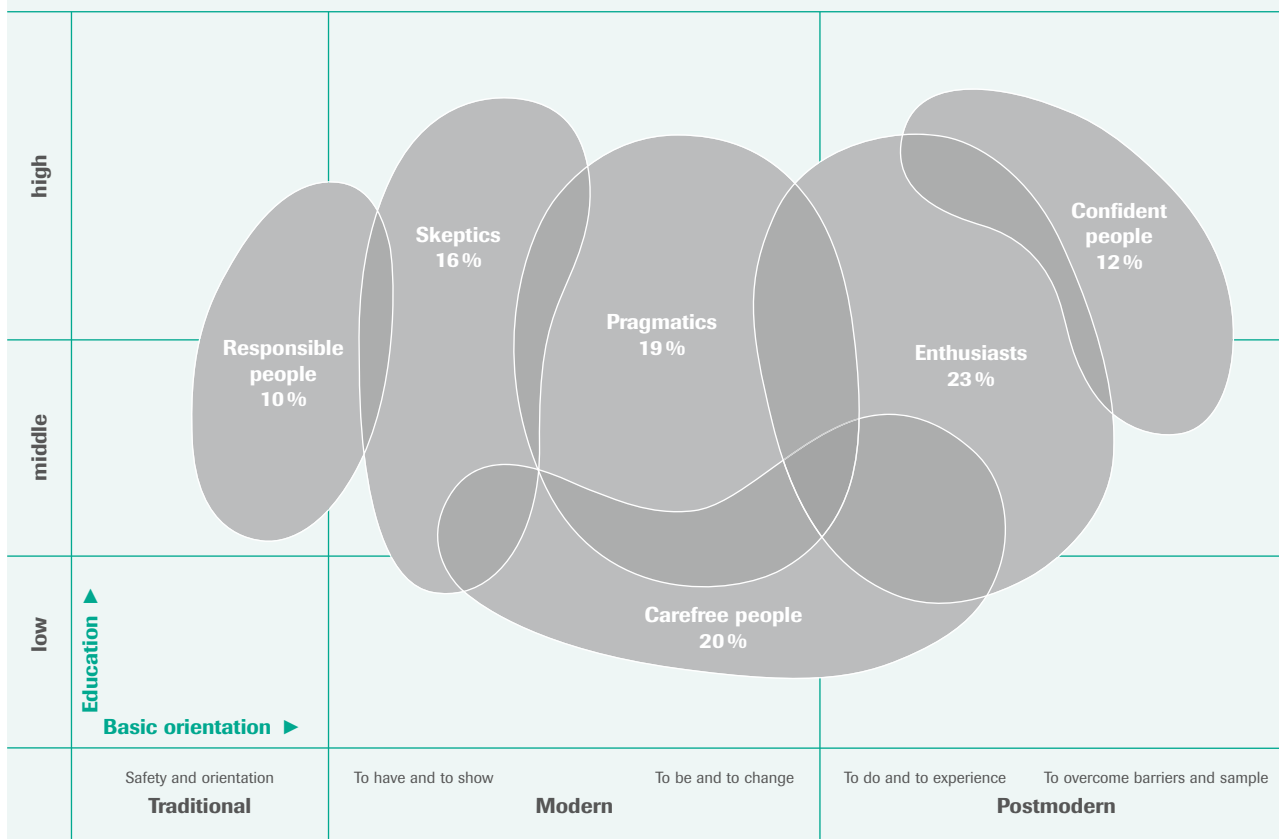
Opinions about influencer – differences in educational level



Source: DIVSI. Based on all 1,730 interviewees.

Fig. 2

DIVSI Internet Milieus <25 Years (2018)



Source: SINUS 2018.

The Increased Importance of Risks

14–24-year-olds primarily see opportunities in digital innovations, although they are also acutely aware of the risks and large challenges involved. These may be found particularly in three risk areas:

Danger to identity, i.e., attacks on personal integrity through insults, mobbing, or the exposition of intimate information on the internet. They are especially sensitive to the linking of personal and personalized data with real attitudes and activities. They are afraid of damaging their reputation and thus their future professional and social opportunities.

Differentiation between true and fake on the internet. The theme of “fake news” has come front and center and has damaged the basic overall trust in the medium, even if in everyday life you still presume (or at least hope) that you have chosen the right information.

Insecurity concerning whether or how one might be affected. Even if we may vaguely know how cookies function or have heard that our online activities can be followed, what others really know about us remains unclear and creates a feeling of discomfort.

That in the future many things will have to be done via the internet causes anxiety in 41% of the interviewees – in 2014 this figure was only 21%. One reason for the change lies less in their lack of trust in their ability to adopt the new skills or to implement the innovations than in the dilemma they see facing them: Becoming dependent on an

infrastructure that presents itself to them as a black box. They grope in the dark for something they can rely on, for some means of repelling the dangers.

Digital Lifeworlds

The various means of accessing the internet and the various existing communication cultures may be described as forms of *internet milieus*, the representatives of which differ in their attitudes, value systems, and online behaviors. Figure 2 provides an outline of the present landscape of the “DIVSI internet milieus <25 years” in Germany as determined by this study.

The **confident people** represent the cosmopolitan digital avantgarde with an expressly individualized approach. They are convinced of the value of digital innovations, albeit today somewhat more critical than even a few years ago. They are aware that initially good inventions may over time develop differently than planned (e.g., when couch surfers become professional landlords). And increasingly they ask: What do I need that for? Does it really make my life better? For them, becoming dependent on the internet is not cool.

“Sometimes it can be very tiresome [...] the way content marketing has taken off, and that after every visit to some website [...] you are confronted with companies that write something only in order to corral you for their website, resulting in superfluous articles that essentially always say the same thing” (24-year-old female).

The **enthusiasts** are online optimists, carefree networkers. Not only can they not imagine life without the internet, the idea scares them since they do not see how they could manage their everyday life without the internet. Thus, they are expressly unmoved by matters of security and continually optimistic that everything will go well. Among the various internet milieus, the enthusiasts are those most fascinated by the influencers.

“Among others, I follow people who travel a lot. It’s very relaxing to me, and it’s interesting to see how they travel, what experiences they have. They also take very cool photos and have the money to do cool things. [...] that can be very inspiring” (17-year-old female).

The **pragmatics** are oriented toward performance and very determined; they use the internet above all as an instrument to enhance their own personal future chances. Increasingly, they find themselves caught between being open to new things and worried about their personal safety in the digital public arena. Online they tend to withdraw into personal networks; they post less and more selectively, avoiding the public eye. In their opinion the risk is great that their reputation and their image might suffer if they take some misstep. The pragmatics are among the most active Instagram users, but they generally observe what others are doing rather than becoming active themselves. They garner ideas and suggestions and only follow the one or the other star in the internet influencer sky.

“On YouTube you can’t really have a conversation with someone. Look at the quality of the comments – it’s very depressing; If you voice some opinion, you get shot down immediately – although I’ve never or only rarely actually voiced an opinion there, maybe a few years ago” (23-year-old male).

The **carefree** people search the internet primarily for one thing: entertainment. YouTube, Netflix, social media – they surf around, they relax, they follow multiple channels at the same time. Yet they also belong to the group of “burned children” among the different milieus. No other group has been so hardly hit by negative online experiences (e.g., insults, fraud, fake profiles, hacked profiles, etc.).

“A friend of mine, she wants to lose lots of weight because of Instagram, so she doesn’t eat much anymore, no sweets at all. For about a year or two now she hasn’t eaten hardly any sugar at all, except for maybe once or twice a month. That has changed her, the whole hype, you know, that you have to be really thin and have a small waist and fat ass and such” (15-year-old female).

The **skeptics** are very prudent and selective users of the internet who see the increasing digitalization of everyday life as a problematic development, although they still use the everyday advantages to their own benefit. Despite their high internet competence, they feel somewhat helpless in the digital world and tend to delegate the responsibility for protecting their privacy to large institutions.

“I have a healthy respect for the internet, and I try to keep my smartphone as uninteresting as possible. I know that it can be hacked, that these things can happen to you” (15-year-old female).

The **responsible people** are geared toward safety and have rather down-to-earth and traditional value systems. They are generally skeptical toward modern technology and thus highly sensitive toward the possible risks.

“I don’t follow anyone, and I don’t really know how. I think my friends use Instagram and Snapchat, but because

I don’t have it at my disposal, I don’t really know how active they are since I don’t look at their profiles” (22-year-old female).

Conclusion

Today, most adolescents can no longer imagine life without the internet. For this reason, they want it to work and want it to meet their expectations for equality and fairness. The idea of becoming dependent on the internet worries them. They see the internet as something practical when it remains fair to all, but terrible when something goes wrong. This idea makes them uneasy since they can no longer gauge what will happen to their data and information in a few years.

Adolescents know the internet will continue to progress – and are basically happy about that. Thus, they also demand that the path to the digital future be a trustworthy one. They can formulate their wishes quite adequately and make clear that they want not just to use the internet, but also to understand it.



Dr. Silke Borgstedt is Director of Marketing and Social Research at the SINUS Institute. She has been the Project Head of Empirical Studies for enterprises and public institutions for more than 10 years. She also does research on everyday esthetics and consumption, family sociology, youth and trend research, the digital society, and migration.

Contact:

SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung,
Gaisbergstraße 6,
69115 Heidelberg,
silke.borgstedt@sinus-institut.de,
www.sinus-institut.de

Sexuality Education in the Digital Media: The Present State of Development and Research

Nicola Döring

For adolescents in Germany, the digital media have long become the most popular source of sexuality education. But what does this content look like and who is offering sexuality education on social media when adolescents start targeted searches for sex-related matters? What is the quality of such digital sexuality education? What results from such activities? This contribution describes the present state of affairs of development and research and provides suggestions for future research and practice.

Introduction

In 2001, only some 3% of all girls and 10% of all boys in Germany reported getting their information about sexuality education from the internet; in 2014, the figures had risen to 39% of girls and 47% of boys (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 60). When asked today where they go to close any gaps in their knowledge of sexuality, 59% of girls and 62% of boys reply on the internet (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 58). The internet has clearly become the favorite medium of sexuality education for adolescents, more than all other media and all other persons of trust. Even most adults in Germany (55%) now say that they look on the internet for sex-related information (DÖRING/MOHSENI 2019, p. 254).

Thus, both the younger and the older generations appreciate the fact that searching for sex-related information on the internet means having quick and discrete access to a wide spectrum of themes regardless of place and time (HOLSTROM 2015). Yet, at the same time, much skepticism and insecurity are involved regarding the reliability of such online sources.

Against this background, this overview would like to pursue four different research questions:

- 1) How do adolescents go about discovering sexuality education in the digital media?
- 2) What types of digital sexuality education are available to them?
- 3) What is the quality of the digital offers of sexuality education for adolescents?
- 4) What are the patterns and effects of the digital offers of sexuality education?

The answers to these questions will be sought using case examples and scientific studies.

How Do Adolescents Access Sexuality-Educational Matters in the Digital Media?

Adolescents can access sexuality education in the digital media in two basic ways (DÖRING 2017c):

- *Push mode*: Sex-related information is automatically sent to them or automatically appears in their timeline, whether on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, or as a video suggestion on their YouTube account. This happens when sex-related entries come up on the channels the adolescents have liked or subscribed on social media, for example, when they have liked the Facebook page of Loveline by the German Centre for Health Education (BZgA) and receive new posts in accordance with the Facebook algorithm. Generally speaking, adolescents prefer not to get sex-related information via push notices on their own (partially) public online profiles, since it might be embarrassing to them if information on, say, sexually transmitted diseases were to appear on their Facebook or Instagram timeline. Private push messages, such as those transmitted via messenger services like WhatsApp or via dedicated sexuality-educational apps, on the other hand, are more acceptable (BYRON/ALBURG/EVERS 2013).
- *Pull mode*: Sex-related information is retrieved on purpose, for example, when adolescents enter completely or partially sex-related questions in Google or the search box on YouTube. Thus, those offering sexuality education on the internet must ensure that their content lands among the highest hits, since people typically only look through the first few hits. Searching for “chlamydia” on the German YouTube results in videos from the Techniker Krankenkasse (a statutory health insurer), from Inka, an expert in sexuality education (channel “einfach inka”), from the now defunct channel “Fickt euch, ist doch nur Sex” (originally run by the state television stations ARD/ZDF). Only thereafter do videos from the BZgA campaign “Die infektaischen STI” (The Infectastic STDs) appear. Providing information in pull mode is the main method of dissemination of online sexuality education.

The spectrum of the sexual themes interested adolescents can find in sexuality-education efforts or discover in the digital media via pull mode is very broad (DÖRING 2017c). They concern fertility, pregnancy, contraception, body and bodily changes, health and sexually transmitted diseases – but also sexualized violence. Primarily, however, we are dealing with questions surrounding sexual practices, identities, relationships, and sexual desire, that is, sexual well-being (HOLSTROM 2015). We find explicit questions focusing on lustful experience – what makes for a “proper” kiss or a “good” kiss, how best to finger someone, the various ways to successfully masturbate, how oral, vaginal, or anal sex functions, what girls and boys like most among the sexual practices. Even today some of these questions remain taboo and are thus best posed discretely via online sexuality education. Also, many different role models and visual information are available online. The question “how to properly finger” results in diverse YouTube videos with millions of hits.

We know relatively little about the specific contexts (time, place, situation) in which adolescents use the pull mode to directly retrieve information about sexual themes. It is plausible that the internet is able to satisfy the overall sexual curiosity of adolescents, who may also Google such matters out of boredom or to entertain a group of peers. Also, it is normal to expect some searches for specific information based on topical events, that is, when sexual matters crop up (such as preparing for the “first time” or for one’s first visit to a gynecologist, during a difficult patch in a relationship or a coming out, following a contraceptive mishap or a sexual assault). Whenever the internet can serve as a go-to place for acute crisis situations, then it is important that it disseminate information providing concrete paths to getting further care and assistance (e.g., telephone hotlines, counseling services).

An analysis of the hit rates of the Wikipedia entry on “HIV” (GABARRON/LAU/WYNN 2016) reveal three contexts for increased retrieval:

- a) *a weekly pattern*, especially on Mondays, which can be interpreted as increased concern about a possible HIV infection following sexual activities over the weekend.
- b) *a yearly pattern*, especially on December 1, the World AIDS Day.
- c) *an event-related pattern*, for example, especially during November 2015, directly following the announcement of the HIV infection of the actor Charlie Sheen, known to many adolescents through his TV series *Two and a Half Men*.

When planning online campaigns on sexuality education, one should take such contexts of sex-related online information searches into consideration for the respective target groups.

What Types of Digital Sexuality Education Are Available?

Among the first hits in targeted, sex-related online searches for information via pull mode (DÖRING 2017c) are the following answers on Google and YouTube:

- 1) *The classic mass media* (print and television): These turn up with their nonfictional and fictional contributions to the theme. Googling the term “first time,” for example,

calls up the Dr. Sommer team at the German youth magazine *Bravo*. Searching for “chlamydia” on YouTube results in hits leading to excerpts from the TV show *Berlin Tag und Nacht*.

- 2) *Health and sexuality education portals*: Questions related to sexual health (such as “How do you get vaginal fungal infections?”) lead adolescents to the leading online health portals such as netdoktor.de (Holtzbrinck-Verlag) or gesundheit.de (Alliance Healthcare, a large pharmaceutical distributor). With HIV-related questions, sexuality education portals pop up among the first hits (such as the BZgA and the German AIDS Service Organization). For girls, sexuality education and counseling sites are the most important (50%) ones for online sexuality-educational information, more so than for boys (34%) (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 62).
- 3) *Counseling portals and online forums*: If you enter a sex-related question on the internet (such as “Does anal sex hurt?”) you nearly always land at the more general counseling portals such as gutefrage.de (Holtzbrinck Digital GmbH) or numerous other online forums (e.g., medi.de, gofeminin.de, erdbeerlounge.de, aven-forum.de). Online forums are important means of obtaining information on sexuality education for both girls (51%) and for boys (41%) (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 62) as well as offering diverse perspectives on sex-related matters such as pornography (DÖRING 2013).
- 4) *The online encyclopedia Wikipedia* nearly always turns up among the first 10 hits with sex-related searches. Wikipedia is considered an important source by about half of the both male and female (48%) adolescents seeking out sexuality-educational information on the internet (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 62).
- 5) *Social media platforms*, particularly YouTube, one of the most popular internet addresses among adolescents, offer a wealth of sexuality-educational contents (DÖRING 2017b). This includes professionals with very widely consulted channels, such as the sexuality educationist Benjamin Scholz with his YouTube channel “jungfragen” (boys’ questions). Further, many laypersons are active – and successful – on this platform who disperse information in the sense of peer counseling (an example is the YouTube channel “einfach inka”) or serve as role models for sexual and gender minorities, an example being the lesbian YouTube channel “The Nosy Rosie” (DÖRING/PRINZELLNER 2016).
- 6) *Online pornography portals* also serve as sexuality-educational portals for male (49%) and female (16%) adolescents (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 62) since they show sexual practices in great detail.
- 7) *Sexual health apps* are presently underresearched and very dynamic in nature, though they can be very effective, for example, in the prevention of unplanned teenager pregnancies (MANGONE/LEBRUN/MUESSIG 2016). In Google searches, apps for the promotion of sexual health do not appear high on the list; rather, they must be sought out in the online stores for mobile apps, such as the Apple Store or the Google Play Store, in the categories “health and fitness,” “lifestyle,” or “medicine.” Well-known sexual health apps include those that remind users to take their contraceptive pills or that offer menstruation cycle calendars, which can be relevant to adolescent girls (RICHMAN/WEBB/BRINKLEY/MARTIN 2014).

What Is the Quality of the Digital Contents of Sexuality Education for Adolescents?

Generally speaking, and this is confirmed in the literature, all online information, including YouTube videos, must be approached with a measure of caution because of insufficient quality, in particular because of possible factual errors. Whether one is dealing with a YouTube video on HIV, HPV vaccination, Kegel exercises, IUDs, or premature puberty – all previous studies of samples have revealed a not negligible number of mistakes (DÖRING 2017b).

That the treatment of sexuality, sexual health, or health in general in the digital media (and particularly on YouTube) is flawed should not come as a surprise to anyone these days (DÖRING 2017a). Whatever the context of human communication, there will always be, consciously or unconsciously, some false information. More meaningful estimates about false information in the digital media (websites, YouTube videos, sexuality-educational apps) will emerge only when comparative studies include an important necessary condition: exact information concerning the existing gaps in knowledge and errors in sex-related *nononline* communication in families, among peers, in doctors' offices, in school curricula, in independent youth work, in adolescent literature and sexuality-education booklets. Without such comparative data it is virtually useless to report on selective error rates on YouTube or any other online context.

Yet, even the sexuality-educational videos on YouTube that contain erroneous or questionable information of one type or another may still be quite useful and sufficient for target groups that otherwise receive little or problematic information at home, at school, or in schoolbooks. For example, the tabooed issue of masturbation, so highly important to adolescents of both sexes, is barely dealt with in the official brochures of the BZgA and pro familia, whereas it plays a major role in YouTube videos (DÖRING 2017c).

In the future, there will be a need for studies that systematically compare the quality of information on the internet to that provided in other contexts. Furthermore, for a qualitative analysis of the sexuality-educational information given online we need assessment instruments that are well founded in theory and validated, and that meet the necessary quality standards regarding content and technical implementation (DÖRING 2017c; GABARRON/FERNANDEZ-LUQUE/ARMAYONES/LAU 2013; MADATHIL/RIVERA-RODRIGUEZ/GREENSTEIN/GRAMOPADHYE 2015).

What Are the Patterns and Effects of the Digital Contents of Sexuality Education?

To date, because we do not have the respective interview and questionnaire studies at our disposal (HOLSTROM 2015), we do not know by whom, when, how, and with whom the existing online contents of sexuality education are being used and discussed with others.

Large gaps in our research knowledge exist not only regarding user behavior, but also regarding the effects of online sexuality education. In the absence of empirical data, we can formulate only theory-based conjectures. Based on existing theories from communication science and learning psychology, the general effects of such sexuality education may be formulated as follows:

- *Agenda setting* (because of their content, digital offers of sexuality education put certain themes to the public eye).
- *Framing* (because of the way in which digital contents of sexuality education are presented and the way they approach certain sexual themes and problems, they are able to affect how the public views them).
- *Learning from role models* (because the digital contents of sexuality education implement and emphasize sympathetic and successful role models, the attitudes and behaviors they project are well received).

Whether such effects can be deemed “positive” or “negative” for sexual development and sexuality education depends greatly on the respective context, content, and value system (DÖRING 2017b). Thus, for some adolescent girls and young women it may be helpful to receive such detailed information and see such diverse role models in YouTube videos actively addressing the subject of masturbation. But wherever sexual options are being presented, this must necessarily occur on the condition that this behavior not be seen as a new norm, that the viewer not be put under pressure to conform. Videos viewed millions of times on such sexual techniques as “fingering,” “licking,” and “sucking” may have the positive effect of eliminating insecurities and encouraging viewers to explore desired sexual techniques with others. But these videos can also create problems, for example, by precipitating excessive expectations, performance-oriented behaviors, or the incorrect assumption that watching the video suffices to know what one's partner wants or needs. If videos dealing with STDs lead to a reduction in the rate of STDs, then that is clearly a positive thing, but the evidence for this effect is in fact weak (GABARRON/WYNN 2016).

It is necessary to warn against attributing all too large positive or negative effects on the sexual behaviors of the overall population to the internet. Whatever the messages the digital contents of sexuality education may impart, they are always embedded in a large number of other personal, situational, and environmental factors that determine the paths our sexual development takes. People who have no urgent issues and draw only sporadically on online offers of sexuality education will likely experience only minimal effects. However, those who tap more intensively into select contents of sexuality education and have concrete needs (e.g., adolescents belonging to sexual or gender minorities) will be affected to a greater extent by the digital contents.

Conclusion

The digital media present a large variety of sexuality education by and for adolescents. Professional sexuality education is to date not prominently represented, whereas offers of peer-driven sexuality education are in part very popular. There is also a tendency to spread unenlightened messages in social media which run contrary to sexuality education (DÖRING 2017a). Professional institutions of sexuality education must step up and become more visible in the context of the booming online contents of sexuality education and keep up with the rapid changes going on in the social media culture. This means developing and implementing professional social media strategies. Research in this area has the task of determining the contents, user patterns, and impact of the digital contents of sexuality education.

Nicola Döring, Prof. Dr. phil. habil., Dipl.-Psych., is Head of the Media Psychology and Media Design Group at the Institute of Media and Communication Science (IfMK) of the Technical University of Ilmenau. Her focus lies on social and psychological aspects of online, mobile and man-machine communication, sexual and gender research, research methods and evaluation.

Contact:

nicola.doering@tu-ilmenau.de

References

- BODE, HEIDRUN/HESSLING, ANGELIKA (2015): Jugendsexualität 2015. Die Perspektive der 14- bis 25-Jährigen. Ergebnisse einer aktuellen Repräsentativen Wiederholungsbefragung. Köln: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung
- BYRON, PAUL/ALBURY, KATH/EVERS, CLIFTON (2013): "It would be weird to have that on Facebook": Young people's use of social media and the risk of sharing sexual health information. *Reproductive Health Matters* 21(41)
- DÖRING, NICOLA (2013): Wie wird Pornografie in Online-Foren diskutiert? Ergebnisse einer Inhaltsanalyse. In: *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 26(4)
- DÖRING, NICOLA (2017a): Gesundheitskommunikation auf YouTube: Aktueller Forschungsstand. In: SCHERENBERG, VIVIANE/PUNDT, JOHANNA (Eds.): *Digitale Gesundheitskommunikation. Zwischen Meinungsbildung und Manipulation*. Bremen: Apollon University Press
- DÖRING, NICOLA (2017b): Online-Sexualaufklärung auf YouTube: Bestandsaufnahme und Handlungsempfehlungen für die Sexualpädagogik. In: *Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung* 30(4)
- DÖRING, NICOLA (2017c): Sexualaufklärung im Internet: Von Dr. Sommer zu Dr. Google. In: *Bundesgesundheitsblatt – Gesundheitsforschung – Gesundheitsschutz* 60(9)
- DÖRING, NICOLA/MOHSENI, M. ROHANGIS (2019): Are online sexual activities and sexting good for adults' sexual well-being? Results from a national online survey. In: *International Journal of Sexual Health* 30(3)
- DÖRING, NICOLA/PRINZELNER, YVONNE (2016): Gesundheitskommunikation auf YouTube: Der LGBTIQ-Kanal "The Nosy Rosie." In: CAMERINI, A.L./LUDOLPH, R./ROTHENFLUH, F. (Eds.): *Gesundheitskommunikation im Spannungsfeld zwischen Theorie und Praxis. Reihe Medien + Gesundheit, Band 13*. Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlag
- GABARRON, ELIA/FERNANDEZ-LUQUE, LUIS/ARMAYONES, MANUEL/LAU, ANNIE Y. S. (2013): Identifying measures used for assessing quality of youtube videos with patient health information: A review of current literature. In: *Interactive Journal of Medical Research*. 2(1)
- GABARRON, ELIA/LAU, ANNIE Y. S./WYNN, ROLF (2016): Weekly pattern for online information seeking on HIV – A multi-language study. In: *Studies in Health Technology Information* 228
- GABARRON, ELIA/WYNN, ROLF (2016): Use of social media for sexual health promotion: a scoping review. In: *Global Health Action* 9(1)
- HOLSTROM, AMELIA M. (2015): Sexuality education goes viral: What we know about online sexual health information. In: *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 10(3)
- MADATHIL, KAPIL CHALIL/RIVERA-RODRIGUEZ, A. JOY/GREENSTEIN, JOEL S./GRAMOPADHYE, ANAND K. (2015): Healthcare information on YouTube: A systematic review. In: *Health Informatics Journal* 21(3)
- MANGONE, EMILY ROSE/LEBRUN, VICTORIA/MUESSIG, KATHRYN E. (2016): Mobile phone apps for the prevention of unintended pregnancy: A systematic review and content analysis. In: *JMIR mHealth and uHealth* 4(1)
- RICHMAN, ALICE R./WEBB, MONICA C./BRINKLEY, JASON/MARTIN, RYAN J. (2014): Sexual behaviour and interest in using a sexual health mobile app to help improve and manage college students' sexual health. In: *Sex Education* 14(3)

The Portrayal of Gender on YouTube: The Narrow Spectrum of Female YouTubers and the Broad Field of Males

Elizabeth Prommer, Claudia Wegener, Christine Linke

A study by the “Institut für Medienforschung” (Institute for Media Research) at the University of Rostock shows that significantly more men than women are present on the most successful YouTube channels. It also shows how thematically limited and traditional the themes are that the female protagonists on YouTube tend to foster compared to their male counterparts.

Object and Goal of this Research

Video portals – and by this we mean primarily YouTube – presently belong to most popular media formats on the internet, a situation supported by recent research data. The JIM Study from 2018 of the “Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest” (MPFS; MEDIA EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION SOUTHWEST) confirmed the major role YouTube plays especially in the lives of adolescents and young adults. According to their research, 90% of all adolescents use YouTube at least several times a week, and 64% even watch videos on this platform on a daily basis (MPFS 2018, p. 48). This underlines the enormous impact that YouTube has on the everyday life of especially the younger viewers. When asked about the themes they are interested in, adolescents reply above all with comedy, followed by music, gaming, and news (cf. RIHL/WEGENER 2015). Gender-specific differences are apparent especially in the beauty and lifestyle videos, which are viewed predominantly by girls and young women, whereas boys and young men show less interest in these topics (ibid.).

Empirical analyses of the portrayal of gender on YouTube are still rare, but DÖRING (2019) presents a good overview. Internationally, research consists primarily of studies that treat and analyze individual aspects of gender portrayal (MOLYNEAUX et al. 2008; DÖRING 2018). What they all have in common is that they find, first, that women are under-represented and, second, that YouTube is an overall hostile environment for women. Women get more negative comments than men (cf. DÖRING 2018). A few first analyses of the German YouTube site are now available. DÖRING and MOHSENI (2018), for example, studied who produced the top 100 YouTube channels in nine different countries as well as the comments garnered by international videos. It turned out that only 25% belonged to women.

Whereas research into gender portrayal in television can look back on a long history (PROMMER/LINKE 2019), there is a great deficit regarding video portals. Thus, for example, no broadly-based quantitative content analysis is available on the

portrayal of men and women in German YouTube videos that do not land in the top 100 channels. Deep analysis of gender representation is needed.

Thus, the first goal of the research contained in the study described here was to determine the proportions of female and male YouTubers among the 1,000 most successful German channels as well as to analyze more exactly the content and forms of presentation.¹ Furthermore, we wanted to expand our study to include the following aspects: What are the differences between themes presented by men and women? How are the roles distributed in the various different formats, such as popular journalistic, political, socio-political as well as knowledge-based vs. beauty and lifestyle-oriented? In which contexts do men and women emerge on YouTube?

Our analysis proceeded in two steps: First, we analyzed the 1,000 most popular channels of YouTubers in Germany according to their genre and the sex of the persons who run them. The top 1,000 channels were determined based on the number of subscribers.² In a second step we then identified the top 100 YouTubers in Germany and more closely examined 20 of their videos, respectively. For that we chose the 10 most recent and the 10 most viewed videos for further analysis.

Under the term “YouTubers” we put the main actors on YouTube who were real persons, who could be identified by the viewers as real persons, and who declared themselves to be (co)responsible for the channel in question. We did not consider any channels run by television stations, music labels, individual television shows, and other institutions. We also did not further analyze any “Let’s play” formats since the people responsible for them are generally unknown, only the respective computer games. In addition to the sex of those responsible, we also coded their age, migration back-

1 The study was financed by a grant from the “Film- und Medienstiftung NRW” (Film and Media Foundation of North Rhine-Westphalia).

2 Data drawn from Social Blade on 28 January 2018.

Fig. 1

Top 1,000 channels

YouTubers, natural persons only (n=722), all figures in %

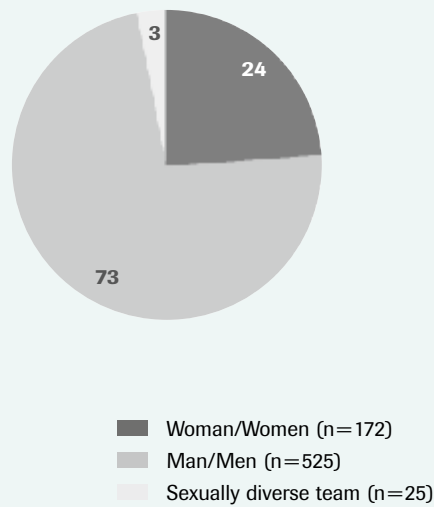
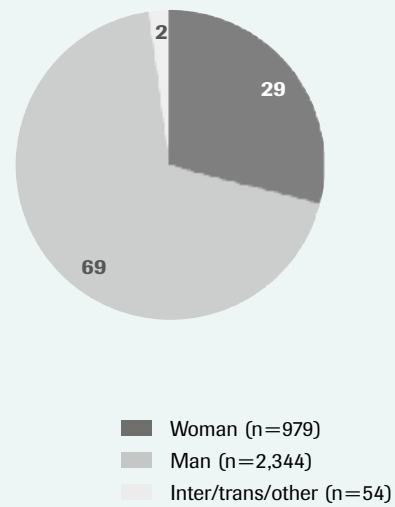


Fig. 2

Top 100 channels/2,000 videos

Sex of main contributor (n=3,377), all figures in %



ground, relationship/children, affect orientation, recording background (bathroom, bedroom, studio, etc.) as well as the themes being treated (fashion, politics, etc.).

The system used to categorize and define these matters was drawn from the study by PROMMER and LINKE (2019) in order to be able to compare our results with those from television and movies.

Gender Distribution Among the Top 1,000 YouTube Channels

17% of the top 1,000 channels were hosted by women, 53% by men, and 3% by mixed gender or sexually diverse teams. 27% were not hosted by natural persons but by music labels, television stations, institutions, or television programs such as Vox Kids.³

If you look solely at the channels hosted by natural persons, about one-fourth (24%) is run by women. That is, there are three male channels for every one female channel.

In their description of channels, YouTube offers categories of specific YouTube genres, where very clear gender differences become apparent. Women and men most often run entertainment channels (women: n = 86, men: n = 199). Women are particularly active on how-to-channels (women: n = 61, men: n = 9). But because only 24% of all channels run by natural persons are hosted by women, more men tend to host all other types of channel except for the how-to-channels. The game videos lie squarely in the hands of men (women: n = 6, men: n = 150) – one woman to every 25 men. This is especially striking because women make up 41% of the gamers (STATISTA 2018); their disproportional activity in game video channels therefore cannot be explained by a lack of interest in the subject. Further, men dominate many other

genres such as music (women: n = 9, men: n = 80) and sports (women: n = 4, men: n = 20). Only a single woman is represented in the genres of comedy, film, and education, where the ratio men to women lies between 10:1 and 20:1.

If we look at men and women separately, that is, calculate separate percentage values for men and women, we notice that men not only run channels more often but are also overall present in more various genres. Female YouTubers are generally limited to entertainment channels (50%) and how-to-channels (35%) – or they are concerned with people and celebrities (2%). Men, on the other hand, are more diversely active, being responsible for channels about entertainment (38%), games (29%), music (15%) as well as in all other genres. Only in the how-to-channels are they under-represented (2%).

From the list of the 1,000 most popular videos, we chose 20 from the 100 most successful channels run by natural persons and analyzed them more thoroughly. A look at the natural persons occurring in these 2,000 videos reveals a ratio of 2:1 for males. Only 2% of these videos show persons having another gender. Interestingly enough, this lopsided ratio is similar to that found in television (cf. PROMMER/LINKE 2019).

In one central diverse category, however, we do discover more diversity on YouTube than in television (cf. PROMMER/LINKE 2019): A total of 44% of the persons hosting a channel had a recognizable migration background, more so among men (68%) than among women (32%). In this respect, YouTube is clearly a more diverse ethnic platform than other audiovisual media.

Among the top 100 channels, female YouTubers are generally more involved with how-to-channels that are service oriented (e.g., on themes like beauty, food, household matters).

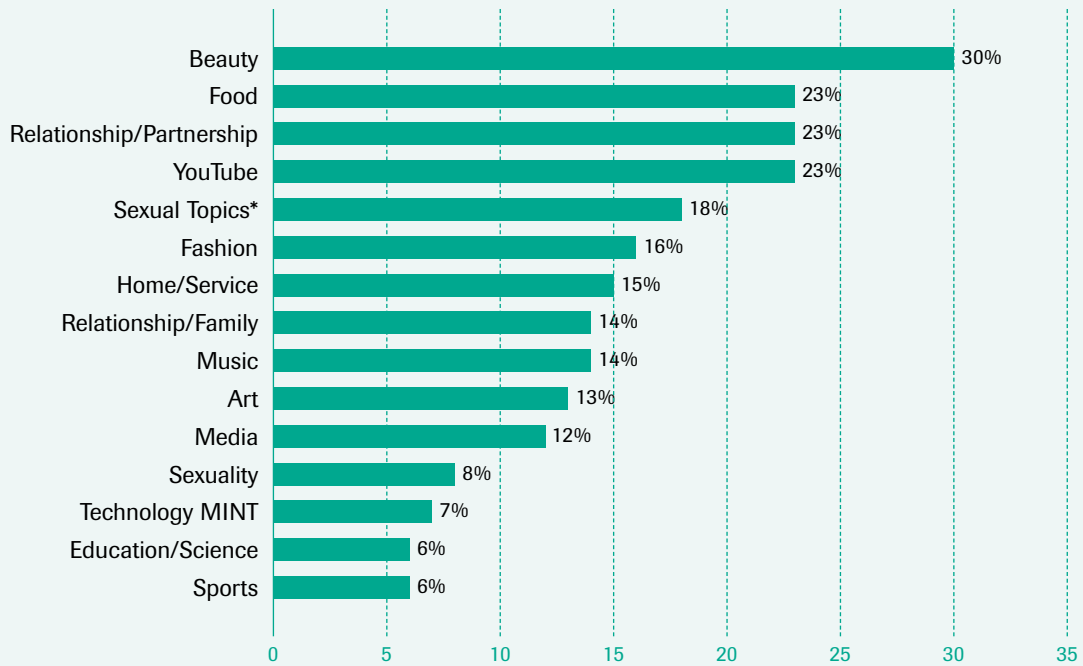
Yet, we took an even closer look: YouTube videos also differ in their formats, that is, in their specific structure, narrative style, and esthetics. Female YouTubers, for example, may be found largely in the formats VLOGs (short for video-blogs: 17%), battle/challenges (16%), sketches/parodies (14%),

³ Eight channels could no longer be reconstructed since they had since been subsumed into other channels. In only two cases was a sex different from male or female coded.

Fig. 3

Subject areas of women

Mentions of more than 3% (% of 979 women, multiple mentions possible)

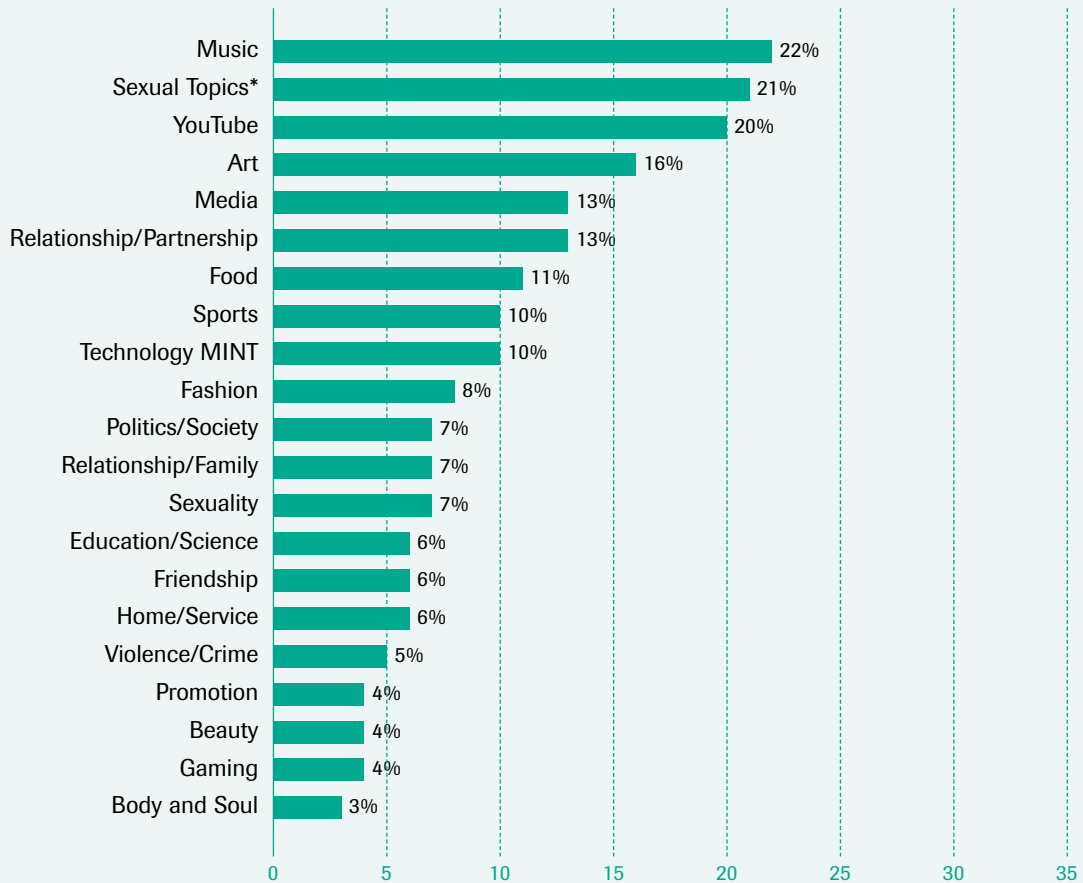


*This category comprises largely sexual innuendos and references as well as explicit descriptions.

Abb. 4

Subject areas of men

Mentions of more than 3% (% of 2,343 men, multiple mentions possible)



*This category comprises largely sexual innuendos and references as well as explicit descriptions.

and tutorials (11%). The format hauling/unboxing, which consists of videos of unpacking previously “hailed” products or presents, is nearly completely in female hands.

Males, on the other hand, may be found in many different formats, among others, battle/challenges (21%), sketches (17%), and VLOGs (14%), but also music (9%), opinions/positions (6%) as well as interviews, music parodies, and question-answer formats. The breadth of male engagement vis-à-vis the limited field of female YouTubers becomes even clearer if we look at the themes depicted in the videos. Some videos are coded with multiple tags. The results reveal that male YouTubers are concerned with a broad range of subjects, whereas those of female YouTubers are limited: Female YouTubers treat themes of beauty (30%), food (23%), relationship/partnership (23%), fashion and family as well as household (15%). Male YouTubers in turn are concerned with music, relationships, family, and fashion, but also with politics (7%), gaming, and much more.

The narrow corridor used by female YouTubers becomes very clear if we view the order and forms of themes addressed by the two sexes. Thus, beauty, food, and relationships lead the list of female themes, whereas the list of male themes is much longer and more diverse (21 different areas vs. 15 among females), beginning with music, sexual themes (generally innuendos and suggestive acts, but in part also explicit ones), reference to other YouTubers and media in general.

The Contexts Used in the Portrayal of YouTubers

The following results show the contexts in which the main YouTubers are depicted in the 2,000 videos studied. This analysis clearly reveals that female YouTubers remain largely within private surroundings in which their relationships to their (nearly always male) partners and to their families play a major role. They often call their activities in the videos their “passions” or their “hobbies” and rarely indicate that these activities are in any way connected to their professions. Women speak about their passions, whereas men talk about their professional abilities. Whereas less than one-fourth of the female YouTubers (22%) even point out their profession, nearly two-thirds of the male YouTubers mention their jobs. With hobbies and passions, the situation is reversed: Whereas only about one-third of the male YouTubers (32%) mention them in their videos, two-thirds of the female YouTubers (64%) introduce this context into their videos.

Furthermore, female YouTubers are more clearly emotional, talking about their feelings and speaking to the emotions of their viewers. Whereas more than two-thirds of female YouTubers (67%) do this, less than half of the male YouTubers (44%) communicate their feelings in their videos. Likes, comments, and subscriptions are important on YouTube, and the majority of the protagonists explicitly request their viewers to do so. But here, too, more female YouTubers (75%) explicitly request feedback than male YouTubers (64%).

The public arena and the professional contexts shown on YouTube remain largely the domain of the male YouTubers. That is, female YouTubers tend to make their videos at home or in some private space, whereas male YouTubers record their videos outside, in offices, or in professional surroundings (e.g., fitness studios). For a large portion of the female

YouTubers (71%) and for more than half of the male YouTubers (57%) the settings in which the videos are shot are largely private apartments or houses. The public arena, on the other hand, is used by twice as many male YouTubers (34%) as female YouTubers (17%).

Summary of the Results

This study has clearly revealed that women are considerably underrepresented in the most popular German-language YouTube channels. Among the top 1,000 channels, the portion of female YouTubers lies at about one-fourth, making this venue for the visibility of women even more unequal than that of movies or television. If we look at all those responsible for the 100 most successful channels, we find a ratio of 2:1 males to females (29% vs. 69%); 2% had a diverse sex. Thus, the popular platform YouTube is not a space very conducive to diverse sexualities or identities. YouTube is clearly a platform for heterosexuals.

The themes and formats presented by men and women are remarkably traditional. Female YouTubers treat largely traditional themes such as beauty and service-oriented formats such as how-to-videos. Male YouTubers, on the other hand, present a wide variety of themes and employ a broad number of formats.

The limited spectrum occupied by women may also be seen in the fact that the women making the popular YouTube videos primarily do so in private spaces. Men as well use private contexts, but they are also present in public spaces – twice as much as women in fact. Videos with female protagonists are devoted more to their passions and hobbies and less so to their jobs or professions. Men in turn tend to include their professional background in their videos. The public space and the professional contexts on YouTube remain mostly domains of male protagonists.

More female YouTubers than male YouTubers touch on their relationships to their almost exclusively male partners and to their families. Women on YouTube reveal more emotions and address their own feelings more, thus aligning themselves more with the emotions of their viewers.

In summary, the image of women emerging from this study is one seemingly stuck in the 1950s: The woman lives in a private world, is emotional, responsible for beauty and service. She leaves the public spaces to her male counterparts, where he presents himself and his professional background.



Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Prommer teaches communication and media sciences and is the Director of the Institute for Media Research at the University of Rostock as well as Vice-Dean of the Interdisciplinary Faculty. She works and does research on the interaction of media, media reception, and society from the perspective of the communication and media sciences. Her present research projects are concerned with the visibility of women in movies and television as well as the gender-specific aspects involved in access to the media industry.

Contact:

Lehrstuhl für Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft, August-Bebel-Straße 28, D-18055 Rostock, elizabeth.prommer@uni-rostock.de



Dr. Christine Linke is a scientific assistant at the Institute for Media Research of the University of Rostock. Her research and teaching activities are concentrated around the themes of communication and media in relationships, everyday life, and culture as well as diversity in audiovisual and digital media. She is presently working on the role the media play in the lives of young people with cancer. She is a member of the interdisciplinary AYAROSA Workgroup in the Medical School of the University of Rostock.

Contact:

christine.linke@uni-rostock.de



Prof. Dr. Claudia Wegener is Professor for Media Studies for the study programs Media Studies and Digital Media Culture at the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf. Her present research and teaching activities lie in media reception and media adoption, media research in adolescents, communication theory, digital media culture and political communication.

Contact:

c.wegener@filmuniversitaet.de

References

- DÖRING, NICOLA/MOHSANI, ROHANGIS (2018): Male dominance and sexism on YouTube: Results of three content analyses. *Feminist Media Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2018.1467945
- DÖRING, NICOLA (2019): Videoproduktion auf YouTube: Die Bedeutung von Geschlechterbildern. In: DORER, J./GEIGER, B./HIPFL, B./RATKOVI, V. (Eds.): *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. Online: www.nicola-doering.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Döring-YouTube-Geschlechterbilder-2019.pdf (Accessed on 23 May 2019)
- MPFS (MEDIENPÄDAGOGISCHER FORSCHUNGSVERBUND SÜDWEST) (2018): JIM-Studie 2018: Jugend, Information, (Multi-)Media. Basisstudie zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger in Deutschland. <https://www.mpfs.de/studien/jim-studie/2018/> (Accessed on 15 May 2019)
- MOLYNEAUX, HEATHER/O'DONNELL, SUSAN/ GIBSON, KERRI/ SINGER, JANICE (2008): Exploring the gender divide on YouTube: An analysis of the creation and reception of vlogs. *American Communication Journal* 10(2)
- PROMMER, ELIZABETH/LINKE, CHRISTINE (2019): *Ausgeblendet: Frauen im deutschen Film und Fernsehen*. Köln: Herbert von Halem Verlag
- RIHL, ALEXANDER/WEGENER, CLAUDIA (2015): YouTube-Stars. Zur Rezeption eines neuen Phänomens. *tv diskurs* 19(3), pp. 82–85
- STATISTA (2018): Anzahl der Computerspieler in Deutschland nach Geschlecht im Jahr 2018 (in Millionen); <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/197219/umfrage/anzahl-der-computerspieler-in-deutschland-nach-geschlecht/> (Accessed on 15 May 2019)

Mobile Media: Selfies, Sexting, Self-Portrayal

The Results of a Quantitative Study on How Adolescents Approach Sexting

Verena Vogelsang

This article presents a quantitative online survey carried out in Germany to study how adolescents from 14 to 17 years of age approach sexting. The results reveal the knowledge and attitudes adolescents have in their dealings with sexting. Based on the findings of this research, we draw conclusions concerning which risks and potentials should be considered in the context of media and sexuality education as well as which aspects distinguish sexuality-based media competence in dealing with sexting.

In the ongoing public discussions about sexting, the conversation revolves mainly about the sex-related interaction risks. The focus lies squarely on the possible forwarding of photographic materials and the resulting negative effects, such as mobbing or the stigmatization of the person(s) depicted. Yet sexting itself is not per se a risky way of using media; using a selfie to depict one's body can in fact be an important stage in the development of sexual identity during adolescence (cf. TILLMANN 2014, p. 44). Sexual self-depiction can enable adolescents to test different identity models, different beauty norms, different definitions of attractiveness or "sexiness" as well as their degree of femininity/masculinity for suitability for own purposes. The possible potentials inherent to sexting as part of sexual socialization and coping with the developmental challenges of adolescence are often not considered.

Contexts in Which Sexting Occurs

Depending on the definition used, statistics on the incidence of sexting among adolescents vary widely. In an online survey (cf. VOGELSANG 2017), 28% of the 254 persons interviewed reported having sent an erotic photo or video of themselves naked or partially naked at least once or multiple times to peers. More than half (55%) admitted to having received sexts (sexting videos/photos) once or multiple times (cf. *ibid.*, p. 274).

As far back as 2012, in a qualitative study, HOFFMANN concluded that sexting takes place in various scenarios: as a fixed part of a partnership (to maintain the partnership, to keep up sexual desire in long-distance relationships, as proof of trust, etc.), as a means of initiating a relationship, as a form of noncommittal flirtation, as a method of arranging casual sex, or for motives not directly affiliated with sexual intentions, such as making a joke or getting someone else's opinion about something (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 55ff.). The online survey in question clearly reflects this. About half of those queried who engaged in sexting reported that the recipients

of their sexts were their (boy or girl) friends. This clearly shows that sexting is largely part of a dyadic relationship. But even best friends or persons one knows solely on the internet were named by some of the adolescents as recipients of their sexts.

The motives the adolescents mentioned for sending or releasing sexts were as follows: for use in flirts (males: 53%, females: 15%), as a joke or just in fun (males: 31%, females: 33%), to feel sexy (males: 16%, females: 13%). However, sending sexualized selfies or naked photos to online acquaintances and the intentional release of sexualized self-portraits of oneself as a means of flirting clearly contradicts the proposed recommendations of not communicating with unknown persons or online acquaintances and of not releasing sexualized photos of oneself as well as the advice by experts to limit the access of others to one's own profile in social media. For those active in the media and sexuality education, it is thus important to understand that adolescents may apply the safety advice disseminated to them ambivalently and inconsistently. Dealing competently with sexting ("safer sexting," cf. DÖRING 2012, p. 20) means weighing the possible opportunities and risks. This means reflecting on how best to sensibly cope with sexting photos, including adhering to safety strategies while also meeting the need for self-presentation, testing sexual identity, initiating sexual relationships, or flirting with strangers.

In accordance with the results of international studies, the online survey reveals that most of those interviewed practice sexting mutually. Nearly two-thirds of the males and one-third of the females reported sending a sexting photo as the response to one they had received themselves. In such a mutual exchange of sexualized selfies, the photos received serve to as "insurance" that one's own photos will not be forwarded to someone else.

A further motive for sexting photos/videos was to give a "sexy present" to one's partner (males: 29%, females: 43%). Here, however, the question arises whether the sender may be crossing a border for the purpose of gratifying their partner or fulfilling their expectations.

It is also questionable when aspects of group dynamics (“... everyone’s doing it”; males: 6%, females: 15%) or pressure from others (males: 6%, females: 13%) are involved as motives for sexting. Compared to the other motives mentioned, overall these may play a subordinate role, but it is nevertheless important to keep these risks in mind and work them into sexuality or media education with adolescents. The focus should lie on reflecting on the question: “How do I want to live out my sexuality and my sexual identity?” Sensitizing adolescents to perceiving and respecting their own feelings is especially relevant. DÖRING’s (2012, p. 21) suggestion for “safer sexting” is: “Listen (...) to your gut feeling and don’t let yourself be persuaded to do something you don’t feel okay with, something you’re not completely convinced of.”

Forwarding Photos and “Victim Blaming”

One problematic aspect of sexting lies in the forwarding of images, which can take a negative turn.

In the online survey, 10% of those who engaged in sexting reported that a photo/video of them had been forwarded or published at least once without their permission. This value agrees with that found in an online survey carried out in the United States (cf. COX COMMUNICATION 2009, p. 38; GfK GROUP 2013, p. 44).

Of the adolescents who had received images via sexting, 23% say that they themselves had forwarded or showed photos/videos of others without their permission. Three-fourths of those queried are aware of the fact that an individual has the sole rights to their images, but this knowledge of a possible infringement on others’ rights does not hinder all of those interviewed from forwarding such materials without the expressed consent of the adolescent owner.

One central aspect in the forwarding of sexts lies in the so-called victim blaming: accusing the person depicted in the image of being at fault. 67% of those interviewed agreed with the statement “Anyone sending intimate photos of themselves to others is to blame if those photos then become public” (cf. VOGELSANG 2017, p. 287). The study results thus reveal a serious degree of victim blaming.

When photos/videos are forwarded, the resulting disregard for the rights of the owner to their images and the significant victim blaming going on clearly show that competent sexting demands a communicative culture where one recognizes the limits necessary to one’s own actions – something at least some of those interviewed did not possess. It becomes obvious how important it is to encourage critical reflection of the ethical and moral aspects of such interactions, and to promote social competence, respect, and the capacity for empathy.

Consideration for Stereotypical Gender Attributes

About one-third of those queried think that the forwarding of sexts does more damage to the reputation of girls than of boys (cf. VOGELSANG 2017, p. 285). This statement is not surprising when seen against the background of stereotypical gender attributes: Male and female adolescents have very different gender-normative limits and freedoms that restrict their behavioral repertoire as well as their other- and self-

awareness. Offensive sexual behavior, such as creating, sending, and forwarding sexting images is subject to different gender-related attributions and norms within our society. Whereas female adolescents are expected to display sexual restraint/passivity in typical dating and relationship scripts in a heterosexual matrix, male adolescents are attributed an active sexual role (cf. DÖRING 2012, p. 14). Offensive sexual behavior on the part of girls thus represents a violation of norms and is typically connected to a negative image (“cheap,” “slutty”) (cf. GRIMM et al. 2019, p. 113). With boys, on the other hand, offensive sexual behavior is largely associated with masculinity. This results in a double standard for girls: When actively sexting, they are confronted with the conflicting demand to deliver sexy poses while not appearing to be “cheap” or “slutty.”

The study results discussed here indicate that stereotypical gender attributes can influence how adolescents approach the sexual aspects of media, including the related potential uses and dangers. With respect to the above-mentioned problem of victim blaming, the pivotal question is whether female adolescents are granted different freedoms in their sexting behavior than male adolescents.

Sexuality-related media competence includes being able to perceive, analyze, and reflect on stereotypical gender attributes when dealing with media (cf. VOGELSANG 2017, p. 314). This means considering the (medial) orientation offers available for developing sexual identity during adolescence. In the context of media and sexuality education with adolescents, it is thus of paramount importance that educators analyze which gender stereotypes and norms are presented regarding beauty, attractiveness, and sexiness (e.g., in make-up video tutorials on YouTube or videos by stars and role models) (cf. the contribution by PROMMER et al. in this issue).

Contact Persons, Assistance and Support Programs

Adolescents need people they can trust and turn to when they experience insecurities or have questions concerning sexting or when they need help and support, for example, when their images have been forwarded or when sexting results in sexualized violence or mobbing. Since 16% of the adolescents interviewed (n = 245) admitted to not having anyone or not trusting anyone to talk to about sexual matters, in media and sexuality education it is important to provide adolescents with spaces in which they can pose their questions and receive the help and assistance they need (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 297f.).

Further, it is crucial to inform adolescents about available counseling and assistance offers. Less than half of those interviewed reported being aware of specialized counseling services. And online counseling offers, which present a low threshold because of their anonymity and easy access, are known only to a small minority (cf. *ibid.*, p. 299).

Conclusions on Promoting Sexuality-Based Media Competence

The study results show that, for a nonnegligible number of adolescents, sexting today belongs to their repertoire of sexual experimentation; it occurs autonomously and carries many

usage potentials with it. Practically speaking, however, only the risks associated with the forwarding of images are emphasized, combined with the demand to just stop sexting altogether.

Such appeals for abstinence fail to recognize the positive potentials its use offers, in addition to denying adolescents their pleasures and contributing to increased pressures to blame the victims of forwarded sexting materials (cf. HOFFMANN 2012, p. 85). Developing media competence in dealing with sexting means supporting adolescents to decide on their own to pursue or not to pursue sexting, based on their own reflections about their individual needs and social demands, values, and norms, possible risks and possible advantages. Promoting sexuality-based media competence and a communication culture that respect limits is closely linked to promoting social skills, ethical-moral judgment, emotional competence, sexuality education, gender competence, and the ability to engage in follow-up communication.



Verena Vogelsang, Dr. phil., Dipl.-Ped., focuses on media education. She is a Research Assistant at the “Institut für soziale Arbeit e.V. Münster” (Institute for Social Work Münster). Her research topics include media research with children and adolescents, the promotion of sexuality-related media competence, and the prevention of sexualized violence.

Contact:

verena.vogelsang@isa-muenster.de

References

- COX COMMUNICATION (Ed.) (2009): Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey. Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls. <http://www.cox.com/wcm/en/aboutus/datasheet/takecharge/2009-teensurvey.pdf> (Accessed 19 May 2019)
- DÖRING, N. (2012): Erotischer Fotoaustausch unter Jugendlichen: Verbreitung, Funktionen und Folgen des Sexting. In: Zeitschrift für Sexualforschung 25(1), pp. 4–25
- GfK GROUP (Ed.) (2013): The Digital Abuse Study: A Survey from MTV & The Associated Press – NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. http://www.athinline.org/pdfs/2013-MTV-AP-NORC%20Center_Digital_Abuse_Study_Full.pdf (Accessed 19 May 2019)
- GRIMM, P./RHEIN, S./MÜLLER, M. (2010): Porno im Web 2.0. Die Bedeutung sexualisierter Web-Inhalte in der Lebenswelt von Jugendlichen. Berlin: Vistas
- HOFFMANN, D. (2012): Sexting. Der erotische Foto- und Nachrichtenaustausch unter Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen. Magdeburg: Kompetenzzentrum für geschlechtergerechte Kinder- und Jugendhilfe Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. (Ed.), Eigenverlag
- TILLMANN, A. (2014): Selfies. Selbst- und Körpererkundungen Jugendlicher in einer entgrenzten Gesellschaft. In: LAUFFER, J./RÖLLECKE, R. (Eds.): Lieben, Liken, Spielen. Digitale Kommunikation und Selbstdarstellung Jugendlicher heute. München: Kopaed, pp. 42–51
- VOGELANG, V. (2017): Sexuelle Viktimisierung, Pornografie und Sexting im Jugendalter. Ausdifferenzierung einer sexualbezogenen Medienkompetenz. Wiesbaden: Springer VS

Loveline – The Youth Portal of the BZgA in Times of Changing Media Use

Mirjam Tomse

On www.loveline.de adolescents can find scientifically based information on themes of interest to them, such as love, sexuality, and contraception.

Today, adolescents seek their information on sexual matters primarily on the internet: In a study from 2015 on adolescent sexuality, the German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) discovered that 59% of girls and 62% of boys turned first to the internet (BODE/HESLING 2015, p. 58). “The internet enjoys a high level of acceptance among both adolescents and young adults as an informational source and is thus by a wide margin the most popular medium for accessing information about matters of sexuality, contraception, and related themes. This is true for all population groups” (ibid., p. 61).¹

There are many reasons for this. Searching for information on the internet goes quickly, anywhere and anytime, though above all it is a discreet way to do it. Despite all the openness propagated on modern media about such matters, questions pertaining to sexual matters, contraception, bodily functions, and sexual development remain very private concerns and often ones marked with shame for adolescents. “How can I masturbate? Why don’t I have my period yet? Am I gay?” Adolescents want to anonymously seek the answers to these questions on the internet in order to profit from the experiences of others.

Nevertheless, adolescents no longer engage solely in classical searches via the well-known search machines. Rather, they are influenced more by news items that pop up on their Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter feeds or by suggestions that appear for them on YouTube or Snapchat. In fact, social media sites are ever more becoming news portals, both for adults and for adolescents. “In the age group of the 18–24-year-old internet users, the social medium used most to get one’s news is Instagram. Nearly one-fourth (23%) of internet users in this age group regularly check the news content on Instagram, putting it slightly before Facebook and YouTube.”²

This change in user informational behavior has proved to be a challenge as well for www.loveline.de, the youth portal of the German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA). The goal is to provide adolescents with what they want to know about sexuality, contraception, love, and partnership and to reach out to them where they get their information.

Loveline.de – Reliable Information for Adolescents

With www.loveline.de the BZgA makes information available on love, sex, and contraception to adolescents between 12 and 17 years of age. At that website they can find serious, up-to-date, interactive advice on matters such as body, feelings, sexuality, contraception, and gender issues.

www.loveline.de prepares and delivers scientifically backed and reliable information geared to the respective target group. These digital efforts began in 2000, when the website was launched. Since then, however, the informational behavior of the target group has continually been in flux, so that the page had to be revised and further developed over time.

The goal is to strengthen adolescents in making responsible decisions and adopting responsible behavior as well as establishing relationships that are based on mutual understanding and respect for the needs and limits of one another. The website’s contents (e.g., on matters such as friendship, body image, falling in love, lovesickness) and messages address the personal questions, experiences, and desires of the adolescent users in accordance with their particular developmental status as well as their social environment such as cultural background, gender-specific aspects, and value and norms.

Loveline.de – Adapting the Discourse

With all the changes going on in the way information is disseminated and in light of the continually rising number of users, over time www.loveline.de developed into a more interactive website with a broad selection of offers. It is clearly

1 <https://www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/sexualaufklaerung/sexualaufklaerung/jugendsexualitaet-2015/>

2 Reuter Institute Digital News Report 2019; https://hans-bredow-institut.de/uploads/media/default/cms/media/xsowwwl_AP47_RDNR19_Deutschland.pdf (Accessed 19 July 2019).

divided into an informative section and a participative section.

One of the core competences of www.loveline.de is that it provides adolescents with reliable, scientifically backed information that they can understand. Adolescents want to find answers to their questions quickly and simply, and they are very interested in finding out what their peers are thinking. In order to adapt the information to the interests and search habits of adolescents, the BZgA added a section entitled “kurz&knapp” (short and concise). The central message is put at the beginning of every text to give adolescents a way to quickly grasp the gist and maneuver their way through the contents. In the section “Your Feedback,” they can also read and comment on the questions and information of other adolescents. The latter section has garnered great interest. It is subject to editing, that is, the contributions are first checked before being published.

The adolescent users can also participate in regularly changing surveys, games, and quizzes. There are also short videos to watch. The videos were integrated into the website in order to enable low-threshold entry and to convey the important information in an entertaining way. The section “Love Stories,” for which users can upload their own experienced or invented love stories, is actively used; it is also subject to editing. Many adolescents want to recount their relationship stories and experiences or express their desires and ideas concerning the subject of love and relationships.

Some offers were terminated when the need was no longer there or when the means of communication had changed. For example, for many years the website offered a well-attended moderated chat every week, where the adolescents could pose questions or discuss with others and the moderator. This had the advantage of being a protected space where the adolescents could exchange views with others in real time, while being sure that the www.loveline.de staff would provide well-founded and up-to-date information. However, when chats via websites went out of style and adolescents were no longer interested in visiting the chatroom, this section was closed in 2016.

Loveline.de is regularly realigned to meet the needs of adolescents and thus to continue to provide informative and interesting sources. This type of offer enables adolescents to remain anonymous while encouraging them to participate and interact with others on the website and to return again and again with their concerns.

Loveline.de – Communication and Interaction

An analysis of the hit rates show that adolescents bring very different expectations to the website. Sometimes they come to www.loveline.de while searching for information via a search engine. But schools as well as youth centers can also function as disseminators of the website. Whenever www.loveline.de is mentioned during a class, the adolescents understand that it presents information that is particularly reliable and thus go there on their own the next time they have a question.³

For many years now the website has also provided means of submitting questions anonymously on a contact form

that goes directly to the loveline staff, who then answers by email. Several hundreds of such inquiries reach the editing staff every year. The adolescents then turn directly to the editing staff if they fail to find the answer they were looking for on the website and want to ask an expert directly. Some adolescents even use this method on a regular basis if they are uncertain about something. Some even write letters of thanks for the information and support per email. Here are some common questions:

- I fell in love with someone. How do I go about saying it to him or her?
- I’ve experienced a contraceptive accident or failed to use contraception at all. What should I do now? Can I get pregnant from that?
- When will I get my first period? Are there any signs in advance I can look for?

Adolescents often seek answers to questions concerning contraception and romantic relationships, including information on the “first time” and pregnancy as well as STDs and male and female gender roles. To that end, www.loveline.de provides information on bodily functions, contraception, love, friendship, and partnership.

Because many questions are repeated over time, the most often posed ones have been gathered into a separate section on www.loveline.de under the heading “Ihr fragt – loveline antwortet” (You ask – loveline answers).

When directly communicating online with adolescents it is extremely important to point out the further counseling offers available to them. Answering an email can only serve as the initial contact. Especially when dealing with mental problems, a possible pregnancy, sexualized abuse or violence, the loveline editing staff mentions other means of assistance. They also motivate adolescents in search of advice to accept such offers. In addition, www.loveline.de makes a database of counseling services available to the adolescent users: If they plug in their ZIP code, they can retrieve all local counseling services.

Loveline.de – Information on Social Media

In addition, www.loveline.de has had its own Facebook fanpage since 2011, with today some 8,600 subscribers. The goal of this presence is to make users aware of the loveline brand and provide specific information.

Experience has shown that adolescents tend not react to information concerning sexuality and contraception on platforms such as Facebook since that might be registered by their friends. Thus, any posts regarding emotionally charged themes such as love, friendship, feelings, and relationships point to the www.loveline.de website. Further, in the Fall of 2017 the editorial staff changed its posting strategy to conform to changes in the Facebook algorithms, for example, postings linked to www.loveline.de were seldomly being shown to registered fans. As reaction, the information and messages emanating from the website are delivered only in text boxes, that is, images containing embedded text, that are placed directly in Facebook and without a link to the website. Furthermore, more contributions from other, related pages are being shared. An example is the BZgA fanpage “Alkohol – kenn dein Limit” (Alcohol – know your limit), the fanpage of [klicksafe](http://www.klicksafe.de) of the EU initiative, or the “Nummer gegen Kummer” (Number against sorrow) of the initiative of

³ The website supports its use in the school classroom by providing teaching materials and methods for working with adolescents on the website’s contents (www.schule.loveline.de).

the same name. Further, more recently videoclips are being added which fit the content of the page. All of these measures have led to a stable range of users and interaction with fans.

Loveline.de – Involving the Target Group

In 2018, a pilot project was carried out with students of a German gymnasium (high school). The goal was to discuss and work through adolescent-oriented themes with the target group. A special youth Editorial Board was set up for www.loveline.de to handle themes that move adolescents. The adolescents themselves chose and implemented the themes. There were weekly editorial meetings, and the groups were accompanied by expert journalists.

From this course there emerged an article, two knowledge tests, and a script for a video. The finding that came out of this pilot project was: A standing youth Editorial Board could develop and implement above all video and audio materials for use on the website and in social media. By including such regular contributions by adolescents who design www.loveline.de with their own ideas and wishes, the website can better adapt to the changing needs, wishes, and questions adolescents have.

Loveline.de – Future Perspectives

In the digital world, www.loveline.de stands for reliable, objective, and verified information concerning bodily issues, sexuality, and contraception. Recent surveys suggest that social media channels and influencers are playing an ever-greater role in the lives of adolescents and are exerting great influence over their thinking and behavior. Over half of the adolescents queried report that they get their information through YouTube videos (MEDIENPÄDAGOGISCHER FORSCHUNGSVERBUND SÜDWEST 2019, JIM-Studie, p. 53). The presence of contradictory statements serves only to confuse adolescent, who then go out in search of an independent and safe source of information.

How adolescents search for reliable information is having a long-lasting effect on their user behavior. For example, in order to pose a question on loveline.de, users first must register. They get answers to their questions via email, but in comparison to other communication channels email is hardly used by adolescents anymore. In the JIM Study of 2018, email was not listed at all! Rather, communication among nearly all adolescents between 12 and 19 years of age occurs first on WhatsApp, followed by Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. Also, adolescents are using the internet today increasingly for entertainment purposes; searching just for information is on the decline (ibid., p. 33).

For this reason, the loveline editorial staff is working intensely on a new communication strategy that includes social media. In addition to www.loveline.de as a tried and tested platform and the fanpage on Facebook, beginning in 2019 users are now also addressed on Instagram directly, where messages are graphically prepared and posted. The followers have the ability to discuss and share any message. www.loveline.de remains a reliable source of information and is repeatedly mentioned along with its logo in the respective posts.

Instagram today belongs today to the most popular social media offers for adolescents. In the JIM Study of 2018

(ibid., p. 36), they put Instagram in second place following WhatsApp as their favorite app. Girls tend to use it even more intensely than boys. Instagram is especially popular among 14–17-year-olds. Compared to the previous year, the user numbers rose again considerably, whereas Facebook appears to be aging with its users: According to the JIM Study, only some 15% of adolescents use Facebook on a daily or weekly basis – the Instagram value lies at 67%!

The concept of loveline on Instagram is to support adolescents in getting the information they want and to find their own way to do this. This means concentrating especially on soft, positive themes such as friendship, relationships, love, and a positive self-image – which corresponds to the overall atmosphere of Instagram. It is important to test out and evaluate different contents and formats on Instagram in order to be able to create something on that platform that is attractive and interesting to adolescents.

But regardless of whether the offer is being made online or offline – the primary goal remains to provide adolescents understandable, reliable information and to make www.loveline.de widely known as such an information source. The challenge lies in continually checking the offers extended to adolescents and adapting them to their needs and to the needs of the next generation of adolescents.



Mirjam Tomse is a Dipl.-Soz.Päd. and a social worker. She works as a Scientific Assistant in the area of sexuality education at the German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), with a focus on inclusion.

Contact:

mirjam.tomse@bzga.de

References

- BODE, HEIDRUN/HESLING, ANGELIKA (2015): *Jugendsexualität 2015. Die Perspektive der 14- bis 25-Jährigen. Ergebnisse einer aktuellen Repräsentativen Wiederholungsbefragung.* Köln: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung; <https://www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/sexualaufklaerung/sexualaufklaerung/jugendsexualitaet-2015/>
- HÖLIG, SASCHE/HASEBRINK, UWE (2019): *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019 – Ergebnisse für Deutschland.* Unter Mitarbeit von Julia Behre. Hamburg: Verlag Hans-Bredow-Institut, June 2019 (Arbeitspapier des HBI No. 47).
- MEDIENPÄDAGOGISCHER FORSCHUNGSVERBUND SÜDWEST (2018): *JIM-Studie 2018. Jugend, Information, Medien. Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger;* <https://www.mpf.de/studien/jim-studie/2018/> (Accessed on 13 February 2019).
- Forschung und Praxis der Gesundheitsförderung, Band 48: *Social Media in der gesundheitlichen Aufklärung;* <https://www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/fachpublikationen/forschung-und-praxis-der-gesundheitsfoerderung/band-48-socialmedia-in-der-gesundheitlichen-aufklaerung/>

Media Usage and Eating Disorders

From *Germany's Next Topmodel* to the Pro-ana Movement on the Internet

Christiane Eichenberg

Eating disorders are very serious and highly prevalent conditions with considerable mental as well as physical side effects for those affected. Because of the wide prevalence of these disorders, on the one hand, and their initial manifestation largely among adolescents, on the other hand, it comes as no surprise that the internet (too) plays a major role as a means of getting help to those afflicted. This contribution provides an overview of the various forms of eating disorders and their prevalence, particularly concerning the role of the different media in their etiopathogenesis¹. Thereafter, I address the so-called pro-ana movement on the internet, a very controversial form of online-based self-help.

Anorexia nervosa and Bulimia nervosa: Pathology and Prevalence

Chapter V “Mental and Behavioral Disorders” of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) lists four different forms of eating disorders in the strict sense of term: anorexia nervosa, atypical anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and atypical bulimia nervosa (ICD-10: F50.3). In the pertinent literature, several other manifestations are described, such as anorexia athletica, which refers to disturbed eating behavior among professional athletes; or orthorexia nervosa, the pathological fixation on eating healthy foods. These, however, are controversial and have not yet been sufficiently scientifically underpinned to be regarded as disorders.

Anorexia nervosa is characterized as purposefully induced or retained loss of weight. The central aspect is a fear of growing fat, for which the afflicted set a very low weight goal for themselves. This generally results in malnutrition of varying severity, in addition to endocrine and metabolic changes (i.e., of the hormonal or metabolic systems, respectively) as well as functional disorders. Symptoms include limited diet choices, excessive physical activity, self-induced vomiting and/or purging as well as the use of appetite suppressants and diuretics. Bulimia nervosa is characterized by repeated bouts of cravings and the excessive preoccupation with the control of one's weight, typically followed in turn by shifts from eating attacks to vomiting or use of laxatives. Many of the psychological characteristics of this disorder resemble those of anorexia nervosa, for example, the exces-

sive concern about body form and weight. Repeated vomiting may also lead to disturbances of the electrolyte status and other physical complications. The anamnesis often reveals earlier episodes of anorexia nervosa.

Anorexia nervosa is one of the most highly prevalent mental diseases in Germany. Presently it has a 12-month prevalence of 0.7% (females: 1.2%, males: 0.2%; Jacobi et al. 2014). In some groups, the prevalence is significantly higher. Some 95% of all afflicted with anorexia nervosa are young girls or women between the ages of 15 and 23 years. For bulimia nervosa the rate of afflicted males is higher (10%), as is the average age of 20 to 30 years. In addition, the mortality rate is the highest among all mental diseases – much higher than among patients with depression or schizophrenia.²

Decisive for the progression of these diseases is, among other things, how quickly and at what stage effective therapeutic interventions are applied. However, these can work only on the condition that the afflicted themselves and their relatives as well as the consulting physician/psychiatrist/psychologist recognize the disorder as a mental disease. To this end, it is paramount that everyone involved receives adequate and easily available information about the various forms this disease can take. The clinical practice, however, shows that, among the afflicted and among medical personnel as well, insufficient knowledge is available on the point in time when certain behavioral aspects and physical changes come to correspond to the diagnostic criteria and demand therapeutic intervention (GRUNWALD 2003). Here, the internet can make a significant contribution as an informational medium. At the same time, the media can exert substantial influence concerning the reception of gender norms, role expectations, and body ideals, and thus remain an important factor in the etiopathogenesis of eating disorders.

The Influence of Media on Body Image

A disturbed body image is one of the central symptoms of eating disorders as well as one of the most difficult symp-

1 Etiopathogenesis is defined by MERRIAM-WEBSTER as “the cause and subsequent development of a disease or an abnormal condition” (accessed on 7 February 2020; the translator).

2 S3 Guidelines on Eating Disorders of the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Wissenschaftlichen Medizinischen Fachgesellschaften” (AWMF; German Association of Scientific Medical Societies); www.awmf.org/uploads/tx_szleitlinien/051-26p_Esstörungen_2015-06_01.pdf (accessed 29 April 2019).

toms to treat (GÖTZ-KÜHNE 2012). Not only do everyday experiences influence changes in the perception of one's body, the media play a major role as well.³

The mass media have repeatedly been accused of contributing in part to the etiology of eating disorders since they often function as agents of social principles and as sources of role models and bodily ideals (BAUMANN/HARDEN/SCHERER 2003). On the other hand, the public discussion of mental disorders in the media can also serve as a contribution to destigmatizing and surmounting these problems.

Especially TV shows such as *Germany's Next Topmodel* are being critically discussed and blamed for the spreading unrealistic slimness ideals and exacerbating eating disorders. Research studies have demonstrated that particularly adolescents are oriented to bodily ideals propagated in various media (WYKES/GUNTER 2011). The study by GÖTZ et al. (2015) generally revealed that 69% of the girls interviewed who reported regularly watching such model shows felt they themselves were too fat, whereas among girls who do not watch such shows the rate was 41%. Further, the authors note that the influence of *Germany's Next Topmodel* is especially pronounced among girls who are already suffering from eating disorders. DORNES (2018), on the other hand, disagrees: A look at the relevant research on this topic exhibits that the influence of such shows or of the reporting media is actually quite small, is limited to adolescent girls, and especially to girls who already have disturbed body images. The decisive element for judging the influence of the media on eating disorders is rather whether the viewers have already internalized the (thin) body image before viewing the television presentation and before entering adolescence, that is, in their interactions and communication within their family. Further doubts about the influence of Western beauty standards and the role of the media were expressed by FERGUSON et al. (2011), who found that anorexia nervosa occurs equally often in countries such as Iran, where Western media have been forbidden since 1979.

Research has also looked into how male recipients react. POPE et al. (1999) determined that, since the 1960s, the bodies of typical play figures for boys have generally depicted males with large muscles. The same is true for the protagonists in action films (BAGHURST et al. 2006). FREDERICK, FESSLER, and HASELTON (2005) compared the male models depicted in men's and women's magazines and concluded that the male bodies shown in men's magazines were more muscular than those shown in women's magazines.

Orienting oneself to ideals propagated by the media without further critical reflection may lead to greater dissatisfaction with one's own body, and media ideals may be linked to existing, previously only latent potentials for disorder. Yet they are not the sole reason for the development of an eating disorder.

Pro-ana Movement on the Internet

The media supply important resources for persons suffering from eating disorders in the form of discussions in the mass media, self-help books, etc. Especially the internet offers a wide variety of such efforts (reviewed in detail by EICHENBERG/KÜHNE 2014), ranging from complex, therapist-supported e-health programs (e.g., online therapy: AARDOOM et al. 2016), virtual reality applications for working with disturbed body images (CLUS et al. 2016) as well as apps

(LINDGREEN/LOMBURG/CLAUSEN 2018) and self-help platforms (which presented positive effects in the respective studies; e.g., NDOCHILL et al. 2005). However, one particular type of online platform, organized by and for persons with eating disorders, seems to stand out, namely, the so-called "pro-ana forums." This is where very controversial discussions are going on, not the least also about whether the relevant social media groups promote healing or whether they in fact contribute to the preservation of eating disorders (CHANDELLOR/MITRA/DE CHOUDHURY 2016). Various different services have been reviewed (e.g., Twitter: BERT/GUALANO/CAMUSSI/SILIGUNI 2016; YouTube: SYED-ABDUL et al. 2013), particularly as to whether the contents of the pro-ana pages or other constructive contents prevail – and whether the pro-ana pages contain sufficient risk warnings.

Characteristics of the Pro-ana Forums

Pro-ana stands for "pro anorexia nervosa"; pro-mia for "pro bulimia nervosa." Both the pro-ana movement and the pro-mia movement represent internet forums that integrate those affected who choose not to battle their eating disorder but rather to stand up for it and to maintain it. As a movement of people who want to cultivate their disease, pro-ana has met with incomprehension and unease. The first forums of this nature arose during the 1990s in the English-language world and came to Germany about 5 years later. The main users of the pro-ana forums are, in accordance with the best-known risk factors of eating disorders, mainly girls and young women.

A "typical" pro-ana page is set in pink tones and designed with little girlie motives. The focus and contents of such pages vary widely. Characteristic contents include information on various eating disorders and on diet themes such as caloric tables. Further, there is usually a section "tips and tricks" on how to maintain one's disturbed eating behavior. A further element consists of the so-called "thinspirations," e.g., photos of extremely thin models, which serve to motivate the viewers to remain thin. Thinspirations are also the topic of destructive self-instructions, poems, songs, and films. Another important aspect of all pro-ana pages are the built-in interactive applications (forums, instant messaging).

Pro-ana pages are generally organized such that only members who have registered and gone through an "application process" have access to the inner area of the website. In 2015, the German Youth Protection Law, after taking an extensive look, ordered many of these forums to be closed.⁴ These measures, however, were unable to truly contain this movement but rather led to the site administrators shifting their pages to using less apparent names and to other servers.

The Functions and Effects of the Pro-ana Forums

Among experts, the pro-ana forums are viewed with great concern (cf. EICHENBERG 2014). They think that affected adolescents are put in grave danger by these forums and are being exposed to ideas that serve to further exacerbate their disease through the community, such as commonly im-

3 On the complex interrelationships between the role of the media in the context, development, and handling of disturbed eating behavior, see BAUMANN 2009.

4 http://www.jugendschutz.net/fileadmin/download/pdf/Selbstgefuehrdung_2015.pdf (accessed 29 April 2019)

plemented excessive diet plans. This type of exchange only enhances existing symptoms and mutually strengthens the users to reject professional help. In contrast, we find other voices, albeit more rarely, who see these forums as also exerting preventive functions, for example, by integrating unstable persons into a social network.

Because these assessments are based solely on theoretical considerations, a study was carried out to capture the functions and effects of the pro-ana forums from the perspective of the users (EICHENBERG/FLÜMANN/HENSGES 2011). A total of 220 adolescent female users of the German-language pro-ana forums filled out a self-constructed online survey as well as two standardized instruments: the *Brief Symptom Inventory* to assess the general level of psychopathology; and the *Eating Attitudes Test*, an eating-disorder inventory.

The total sample proved to have a high level of psychological stress and a high level of eating disorder symptoms. They had been frequent visitors of the pro-ana forums for a relatively long time. The social exclusivity of the pro-ana users also came to light: Two-thirds reported that no one from their “normal” environment knew about this activity.

The dominant reasons for using these forums were those that were considered constructive to dealing with eating disorders, such as “getting to know other people with similar problems and thoughts” or “being able to help others with their problems.” However, other reasons related to healing potentials did not meet with approval, for example, “to get rid of my eating disorder” or “to get information on psychotherapy.” In this study, the users of the pro-ana forums did not represent a homogeneous group; rather, we were able to identify three types of users that differ with respect to their motives, their age, and the length of their membership/eating disorder. The first, the “healing-oriented user type,” uses pro-ana forums primarily to receive emotional support (40% of the sample). For them, overcoming their eating disorder is the main priority. This user type differs from the other two by having a significantly lower motivation to reduce their weight and deriving less weight-reducing effects from the forums. The second type, the “coping-indifferent user type” (ca. 20% of the sample), is overall similar in their motives to the first type. They too want to overcome their eating disorder but also harbor expressed desires to reduce their weight. The third type, the “disease-maintaining user type” (ca. 40% of the sample), has predominantly destructive motives: They use the pro-ana forums significantly less for fighting the eating disorder and for supporting others with their eating disorders. Instead, the main desire to lose weight dominates.

When asked about their subjective understanding of pro-ana, most of those interviewed reported that pro-ana was for them a self-help group with the goal of learning to live with an eating disorder. Only 15% regarded pro-ana as a self-help group that provided support for overcoming an eating disorder. The desire to retain one’s eating disorder was most often supported by aspects of so-called psychological secondary gain (also called “morbid gain”), followed by statements that could be seen as failed attempts at overcoming the disease. Yet one often-mentioned attitude of the pro-ana movement, namely, wanting to maintain one’s anorexia nervosa even until death (“Ana till the end” = ATTE), was rejected by the vast majority (70%) of those interviewed.

Regarding the effects of the forum, according to their own reports, the overall sample reported that using the forum resulted in losing considerable weight. But there were also

positive effects: The large majority noted that they felt less lonely than before, and about one-fourth of the users said their willingness to begin psychotherapy had risen during their membership in pro-ana. Yet, at the same time, it also became clear that pro-ana seems to attract a subgroup of people who had broken off therapy and wanted to report on their negative experiences. Thus, participation in pro-ana forums could represent the attempt of particularly desperate adolescents to achieve some relief.

Overall, the results agree with other such studies (e.g., PEEBLES et al. 2012; BRANLEY/COVEY 2017) and point to the differential influence of the pro-ana forums on its users (primarily females). Depending on the motivation of the respective user, those afflicted may derive positive or negative effects from their participation. The often-heard opinion in the media that pro-ana websites have nothing but negative effects on their users was not confirmed in this study – which does not mean that these forums do not have negative effects. In this regard, the task now is to continue to research which user types in which stages of their disease are being drawn to these websites and to what extent their participation tends to strengthen or maintain their behavioral patterns – or to even contribute to further aggravation of their existing severe eating disorder.



Univ.-Prof. Dr. phil. Habil. Christiane Eichenberg, Dipl.-Psychol., is a psychotherapist (psychoanalysis) and Head of the Institute for Psychosomatics in the Faculty of Medicine (Medical School) at the Sigmund Freud Private University Vienna. Her research focus lies on e-mental health, psychosomatics, psychotraumatology, and psychotherapy research.

Contact:

www.christianeeichenberg.de,
<https://med.sfu.ac.at>

References

AARDOOM, JISKA/DINGEMANS, ALEXANDRA/SPINHOVEN, PHILIP/VAN GINKEL, JOOST/DE ROOIJ, MARK/VAN FURTH ERIC (2016): Web-Based Fully Automated Self-Help with Different Levels of Therapist Support for Individuals with Eating Disorder Symptoms: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *J Med Internet Res.* 18(6), p. e159. doi: 10.2196/jmir.5709

BAGHURST, TIMOTHY/HOLLANDER, DANIEL B./NARDELLA, BETH/HAFF, G. GREGORY (2006): Change in Sociocultural Ideal Male Physique: An Examination of Past and Present Action Figures. *Body Image* 3(1), pp. 87–91

BAUMANN, EVA (2009): Die Symptomatik des Medienhandelns. Zur Rolle der Medien im Kontext der Entstehung, des Verlaufs und der Bewältigung eines gestörten Essverhaltens. Köln: Herbert von Halem Verlag

BAUMANN, EVA/HARDEN, LARS/SCHERER, HELMUT (2003): Zwischen Promi-Tick und Gen-Defekt. Zur Darstellung von Essstörungen in der Presse. *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 51(3–4), pp. 431–454

BECKER, ANNE/BURWELL, REBECCA/GILMAN, STEPHEN/HERZOG, DAVID/HAMBURG, PAUL (2002): Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Following Prolonged Exposure to Television Among Ethnic Fijian Adolescent Girls. In: *British Journal of Psychiatry* 180, pp. 509–514

BENNINGHOFEN, DIETER/TADI, VERA/KUNZENDORF, SEBASTIAN/JANTSCHKE, GÜNTER (2007): Körperbilder männlicher Patienten mit Essstörungen. *PPMP – Psychotherapie Psychosomatik Medizinische Psychologie* 57, pp. 120–127

BERT, FABRIZIO/GUALANO, MARIA ROSARIA/CAMUSI, ELISA/SILQUINI, ROBERTA (2016): Risks and Threats of Social Media Websites: Twitter and the Proana Movement. *Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw.* 19(4), pp. 233–238. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2015.0553. Epub 2016 Mar 18

BRANLEY, DAWN/COVEY, JUDITH (2017): Pro-ana Versus Pro-Recovery: A Content Analytic Comparison of Social Media Users' Communication about Eating Disorders on Twitter and Tumblr. *Frontiers in Psychology* 8, p. 1356

CHANCELLOR, STEVIE/MITRA, TANUSHREE/DE CHOUDHURY MUNMUN (2016): Recovery Amid Pro-Anorexia: Analysis of Recovery in Social Media. *Proc SIGCHI Conf Hum Factor Comput Syst.* May, pp. 2111–2123. doi: 10.1145/2858036.2858246

CLUS, DAMIEN/LARSEN, MARK ERIC/LEMEY, CHRISTOPHE/BEROUIGUET, SOFIAN (2018): The Use of Virtual Reality in Patients with Eating Disorders: Systematic Review. *J Med Internet Res.* 20(4), p. e157. doi: 10.2196/jmir.7898

DORNES, MARTIN (2018): Hungerwahn? Eine Kritik an der medialen Dramatisierung von Essstörungen. *Forum Psychoanal* 34, p. 81. doi: <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1007/s00451-017-0284-9>

EICHENBERG, CHRISTIANE (2014): Online-Foren für junge Menschen mit selbstschädigenden Problematiken: Pro-ana Blogs, Suizid-Boards und Foren zu selbstverletzendem Verhalten. In: T. Porsch/S. Pieschl (eds.): *Neue Medien und deren Schatten.* Göttingen: Hogrefe, pp. 245–274

EICHENBERG, CHRISTIANE/FLÜMANN, ANDREA/HENSGES, KRISTIN (2011): Pro-ana Foren im Internet: Befragungsstudie ihrer Nutzerinnen. *Psychotherapeut* 6, pp. 492–500. doi: 10.1007/s00278-011-0861-0

EICHENBERG, CHRISTIANE/KÜHNE, STEFAN (2014): Einführung Online-Beratung und -therapie. Grundlagen, Interventionen und Effekte der Internetnutzung. München: UTB

FERGUSON, CHRISTOPHER/WINEGARD, BO M./WINEGARD, BENJAMIN (2011): Who Is the Fairest One of All? How Evolution Guides Peer and Media Influences on Female Body Dissatisfaction. *Rev Gen Psychol* 15, pp. 11–28

FREDERICK, DAVID A./FESSLER, DANIEL/HASELTON, MARTIE G. (2005): Do Representations of Male Muscularity Differ in Men's and Women's Magazines? *Body Image* 2, pp. 81–86

GÖTZ MAYA/MENDEL, CAROLINE/MALEWSKI, SARAH (2015): "Dafür muss ich nur noch abnehmen." Die Rolle von Germany's Next Top Model und anderen Fernsehsendungen bei psychosomatischen Essstörungen. *Televizion* 28, pp. 1–7

GÖTZ-KÜHNE, CORNELIA (2010): Körpertherapeutische Interventionen und kreative Verfahren in der Behandlung von Essstörungen. In: GÜNTER REICH/MANFRED CIERPKA (Eds.): *Psychotherapie der Essstörungen. Krankheitsmodelle und Therapiepraxis – störungsspezifisch und schulenübergreifend.* Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 3rd ed., pp. 267–277

GRUNWALD, MARTIN (2003): Essstörungen: Wird das Internet als Informationsquelle von Betroffenen und Angehörigen genutzt? In: RALF OTT/CHRISTIANE EICHENBERG (Eds.): *Klinische Psychologie und Internet. Potenziale für klinische Praxis, Intervention, Psychotherapie und Forschung.* Göttingen: Hogrefe

JACOBI, FRANK/HÖFLER, MICHAEL/WITTCHEN, HANS-ULRICH/STREHLE, JENS (2014): Psychische Störungen in der Allgemeinbevölkerung: Studie zur Gesundheit Erwachsener in Deutschland und ihr Zusatzmodul "Psychische Gesundheit" (DEGS1-MH). *Nervenarzt* 85, pp. 77–87

LINDGREEN, PIL/LOMBORG, KIRSTEN/CLAUSEN, LOA (2018): Patient Experiences Using a Self-Monitoring App in Eating Disorder Treatment: Qualitative Study. *JMIR mhealth uHealth.* 6(6), p. e10253. doi: 10.2196/10253

NEDOSCHILL, JAN/LEIBERICH, PETER/POPP, CHRISTINE/LOEW, THOMAS (2005): *www.hungrig-online.de: Einige Ergebnisse einer Online-Befragung Jugendlicher in der größten deutschsprachigen Internet-Selbsthilfegruppe für Menschen mit Essstörungen.* *Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie* 54, pp. 728–741

PEEBLES, REBECCA/HARRISON, SHAUNA/MCCOWN, KATHERINE/WILSON, JENNY/BORZEKOWSKI, DINA/LOCK, JAMES (2012): Voices of Pro-Ana and Pro-Mia: A Qualitative Analysis of Reasons for Entering and Continuing Pro-Eating Disorder Website Usage. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 50(2) Suppl S, p. S62

POPE, HARRISON G./OLIVARDIA, ROBERTO/GRUBER, AMANDA/BOROWIECKI, JOHN (1999): Evolving Ideals of Male Body Image as Seen Through Action Toys. *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 26, pp. 65–72

SYED-ABDUL, SHABBIR/FERNANDEZ-LUQUE, LUIS/JIAN, WEN-SHIAN/LI, YU-CHUAN/CRAIN, STEVEN/HSU, MIN-HUEI/WANG, YAO-CHIN/KHANDREGZEN, DORJSUREN/CHULUNBAATAR, ENKHZAYA/NGUYEN, PHUNG-AHN/LIOU DERMING (2013): Misleading Health-Related Information Promoted Through Video-Based Social Media: Anorexia on YouTube. *J Med Internet Res.* 15(2), p. e30. doi: 10.2196/jmir.2237

THOMSEN, STEVEN/WEBER, MICHELLE/BROWN, LORA (2002): The Relationship Between Reading Beauty and Fashion Magazines and the Use of Pathogenic Dieting Methods Among Adolescent Females. In: *Adolescence* 37(145), pp. 1–18

VAN DEN BERG, PATRICIA/NEUMARK-SZTAINER, DIANNE/HANNAN, PETER/HAINES, JESS (2007): Is Dieting Advice from Magazines Helpful or Harmful? Five-Year Associations with Weight-Control Behaviors and Psychological Outcomes in Adolescents. In: *Pediatrics* 119, pp. e30–e37

WITTCHEN, HANS-ULRICH/JACOBI, FRANK (2012): Was sind die häufigsten psychischen Störungen in Deutschland? Vortrag auf dem DEGS-Symposium, 14 June 2012, Berlin; www.rki.de/DE/Content/Gesundheitsmonitoring/Studien/Degs/degsw1/Symposium/degpspsychische_stoerungen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

WYKES, MAGGIE/GUNTER, BARRIE (2011): *The Media & Body Image.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publishing

The Research Project “Human”

The Development of Recommendations for Action for Teaching Practitioners Involved in Professional Interactions with Sexualized Violence Using Digital Media

Frederic Vobbe

Presuppositions and Goals of the Research Project

Children and adolescents today use online portals and communication services so fluidly and to such an extent that digital media have become relevant means of socialization in the world of young people (FEIDERABEND/PLANCKENHORN/RATHGEB 2016, 2018). Because of the sheer unlimited ways in which such interactions can take place, the digital media have also taken a prominent role in the context of the sexualization of childhood and adolescence and sexualized violence. According to a new evaluation of the MiKADO Study data, one-third of the young people interviewed reported having experienced at least one undesired sexualized approach over the course of the past year (NEUTZE/SKLENAROVA 2018). The spectrum of such digitally perpetrated or accompanied violations is large, ranging from ritualized provocations (e.g., disseminating pornographic memes¹ in groups as “jokes”) to massive, criminally relevant sexual exploitation. Principally, however, one may assume that the experience of assaults committed online leads to the same stress responses as actual “hands-on” delicts (JONSSON/SVEDIN 2017). And because of the repeated loss of control due to the spread of abusive images or the frequent correlation between offline and online violence, one must in fact reckon with an increase in such responses stemming from digital media use.

On the other hand, professionals who are tasked with protecting children and adolescents experience cases of sexualized violence via digital media as particularly complex (DEKKER/KOOPS/

BRIKEN 2016; VOBBE/KÄRGEL 2019). Beyond pointing out the importance of developing medial competence and the right to one’s own image, the recommendations for action in existing prevention concepts only rarely reflect the role digitally based violence now plays. And guidelines on how to proceed with respective interventions are missing completely. The goal of the research project “Human,” which is sponsored by the “Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung” (MNBF; German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany), is to fill that gap between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention such that specialized expert knowledge on dealing with sexualized violence from digital media sources is empirically systematized and made available to a broader specialist public. To this end, valuable process and interpretive knowledge based on concrete case examples is to be prepared. The later dissemination of these recommendations for action will be supported by the “Human” project team of the SRH University Heidelberg through strategic partners, such as Innocence in Danger, the “Bundeskoordination Spezialisierter Fachberatung gegen sexualisierte Gewalt in Kindheit und Jugend” (BKSF; Federal Coordination Office for Specialized Counseling Against Sexualized Violence in Childhood and Adolescence), the “Bundesverband der Frauenberatungsstellen und Frauennotrufe in Deutschland” (bff, German Federal Association of Rape Crisis Centres and Women’s Counselling Centres), the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Prävention und Intervention bei Kindesmisshandlung, -vernachlässigung und sexualisierter Gewalt e.V.” (DGfPI; German Society for the Prevention and Intervention in Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexualized Violence), and the “Deutsche Sportjugend” (dsj; German Sports Youth).

Procedures and Research Design

In cooperation with specialist units that work on the theme of sexualized violence in childhood and adolescence, the first step is to create anonymized documentations concerning cases of sexualized violence from digital media sources. These case documentations contain descriptions of the various means of assault, the social context in which the violence took place, information that eventually led to exposing the violent act, reactions from the social environment as well as descriptions

of the professional interventions and assistance that followed.

Based on the documentations, the project team then qualitatively and empirically reconstructs between eight and ten prototypical case scenarios, which consist respectively of the most significant details from several original cases. This prevents any conclusions from being traced to the original cases. Further, the prototypical cases comprise so-called key situations, that is, according to Tov/KUNZ/STÄMPFLIS (2016), generalizable characteristics that have particular relevance for professionally handling the case example in question.

In a second step, the key situations are discussed by focus groups recruited from experts who work with or do research on sexualized violence from digital media sources. These experts debate how best to evaluate the generic case examples and how best to deal with such cases. They must justify their professional stances and illustrate the principles behind their concrete assessments. The discussions and arguments of these experts on the key situations then form the basis for recommendations for action.

In addition, the experiences of persons who have been subjected to sexualized violence during childhood or adolescence are gathered by means of qualitative interviews carried out either by personnel from specialized services schooled in dealing with violence to ensure subsequent counseling is available if necessary; or the persons being interviewed belong to so-called special interests organizations and are well trained in dealing with issues of violence because of their sociopolitical commitment. The participation of experienced experts is important for the later development of recommendations of action that demand that assistance account for the perspectives of the target group(s).

Current Status

The anonymized case-study documentations are now available in full to the project team and are being evaluated in accordance with the “reflexive grounded theory” (BREUER 2010). The first assessments of the documentations show that the present data are much more diverse than had been expected. The challenge lies less in the variability of the violence dynamics than the forms of presentation themselves. Although all of the professional services are working with the same documentation

¹ “Memes” are generally edited photos or videos accompanied by ironic text passages which are shared with numerous people at once and thus broadly reproduced and further disseminated.

forms, in light of the level of concrete information, the extent of the descriptions, the choice of language, and the volume of the professional assessments and interpretations the content design could hardly be more diverse. Thus, the case documentations must consistently be seen as interpretations reflecting above all the professional reality of those doing the documenting and their interactions with the reflective understanding of the project team. This allows some paradoxes and dilemmas to come to the forefront which emerged from the professional assessments of the specialists. Typological characteristics such as the age and sex of the violence perpetrators or the categorization of violent acts by number of perpetrators, victim, type and extent of digital media use are delegated to the secondary level of analysis. Focusing on paradoxes and dilemmas, however, it is necessary because of the overall goal of the project, since they point to the challenges for which no immediate solution is available and for which the proper recommendations for action must be further developed.

Problematic Areas in This Context

The strategies of digital perpetrators, the (self-)sexualization of childhood and adolescence as well as the tendency of children and adolescents toward experimentation all tend to facilitate experiences of victimization. Educational assessments of the observed risk behavior of young people in this context flow seamlessly into victim blaming. The resulting reactions from the victim's social environment (i.e., accusations of peers and adults directed toward the online behavior of the victim) are added to the existing burden of the original violent acts and may produce as much stress as the violent acts themselves. Adults in turn try to regain control over the situation by issuing media bans, while also blaming themselves for the events.

The situation surrounding the online interactions of adolescents often creates conflicts between the self-assessment of the adolescents and that of the adults in their environment. Adults see the acts as invasive events that are labeled by the presumed victims as consensual. In individual cases it remains unclear to what extent the conflict runs parallel to an internalization of the grooming dynamics on the part of the adolescents or the revocation of adolescent sexual self-

determination on the part of the adults. Since the problem can only rarely be solved by resorting to criminal law, this leads to a revision of the discussion of the sexual self-determination of young people. The necessity results primarily from the ongoing shift of parts of sexual development to the digital media as well as the divergent understanding in the different generations about what "digital intimacy" means.

When sexualized peer violence is perpetrated in a group situation using digital media, the exact circle of witnesses is often difficult to ascertain, making the rehabilitation of those affected by such violence complex. In some cases, it may be nearly impossible to differentiate between the roles of perpetrator, reinforcer, defender, victim, witness, etc. The motives of young people who forward humiliating depictions of abuse or violence seem rather diffuse; depending on one's vantage point they range from displacement behavior, just having "fun," exercising revenge or vengeance, to the reenactment of hegemonic gender stereotypes, to the experience of power. This makes it difficult to prioritize group-related systemic principles of crisis intervention and secondary prevention that go beyond the simple act of protecting the victim. Present intervention strategies against sexualized violence from digital media sources were apparently loaned from strategies against violence without digital media sources. To date, there are no systematic strategies available to deal with the increased loss of control when abusive situations are recorded and disseminated. The largest common denominator is present when dealing with behavioral forms that conform to the principles of rational-emotive behavioral therapeutic approaches. Above all, one works with the evaluations of those affected by violence, reframing the violent acts or inquiring about the purpose of disseminating the abusive images in order to counter negative attributions.

Contact

human.hshd@srh.de

References

- BREUER, F. (2010): Reflexive Grounded Theory. Eine Einführung in die Forschungspraxis. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag
- DEKKER, A./KOOFS, T./BRIKEN, P. (2016): Sexualisierte Grenzverletzungen und Gewalt mittels digitaler Medien; http://docs.dpaq.de/11763-2a_expertise_sexuelle_gewalt_an_kindern_mittels_digitaler_medien.pdf (Accessed on 21 May 2019)
- FEIERABEND, S./PLANKENHORN, T./RATHGEB, T. (2016): Kindheit, Internet, Medien: Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 6- bis 13-Jähriger in Deutschland; https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/KIM/2016/KIM_2016_Web-PDF.pdf (Accessed on 1 April 2017)
- FEIERABEND, S./PLANKENHORN, T./RATHGEB, T. (2018): Jugend, Information, Medien: Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger in Deutschland. https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2016/JIM_Studie_2016.pdf (Accessed on 1 April 2017)
- JONSSON, L./SVEDIN, C. G. (2017): Barn utsatta för sexuella övergrepp på nätet (Children subjected to online sexual abuse). Self-published
- NEUTZE, J./SKLENAROVA, H. (2018): Sexualisierte Gewalt in den digitalen Medien. Zusammenfassung der neuen, erweiterten Datenanalyse des MiKADO-Projekts, 2011–2014; https://beauftragter-missbrauch.de/fileadmin/Content/pdf/Pressemitteilungen/2018/Juni/05/Neuauswertung_MiKADO_Sex_Gewalt_in_digitalen_Medien.pdf (Accessed on 21 February 2019)
- TOV, E./KUNZ, R./STÄPFELI, A. (2016): Schlüssel-situationen der Sozialen Arbeit. Bern: hep Verlag
- VOBBE, F./KÄRGEL, K. (2019): Sexualisierte Gewalt mit digitalem Medieneinsatz. Herausforderungen und Handlungsfelder im fachpädagogischen Umgang. In: *KJug* 1/2019, pp. 48–52

The EU Initiative “klicksafe” For More Safety on the Internet

Alona Yegorova,
Nadine Eikenbusch

“klicksafe” is the German Awareness Centre in the CEF Telecom Program of the European Union. This EU initiative is an awareness campaign to promote media competence on the internet and with new media. Since 2004, this initiative has had the goal of enabling internet users to competently and critically use the internet and to develop an awareness for the risks new media carry with them. Klicksafe works closely within a network at both the European and national level, including national and state institutions such as the respective ministries, business enterprises, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The project is being implemented jointly by the LMK – medienanstalt rlp (coordinator) and the “Landesanstalt für Medien NRW” (Media Authority of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia).

The role of klicksafe is primarily to ensure and improve the awareness of the general population for ways to safely use the internet. It is directed toward supporting disseminators, teachers, parents, and school social workers as well as children and adolescents in developing their digital competence.

In the modern digital society, especially young people are well networked and active in many ways on digital media. Especially the exchanging of information via social networks such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat plays a major role. The focus of such services generally lies in communication and self-expression. The various means of communication provide a multitude of ways to do this, but they are also accompanied by risks children and adolescents must be protected from, including the phenomena of cybergrooming, cybermobbing, and dangers emanating from sexting.

Sexting: The Correct Approach and Possible Risks

Sexting (from “sex” and “texting”) describes sending and receiving self-produced revealing images via the internet. Often apps such as Snapchat or WhatsApp are used for this purpose. This phenomenon presents a negative image based on the risks and side effects involved. But sexting can be done without the negative effects and is not per se a negative thing. Rather, it could become part of modern intimate communication – if those involved are old enough, know each other well enough, behave responsibly, and adhere to certain rules. This includes, above all, being aware of the possible dangers. One clear risk lies in images being forwarded to third parties. The effects of “failed” or “secondary” sexting can be multifaceted and damaging: The person may be subjected to ridicule, and the images may be shared publicly or eventually reach parents and teachers. Often the unauthorized forwarding of such revealing images results in systematic cybermobbing.

“Sexy” photos can also be used as leverage to pressure or blackmail the person in the photo. This is what is called “sextortion” (from “sex” and “extortion”). This may mean being persuaded or forced to make photos and then being blackmailed again with these photos. This is a criminal act that should not be confused with sexting.

The project klicksafe serves to instruct primarily educators with the module “Mobile Media: Selfies, Sexting, Self-Depiction” about the phenomenon of sexting as well as providing concrete teaching materials on this subject. The klicksafe flyer “Too Naked for the Internet?” contains tips about what to consider before sharing a photo or a video via messenger apps or social networks.

Cybergrooming: How Can Children and Adolescents Be Kept Safe?

In addition to incorrectly dealing with revealing photos on the internet, children and adolescents may also be subject to sexual harassment while chatting or participating in social networks. Thus, all children and adolescents should preventively be warned about the risks involved with online communication.

Cybergrooming means making calculated contact with minors via the internet, with the goal of initiating

sexual contact. This may occur in normal chat portals, online games, or social networks. It is especially prevalent in situations where the users can remain anonymous. According to the KIM Study of 2016, 7% of the 6–13-year-olds have already experienced such problematic attempts at being contacted by strangers on the internet, often with the pattern that the perpetrator slowly tries to get the trust of the young victims in order to sexually harass them once that trust has been established. This behavior can go as far as the perpetrator wanting to actually meet up in person. In cases of sexual harassment, the child or adolescent should immediately inform their parents and make screenshots as proof. To this end, however, it is necessary to first preventively inform the child or adolescent about such dangers. Furthermore, they should be warned never to meet with online acquaintances in person. If children and adolescents adhere to these important rules while chatting and communicating on the internet, then that is a major step toward ensuring their safety.

Further information about sexting and cybergrooming as well as about other themes surrounding internet safety may be found on www.klicksafe.de. Materials issued by the EU initiative may be ordered and downloaded free of charge at www.klicksafe.de/bestellungen.

Contact:

Landesanstalt für Medien NRW,
Zollhof 2, D-40221 Düsseldorf,
klicksafe@medienanstalt-nrw.de,
www.klicksafe.de

“Stoppt Sharegewalt” The Work of Innocence in Danger e.V.

Catharina Beuster,
Regina Neu,
Louisa Strachwitz,
Julia von Weiler

The digital world has experienced a rapid development. Society, particularly the protection afforded to children and adolescents, is being confronted with ever new challenges. Sexualized violence via digital media is becoming more diverse as well, ranging from undesired confrontation with pornography, cybergrooming, sextortion, “sharegewaltigung”¹, and the dissemination of abusive images (“sharegewalt”), to child sex tourism via webcam.

In 2015 to 2018, Innocence in Danger used a three-part approach (questionnaires, interviews, focus groups) to survey psychosocial institutions, schools, and cultural ministries throughout Germany concerning how they with digital media, the depictions of abuse, sharegewaltigung, and methods of photo tracing.²

We know from impact research on prevention programs in the area of “sexual abuse” that providing information in schools about sexualized violence has one major effect: Students who have already experienced sexualized violence then tend to turn to trusted contact persons.³ In order for such victims to receive the help they need, for example, when confiding in adults following such prevention events, it is paramount that all persons working in the school system be aware of the intervention strategies before spreading such prevention messages.

At the same time, we found a striking lack of both coherent prevention and intervention strategies.⁴

On the one hand, the school system has long been confronted with the phenomenon of digital sexualized violence – and has acted accordingly. On the other hand, it became clear that the professionals in the schools were often confused and in need of more background knowledge, recommendations for action, and practical guidelines.

But the study also showed that many colleagues working in the existing

counseling services have gathered extensive experience in this area. They are the experts in situ when there is need for prevention, intervention, and care for the victims of sexual abuse. Yet we also found that the themes of “abuse depictions” and “sharegewaltigung” are only marginally known in these services. Care for victims is fragmentary: Some counseling services use their knowledge and abilities intensively to combat digital sexualized violence, yet a network linking this expertise from the past 10 years is missing – and a top-down transfer of knowledge and appropriate counseling methods is not taking place.

At the same time, the increasing knowledge on the part of the professional experts about (digital) sexualized violence has led to their discovering and reacting to suspicions and concrete tips more rapidly.

Following the study, Innocence in Danger established a training format entitled “Stop Sharegewalt” which teaches about sharegewaltigung and other forms of sexualized cyberviolence in a very practical manner, where action strategies for interventions are concretely practiced. Case work is done in the form of a simulation game in which the digital risks and chances of the institutions are experienced and discussed. In addition to dealing with the organizational conditions under which professional actions of digital child protection occur, this method includes individual attitudes, positions, feelings, and behavioral options. The practical work during the simulation game produces concrete results and an exact catalogue of measures for the respective institution as well as action guidelines for prevention and intervention.

The participants of the pilot phase were impressed: “I don’t think you’ll ever be 100% safe. But now my sense of security is much stronger, and I know where I can turn to for help. Thank you!” They would like to have such formats as well for other target groups: “I would recommend this course for parents” and “I think your efforts are extremely relevant for students with disabilities in the area of ‘intellectual development.’”

Definitions

“Sexting” is a new, digital form of sexual behavior. It means the digital forwarding of sexual contents (text, photo, video) between two or more persons. If this occurs consensually and volun-

tarily, it is a sexual act, and like all other sexual acts carries certain risks with it, for example, when the digital document (text, photo, video) is further disseminated without permission or used to leverage the owner.

“Sextortion” (from “sex” and “extortion”) contains not just blackmailing or extorting someone but using images to do so.

“Sharegewaltigung” very deliberately comprises the rape aspect of sharing. This happens when, for example, a self- or other-generated intimate digital document (text, photo, video) is forwarded to a third party without the knowledge or permission of the owner. This term emphasizes the notion of sexualized violence and is consciously suggested as an alternative to the well-known term “revenge porn.” It makes clear that the perpetrator is responsible for the act, not the victim.

Contact:

Innocence in Danger e.V.,
Holtzendorffstraße 3, D-14057 Berlin,
www.innocenceindanger.de, www.stoppt-sharegewalt.de

- 1 “Sharegewalt” and “Sharegewaltigung” represent the combination of the English word “share” and the German words “Gewalt” (violence) and “Vergewaltigung” (rape). These are retained throughout. [The translator].
- 2 Photo tracing is a means prosecutors use to search for victims of abuse depictions in schools, in order first to end such abuse and second to apprehend the perpetrators.
- 3 KINDLER, H. (2003): Evaluation der Wirksamkeit präventiver Arbeit gegen sexuellen Missbrauch an Mädchen und Jungen: Expertise. Amyna Verlag.
- 4 See also www.stoppt-sharegewalt.de.

The pia Theme Week – By Peers for Peers Social Media as a Form of E-Participation in Generational Change

Alina Marlene Schmitz

Reaching young people via social media would seem to be easier today than ever. They are not only the addressees of our work, they must also be seen as participants within an organization. That is the approach of the national network of volunteers “pia – pro familia in action,” which is part of the federal association “pro familia.”

pro familia and Generational Change

pro familia is the leading professional association in Germany for the fields of sexuality, partnership, and family planning. It is internationally well networked and for its practical work maintains a total of 180 counseling offices organized in 16 state-level associations. Young people have always been important partners in the design of the educational and counseling offers. All age groups are active within pro familia as sociopolitical protagonists. Together, they act on behalf of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

About 10 years ago, the generational change on the horizon occasioned pro familia to approach young people as experts of their own generation to become more involved in the organization. To this end, experienced full-time personnel created open structures to permit young people (16 years and older) to initiate and implement their own projects. The result was the national network pia – pro familia in action.

pia – Nationally Active

pia – pro familia in action is a collective of young people who want to publicly propagate matters concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights through their own actions and activities. To this day, pia is the only network of young adults (up to the age of 30) in Germany focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights and thus offers political (educational) work in

Germany, in Europe, and in Central Asia.

The basis for this network are self-organized structures via virtual networks and cooperations using online tools such as Skype and Slack. Within the work groups around various different themes, the pia participants concentrate equally on structural work within the pro familia organization (e.g., How can the voices of young people be more strongly integrated into the political work pro familia does?) and on actionistic work. The pia participants employ the latter in various formats of sexual and political education, such as #piakneipentouren (pia bar hopping) as part of proactive sexuality education or #piathemenwoche (pia theme week) as part of the online sexuality education program.

pia in Social Media

Every month, via the hashtag #piathemenwoche, one theme is chosen to be made broadly available on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These are generally topical themes from sexual and reproductive health and rights which are considered socially taboo. They are made public, grievances are demonstrated, or political demands are formulated.

During such a pia theme week, the readers of the contributions on the various social-media channels are not only given the opportunity to express their opinions on the topics in question, they can also submit reports of their own experiences or express their criticism. The generation of such a pia theme week depends on the participation of young people in the network.

The theme week is a self-governed format that makes it clear in its disclaimer that how the theme is presented does not necessarily reflect the position of pro familia or of the entire network, but rather the opinions of the various participants within the network.

pia at the Local Level

In addition to the virtual network of young people organized in pia, since 2017 a number of cities have established their own local groups: In Berlin, Hamburg, Trier, Bielefeld, and Kiel, for example, the pia chapters meet regularly on their own or in the pro familia offices, where they work closely with the staff on the themes and the practice fields of pro familia and help shape them as well. By sitting in and

visiting work sessions, becoming active in political bodies, and attending to information booths, they actively support the ongoing work and insert the views of their generation.

Digitalization, E-Participation, Generational Change

The method of enabling the greater participation of young people in the organizational structures goes hand in hand with a digitalization of the entire organization. The young activists are able to convince the older staff members that, for example, modern sexuality education does not take place solely within the counseling offices, but rather that interested parties and members of the target groups are active on the internet; that sexuality education can take place, among other places, on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Often in fact, the formats of the various channels have already reached young people long before they even set foot in a counseling office or come into contact with sexuality educators. The stakeholders of the national network pia – pro familia in action are presently working together with the staff members of the pro familia organization to prepare videos that can be used to propagate sexuality education online.

pro familia has recognized the great benefits not just of asking young people about their needs, but also of learning together with them about social media. This gives them the space they need to become active on their own and to use own channels to gather online experience. At the same time, this allows long-term organizational processes to be scrutinized and slowly adapted to modern, attractive, digital communication. The common goal remains: to propagate and make available up-to-date information on sexual and reproductive health and rights!

Contact:

alina.schmitz@profamilia.de

Growing Up with Media: Between Protection, Enablement, and Participation

Standards of Modern Youth Media Protection

Anna Grebe

The internet has reached the child's room: 99% of all children and adolescents between 13 and 19 years of age today have access to the internet; 97% of them have their own internet-capable device, such as smartphones, tablets, and game consoles (cf. JIM-Studie 2018). In addition to the great opportunities and possibilities this offers, risks and dangers lurk everywhere for young people on the internet and because of the internet. So how can politics, service providers, parents, and professionals join together to create modern digital youth media protection?

Always Online – Always in Danger?

The use of digital media is playing an ever-greater role in the everyday life of modern children and adolescents. They are connected via WhatsApp or Facebook, they watch the latest videos on YouTube, they provide reports about their life in Insta-stories, they lip-sync and dance on TikTok, they do research for school and leisure activities. They even become media producers themselves, by creating and publishing texts or videos. They live out their creativity and learn valuable skills for their future. And they have a lot of fun doing it all. But in addition to the many opportunities offered them, children and adolescents are also subject to many dangers that they may or may not completely gauge or realize. These risks occur above all from their use of social media, communication services, and games. Because the risks they are exposed to are inherent to the opportunities the internet offers and have changed and grown over time, the youth media protection guaranteed by law in Germany must also change and adapt. No longer do the dangers emanate only from the pornography or violence that confronts young people on television, in books and magazines, or music; situations on the internet

may entice them to divulge personal information and thus endanger their right to privacy, to data security, and to physical and mental integrity.

“Let's keep this between the two of us” – The Phenomenon of Cybergrooming

Particularly phenomena like cybergrooming – the strategic approach taken by perpetrators to prepare for sexual abuse on and via the internet – create real effects if the affected child or adolescent cannot seek out advice or help in time. This occurs also because many offers on the internet are not separated into those suitable or unsuitable for children and adolescents or possess any special security settings to protect them from coming into contact with adult users, who in turn could confront them with pornographic materials or approach them with the goal of sexually assaulting them. The MIKADO Study by researchers from the University of Regensburg, specially directed toward studying the phenomenon of such online approaches, clearly showed that every tenth adolescent interviewed had experienced at least one such case of sexual harassment on the internet. And nearly one-third of those affected subsequently experienced stress because of such encounters. Sexual online advances comprise discussions about sex, acts depicted via webcam (cybersex), and transmitting or receiving erotic photos. Because the perpetrators act as though they are the same age as their victims, or depict themselves to be very understanding adults, the children and adolescents cannot easily discern whether such an advance presents a danger to them and whether they should turn to their parents for help. Even though we acknowledge that gathering sexual experiences in the digital world has become part of the modern identity-development process of adolescents, it remains undisputed that the combination of anonymity on the internet, the lack of digital safe places, and the absence of technical infrastructure (e.g., the lack of chat moderators and reporting systems) has effectively endangered younger children's use of the internet.

Youth Media Protection in the Digital Space

For these reasons, it is necessary for lawmakers to introduce new and modern guidelines to ensure up-to-date protec-

tion of children and adolescents, especially regarding new and innovative interaction and communication risks arising through social media. On the one hand, this means taking good and effective standards already known in the offline world and applying them to the online world as well as creating good interactive cooperation between national and state authorities and platform providers and self-control authorities to ensure future protection. On the other hand, in order to ensure proper youth protection on the internet, the content providers must be obliged to adapt the technical infrastructure to this end. It should be demanded that they establish sufficient safety and reporting systems that enable children and adolescents to simply and transparently send a report when they encounter critical content or disturbing interactions – which are then followed up on. One challenge in this matter is that young people tend to use apps that stem from international organizations/firms. Good and up-to-date youth media protection can succeed in this regard only if such services adhere to and implement such standards and accept the demands of national laws – and if national laws are strictly applied to such international providers.

Protection Through Media Competence and Participation

Yet it will not suffice simply to adapt the laws to the digital age; if children are to survive on digital media, they must experience a balance of security, participation, and competence. Parents must be strengthened in sensitizing their children to the amount and type of information they can reveal on the internet, how best to maneuver in the digital space, and what offers are appropriate for the respective age group, for example, those listed in the online portals of the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women, and Youth, such as the initiative “SCHAU HIN! Was Dein Kind mit Medien macht” (Observe what your child is doing with media”; www.schau-hin.info) or the initiative “Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien” (Growing up well with media; www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-media.de). Special websites for children (e.g., www.seitenstark.de) or child-appropriate search engines (e.g., www.blindekuh.de, www.fragfinn.de) provide ways that children can partake of safe and tested games, chats, and informational pages offering trans-

parent quality standards parents can trust. In the end, modern youth media protection must reflect the actual life-worlds of children and adolescents and take their needs and true-life situations into consideration, also offering them ways to actively participate in designing their digital environment. For this reason, young people should be encouraged, enabled, and supported to create media and fill them with their own important contents. It remains the overall task to sustainably strengthen the offers of media education and media competence training in schools as well as in extramural youth education so that children and adolescents may learn through their own contributions to become strong personalities – on the internet, too.

Contact:

Initiativbüro "Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien," c/o Stiftung Digitale Chancen, Chausseestraße 15, D-10115 Berlin, agrebe@digitale-chancen.de, <https://www.gutes-aufwachsen-mitmedien.de>

Reports

- 3 **Adolescents and Social Media: The Results of the JIM Study 2018**
Sabine Feierabend, Thomas Rathgeb, Theresa Reutter
- 8 **“The Internet is always there.”
The Digital Worlds of 14–24-Year-Olds**
Silke Borgstedt
- 12 **Sexuality Education in the Digital Media:
The Present State of Development and Research**
Nicola Döring
- 16 **The Portrayal of Gender on YouTube:
The Narrow Spectrum of Female YouTubers and the
Broad Field of Males**
Elizabeth Prommer, Claudia Wegener, Christine Linke
- 21 **Mobile Media: Selfies, Sexting, Self-Portrayal.
The Results of a Quantitative Study on How Adolescents
Approach Sexting**
Verena Vogelsang
- 24 **Loveline – The Youth Portal of the BZgA in Times of
Changing Media Use**
Mirjam Tomse
- 27 **Media Usage and Eating Disorders.
From *Germany’s Next Topmodel* to the Pro-ana Movement
on the Internet**
Christiane Eichenberg

Project Outlines

- 31 **The Research Project “Human”**
Frederic Vobbe
- 33 **The EU-Initiative “klicksafe”**
Alona Yegorova, Nadine Eikenbusch
- 34 **“Stoppt Sharegewalt!”**
*Catharina Beuster, Regina Neu, Louisa Strachwitz,
Julia von Weiler*
- 35 **The pia Theme Week – By Peers for Peers**
Alina Marlene Schmitz
- 36 **Growing Up with Media: Between Protection,
Enablement, and Participation**
Anna Grebe

FORUM *Sexualaufklärung und Familienplanung*
(FORUM Sexuality Education and Family
Planning)

A Publication Series of the Bundeszentrale für
gesundheitliche Aufklärung/BZgA (German
Federal Centre for Health Education)
Head: Heidrun Thaiss, MD
Department of Sexuality Education, Contraception
and Family Planning
Maarweg 149–161
D-50825 Köln
www.forum.sexualaufklaerung.de

Bibliographical information of the German
National Library – CIP Entry
FORUM Sexualaufklärung: Informationsdienst der
Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche
Aufklärung/BZgA
Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung,
Abteilung Sexualaufklärung, Verhütung und
Familienplanung – Köln: BZgA
Aufnahme nach 1996,1
ISSN 2192-2152

Concept: Department of Sexuality Education,
Contraception and Family Planning
Managing editors: Angelika Heßling,
Dr. Christoph Aluttis
Text/copyediting: Heike Lauer, Frankfurt
Illustrations: Feierabend: SWR; Rathgeb: LFK;
Reutter: LFK; Borgstedt: SINUS-Institut; Prommer
und Linke: Tom & Lia Fotografie; Wegener: The
Face Studio Hannover; Vogelsang: Studio Wiegel;
Tomse: BZgA; Eichenberg: privat
Layout and typesetting: Dietmar Burger, Berlin
Translation: Joseph Smith, Nörten-Hardenberg

All right reserved.

Articles that include an author’s name or an
author’s abbreviation do not necessarily reflect the
opinion of the publisher. This journal is provided
by the BZgA free of charge. It may not be resold by
the recipient to third parties.

