

Sexting in adolescence: perceptions of parents
Sexting na adolescência: percepções dos pais
Sexting en la adolescencia: percepciones de los padres

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Abstract: Sexting is the behavior of producing and sending or receiving sexual content. Research focuses on studying sexting among adolescents, leaving out familiar aspects. In Brazil, such studies are still scarce. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative and descriptive research was to know the perception of parents of adolescents about sexting. There are two focus groups with parents in a public school. After content analysis, the results revealed that the participants were aware of the sexting, but did not know how to deal with the involvement of the children. The biggest concern was with exposure, rather than with engaging in sexting. The importance of family communication is highlighted. It is proposed that interventions be designed to improve communication between family subsystems and research with adolescents to investigate how they understand and deal with the phenomenon.

Key words: sexting, adolescence, family, systemic psychology

Resumo: Sexting é o comportamento de produzir e enviar ou receber conteúdo sexual. As pesquisas se concentram em estudar o sexting entre adolescentes, deixando de fora aspectos familiares. No Brasil, esses estudos ainda são escassos. Portanto, o objetivo desta pesquisa qualitativa e descritiva foi conhecer a percepção de pais de adolescentes sobre o sexting. Foram realizados dois grupos focais com pais em uma escola pública. Após a análise de conteúdo, os resultados revelaram que os participantes estavam cientes do sexting, mas não sabiam como lidar com o envolvimento dos filhos. A maior preocupação era com a exposição, e não com o envolvimento em sexting. A importância da comunicação familiar é destacada. Propõe-se que intervenções sejam desenhadas para melhorar a comunicação entre os subsistemas familiares e pesquisas com adolescentes para investigar como eles entendem e lidam com o fenômeno.

Palavras-chave: sexting, adolescência, família, psicologia sistêmica

Resumen: Sexting es el comportamiento de producir y enviar o recibir contenido sexual. Las investigaciones estudian el sexting entre adolescentes, descuidando aspectos familiares. En Brasil, estos estudios todavía son escasos. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta investigación cualitativa y descriptiva fue conocer cómo piensan los padres de adolescentes sobre el sexting. Se realizaron dos grupos focales con padres en una escuela pública. Después del análisis de contenido, se concluyó que conocían el sexting, pero desconocían cómo lidiar con la participación de los hijos. La mayor preocupación fue la exposición, y no tanto con la participación en sexting. Se resalta la importancia de la comunicación familiar. Se propone que se piensen intervenciones para mejorar la comunicación familiar y la realización de investigaciones con los adolescentes para investigar cómo entienden y tratan el fenómeno.

Palabras clave: sexting, adolescência, familia, psicología sistêmica

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Introduction

The behavior of producing and sending or receiving sexual content over the internet is defined in the literature as sexting. It is the contraction of the English words “sex” and “texting” - sending text messages through the cellphone. This phenomenon has received attention from researchers due to the increased use of mobile phones and smartphones, especially by young people. What researches show is that most adolescents have access to the internet through mobile devices, which makes engaging in sexting very easy (Korenis & Billick, 2014; Rice et al., 2012; Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaíta, & Rullo, 2013).

In the United States, Korenis and Billick (2014) showed that among the adolescents between 12 and 17 years old who participated in the research, the majority (84%) had a mobile phone and used it on average 50 hours a week; half sent and received about 50 text messages and one third of them on average 100 messages per day through the different social networks of the internet. In Brazil, a survey carried out in 2013 by the National Youth Secretariat (SNJ) analyzed the profile of Brazilian youth and showed that 80% of them used computers and the Internet, and 89% have a cell phone, which in 2014 became the most used equipment to access the internet (IBGE, 2016).

This intensity and speed with which young people use communication technologies, especially smartphones, can carry some risks, such as exposure of intimate life publicly (Assunção & Matos, 2014). In Los Angeles, adolescents ages 12 to 18 reported using social networks daily for an indefinitely amount of time and knew someone involved in some kind of intimate photo or video exposure on the internet (Rice et al.,

2012). In 2009, the consequence of this type of exposure was tragic to the family of an American teen girl. As reported by Cable News Network – CNN (*How to have sexting*, 2016), the adolescent took her own life after pictures of her naked were published on the internet. The same happened in Brazil, in the states of Piauí and Rio Grande do Sul, where, because of the exposition on social media, two young girls committed suicide. Both had intimate images shared on the internet without consent (Zylberkan, 2013).

As for the reasons that lead adolescents to engage in behaviors as sexting, young Mexicans cite sexual identity problems, low self-esteem, feeling socially discriminated, being a new student in class, trying to impress the other with a proof of love and that the internet could satisfy the curiosity about sex (Mejía-Soto, 2014). In a similar way, young people from 20 European countries cited age, the search for new sensations and the frequency of internet usage as factors that lead to sexting in all of the researched countries, where boys are more involved than girls (Baumgartner, Sumter, Peter, Valkenburg, & Livingstone, 2014; Walrave, Heirman, & Hallam, 2014). This result related to gender was also described in other studies (Morelli, Bianchi, Baiocco, Pezzuti, & Chirumbolo, 2016; Rice et al., 2012; Van Ouytsel, Van Gool, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2014).

However, regarding age, there is no consensus in the literature if the youngest adolescents are most engaged in sexting. In England, the oldest adolescents compared to the youngest were more engaged in this phenomenon (Livingstone & Görzig, 2014). The same was found in the study previously mentioned from Rice et al. (2012). On the other hand, in the USA sexting was very prevalent among those under 14 years old

(Rood, Thackeray, Letson, Leder, & Berlan, 2015). Thus, it is important to consider which other factors could influence the development of adolescents in sexting. For example, the literature shows that, in general, the parents' behaviors influences the children (Ferreira, Nelas, Duarte, Albuquerque, Grilo, & Nave, 2013; Toni & Silvaes, 2013; Moscoso-Alvarez, Rodríguez-Figueroa, Reyes-Pulliza, & Colon, 2016) and that leads to question if the same would happen regarding sexting.

Even though there are studies associating family systemic aspects and the adolescents' behavior, they do not focus specifically on sexting. For example, Moscoso-Alvarez et al. (2016) researched the relation between family aspects and mental health of adolescents from Puerto Rico, indicating that family, especially the communication between parents and children, had an important role in the adolescents' mental health. Therefore, once the literature points out that communication among family's subsystems is fundamental for a good interaction between them (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007; Vasconcellos, 2013) and that the dialog with parents has a protecting effect on adolescents' life (Gomide, Salvo, Pinheiro, & Mello, 2005; Tomé, Camacho, Gaspar De Matos, & Diniz, 2011), it is possible to question if the same happens regarding sexting, this is, if the communication between parents and children is associated to the adolescents' involvement in this phenomenon.

In a similar way, Lam and Wong (2015) studied the influence of parental factors in their children's internet addiction. The authors concluded that the parents' mental health and their behaviors in the internet influence the children's addiction to internet. Still in China (Chang et al., 2015), increased monitoring, establishment of rules and promoting education for the safe use of internet by parents were negatively associated to Cyberbullying, the use of the internet to socially exclude, insult, offend, embarrass, molest, threaten or shame another person (Korenis & Billick, 2014; Sampasa-kanyinga & Hamilton, 2015). Finally, Li, Li e Newman (2013), while studying the problematic use of

internet among adolescents and the parents' behavior, also reported something similar.

Those results, however, refer to the Chinese context, but what about the Brazilian one? How do parents understand the influence they have on what their children do on the internet, and, especially, on their involvement in sexting? It is important to observe that the studies presented so far refer to international literature, because in Brazil they are still scarce. A search conducted in the website of Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes) with the terms "sexting" and "adolescent" and "family" identified no national studies. However, some researches are dedicated to investigate adolescents' behaviors, their pattern of internet usage and the possible associations to family factors, which should be considered when analyzing the phenomenon of sexting.

For example, Terres-Trindade and Mosmann (2015) pointed out that the conflict between mother and children is related to the addiction to internet and that maternal emotional support seems to serve as protection against the emergence of this addiction. However, the practice of excessive control of internet usage and the consequent family misunderstandings does not decrease the dependency but promotes it. Besides, young people perceive parents control of the internet usage as negative. The authors suggest that it is important to be alert to the parents' role associated to the emergence of internet addiction.

In the same direction, Toni and Silvaes (2013) researched the direct influence of educative parental practices on the behaviors of health protection and health risk in adolescents of public schools in the states of Paraná and São Paulo. They revealed that parental practices are predictors of social competences, internalization and externalization, as well as determinant of health risk and health protection behaviors. However, in the Brazilian context, the studies indicate that parental monitoring of what their children do in internet (Spizzirri, Wagner, Mosmann, & Armani, 2012) and dialogs between parents and adolescents about daily

problems are scarce (Reis, Almeida, Miranda, Alves, & Madeira, 2013). Maybe, as described in a study in Colombia, this lack of communication may make adolescents feel alone for solving their problems (Loaiza, Martinez, & Klimenko, 2017), facilitating their involvement in sexting. Thus, it is possible to conclude that parents' attitude and the way they monitor the virtual behavior of their children influences the involvement in sexting.

In summary, due to the emotional, psicossocial and legal consequences of the involvement in sexting, it is important for adolescents, parents, educators and therapists to understand this phenomenon and its impact on the life of young people. Also, there were no Brazilian studies about sexting, as well as the international researches address the issue quantitatively, in general, aspects related to adolescents' individuality. Therefore, Brazil still lacks national studies that approach the issue in an exploratory and qualitative way, accessing other constructs that can be related and reverberate on the involvement of adolescents in sexting, as for example the role of family relations. Therefore, the aim of this study was to know the perception of adolescents' parents about the sexting behavior in adolescents.

Method

Outline

A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive research was conducted (Creswell, 2010), to understand the individual or collective meanings that people attribute to a certain phenomena and what they represent (Gibbs, 2009; Turato, 2008).

Participants

The participants were five parents and twelve mothers of adolescents (Brasil, 1990) with ages between 12 and 18 years of a public school in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, with or without involvement in sexting of parents' knowledge. The individuals were selected through the advertisement of the research at the school and also indications.

Those who accepted were invited to compose two focal groups.

Instruments

The instruments used to collect data were a sociodemographic questionnaire to characterize the participants, elaborated by the authors, and the focal group (Flick, 2009; Minayo, Souza, Constantino, & Santos, 2008). The following themed triggering questions were used: 1) What do you know about sexting? 2) What are the reasons that lead adolescents to engage in sexting? 3) Did someone ever experienced or know any family who experienced their children's involvement in sexting? Which are the perceived consequences? How would they react if it would happen with their children? 4) What do you think about the consequences of the children's sexting to the family? 5) How do you perceive the relation between your own virtual behaviors, the way you monitor your children's virtual life and sexting?

Data collection and analysis procedures

After getting the written authorization from the school management and the approval from the Ethics in Research Committee of Unisinos (opinion n. 62448016.7.0000.5344) to conduct the research, the proposal was advertised to the parents. A total of 32 people manifested interest and enrolled at the school secretary. The explanation of the research aims and stages were given through the telephone. Among the parents who agreed to participate, the researcher made a draw to compose the groups. Following, he told the participants about the date and time of the appointment. Seven people came on the first day and twelve on the second.

The phases of focal groups with parents were: (a) reception; (b) opening – introductions, signing the Informed Consent Form (TCLE – Appendix III), general information about the aims of the meeting and about how it would happen; filling the sociodemographic form; (c) warming-up – reading an illustrative report about sexting to

introduce the discussion (Vítimas de vazamentos de *Nude Selfies*, 2014); (d) themed discussions; (e) closure. The researcher was alert so that every member of the group could expose his/her points of view and interact in the debate (Flick, 2009). The participants' conversations were registered in audio and video. All guidelines and regulations for researches involving human beings were respected, following the instructions of the Resolution n. 510/2016 of the National Health Council. The conversations of the focal groups were analyzed using the content analysis method (Bauer, 2008).

The data were grouped in categories *a posteriori* (Gibbs, 2009) and discussed under the systemic theory (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007). From the content analysis method and after the data saturation, the following categories were formed: factors associated to sexting; consequences for the adolescent; consequences for the family; and ways of dealing with sexting.

Results

Grupo A Group: The A group is composed by four mothers and three fathers and there were no couples in the group. When asked if they knew the term "sexting", all said they did not. However, when the researcher asked if they knew the adolescents' behavior of sending and receiving sexual content through the internet, all answered that they did and realized that it is a common phenomenon. For them, the biggest concern was with the exposure of the adolescents if the sexting were shared, as the Mother A1 said: *"the problem is if they start to forward"*.

A relevant characteristic of Group A is that one of the participant mothers – the mother A2 – shared her own experience with her daughter's involvement in sexting. This sharing lead other participants to act more empathic with the Mother A2, in an attempt of care and protection.

B Group: The B group was composed by eight mothers and two fathers, among them was one couple, Father B2 and Mother B7.

The participants reported they did not know the term sexting. However, all of them said they knew the adolescents' behavior of receiving or sending sexual content. The participants of this group also said that it is not their children's involvement in sexting that concerns them, but the public exposure if this content were shared on the internet, as Mother B3 said: *"if it leaks yes, but if it doesn't [...] if it stays just between them, I think it is something intimate of them, its cool!"* and also Mother B5 *"in that moment yes, but tomorrow they fight and the other person will use that for revenge"*.

Factors associated to sexting

Regarding the factors that lead adolescents to engage in sexting behaviors, the participants of both groups reported the search for popularity as the main factor associated to the involvement. This appears in reports as the one from Mother A1: *"it was a self-promotion to the boy [...] he wanted to promote himself"*. Also from Mother B3: *"it is an exhibitionism!"*.

Following, questions related to the development appeared: the influence of other people, as peers and the media, immaturity and curiosity. This contents are expressed in speeches such as the one from Father A2: *"I think that what leads are the different friendships"*; from Father A3: *"he was born in this technology. [...] watches Big Brother. And there it is all those women there... bathing, filming [...]"*; from Mother A2: *"to please the other I think. In the group, huh?"*.

About the influence of other people, it draws the attention that the parents, both from Group A and B, also said that trying to please the boy/girlfriend would be a factor that leads to sexting. This can be perceived in the speeches of Mother A2: *"he (boyfriend) got into his mind. Induced her and she sent the pictures"* and B5: *"trying to please the partner"*.

The parents from both groups also think that immaturity of adolescents is an important factor that leads to sexting, as said by the Father A1: *"I think that they still don't have*

this maturity to think"; the Mother A1: *"I mean, they don't have this maturity"*; and Mother B1 *"but [...] they are children"*. Also, all parents see that curiosity plays an important role. They say: Father A2: *"They feel this need of seeing a woman naked, a man naked, you know?"*; and Mother A2: *"curiosity!"*; and Father B1: *"they have a curiosity"*.

Regarding how the way parents monitor what their children do on the internet could reverberate in their children's involvement in sexting, parents from both groups had different opinions. There are parents who report the need of intense control, as identified in the following sayings: Mother A2: *"We have to participate in everything there"* and Mother B4 *"we have to watch always"* and the couple (Mother B7 and Father B2): *"we are always watching them"*. On the other hand, different parents said that this monitoring is instigating, as reports the Mother A5: *"But it is like that: if you force they will do it hidden"*; and Mother B5: *"sometimes you forbid it [...] she will try to do it"*. There are also some parents who pointed out that their lack of monitoring would lead to the involvement in sexting, as said the Mother A2: *"But we are relapse. You won't be there beside her"*.

About the parents' behavior on the internet, the participants of both groups said that it is related to the involvement in their children's sexting. They agreed that the guardians should be an example to their children about which behaviors are correct and which are not. In group A, the Mother A3 shared that her daughter took her father's cellphone and saw sexual content that he had received from coworkers: *"Then she took it and said: 'wow, how much porn videos that dad has on his phone. Shame on you, dad!'"*. The mother scolded her partner and admonished him about the need to be an example. This was endorsed by Mother A2: *"you need to have respect at home to pass on to them"*; and the Father A1: *"teaching your son to respect nudity, or respect someone else"*.

The participants of the A Group reported that the exercise of authority and rules establishment by the parents on the use of

internet would be preventive of sexting. The Mother A1 said: *"I think the parents need to impose"*, what was endorsed by the Father A3: *"No, I am the authority in my house"*, referring to how to conduct the internet usage of the family.

Finally, the participants of B Group said that to broaden the opportunities for adolescents to occupy themselves in other activities beside internet helps to prevent sexting. For them, *"giving the children tasks and occupy their minds"*, according to Mother B7 and *"offering a different path"*, according to Mother B5 are ways of prevention. They also agreed that the absence of the parents at home when they go to work eases the involvement of their children in sexting, because, as said the Mother B7, the parents' absence *"lets the children too free"*.

Consequences to the adolescent

About the consequences of the involvement in sexting to adolescents, participants of both groups reported as harmful the public exposure, as the Father A1 said: *"like if a photo of her would get lost in the internet and appear in a porn website. Or if the friends from school would share it with the whole school"*; the Mother A2: *"everyone knew!"* and Mother B3 *"what if it leaks? This is the fear of the internet these days"*. Other harmful consequences brought up were internalizing symptoms as sadness and isolation, as reports Mother A2: *"there were psychological (consequences). She cried a lot, told me and was isolated"*. Also the fact of triggering off shame, depression and bullying, as illustrates the words of Mother A1: *"Shame, depression, being tagged"*; of Mother B3: *"shame, huh"* and Mother B5: *"being ridiculed"*.

Consequences to the family

The mother A2 reported as consequences to the family of the adolescent engaged in sexting the emergence of guilt: *"we are guilty. I feel guilty"*; anger: *"I wanted to hit her. Because of the anger I felt in that moment"*;

and sadness: *"I cried a lot"*. Those reports were confirmed by the other members of group A, who described the judgment from friends and relatives as a consequence for the family, according to Father A1: *"ah, then will criticize you"*; Mother A2: *"Yeah! The family [...] they condemn first"*. However, the participants of B Group only reported the shame as a consequence to the family, as Mother B3 said: *"the shame that the family faces"*.

A unanimous aspect reported by the participants of both groups is that the involvement in sexting leads the family to deal with legal questions, as well as police issues. This was demonstrated by the reports of Mother A2: *"I had to give a police report"*; and Mother B5 *"Then you go to the police"*.

Ways of dealing with sexting

Regarding the ways of dealing with the children's involvement in sexting, parents of both groups said they did not know how to act. This was pointed out by Mother A2: *"But you don't know what do do"*; Father A1: *"Even you don't know what you will do"*; and Mother B3: *"there is no way to know what to do"*.

However, the parents considered dialog with the adolescent and emotional support as ways they would deal with the situation, as perceived in the speech of Father A3: *"deal with care"*; of Mother A3: *"I talk to her"*; *"I will give all support to my daughter"*.

Discussion

Both the participants from A and B Groups said to know the behavior of producing and sending sexual content by adolescents, even though they did not refer to it by the term "sexting". In general, the parents perception is that it is a common and current phenomenon. This perception agrees with the results of Rice et al. (2012), who reported a high rate of involvement of adolescents in their study. However, the biggest concern of parents seems to be actually not the practice of sexting in itself, but the exposure of the adolescent if the content becomes public. This

fear of public exposure was also described by Assunção e Matos (2014).

Also, it is relevant to observe the participation in Group A of the mother who shared the experience of the daughter's involvement in sexting and the consequent public exposure of the images. What the results show is that, in fact, the leakage of the images was what brought problems to this family and not the practice of sexting. Moreover, this account of experience may have reverberated (Yalom, 2000) in Group A and influenced the participants' conversations, as they may have restrained themselves in their comments in an attempt to not hurt the Mother A2. What is exemplified in *"I would cry too"* (Father A1) and *"You can not blame yourself"* (Father A3). However, the same did not occur in Group B, as there was no experience report from any of the participants, which gave them greater freedom both to express themselves more openly and to speak more hypothetically: *"If it happened to me, I ..."*. Despite this, the concern was also about the fear of public exposure and not about the involvement of their children in sexting.

Parents reported that curiosity and trying to impress others, such as a boy/girlfriend, for example, by sending sexual images, would be factors that would lead the adolescent to sexting. This aspect is supported by the results of the study with young Mexicans (Mejía-Soto, 2014). Similarly, Walrave et al. (2014) have described that romantic friends and peers are the major sources of pressure for adolescents to engage in sexting. As for the description that the curiosity would be another factor that leads the adolescent to sexting, it is echoed in what was described by young Europeans (Baumgartner et al., 2014). Thus, it leads to the conclusion that curiosity and the desire to please others are characteristics of adolescence, which are also manifested in other behaviors of this phase of life, such as in the use of drugs (Reis et al., 2013) and may not be specifically linked to sexting.

It is further argued that participants said that engaging in sexting would help adolescents to satisfy their curiosity about sex. In this sense, the importance of family

communication about sexuality in adolescence is emphasized. The literature has already demonstrated that family dialogue has protective effect for adolescents (Gomide et al., 2005; Tomé et al., 2011). However, the dialogue between parents and adolescents, especially about Internet and sexuality matters, as well as monitoring their virtual activities, do not seem to be part of the practices of many Brazilian families (Spizzirri et al., 2012; Reis, et al. 2013).

All participants agreed that parents influence what their children do on the internet, both by monitoring and by their own behavior on the Internet, and this is confirmed by the literature (Lam & Wong, 2015; Moscoso-Alvarez et al., 2016; Sampaio & Gomide, 2007; Toni & Silvares, 2013). However, regarding the type of monitoring of the children, their perception oscillated between two extremes: the non-monitoring and the excessive control. On this last aspect there is no consensus among the researchers, as some studies on internet addiction have shown. For example, Chang et al. (2015) and Li et al., (2013) showed that restrictive parental monitoring reduced children's Internet addiction, while Terres-Trindade and Mosmann (2015) concluded that excessive parental control fostered such an addiction. In addition, Brazilian researches has shown that parents have little or no knowledge of what their children do when they are connected (Barbosa, 2015; Spizzirri, et al. 2012), confirming, therefore, the perception of some of the participants that non-monitoring is perhaps a predictor of sexting.

Thus, one can think that through social learning (Bandura, 1977) indeed, parents' behavior on the Internet can be stimulating, if parents also exchange sexual content, as well as prevention of sexting in their children. By observing what parents share on the internet, not only sexual content, but naturalizing the exposure of their own lives, it is possible that the children assimilate some behaviors as allowed and accepted or forbidden.

Given all this, one can reflect on the characteristics of the existing borders (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007) between the parent-child

subsystems. It appears that they lie between two extremes in the sample investigated: rigid or diffuse. The existence of these two types of parent-child boundaries explains why parents oscillate between two extremes: excessive monitoring and non-monitoring. Diffuse boundaries determine that the space of one merges with that of the other and that the limits of interaction are not well defined. This leads to entanglement in relationships, causing parents to invade the children's space and thereby exaggeratedly control their lives, including in the virtual environment. Rigid boundaries, on the other hand, establish a separation between subsystems, where there are insurmountable barriers and there is no room for interactions and exchanges. From this type of relationship it is understood that non-monitoring the children makes them feel neglected and that the parents are disinterested and distant. It is therefore important to think of more balanced strategies of interaction, which may be situated between the two poles described by the parents, but without being extreme, especially in the development of healthier borders such as sharp ones, where there are exchanges between members of the system, but also space for individuality (Vasconcellos, 2013).

Also in relation to monitoring, for participants of B Group, the absence of the parents when they go to work leaves the children "too free" (Mother B7). For them, this lack of parenting would make way for adolescents to engage in sexting. However, there may be factors that go beyond the mere physical distancing of parents, as described by Spizzirri et al. (2012), adolescents are accustomed to using the internet alone, at home and without parental monitoring, whether or not they are present at home. Perhaps the main question is not the physical distance, but the emotional distance of the children (Loaiza et al. 2017; Reis, et al. 2013), which can make them seek to meet this distance with other people, as with their peers (Walrave et al., 2014), including through sexting, which would explain, also, the search for the popularity reported in the groups.

Among the consequences that the involvement in sexting brings to adolescents, the parents of both groups reported as harmful, in addition to public exposure, the appearance of internalizing symptoms, such as sadness, shame, isolation and depression. Parents may refer to these consequences not as a result of sexting, but rather of public exposure if the images are shared. These perceptions of the participants do not find support in the literature, since the involvement in sexting appears associated (Assunção & Matos, 2014; Temple, et al. 2014), but not as a predictor of such symptoms.

As negative consequences for the adolescent's family, the parents of Group A cited the appearance of guilt, anger, sadness and shame of the judgment by friends and relatives. Again, these group perceptions are not supported in the literature, except for the involvement in legal issues, as Mother A2 said: "*I had to report to the police station*". According to Wolak et al. (2012), since adolescents are underage, family involvement in legal issues is inevitable. On the other hand, in Group B the participants cited only shame as a consequence for the family. This seems to confirm, in fact, the effect of the reverberation of the experience report of Mother A2 in the Group A, which did not occur in Group B. These parental perceptions once again lead to think that their greatest concern is the public exposure not only of the adolescent, but of the whole family, and not so much the practice of sexting itself, which directly impacts on the lack of development of strategies to deal with sexting.

Hence, it is understandable that, regarding the ways of dealing with adolescents who engage in sexting, the parents described not knowing how to proceed. This disorientation can also be perceived by the oscillations of opinion among participants at various times. However, all participants agreed that dialogue and emotional support would be essential, which seems to be common-sense. These manners are probably widespread as the general way through which families should deal with difficult situations with adolescents, such as depressive symptoms (Moscoso-

Alvarez et al., 2016), emotional competences (Márquez-Cervantes & Gaeta-González, 2017), that apply also for sexting.

All this also reflects the parents' perception about the ways of prevention. In this regard, participants in both groups ended up repeating the same as they said about the factors they thought were predictors of sexting: parental behavior on the internet, as well as monitoring of children's virtual lives, rule-establishment, and imposed authority by parents. One exception appeared in Group B, which considered important to expand the repertoire of activities to which children can engage beyond the internet to "occupy the mind" (Mother B7). Among these activities, participation in social projects, religious or cultural groups was mentioned as preventive to the involvement in sexting. Something similar was found by Ruvalcaba, Gallegos, Borges and Gonzalez (2017) who described that belonging to such groups works as a reinforcer of emotional intelligence and resilience for adolescents, which could reduce the involvement in sexting.

Despite this, it should be noted that these activities proposed by parents as preventive are directed at the children and not at the family level. They seem to further strengthen the permanence of rigid boundaries (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007) between subsystems, meaning that each has its own time and space to circulate, which may indicate to adolescents that they should look elsewhere to meet their demands, as the curiosity cited by the parents. However, the literature indicates that interactions in the family environment help the development of adolescents' evolutive capacities, such as resilience to dealing with stress situations (Dias & Cadime, 2017), such as sexting. Thus, perhaps the ideal would be to think of strategies that involve the entire family system, to develop creative forms of interaction and communication between subsystems (Nichols & Schwartz, 2007).

Final Considerations

Even though the results of this study show that sexting among adolescents is a phenomenon known to the participants, it is important to note that the parents perceived the involvement of their children as negative. Although most see the sexting practiced by adolescents as normal, due to the risk of the of public exposure and its consequences it is not a desired behavior by them. However, it was clear that it is not their children's involvement in sexting that brings greater concern to the parents, but the public exposure of the adolescent in the event of unauthorized sharing of sexting. These findings serve to guide parents, pedagogues and therapists, family specialists, so they can better understand the parents' thoughts and attitudes concerning the phenomenon, but also so they can propose interventions aimed at improving communication between family subsystems as well as the delimitation of clear boundaries between them.

In addition, parents' good attendance to the study reveals their desire for a space to talk and receive guidance about sexting. Perhaps the lack of strategies and the disorientation of parents to deal with the phenomenon can be used as an attraction to form intervention groups in schools, such as calling parents to work on preventive strategies in psychoeducation groups.

Finally, it should be noted that the present study was conducted only with parents, leaving out those who are the main group involved with sexting: adolescents. Therefore, in order to understand the phenomenon more broadly and to be able to think of ways of orienting parents and children, it is important to conduct research with adolescents too. Thus, it is suggested the conduction of both qualitative studies, in order to understand what adolescents think about sexting and how they deal with it, as well as quantitative ones, in order to know prevalences and associations with other constructs.

Authors' participation:

a) Conception and design of the work; b) Data acquisition; c) Analysis and interpretation of data; d) Writing of the manuscript; e) Critical review of the manuscript.

A.T.C. has contributed in a,b,c,d; D.F. in a,c, e; C.P.M. in a,c,e.

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