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Sexting among University Students: Links to Internet Addiction and Psychological Variables

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Abstract

Sexting is increasingly common among university students, while levels of Internet addiction are rising in this population. This has caused students to present certain risk behaviors that are linked to the development of psychological variables that affect health such as low self-control, depression, anxiety and stress. In this paper it was proposed as objective of the study to analyze the links that are established between the practice of sexting, Internet addiction, self-control, depression, anxiety and stress. For this purpose, an online survey was applied to a sample of 1013 university students from a Spanish university, which collected four standardized instruments to measure the constructs of the study. The results showed that students who practiced sexting were associated with low self-control and higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress, as well as problematic Internet use. Furthermore, gender, living with parents, and daily Internet use were predictors of sexting. Finally, the main implications derived from the study in relation to the links of sexting and Internet addiction were collected.

Keywords

Sexting, Computer-mediated sexual communication, Internet addiction, University students, Depression, anxiety

1. Introduction

Some 30 years ago, the Internet began to spread around the world and has today become a fundamental element in the lives of young people [1]. Today, there is a great diversity of devices that have revolutionized the way of working, relating, having fun [2-4], and learning [5], through the use of communicative applications such as chats, online games or social networks [6]. There is no doubt about the many advantages that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have brought to society [7], highlighting the speed, accessibility, overcoming of barriers and real-time intercommunication from anywhere in the world [8].

Internet use has increased to such an extent that it has become excessive for many people [9], leading to the emergence of new types of addictions related to inappropriate behaviour, such as nomophobia or fear of not being connected to the mobile device continuously [10], Internet addiction or Problematic Internet Use (PIU) [11,12]. Furthermore, DSM-V talks about internet gaming disorder and defines it as "recurrent and persistent participation for many hours in video games, usually in groups, leading to clinically significant impairment or discomfort for a period of 12 months" [13].

The youth population is especially attracted and influenced by the Internet, as they get quick answers, instant rewards and have a very effective interactive mode capable of overcoming the barriers of space and time. Through the Internet young people have found an ideal means of communication, relationship and satisfaction of curiosity [14]. So much so, that they use social networks to build their social identity, as well as a relational bond, tending to stay connected for long periods of time [15]. For this reason, it is also the youngest who are most exposed to the risks involved in this phenomenon [16], becoming classified as at risk [17,18].

Young people also use ICT to provide each other with intimate information by exchanging sexual content and messages, making use of the practice known as sexting [18]. This practice has increased in recent years due to the ease of access to cameras and the Internet through mobile devices [19] and the need to get more attention among friends [20]. The experience itself would not be a problem if it were not used to damage the image of the agents involved [21], and as long as no adults

are involved with minors, which would become child pornography [22].

Therefore, this work carried out an analysis on the phenomenon of sexting and Internet abuse in the university student population. It was also of interest to check the influence of certain socio-demographic factors on the practice of sexting, Internet addiction and on psychological variables such as self-control, depression, anxiety and stress.

2. Literature review

The results of the Spanish Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction (2017), indicate that 18% of Spanish adolescents use social networks in an addictive way, 3.7% more than those who consume illegal drugs in Spain (14.3%). Despite these data, there are no diagnostic criteria to define this problem and there is a confusion between considering this fact as an addictive pathology or as an environmental, psychological, sociological and/ or socio-political explanation [23].

Therefore, these technological advances bring many advantages, but they are also accompanied by a series of dangers derived from misuse, possible addiction and other risks such as cyberbullying, grooming and identity theft among many others [8]. Kożybska [24] define dysfunctional use of the Internet or PIU as online activity that, instead of providing benefits, degenerates into disruptive behaviour, which can lead to physical and psychological health and social problems.

Excessive use of the Internet, reflected in the amount of time spent on online activities, especially for leisure and social communication purposes, is associated with problems of [25-31], obesity [32] and other eating disorders [33]. Aznar-Díaz [34] add obsessive-compulsive disorder, alcohol abuse, sleep disorders, and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder to this set of problems linked to PIU. Numerous studies support this negative relationship between PIU and mental health [35,36]. A relationship has also been found between PIU and declining academic self-efficacy [37], lack of self-esteem and verbal fluency problems [38].

Hurwitz and Schmitt [39] highlight the risks involved in making inappropriate content accessible, reducing time spent on other more educational or enriching activities, the danger of contacting strangers, addiction to online gambling, sexting, loss of privacy, encouraging narcissistic behaviour, feelings of loneliness and even distortions of reality [40].

According to Happ, Melzer and Steffgen [41], young people say they are aware of the dangers of the Internet and how to avoid them, but in practice they are often exposed to its risks. There is a profile among young people who are more likely to suffer from PIU, related to personality traits such as difficulty in coping with problems, impulsivity, seeking strong sensations, lack

of resources to control stress and communication skills, tendency to depression, cognitive distortions, feeling of loneliness and propensity to isolation [42-44]. From these aspects, it can be deduced that the problems arising from the PIU are similar to those that push youth to express themselves. Concern about this phenomenon has even led to the need to design prevention programmes [45].

A study conducted by Necmi-Uçar [46], showed that adolescents with depression, had significantly higher scores for bullying and cyber-victimization, as well as addictions to digital games and the Internet, also used chat and social networks more than the control group. On the other hand, parents in the group with depression spent more hours on social networking than those who didn't. Like depression, negative family environment is associated with problematic Internet use and time spent online by young people (Sela, 2020). Likewise, Faghani [47] found that the emotional and cognitive model explains 57% of PIU variance.

Sexting is defined as the intimate exchange of sexually explicit nude or semi-nude images, text messages or videos via mobile phones or other communication devices [20, 48].

The problem arises when information is misunderstood or used. These facts often lead to harmful experiences with negative psychological effects [18]. Therefore, sexting is a potential risk, which starts as a fun and opportunity for sexual exploration, but can end up in a serious, out-of-control situation with serious social, physical, psychological and even legal consequences [48].

According to Skenarova [49] women and adolescents are the groups most at risk of being victims of this type of non-consensual sexual practices through the Internet. Authors such as Gámez-Guadix [50] to study and prevent this problem, developed a tool to measure online sexual victimization, which covers three dimensions: sex-related insistence, threats and coercion, and unwanted dissemination of intimate content. These same authors have noted that this practice is increasingly widespread among minors and young people, being more frequent in young adults, and even stating that two out of three adults have participated in sexting practices. Van Ouytsel [51] found a relationship between sexting and psychological factors such as depression, anxiety, emotional disturbance and substance use. In contrast, Van Oosten and Vandenbosch [52] concluded their study by stating that young adolescents are more willing to engage in non-consensual sending of sexually explicit images than are more adult youth. And within this group, those with high instrumental attitudes towards sex have a higher level.

Along the same lines, the results of the study carried out by Marganski and Melander [53] showed that victimization by this type of cybernetic aggression in the couple is quite common, since almost three quarters of the

university students surveyed stated that they had suffered this experience to a greater or lesser extent in the last year. This is related to a wider range of psychological, sexual and physical violence within the couple. Gámez-Guadix [50] indicated that participation in sexting increases the probability of being a victim of sexual harassment and with a greater proportion if the recipient has met through the network, participation is also greater among people of the same sex.

On the other hand, Gassó [22] place sexting among one of the three phenomena considered to be youth cybercrime, along with cyberbullying and grooming. And they highlight the fact that it can seriously affect the psychopathological assessment of the participants and produce great moral damage to both the victim and his or her family.

Based on this context, the objective of the study was to analyze the links between the practice of sexting, Internet addiction, self-control, depression, anxiety and stress. It was from this objective that the research questions arose:

RQ1. Are there significant relationships between sexting and Internet addiction, self-control, and suffering from anxiety, stress or depressive disorders?

RQ2. What factors significantly influence and can therefore be predictive of sexting, Internet addiction, self-control, and having more or less stress, anxiety or depression?

3. Materials and Methods

To carry out the study, we advocated a quantitative methodological design of cross-sectional nature, which analyzed through the descriptive and inferential approach the realities of the responses obtained by the participating subjects by Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista,. To this end, an online survey based on standardized instruments was implemented and distributed through the official student channel of the University of Granada (Spain) during January and February 2020 before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain.

3.1 Participants

The sample of participants was composed by Spanish students of Higher Education of the University of Granada (n = 1013). For its scrutiny, a convenience sampling was used, because the instrument was applied to the whole student body of the University, where students freely decided whether to participate in the research. The overall sample consisted of 252 men and 761 women between the ages of 17 and 35 (M = 22.23; SD = 3.88). The decompensation observed in the sample around the gender variable is evident, and is due to the number of enrolments in university degrees in the social sciences, the majority of whom are women by Navarro & Casero, in 2012. The division established by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) [54] was used for the grouping of age ranges and the division

established by the University of Granada itself was used for the grouping into knowledge areas. Table 1 shows the different variables studied in the sample.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Sexting Behaviors Scale (SBS)

The Sexting Behaviors Scale (SBS) aims to identify subjects' behavioral habits and disposition toward sexting [55]. Specifically, we used the existing validated adaptation in Spanish [56], being a five-level Likert type scale, from 1 (Never) to 5 (Frequently). In total, nine items were applied that measured the subjects' active disposition towards sexting. So the scores ranged from 9 to 45, with higher scores indicating a greater predisposition to sexting. The reliability for the present data sample was optimal (α = 0.897).

3.2.2 Internet Addiction Test (IAT)

Internet Addiction Test (IAT) is the most recognized instrument for measuring Internet addiction [57]. It consists of 20 items and measures the degree of Internet addiction of an individual with the electronic device. Response mode features a six-level Likert scale, from 0 (rarely) to 5 (always). The scores ranged from 0 to 100 points, indicating a higher score for a higher degree of Internet addiction. This instrument gathers adequate psychometric properties [58] and has been validated in the Spanish context [59]. The reliability in this investigation was good (α = 0.895).

3.2.3 Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS-SV)

Through the Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS-SV) the evaluation of the self-control was carried out. This scale is made up of 13 items on a five-level Likert scale, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (totally). Thus, scores ranged from 13 to 65, where a higher score was associated with less self-control. The instrument has optimal psychometric properties and internal consistency [60]. It was also validated in the Spanish context [61]. The reliability in this case was acceptable (α= 0.761)

3.2.4 Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21)

DASS-21 has 21 items, collected on a Likert-type scale with four response options, from 0 (didn't happen to me) to 3 (happened to me a lot). It is in charge of measuring the level of frequency in which the subjects have suffered some situation close to depression, anxiety or stress [62]. Each of these constructs is made up of seven items, with the scores distributed between 0 and 21 in each of them. A higher score indicates the presence of these constructions. The instrument has been validated in Spanish [63,64]. The reliability of this work was optimal (α = 0.950).

3.3 Data analysis

The statistical software Rstudio v.1.3.5 was used to process the data. Firstly, a descriptive analysis was carried out which made it possible to ascertain the responses

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the study simple.

	n	%
Gender		
Male	256	25.3
Female	757	74.7
Age		
≤ 20	417	41.2
21-35	596	58.8
Civil Status		
Single	605	59.7
Couple	408	40.3
Parents´ marital status		
Married (Parental St 1)	738	72.9
Separated (Parental St 2)	181	17.8
One of them has died (Parental St 3)	61	6.02
Both of them have died (Parental St 4)	13	1.3
Unmarried Couple (Parental St 5)	20	1.9
Have siblings?		
Yes	918	90.6
No	95	9.4
Live with parents		
Yes	473	46.7
No	540	53.3
Number of social networks		
≤5	383	37.8
≥6	630	62.2
Internet daily use for leisure		
< 1 hour	47	4.6
1-2 hours	195	19.2
2-3 hours	355	35
3-4 hours	245	24.2
>4 hours	171	16.9

collected by the university students. Consequently, the Pearson correlation test was applied, prior to calculating the characteristics of the data distribution (normality, homocedasticity and residue independence). After this, the multiple linear regression models were configured, taking into account the socio-demographic variables previously explained. Finally, through the regsubset algorithm and with the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), the weight and statistical significance of each of the variables included in the predictive power of the model and, therefore, in the development of the dependent constructs was studied in depth.

4. Results

In the first instance, the descriptive statistics allowed to establish a first approach about the reality observed by the students participating in the research (Table 2). Thus, we observed how self-control (AC) was the construct that obtained the highest scores, followed by Internet addiction (IAD), depression, anxiety, stress (DAE) and, finally, sexting (SEXT).

The normality and homocedasticity of the variances were analysed in accordance with the characteristics of the data distribution. Thus, through Levene's test it was found that the distribution showed similar variances (p >0.05). Similarly, in the case of normality, the Shapiro-

Wilk test verified the character and trend of the results obtained (p >0.05). On the other hand, the focus was established on knowing the independence of the residues from the data collected through the Durbin-Watson test, which confirmed this premise, allowing this research to continue.

Regarding the relationship between the study variables, the results of Pearson's correlation test showed some links between the different constructs of the research. The results do not show strong relationships between the variables that make up the study. In this case, there is a slight relationship between daily Internet use and Internet addiction and a moderate relationship between Internet addiction and self-control (Figure 1).

Multiple linear regression models are shown below. Those factors marked with an asterisk (*) are those that present an incidence relationship with the protagonist dimension. In the first place, the multiple linear regression model of the sexting practice allowed to know the socio-demographic factors that have a direct influence with its development, these were: gender, living with the parents, daily use of the Internet and the dependent constructs, especially IAD (Figure 2). The model developed responded to the conditions of significance (F = 9.862; p <0.05), but with a low adjustment factor (R^2 = 0.1161).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics.

Dimension	M	SD	IQR	HIST
Sexting	16.1	6.58	9	
Internet addiction	30.8	15	22	
Autocontrol	36.9	5.68	8	
Depression, anxiety, stress	16.3	10.1	16	

Note: IQR = Inter-quartile range; HIST = Histogram

Gender	Age	Civil St.	Parental St	Siblings	LiveParents	SocNet	IDailyUse	IAD	AC	SEXT	DAE	
1	-0.167	-0.028	-0.043	-0.055	0.237	0.106	0.290	0.191	0.128	-0.088	-0.163	Gender
	1	0.420	0.324	-0.061	0.130	0.016	-0.074	-0.123	-0.073	0.009	0.065	Age
		1	0.113	-0.062	0.113	0.017	-0.740	-0.126	-0.073	-0.009	-0.065	Civil St
			1	0.047	0.129	0.033	-0.070	0.033	0.014	0.179	0.131	Parental St.
				1	0.002	0.006	0.034	0.066	0.009	0.007	0.040	Siblings
					1	0.006	-0.142	0.023	-0.029	0.057	-0.033	LiveParents
						1	-0.125	-0.103	-0.067	-0.063	-0.046	SocNet
							1	0.378	0.180	0.177	0.140	IDailyUse
								1	0.537	0.269	0.364	IAD
									1	0.238	0.362	AC
										1	0.165	SEXT
											1	DAE

Figure 1: Correlation between study variables.

```
Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)     10.16015   2.60053    3.907 9.98e-05 ***
Gender          -2.40510   0.46429   -5.180 2.68e-07 ***
Age             -0.06435   0.03965   -1.623 0.104902
Civil St.        0.46094   0.34565    1.334 0.182653
Parental St      0.78632   0.50577    1.555 0.120333
Siblings        -0.26393   0.67643   -0.390 0.696491
LiveParents      0.91742   0.40731    2.252 0.024515 *
SocNet          -1.72249   1.49892   -1.151 0.249985
IDailyUse        0.63171   0.19728    3.202 0.001407 **
IAD              0.05740   0.01693    3.391 0.000724 ***
AC               0.12007   0.04204    2.856 0.004382 **
DAE              0.04839   0.02163    2.237 0.025515 *
---
Signif. codes:
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 6.185 on 997 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.1292,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.1161
F-statistic: 9.862 on 15 and 997 DF,  p-value: < 2.2e-16
```

Figure 2: Multiple regression model for SEXT.

In the case of Internet addiction, the model presented several significant predictors, such as marital status, living with parents and daily Internet use (Figure 3). Similarly, the rest of the constructions dependent on the study (CA, SEXT, DAE) were also identified as incidents. On the other hand, the significance of the (F = 48.88; df = 997; p <0.05) and the adjustment explains 41% of the total variance of the data (R^2 = 0.4151).

Considering the dimension about AC (Figure 4), a significant model was obtained (F = 34.74; p <0.05). In this model the influence of gender factors, the marital status of the parents, as well as the dependent constructs were shown to be incidents in the development of AC. Similarly, the model fit is less than the previous (R^2 = 0.3334).

Finally, in the case of the DAE construct (Figure 5), the development of the regression model determined the influence of Gender, Age, Parental State and the dependent constructs IAD, AC and SEXT. The model was found to be significant (F = 17.13; p <0.05) and with an adjustment coefficient of almost a quarter of the total (R^2 = 0.1929)

Finally, the algorithm regsubset and with BIC was calculated in order to investigate the degree of statistical significance of each socio-demographic factor with the dependent constructs presented in the previous models. Thus, different results were found according to the four previously configured models. In the case of the model for SEXT, the most incident variable in its development was IAD. Next are Gender, Age, Parental St 2, LiveParents, Daily Use of Internet, AC and DAE (Figure 6). In IAD it was found that mainly, the AC construct has the most influence on the development of IAD. Then there is Daily use of Internet, Civil Status, and in parallel, "have siblings" and "live with parents" (Figure 7). As for the results of the algorithm in AC, they allowed elucidating the influence of multiple variables to a greater extent, as is the case of Parental St 2, Parental St 3, Parental St 5 Live with parents, IAD (to a greater extent), SEXT and DAE (Figure 8). Finally, with respect to DAE, the results show that the variables that statistically show the greatest influence on its empowerment are IAD, Gender, Age, Parental St 2, Parental St 3, Parental St 5, AC and SEXT (Figure 9).

In summary, Table 3 shows a summary of the different relationships of influence that socio-demographic variables have obtained in each of the linear regression models configured for each construct analyzed in the research.

```
Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)    -26.41639    4.80231  -5.501 4.81e-08 ***
Gender          -0.57404    0.87507  -0.656 0.511976
Age             -0.04839    0.07384  -0.655 0.512455
`Civil St.`     -1.56803    0.64166  -2.444 0.014710 *
`Parental St`   -1.20154    0.14258  -1.401 0.161526
Siblings         2.31852    1.25631   1.846 0.065261 .
LiveParents      2.66730    0.75493   3.533 0.000429 ***
SocNet          -3.56020    2.78800  -1.277 0.201910
IDailyUse        3.60801    0.35073  10.287  < 2e-16 ***
AC               1.06836    0.07087  15.074  < 2e-16 ***
SEXT             0.19864    0.05858   3.391 0.000724 ***
DAE              0.23875    0.03963   6.025 2.38e-09 ***
---
Signif. codes:
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 11.51 on 997 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.4238,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.4151
F-statistic: 48.88 on 15 and 997 DF,  p-value: < 2.2e-16
```

Figure 3: Multiple regression model for IAD.

```
Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)    32.57468    1.67331  19.467  < 2e-16 ***
Gender         -0.94508    0.35169  -2.687  0.00732 **
Age            -0.02591    0.02977  -0.870  0.38446
`Civil St.`     0.05873    0.25953   0.226  0.82103
`Parental St`   0.80517    0.37903   2.124  0.03389 *
Siblings       -0.63532    0.50709  -1.253  0.21055
LiveParents    -0.59563    0.30576  -1.948  0.05169 .
SocNet         -0.61587    1.12506  -0.547  0.58422
IDailyUse      -0.20633    0.14861  -1.388  0.16534
IAD             0.17374    0.01153  15.074  < 2e-16 ***
SEXT            0.06757    0.02366   2.856  0.00438 **
DAE             0.10983    0.01589   6.911 8.6e-12 ***
---
Signif. codes:
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 4.64 on 997 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.3433,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.3334
F-statistic: 34.74 on 15 and 997 DF,  p-value: < 2.2e-16
```

Figure 4: Multiple regression model for AC.

```
Coefficients:
                Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept)    -5.09755    3.82333  -1.333   0.1827
Gender          2.74491    0.68158   4.027 6.07e-05 ***
Age            -0.12581    0.05784  -2.175   0.0299 *
`Civil St.`     0.25307    0.50517   0.501   0.6165
`Parental St`  -0.78940    0.73909  -1.996   0.0462 *
Siblings        0.83938    0.98757   0.850   0.3956
LiveParents    -0.27466    0.59628  -0.461   0.6452
SocNet          1.00831    2.19022   0.460   0.6454
IDailyUse      -0.29992    0.28942  -1.036   0.3003
IAD             0.14714    0.02442   6.025 2.38e-09 ***
AC              0.41620    0.06023   6.911 8.60e-12 ***
SEXT            0.10320    0.04614   2.237   0.0255 *
---
Signif. codes:
0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 9.032 on 997 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared:  0.2049,   Adjusted R-squared:  0.1929
F-statistic: 17.13 on 15 and 997 DF,  p-value: < 2.2e-16
```
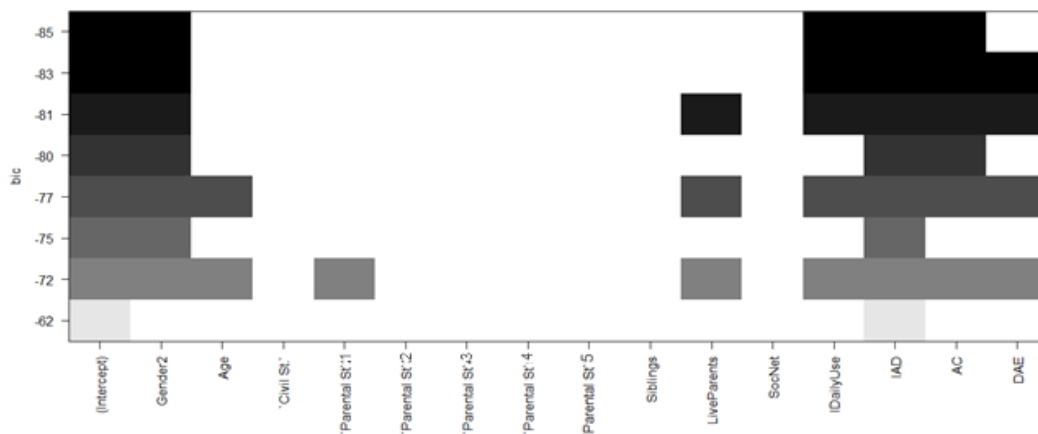
Figure 5: Multiple regression model for DAE.

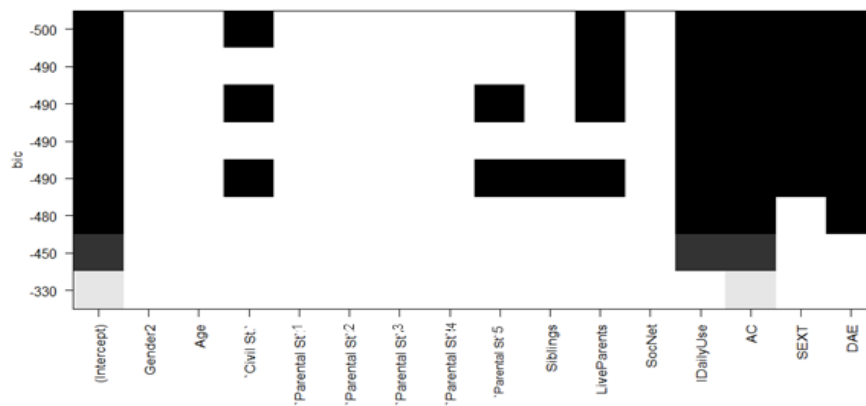**Figure 6:** Weight and influence of variables in SEXT.

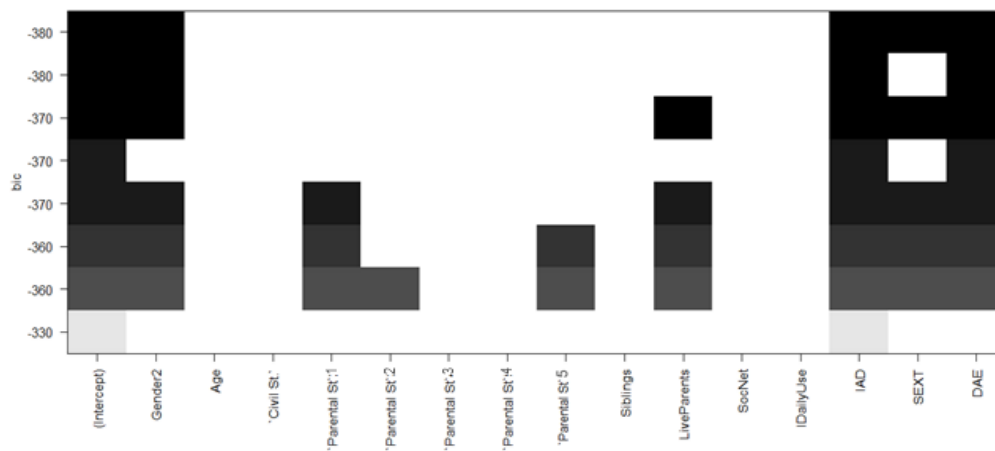**Figure 7:** Weight and influence of variables in IAD.

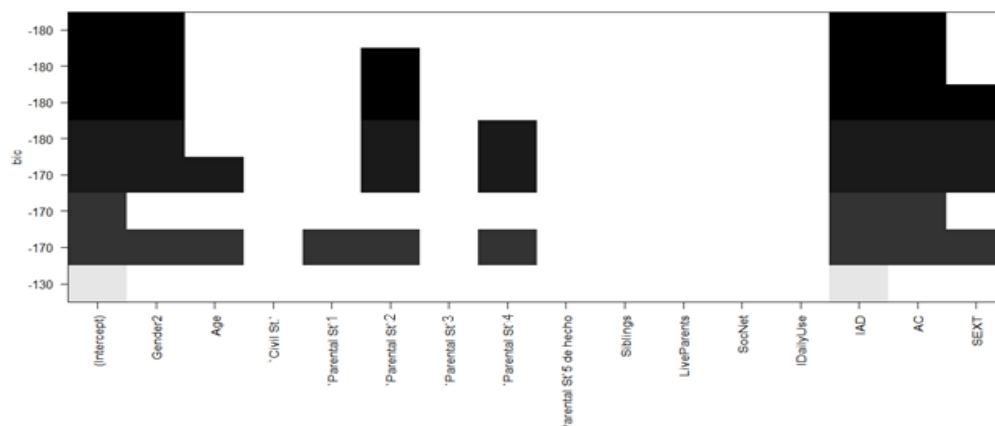**Figure 8:** Weight and influence of variables in AC.

Figure 9: Weight and influence of variables in DAE.

Table 3: Summary of the relationships of influence between socio-demographic factors and research constructs

Socio-Demographic Factor	Construct			
	SEXT	IAD	AC	DAE
Gender	X		X	X
Age				X
Civil Status		X		
Marital status of parents			X	X
Do you have any siblings?				
Lives at home with his parents	X	X		
Nº social networks				
Daily use of the Internet for leisure	X	X		

5. Discussion

The data obtained show significant relationships between socio-demographic variables and dependent constructs. Some of these variables, therefore, being influential in the development of the practices or phenomena discussed here serve as predictors of them. The data also confirmed that university students are a population at risk of suffering at some point from any of the above-mentioned problems [18].

On the other hand, the differences between the variables indicated that socio-demographic factors could explain the problems addressed such as self-control, Internet addiction, sexting, stress, anxiety or depression. In this respect, the existence of notable relationships between some of the study variables such as daily Internet use and the probability of suffering from Internet addiction is highlighted, confirmed by the correlations between the study variables in line with previous studies [9,11,15].

In the same way, the marital status and living with the parents suppose for the population some factors of greater risk at the time of being susceptible to suffer addiction to Internet, which indicates that the fact of not having own responsibilities of the juvenile and adult stages of the life generates climates where the use of Internet acquires a great importance being able to derive in addiction by a little responsible and inappropriate use, like the exposed thing by Sela which in its investigation indicates that to live in family and that in this there are problematic atmospheres it favors situations of addiction to Internet. Along the same lines, the fact of being a woman and living with one's parents or their marital status has a great influence on self-control, or specifically on their lack of it and on being a victim of practices such as sexting [49].

In the same vein as the previous question, young people, especially women, who also have problems controlling impulsivity, are more likely to have problematic use of the Internet and to experience depression, anxiety and stress. This may be a symptom of the fact that by seeking refuge on the web, not only do they not manage previous problems better, but they generate new ones and aggravate existing ones [44].

On the other hand, the multiple linear regression model confirmed that in relation to Internet addiction the daily use of the Internet by students was a predictive factor [16]. Furthermore, in all cases the gender of the student is a decisive factor in influencing his or her own self-control or in being problematic in his or her use of the Internet or in sexting.

Along the same lines, it was observed that the age of the population was also a determining factor in predicting the occurrence of phenomena such as sexting [52] or suffering from phenomena such as anxiety, stress and depression, since it is the youngest who are most vulnerable and most likely to suffer from these types of ailments, which are always related to the use of the Internet and its management [17,18]. Not only are young people a risk group in themselves when it comes to perceiving these disorders, but it is within this group that there is an even more vulnerable figure due to age and personal characteristics, thus generating the need for refuge in the use of the Internet [44].

With regard to the dependent variables and the predictability between them, it was observed how the self-control or the lack of it is the most influential factor when it comes to knowing an excessive and harmful use of the Internet [9], what is presented as a lack of awareness of the problems associated with this misuse [41]. In the rest of the variables, it is the addiction to the Internet that appears in all of them as a factor of influence and predictor of its appearance or development [47].

In short, in today's society, the Internet is a tool for young people that has a double aspect, since on the one hand it is fundamental in the development of multiple facets of life, as is stated in previous studies [2, 3, 5]. Similarly, this is a tool that contributes to overcoming the barriers of the context in which we find ourselves, so following Apridar [7] the speed, accessibility and quantity of information provided are its main characteristics and advantages. However, the relationship of this population with the Internet and everything that derives from it does not always have positive characteristics or consequences, since they have come to monopolize the lives of young people, generating dependency and a series of problems on an emotional, psychological and physical level [24].

6. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the practice of sexting and abusive use of the Internet are issues related to other current phenomena derived from ICT as well as to various socio-demographic factors, both inherent to the individual and external. Thus, using them as predictors helps to prevent or identify these behaviours or problems. Age, marital status, gender and characteristics of the family environment are elements to be taken into account in order to know how it affects or may affect the use of the Internet in all its aspects, as shown in this paper.

The prospective of this study is to extend the sample to more degrees, in the same way as to do the same with the sociodemographic factors to a wider range of possibilities for the evaluation of the greatest possible number of elements that intervene in the practice of sexting and the abuse of the Internet in the life of the students. At the same time, the limitations encountered in this study lie mainly in the sampling technique, since sampling has been carried out for convenience and, for future research, it would be advisable to expand the sample at the national level and to other demographic, social and economic contexts in order to check whether the results presented here are supported by larger populations.

Finally, from this perspective, exposing the current situation of the phenomena and elements derived

from ICT, the Internet, its use and its advantages and disadvantages, while at the same time training young people in the correct and responsible use of all this and its implications is a challenge within Higher Education.

7. Data Availability

The statistical data used to support the findings of this study may be released upon application to the University of Granada, who can be contacted at José-María Romero-Rodríguez (e-mail: romejo@ugr.es).

8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

9. Funding Statement

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