



## A TEST OF THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PERSONALITY PREDICTORS ON THE SEXTING ATTITUDE AND VICTIMIZATION OF ADOLESCENTS

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### Abstract:

Technology is positively aiding the world in its fast-paced thriving existence, but there is a negative side concerning technology, wherein malicious individuals are using it to draw emotions from others, including adolescents. The study intended to determine the mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. Adapted questionnaires were disseminated among the 500 adolescent respondents with consent from their respective parents. Data gathered was treated with statistical tools such as Mean, Pearson product-moment, Medgraph using the Sobel z-test, Regression, and Mediation Test Technique. The result of the study disclosed the following: The level of sexting attitude among adolescents is moderate; the level of victimization is low; while the level of personality predictors is high. There is also a significant relationship between the sexting attitude and personality predictors; there is no significant relationship between personality predictors and victimization; while there is a significant relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. Results revealed no mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. This implies that personality predictors have nothing to do with victimization of adolescents, but sexting attitude does, which means the latter must be modified from among adolescents to prevent harm among the children.

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## 1. Introduction

Young people today often interact with cellphones, social media, and internet platforms at a far earlier age than previous generations, who were never exposed to the newest technology. Modern information and communication technologies have become tools of harassment due to the emerging trend of sexting, which has serious consequences for its victims (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Unwanted sexual text messages, nude images, and/or sexual content (pictures, movies) are sent to sexting victims via their phones, computers, or the internet (Longobardi *et al.*, 2021). The effects are profound, particularly for female adolescent victims who were subjected to verbal abuse and often suffered from a loss of self-esteem. Early sexuality exposure often piques curiosity, and many people are exposed to premarital sex at an early age, which can result in a teen pregnancy.

Online sexual victimization is the most common kind of sexting victimization. The majority of victimization is associated with both offline and online (computer-based) forms, such as coercion to sext strangers and dating violence (Longobardi *et al.*, 2021). These coercive sexting situations are traumatizing for those who encounter them, and they can expose victims to other forms of exploitation, including sextortion—the coercive use of sexual evidence, such as sexual images or videos, against the victim, frequently for financial gain—and nonconsensual pornography, which is the use of adult sexual content without consent (York *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, according to characteristic theories of personality, the sexter's behavior reveals his personality issues, especially with regard to self-esteem. Prior studies revealed a relationship between personality and dangerous sexting activity in teenagers, as well as between victimization and texting attitude (Longobardi *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, there was a relationship between victimization and personality variables. The relationship between adolescent sexting and online victimization is significantly influenced by the availability and use of technology, which fuels their desire to do so and appears to increase with rapidly advancing technology. Sexting social networks provide chances for social connection, but they also carry certain concerns, such as the possibility of online sexual victimization (Gasso *et al.*, 2020).

Study is sparse tackling the topic attest of the mediating effect of personality predictors towards the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents; it is not even conducted in the context of diverse culture such as Mindanao, particularly among adolescents in Region 12, but such cases are prevalent as heard by the researcher among the students; the study's uniqueness was evident because not only the direct relationship between the two variables involved was determined but the indirect relationship as well with sexting passing through the personality predictors from the sender to the recipient of the said message. Results would contribute relevant data

globally relative to the mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents.

Even though victimization and sexting have been studied in other cultures and nations, recent studies on sexting have shown a connection between this new technology-mediated behavior and correlates of psychopathology, though current findings are conflicting, and studies have typically relied on crude and clinically validated mental health measures (Setty, 2021). Online sexual victimization, passive sexting, and active sexting were all linked to worse mental health, according to research by Gasso *et al.* (2020).

On the other hand, personality is seen as a system of unique traits and developmental processes that affect each person's psychological functioning. Similar to this, personality is made up of traits and fixed characteristics and tendencies that seem to be the primary factor influencing an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Kelland, 2020). Though they have differing opinions, theories of personality agree that personality encompasses social, emotional, and cognitive aspects. It acts as a mediator between the effects of environmental stresses on behavior and the onset and progression of sickness (Lee *et al.*, 2020).

A person's personality is the foundation of a persistent way of feeling, thinking, and acting, and it is a reasonably stable predictor of behavior. On the other hand, personality may be described as a tendency to respond to one's surroundings in a distinctive way, preferably in a positive way (Cuadrado *et al.*, 2020). The traits of an individual that explain recurring emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns are referred to as their personality. Numerous studies have linked the Big Five personality traits—extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to new experiences, and conscientiousness—to a range of work-related attitudes and behaviors (Westphal *et al.*, 2020).

Studies emphasized that sexting is seen as a common practice among teenagers, and there have been claims that it can foster closeness, passion, and self-expression in adolescent relationships, but most of them are apprehensive and uncomfortable engaging in sexting because of possible consequences (Van Ouytsel *et al.*, 2020). Although the phenomenon is disputed, sexting—especially coerced sexting—has been depicted in the literature as a risky behavior that might lead to cyberbullying; however, cases of sexting are not prevalent but isolated cases only (Longobardi *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, because sexting has been linked to negative and unfavorable effects, especially for younger populations, it has garnered increased attention from the media and academic community in recent years. Sexting may take many different forms, such as emotions of pressure and compulsion, sex exploration, or the act of having a sex message published with others without the person's prior agreement. Several studies have established that sexting can result in online victimization. The victim can ascertain the real reason for the contact when sexting takes the form of the sender's personality. These findings served as warning indicators for parents of teens who decide to observe their children closely while maintaining a friendly demeanour (Setty, 2021).

Even though drug use, homelessness, and suicide are extreme and less frequent outcomes linked to sexting, the evidence of victimization evidence requires an understanding of what personal characteristics might put a person at greater risk for the negative rather than positive consequences of sexting. These risk factors might include a person's experience with sexting, sensitivity to rejection, and attachment security (Stevens *et al.*, 2021). Through individual experiences of loneliness, exclusion, abandonment, or anxiety about partner availability, one or both of these traits have been shown to enhance susceptibility to and expectancies of interpersonal victimization. Teenagers' initial method of sending sexual messages was via their phones, especially a few years ago when the Internet was still relatively new (Gámez-Guadix *et al.*, 2020).

New forms of communication between people have been made possible by advancements in cyber technology. Regardless of their physical distance from one another, users may now immediately communicate images, movies, and other information back and forth thanks to the development of smart cell phones, many of which have built-in cameras (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Sexting is made feasible by this technology, which allows users to electronically transmit others nude or semi-nude photos to others—often of themselves—through email and text messages. Generally speaking, theoretically based empirical evaluations of the frequency of sexting and the possible repercussions for the victim (Finkelhor *et al.*, 2021).

As previously mentioned, sexting entails the production and distribution of sexual content, such as photographs or sexual information, which may be used to damage the victim or blackmail them. Additionally, people could be more likely to provide private and sensitive information online than in person. Sexting may therefore be an online practice that makes participants more vulnerable to being victimized online by possible offenders. Contact between the victim and the offender rises after the sextings are exchanged, and this can lead to more unpleasant interactions between them, such as pursuing an offline encounter or more sexual content (Afrouz, 2023). Sexters run the danger of being rejected because of their sexual orientation, being outed, being bullied, being humiliated, and experiencing higher rates of homelessness or drug use. These voices are still mostly absent from studies on online victimization, despite the special and intricate relationship between sexting and identity (Buelga *et al.*, 2022).

Teenagers' initial method of sending sexual messages was via their phones, which they enjoyed so much because they could send messages without them being recognized, especially a few years ago when the Internet was still relatively new. With the advent of text messaging, commonly referred to as short message service (SMS), the cellular industry initially gained popularity in Europe and Asia before spreading to the US (Gasso *et al.*, 2020). Teens and young women began using short message services as their primary means of contact, and many of them fell prey to unwanted sexual messages. It's ironic that women are more likely than men to utilize SMS to keep intimate relationships going. Men tend to be shorter and more direct when texting, but they are more explicit when sending sexual messages. Women, on the other hand, tend to use expressive language and write longer portions (Dennehy *et al.* 2020).

Furthermore, a number of traits are thought to be connected to phone sexual victimization because they either raise an individual's exposure to potential offenders through environmental exposures or are associated with the types of activities that people partake in, which may also increase their interaction with potential victims. Furthermore, the texting features that permit the transmission of sexual texts also enable the transmission of sexual communications to unknown or known third parties without the victim's agreement (Wilson *et al.*, 2023). As a result, the chance of victimization increases when people participate in phone sexual messages since they might be committed not only by the person who gets them first but also by other people who receive them later. Once sent, content communicated over SMS can be seen by anybody at any time, increasing the risk of victimization and making it more difficult to avoid it (Smith & Dhillon, 2022).

Online sexual victimization is the most common kind of sexting victimization. An exclusive and potentially harmful dynamic has been developed in social connections as a result of the shift from in-person to online communication, as well as from SMS or phone messaging. While face-to-face communication refers to social contact without the use of technology, online communication refers to communication conducted over the internet (Kaur *et al.*, 2021). The majority of victimization is associated with both offline and online (computer-based) forms, such as coercion to sext strangers and dating violence. In addition to being traumatizing for those who experience them, coercive sexting can expose victims to other forms of exploitation, including sextortion—the coercive use of sexual evidence, such as sexual images or videos, against the victim—and nonconsensual pornography—the use of adult sexual content without consent (Kalaitzaki, 2020).

It is evident that peer or partner pressure or coercion was frequently cited as a driving force behind online victimization and sexting, which at first seemed innocent enough. Threat-containing sexting is nonetheless linked to coercive trauma, particularly when one reflects on the incidents (Kelland, 2020). Therefore, when someone receives threats and insults, even infrequent instances of online abuse should be carefully handled. Moreover, unapproved sext sharing—which is frequently seen as a peer-encouraged way to gain popularity among young men—can result in online persecution (Fissel, 2021).

### 1.1 Study Objectives

The main objective of this study was to test the mediating effect of personality predictors on the sexting attitude and victimization of adolescents. More specifically, this sought answers from the following queries concerning the level of personality predictors among adolescents; about the level of sexting attitude among adolescents in terms of fun/carefree, in terms of perceived risk, relational expectations; as well as concerning the level of victimization among adolescents in terms of phone sexual victimization and online sexual victimization. Answers were sought also about the significance of the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization, sexting attitude and personality

predictors, and personality predictors and victimization; and concerning the significance of the mediation of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. Lastly, to propose an enhancement program based on the findings of the study. The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance, stated as that there is no significant relationship between: sexting attitude and victimization, sexting attitude and personality predictors, and personality predictors and victimization; also, there is no significant mediation of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents.

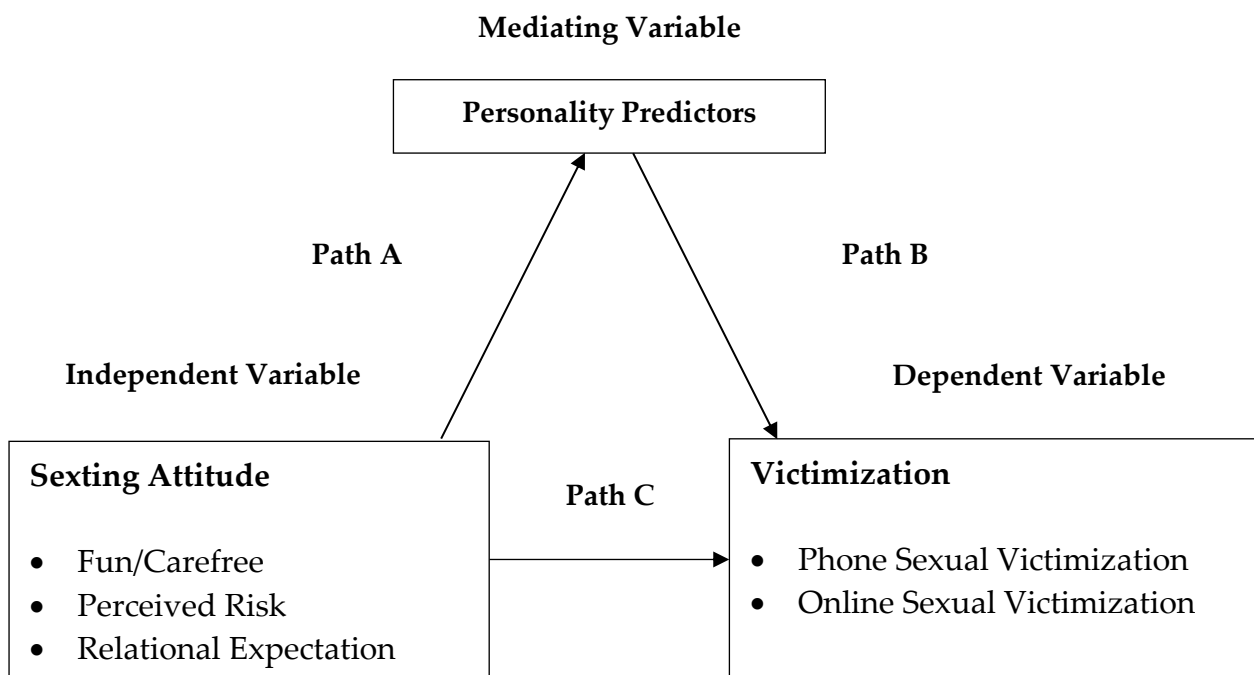
## **1.2 Framework of the Study**

This study is anchored on Allport's (1937), Cattell's (1950), and Eysenck's (1953) Trait Theories of Personality. According to this view, people's conduct is partially determined by their personality features. By assuming that everyone possesses specific characteristics, or distinctive ways of acting, they determine that personality can be comprehended. These characteristics are well-known facets of personality that are displayed in several significant social and private settings. To put it another way, people have traits that influence their conduct in part. These traits include patterns of behavior or attitude that are often present in any circumstance. As a result, the widespread use of technology to transmit messages has become a means of expressing one's thoughts and feelings.

The supporting Theory of Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen (1991) offers an appropriate framework for understanding and predicting individuals' behavior both offline and online. According to this theory, an individual's behavior is directly determined by his/her intention to perform that behavior. Intentions indicate how much effort an individual is planning to exert in order to perform a specific behavior. With the exception of behaviors that are largely beyond our voluntary control, intention is usually identified as the strongest predictor for actual or self-reported behavioral performance. The third theory is the General Theory of Crime, developed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), pertaining to the victims of sexting. Whenever there's a victim who was violated by somebody illegally, there is a crime and a perpetrator. Thus, factors influencing sexting are explored by utilizing the general theory of crime. Theoretically, individuals with low self-control should be more likely to participate in sexting given the risk involved and the impulsive nature of the act.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework showing the relationships among the variables. The mediating variable is personality predictors (Amir *et al.*, 2014). The mentioned variable was gauged through the indicators as follows: Extraversion, which is capturing the quantity and intensity of interpersonal interactions; agreeableness, refers to capturing concern for cooperation and social harmony; conscientiousness, concerns about capturing organization and goal directed behavior; neuroticism, which is capturing susceptibility to emotional instability; and, openness to experience, which refers to capturing the tendency to seek out new and exciting experiences. The independent variable is the sexting attitude emphasizing the use of digital communication to transmit

sexually suggestive content between individuals (Ingram *et al.*, 2019). The said variable was measured through the indicators as follows: Fun/carefree, which refers to people who sexted reported their behavior as fun and carefree without limitations of their feelings; perceived risk, which is sexting associated with engaging in risky sexual behaviors such as unprotected sex; and, relational expectations, which refers to sending sexually suggestive texts or pictures within committed adult romantic relationships. The dependent variable of the study is victimization among adolescents (Gámez Guadix *et al.*, 2015), which was gauged through the following indicators: phone sexual victimization, which refers sexual messaging among the adolescents via SMS (Short messaging service); and, online sexual victimization, which concern about sending and receiving message contents such as nude images, and/or sexual content (photos, videos) via the internet, mobile phones, or any electronic devices. Direct correlation was determined in the study between the independent and dependent variables, while an indirect relationship was determined, wherein the dependent variable passed through the mediating variable and was redirected to the independent variable.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

### 3. Methods

This section depicts the various methods used in the conduct of the study, including research respondents, materials and instruments, and design and procedure.

### 3.1 Study Participants

Adolescent students from selected schools within region 12 were taken as respondents of the study, wherein a total of 500 adolescents were recruited as respondents for this study, considering the fact that it would be impossible to compute the sampling population eliminating the use of Raosoft and Slovin's formula. The study employed a purposive sampling technique in quantitative research (Coyne, 1997) from the identified adolescents in different schools in Region 12 or SOCKSARGEN. This technique is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include their views, attitudes, behavior and knowledge of the research issue or capacity and willingness to participate in the research.

In terms of inclusions, included were the Grade 9 to first year college students studying among the selected schools within the five key areas in region 12, as mentioned above; while in terms of exclusion, excluded were the minors below the Grade 9 level and second year college students. In terms of withdrawal, respondents who wanted to withdraw before the survey began, or those who were already answering the questionnaires, even those who had answered but decided to withdraw, were automatically withdrawn from the study because they had the prerogative to do so as respondents of the study.

### 3.2 Materials and Instrument

The study made use of survey questionnaires from compiled published data gathering instruments of previous research adapted and modified in relation to the objectives of the present investigation namely, personality predictors from Amir *et al.* (2014) (Cronbach Alpha = .684), sexting attitude from Ingram *et al.* (2019) (Cronbach Alpha = .840), and victimization among adolescents from Gámez-Guadix *et al.* (2015) (Cronbach Alpha = .780). To ensure accuracy of measurements, the questionnaire was subjected to content validity and reliability for depth analysis. The survey questionnaire was first validated by external validators who are experts in the field of social research and statistics. A revision of the instrument was recommended in some contents and statements. Prior to conducting the actual survey, the researcher conducted a preliminary survey or pilot testing with a total of 40 respondents for reliability and testing. The preliminary data gathered were subjected to an internal consistency type of validity test using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency or reliability of a data set; this is one of the considerations to judge the suitability of a data set for statistical analysis. The overall Cronbach Alpha computation yielded .895, wherein computation showed Cronbach Alphas of .734 up to .923, indicating that the questionnaire is valid. For reliability results, it was revealed that the average of Cronbach's alpha was not less than .700; this implies that the survey instrument was reliable.

The first part of the questionnaire, which is a personality predictor modified by Amir *et al.* (2014) consisted of 25 items measuring the big five factors or dimensions



of personality, namely, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. The second part of the questionnaire is the sexting attitude designed by Ingram *et al.* (2019) and consisted of the original 17 items designed to assess the responses of participants to statements focused on their attitudes towards sexting. The third part of the questionnaire was structured to cover the measurement of victimization designed to gauge victimization of adolescents, adapted from Gámez-Guadix *et al.* (2015).

A 5-level response Scale from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High) is being used in this study. To interpret the responses on personality predictors, the mean range levels were measured as follows: The range of means from 4.20-5.00 were classified as very high level, wherein the statements stipulated in the questionnaire were always manifested; mean scores from 3.40-4.19 were labeled as high level, which means the statements were often manifested; The mean scores 2.60-3.39 were described as moderate level indicating that the statements stipulated in the questionnaire were sometimes manifested; the range of means from 1.80-2.59 were declared low level, which means the statements were seldom manifested; lastly, the mean score from 1.00-1.79 were labeled very low indicating that the statements stipulated in the questionnaire were never manifested.

### 3.3 Design and Statistical Tools

The study employed quantitative non-experimental research utilizing a descriptive-correlation research design that focused on mediation models. The correlational design is used to identify the strength and nature of association between two or more variables it was applied and dealt with the relationship that correlating variables could vary directly with one another and vary inversely as one decreases and the other increases and vary independently with each other (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, a mediation model seeks to identify and explain the mechanism or process that underlies an observed relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable via the inclusion of a third hypothetical variable, known as a mediator variable (MacKinnon, 2008). Thus, mediation analyses are employed to understand a known relationship by exploring the underlying mechanism or process by which one variable influences another variable through a mediator variable (Cohen *et al.*, 2003). The research design mentioned was apt in determining a test of the mediating effect of personality predictors on the sexting attitude and victimization of adolescents.

For a compendious interpretation and analysis of the data to answer the objective of the study, the following statistical tools were utilized. *Mean* was used to measure the levels of personality predictors, sexting attitude, and online victimization among adolescents. *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation* was utilized to determine the relationships between sexting attitude and victimization; also, between sexting attitude and personality predictors; and lastly, between personality predictors and victimization. *Medgraph using Sobel z-test* was employed to test the mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and online victimization among adolescents. *Regression* was utilized as input to the mediation

test, whether personality predictors sexting attitude influences and sexting attitude influences victimization of adolescents.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section exhibited the results of the study as well as the discussion of the tabulated data treated statistically.

##### 4.1 Sexting Attitude among Adolescents

Presented in Table 1 is the level of sexting attitude among adolescents, with an overall mean score of 3.05, described as a moderate level, having a standard deviation of 0.635.

The indicator perceived risk garnered a top mean score of 3.81, labeled as high level, with a standard deviation of 0.797, showing clustered responses. The respondents highly believed that sexting might bring regret to them in the future, or worse, cause problems, particularly sending their compromised pictures, such as sexually suggestive photos or videos, which may land them in a difficult situation. This means that the perceived risk of adolescents from sexting is foreseen as highly putting them in an adverse situation. The result coincides with the statement of Van Ouytsel *et al.* (2020), who elucidated that there are studies emphasizing that sexting is seen as a common practice among teenagers, and there have been claims that it can foster closeness, passion, and self-expression in adolescent relationships, but most of them are apprehensive and uncomfortable engaging in sexting, because of possible consequences.

Rational expectation is the indicator with the least mean score of 2.59, declared as low level with a standard deviation of 1.064, showing spread out answers from the mean. This means that .999 and below indicate clustered answers from the respondents, while 1 and above mean spread out answers, indicating answers deviated far from the acquired mean. The respondents are least convinced that sharing the sexting messages they receive with their friends is ok, particularly sending sexually racy photos or videos. They are also least convinced that sending sexting messages keeps their partners happy or interested in them, and would develop an intimate relationship. This means that the relational expectation of the adolescents from sexting is seldom manifested or at a low level. The result supports the statement of Fissel (2021), stressing that it is evident that peer or partner pressure or coercion was frequently cited as a driving force behind online victimization and sexting, which at first seemed innocent enough.

**Table 1:** Sexting Attitude among Adolescents

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Fun/Carefree	0.807	2.74	Moderate
Perceived Risk	0.797	3.81	High
Relational Expectation	1.064	2.59	Low
Overall	0.635	3.05	Moderate

## 4.2 Victimization among Adolescents

Table 2 disclosed the level of victimization among adolescents with an overall mean score of 2.46 classified as low with a standard deviation of 0.839, indicating clustered answers. This means that victimization of texting among adolescents is at a low level.

The indicator with the highest mean score is phone sexual victimization, garnering a mean score of 2.59, labeled as low level, with a standard deviation of 1.298, indicating spread out answers from the means exceeding 1, which means answers deviated far from the acquired mean.

**Table 2:** Victimization among Adolescents

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Phone Sexual Victimization	2.59	1.298	Low
Online Sexual Victimization	2.32	1.218	Low
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>0.839</b>	<b>Low</b>

The victims seldom claimed that they had experienced talking through a phone call to someone who uses obscene language, seldom received rude or mean things in messages, seldom sexually harassed through phone calls for no apparent reason, and seldom sexually threatened through messages in their inbox. These incidents seldom happened, as claimed by the adolescents the reason was that it was rated low level. The result is consistent with the statement of [York et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasized that coercive sexting situations are traumatizing for those who encounter them, and they can expose victims to other forms of exploitation, although few cases surfaced because of possible humiliation for the victims.

The indicator of online sexual victimization garnered the least, garnering only 2.32, described as low level, with the standard deviation of 1.218 showing spread out answers exceeded the threshold 1. The adolescents seldom claimed that they had received invitation to engage in unwanted cybersex, and seldom experienced people asking them to send sexy pictures/photographs online. seldom received unwanted sexual images in messenger or email, and seldom received negative things about the way they look/act/or dress online. This means that online sexual victimization is seldom experienced by adolescents, hence labeled as low-level. The result coincides with the claim of [Longobardi et al. \(2021\)](#), who pointed out that although the phenomenon is disputed, online sex messaging has been depicted in the literature as a risky behavior that might lead to cyberbullying and victimization, but cases are seldom exposed to the public.

## 4.3 Personality Predictors

Table 3 shows the level of personality predictors with an overall mean score of 3.97, labelled as high, with a standard deviation of 0.647, showing clustered answers to the mean. This shows the high level of personality predictors of adolescence.

The indicator agreeableness obtains the top mean score of 4.33, described as very high, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.734, indicating clustered answers. The respondents claimed they see themselves as individuals helpful to others, forgiving,

generally trusting, considerate and kind, and who easily cooperate with others. This means that adolescents displayed good behavior when interacting with others manifesting a very high level of agreeableness. This means that the adolescents' trusting nature is very evident. The result supports the statement of Cuadrado *et al.* (2020), who elucidated that personality may be described as a tendency to respond to one's surroundings in a distinctive, preferably positive way.

The indicator extraversion got the lowest mean score of 3.75, labeled as a high level, with the standard deviation of 0.920 showing clustered answers. The adolescents as respondents of the study highly claimed they are talkative, full of energy, enthusiastic, possess an assertive personality, and sociable. This means that the adolescents are extraverts and easily get acquainted with the people they meet. The finding is in accordance with the statement of Kelland (2020), who emphasized that personality is seen as a system of unique traits and developmental processes that affect each person's psychological functioning, wherein extroverts are one of them who thrive where there are many people and desire outgoing activities.

**Table 3: Personality Predictors**

Items	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
Extraversion	3.75	0.920	High
Agreeableness	4.33	0.734	Very High
Conscientiousness	3.94	0.882	High
Neuroticism	3.77	1.106	High
Openness to Experience	3.82	1.018	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>0.647</b>	<b>High</b>

#### **4.4 Relationship between the Sexting Attitudes among Adolescents and Personality Predictors**

Table 4 displays the analysis of the significance of the relationship between the sexting attitude and personality predictors. The first indicator of sexting attitude, namely fun/carefree, is correlated to personality predictors, yielding an r-value of -.203 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the level of significance of 0.05, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Similarly, the second indicator of sexting attitude showed correlation with personality predictors, wherein the computed r - value is .347 and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating the rejection of the null hypothesis. The third indicator of sexting attitude is not correlated with personality predictors, showing an r - value of .081 and a p-value of 0.107, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, disclosing the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

**Table 4:** Relationship between the Sexting Attitude and Personality Predictors

Sexting Attitude	Personality Predictors		Decision on Ho
	r-value	p-value	
Fun/Carefree	-.203*	0.000	Reject
Perceived Risk	.347*	0.000	Reject
Relational Expectation	.081	0.100	Accept
<b>Overall</b>	<b>.105*</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>Reject</b>

\*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

The overall computation between texting attitude and personality predictors yielded an r - value of .105 and a p-value of 0.036, which is less than the 0.05 level.

of significance indicating a significant relationship, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

This means that there is a significant relationship between sexting attitude among adolescents and personality predictors. The result is consistent with the findings of Longobardi *et al.* (2021), who declared that there is a relationship between personality and dangerous sexting activity in teenagers.

#### 4.5 Relationship between the Personality Predictors and Victimization among Adolescents

Table 5 shows the analysis of the significant relationship between personality predictors and victimization among adolescents, wherein the computed r-value yielded --0.025 while the p-value of 0.614 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating no significant relationship resulting in the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant relationship between personality predictors and victimization among adolescents. As revealed by Gasso *et al.* (2020), there was a relationship between victimization and personality variables, indicating a deep desire for belongingness on the part of the victim. Introverts usually fall victim to intimate words through text messages and online messages, but one factor is lacking: the sincerity of the person sending the message.

**Table 5:** Relationship between the Personality Predictors and Victimization among Adolescents

Personality Predictors	Victimization of Adolescents		Decision on Ho
	r- value	p - value	
<b>Overall</b>	-.025	0.614	<b>Accept</b>

\*Significant at 0.05 significance level. \*

#### 4.6 Relationship between Sexting Attitude and Victimization among Adolescents

Table 6 shows the significance of the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. Fun/Carefree as the first indicator of the independent variable sexting attitude disclosed no significant relationship with victimization of adolescents as evidenced by the r-value of 0.091 and a p-value of 0.068, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, thereby accepting the null hypothesis. However, the second indicator, namely perceived risk, showed correlation with the variable victimization of adolescents as evidenced by an r-value of .121 with the p-value of 0.016,

which is less than 0.05 level of significance, showing a significant relationship and the rejection of the null hypothesis. Similarly, the third indicator, relational expectation, manifested correlation with the variable victimization of adolescents, yielding an r-value of 0.566 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The overall computation yielded an r-value of 0.405 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, manifesting a significant relationship and the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a relationship between sexting attitude and victimization of adolescents among adolescents. The finding coincides with the statement of Gasso *et al.*, 2020), who emphasized that the relationship between adolescent sexting and online victimization is significantly influenced by the availability and use of technology, which fuels their desire to do so and appears to increase with rapidly advancing technology.

**Table 6:** Relationship between Sexting Attitude and Victimization among Adolescents

Sexting Attitude	Victimization of Adolescents		Decision on Ho
	r - value	p - value	
Fun/Carefree	.091	0.068	Accept
Perceived Risk	.121*	0.016	Reject
Relational Expectation	.566*	0.000	Reject
<b>Overall</b>	<b>.405*</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Reject</b>

\*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

#### 4.7 Influence of Sexting Attitude among Adolescents towards Personality Predictors

Table 7 displayed the results of regression analysis, which indicates a linear correlation between the independent variables and the mediating variable. Manifested is the linear correlation between the first indicator of the independent variable, namely fun/carefree and the mediating variable, namely personality predictors ( $t = -5.933$ ) with P-value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance 0.05. Shown also is the linear correlation between the second indicator of the independent variable, namely Perceived Risk and personality predictors ( $t = 7.189$ ) with P-value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance 0.05. Manifested as well is the linear correlation between the third indicator of the independent variable, namely relational expectation, and personality predictors ( $t = 3.509$ ) with P-value = 0.001, which is less than the level of significance 0.05.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) suggests that 19.3% of the variance is due to the linear combination influenced by the three indicators of the independent variable Fun/Carefree, Perceived Risk and Relational Expectation. This means that the personality predictors are good by 19.3%. Thus, it can be said that Fun/Carefree, Perceived Risk and Relational Expectation contribute significantly to the personality predictors among adolescents. However, Perceived Risk is a Stronger Predictor than Fun/Carefree and Relational Expectation, since its Beta coefficient has a greater value (0.329, -0.312, and 0.187), respectively. These results confirm that indicators of sexting attitude, namely fun/carefree, perceived risk and relational expectation, positively influence the personality predictors of adolescents.

**Table 7:** Influence of Sexting Attitude among Adolescents towards Personality Predictors

Personality Predictors				
Sexting Attitude	$\beta$ (Standardized Coefficients)	B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	T	Sig.
Constant	3.295	.170	19.337	.000
Fun/Carefree	-.312	-.250	-5.933	.000
Perceived Risk	.329	.267	7.189	.000
Relational Expectation	.187	.113	3.509	.001
R	.439			
R <sup>2</sup>	.193			
F	31.471			
p	.000			

#### 4.8 Influence of Sexting Attitude towards Victimization among Adolescents

Table 8 shows the results of regression analysis, indicating a linear correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Manifested is the linear correlation between the first indicator of the independent variable, namely fun/carefree and the dependent variable, namely victimization of adolescents ( $t = -5.743$ ), with  $p$ -value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance 0.05. Shown also is the lack of correlation between the second indicator of the independent variable, namely Perceived Risk and victimization of adolescents ( $t = 0.470$ ), with  $P$ -value = 0.639, which is greater than the level of significance 0.05. Manifested as well is the linear correlation between the third indicator of the independent variable, namely relational expectation, and victimization of adolescents ( $t = 14.88$ ) with  $P$ -value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance 0.05.

**Table 8:** Influence of Sexting Attitude towards Victimization

Victimization of Adolescents				
Sexting Attitude	$\beta$ (Standardized Coefficients)	B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	T	Sig.
Constant	1.699	.195	8.716	.000
Fun/Carefree	-.266	-.277	-5.743	.000
Perceived Risk	.019	.020	.470	.639
Relational Expectation	.698	.551	14.88	.000
R	.611			
R <sup>2</sup>	.373			
F	78.529			
p	.000			

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) suggests that 37.3% of the variance is due to the linear combination influenced by the three indicators of the independent variable Fun/Carefree, Perceived Risk and Relational Expectation. This means that the victimization of adolescents is positive by 37.3%. Thus, it can be said that Fun/Carefree and Relational Expectation contribute significantly to the victimization among

adolescents. However, Relational Expectation is a stronger predictor than Fun/Carefree, since its Beta coefficient has a greater value (0.698 and -0.266) respectively. These results confirm that indicators of Sexting Attitude, namely Fun/Carefree and Relational Expectation, positively influence the victimization of adolescents.

#### 4.9 Mediation Test of Personality Predictors between Sexting Attitude and Victimization among Adolescents using Path Analysis

Shown in Table 9 was the regression analysis on the mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. The data in this table were used as input to the medgraph. There were three steps to be met for a third variable to act as a mediator. In Table 9, these were categorized as Steps 1 to 3. In Step 1 (Path c), sexting attitude as the independent variable (IV) significantly predicts victimization of adolescents, the dependent variable (DV) (p-value=0.000<0.05). In step 2 (Path a), sexting attitude (IV) failed to significantly predict personality predictors (MV) (p-value=0.035<0.05). In step 3 (Path b), Personality predictors (MV) also failed to significantly predict victimization of adolescents (DV, p-value = 0.135<0.05). The above-mentioned steps, only path c was significant. The Sobel z-value yielded a p-value less than 0.01; hence, no significant partial mediation occurred.

**Table 9:** Mediating Test of Personality Predictors between  
Sexting Attitude and Victimization among Adolescents

Path	Estimates		SE	C.R.	P
	Unstandardized	Standardized			
SA → PP	.107	.105	.051	2.107	.035
PP → VA	-.089	-.069	.060	-1.493	.135
SA → VA	.545	.412	.061	8.983	.000

Table 10 showed that the association between sexting attitude (IV) and victimization of adolescents (DV) has not been significantly reduced by the inclusion of the mediating variable, which is personality predictors. It could be seen in Table 10 graph that .5359 was not reduced but increased to .5454 in the subsequent regression. The 95% confidence interval conclusively revealed that no significant mediation had occurred. In this particular case, the effect of the IV (sexting attitude) on DV (victimization of adolescents) was not significantly lessened after controlling for MV (personality predictors). Therefore, no mediation took place since the effect was not significant. The effect size measured how much of the effect of sexting attitude (IV) on victimization of adolescents (DV) could be attributed to the indirect path (IV to MV to DV). The total effect (.5359) was the raw correlation between sexting attitude (IV) and victimization of adolescents (DV). The direct effect (.5454) was the size of the correlation between sexting attitude (IV) and victimization of adolescents (DV), with personality predictors (MV) included in the regression. The indirect effect was the amount of the original correlation between the IV and the DV that went through the mediator to the DV (a\*b), where "a" refers to the path between the IV and the MV and "b" refers to the path between the MV and the DV. The

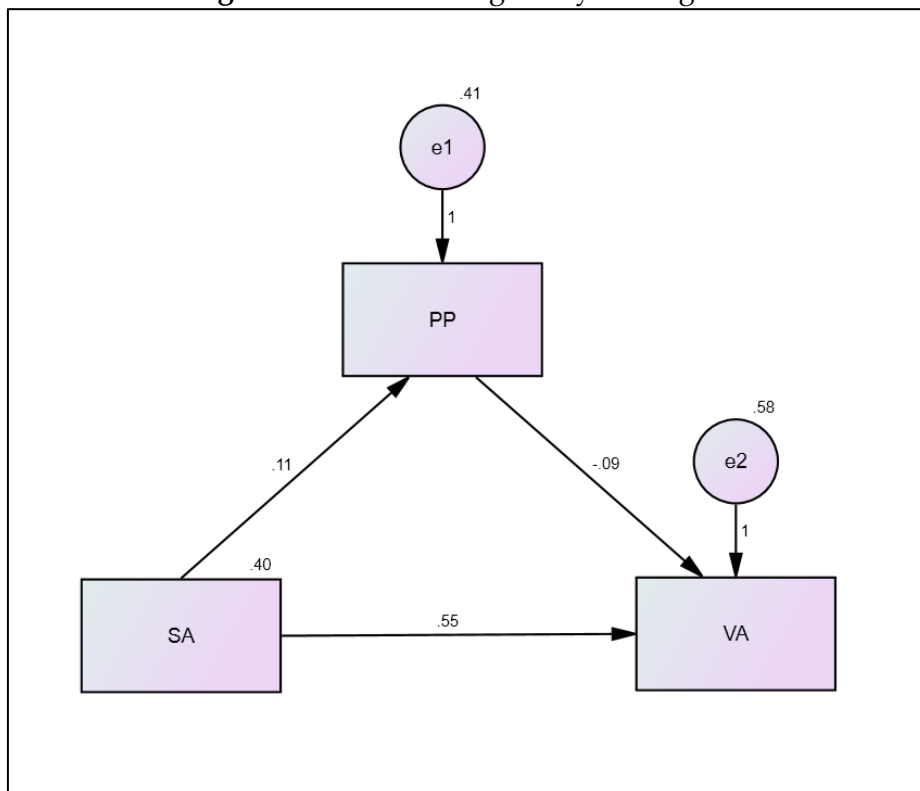


ratio index was computed by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect, in this case, .0095 by .5359= 0.0177%. It seemed that about 1.77% of the total effect of the IV on the DV went through the MV, which is a negligible mediation, and about 98.23% of the total effect was either direct or mediated by other variables not included in the model.

**Table 10:** Total, Direct, and Indirect Effect

Effect	<i>b</i>	95% CI	
		Lower	Upper
Total	.5359	.4167	.6550
Direct	.5454	.4257	.6650
Indirect (mediation)	-.0095	-.0436	.0030

**Figure 2:** The Mediating Analysis Diagram



**Note:** X = Sexting Attitude (SA), Y = Victimization of Adolescents (VA), M = Personality Predictors (PP)

## 5. Proposed Intervention

Based on the study findings, a proposed intervention is outlined below:

### 5.1 Social Media Awareness for Filtering and Empowerment: A Student Messaging Safety

#### 5.1.1 Rationale

In order to provide a secure and empowering online experience, students must be informed of the possible risks and advantages of social media. Important elements include identifying and preventing cyberbullying, safeguarding private data, confirming

information before sharing it, and being aware of privacy settings. Additionally, students should know how to use tools like blocking and filtering and how to report problematic information. They must understand the warning signs of cyberbullying and how to stop and report those who engage in it. This entails being aware of the possible dangers of oversharing, being careful about what personal information is posted, and knowing how to modify privacy settings on social media sites. Additionally, they should be instructed to check the material before posting it online in order to safeguard their own reputations and stop false information from spreading. To avoid identity theft and financial damage, it is essential to be aware of phishing efforts and other online fraud.

: It is important to encourage students to communicate politely online, steer clear of offensive or dangerous information, and foster constructive dialogue. They ought to understand how their online behavior affects their future prospects and builds their online reputation. Social media may be used to establish a favorable online profile by highlighting accomplishments, abilities, and constructive contributions. It is essential that students create strong, one-of-a-kind passwords, activate two-factor authentication, and learn how to control location services on their devices in order to safeguard their privacy. They ought to understand how to report offensive material and ban those who are causing discomfort.

It is essential to promote open dialogue about internet safety amongst educators, parents, and kids. It is important to encourage students to evaluate the messages they hear and the material they come across online. If adolescents run into issues online, they should know who to contact for assistance, such as a parent, counselor, or trustworthy instructor. Students may securely and ethically navigate the online environment, maximizing the advantages while limiting the hazards, by being taught digital citizenship and social media awareness.

### **5.1.2 Intervention Objective**

To specifically protect the adolescent students from the harmful side of messaging and sending pictures and videos, the following intervention design is proposed:

- 1) Raise the awareness of the children concerning the messages they are sending through SMS and social media.
- 2) Orient the children on how to counter threatening messages and where to report.
- 3) Encourage the children on how to reply to these messages and how to block or delete their accounts on social media.
- 4) To decide immediately by deleting sexual messages, pics and videos and block senders.

**Table 11:** Social Media Awareness for Filtering and Empowerment: A Student Messaging Safety

Areas of Concern	Activities	Objectives	Personnel Involved	Budget	Date	Expected result
Risk in sending/posting sexual terms, pictures/videos	Conduct series of information drive among primary and secondary schools	To educate the children concerning the messages they are sending through SMS and social media	Department of Education personnel and IT Experts	Appropriation of the Information Drive, Meal Allowance, Transportation Allowance, and accommodation allowance aside from their monthly salary	At the Start of 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter of the year 2025	For the children to become responsible sender of messages.
Threatened		To teach the children how to counter threatening messages and where to report				To learn to depend on the law enforcement of the country
Bashed/Bullied		Teach the Children how to reply to these messages and how to block or delete their accounts on social media.				Learn to ignore and block senders
Received a sexual message/nude pictures/video		To immediately delete sexual messages, pics and videos and block senders.				Learn to delete sexual messages and pics/videos so as not to spread and block senders and seek parents' guidance

## 6. Recommendations

With all the findings, it is recommended that adolescents should be reminded to avoid having relationships with individuals they have not met personally and decline any suggestions of meeting them face-to-face, which could lead to sexual assaults. Finally, there is no mediating effect of personality predictors on the relationship between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents. The researcher further recommends that law enforcement agencies may immediately respond towards sexting crises and act

within the bounds of law to arrest perpetrators, if caught red-handed or through a warrant of arrest, which means that law enforcement must have well-trained IT personnel to trace perpetrators online. It is recommended that establishing relationships should be in a face-to-face manner and must take a longer time for them to get to know each other. This must be taught by parents to their children. A proposed awareness program to educate users, especially students and young adolescents, on safe messaging practices, including privacy protection, cyber-ethics, and responsible communication. Lastly, future researchers may conduct another study, such as factors influencing sexters to send sexual messages online and the possible intervention scheme necessary.

The result of the study negated the role of personality traits as a mediating variable between sexting attitude and victimization. Allport's (1937), Cattell's (1950), and Eysenck's (1953) Trait Theories of Personality can hardly be traced in messaging through texting or online chatting because personality can easily be faked online, especially between two individuals who have just known each other through the words and phrases appearing in their mobile phones. The study also declared the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen (1991) insufficient in understanding and predicting individuals' behavior online or through texting. One cannot determine the real intention of an individual because sincerity often can be determined through facial expression. The result of the study, however, declared the veracity of the General Theory of Crime developed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) pertaining to the victims of sexting. There are existing cases of girls becoming victims of texting, mostly blackmailed because of nude pictures or even videos of having intimate moments with both of them nude to be posted online.

## **7. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, conclusions are drawn, wherein the sexting attitude among adolescents is moderate in level. Most of them have probably sent sexting to somebody and are now realizing that it is not so good and might put their reputation and dignity at risk. It is recommended that parents monitor their adolescent children when communicating with people they don't know and remind them about the danger of getting bullied and victimized. Similarly, the level of victimization among adolescents is low. Although low in level, it may leave a lasting effect on those who were victimized and the early awareness of sex that might motivate them to engage in a relationship at an early stage of their lives. Again, proper education and reminders to the children are necessary, not only from the parents but also from the teachers in the school and the guidance counsellors. The level of predictors is high, which implies that they have always manifested being helpful and unselfish with others, with a forgiving nature, and at the same time, often trusting. These adolescents are good-natured children. The researcher recommends that school administrators must set sexting policy to penalize violators, while teachers must immediately report children caught sending sexting to teach them a lesson and would serve as a deterrence to others.

Correlation between the sexting attitude among adolescents and personality predictors exists, indicating that sexting attitude significantly influences personality predictors, wherein perceived risk was the strongest predictor. However, no correlation exists between personality predictors and victimization among adolescents, which means linear regression is no longer applicable between the two mentioned variables. In addition, the correlation exists between sexting attitude and victimization among adolescents, showing that sexting attitude significantly influenced victimization, with relational expectation being the strong predictor.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this work. The research and writing were conducted independently, and no financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the findings or conclusions presented in this publication. The author(s) have no competing interests that could be perceived to affect the integrity of the research in the field of criminal justice.

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The author is currently a faculty member at Davao del Norte State College, under the Institute of Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Good Governance. She has handled various research topics from her advisees and has engaged in review lectures for other private schools. Her research interests include criminal justice, with a particular focus on law enforcement, traffic regulation, and security safety. Her scholarly work has contributed to several studies exploring these areas, aiming to enhance understanding and develop effective interventions. Throughout her academic career, she has actively participated in conferences, seminars, and collaborative research projects, fostering interdisciplinary approaches within the fields of criminal justice and public safety.

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