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Sexualized Technology

Portuguese youngsters and the new media

Findings from *EU Kids Online 2*, Sep. 2011

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Overview of the project



- **25 000 parents and children from 25 different countries**
- **Representative sampling (1.000) of each country of children who use the internet (9-16)**
- **Face-to-face questions and personal, private, questionnaires**

Portugal



- **A Catholic and socially conservative country**
- **Low overall literacy and media literacy**
- **A very fast growth of internet penetration in the last few years, especially to children in school**
- **Mobile phone penetration is at above 100%**

- **An ‘unfinished modernity’ (Machado & Costa, 1998), due to several social and cultural factors, such as the prolonged influence of a right-wing dictatorship until 1974**

Sexualized usages



- **Questions were asked about contact with sexual messages and pornography to all children**
- **Older children (11-16) were asked about their participation as actors in sexualized usages of new media**
- **These included seeing pictures of people naked (their «private parts» showing) or having sex; sexual messages (even if written); sending requests for images; sending images or videos of oneself; talking about sex online**

Pornography exposure in Portugal



Event	%
Has seen sexual images	22
Has seen sexual images online	12,3
Has seen sexual images on the phone	3,8

- **EU Kids Online average for sexual images online: 14%**
- **Overall, exposure is higher in Nordic and some Eastern European countries, and lower in Southern or Catholic countries, as is the case with Portugal**
- **Online exposure is *inferior* to offline exposure**
- **Gender difference online: 68% boys vs 32% girls**

Where is it seen, online?



Type of site	%
On an X-rated website	5,9%
On a SN	3,0%
Accidental pop-ups	4,9%
Video-hosting	4,2%
Gaming website	1,4%
File-sharing	1,1%

This represents *only a few dozen people*, from which:

- **48% of those who see pornography online do so on X-rated websites, and 34% in video-hosting websites (several dedicated to pornography, emulating YouTube, even in name)**
- **But 39% of exposures are accidental (pop-ups), suggesting lack of media literacy and skills**

What is seen, online?

How often?



Content	%
'Private parts'	4,2
Having sex	7,2
Violent sex	1,2

It seems that content considered more “extreme” is seldomly seen

Also, 11% of youngsters claim to see pornographic content less than once a month; only 3,5% see it more than once a week

How many are disturbed by it?



- **1,7% of children in the Portuguese sample claimed to have been disturbed or upset with exposure to porn**
- **That constitutes 14% of all those who've seen sexualized material online**

Children as sexualized agents



Action	%
Sent someone a sexual message on the internet	1,10
Posted a sexual message where others could see it	0,80
Talked about sexual acts on the internet	0,30
Asked someone to send him/her a picture of video showing their private parts	0,20
Sent a photo or video showing his/her private parts	0

- **Overall, 2,1% of the children sampled has sent or posted a sexual message of any kind on the internet**

Sexualized media and bedroom culture



74% of youngsters who've seen sexual images have the possibility of using their computers privately

95% of older youth (11-16) who've sent sexual images also have that possibility

Even so, Portugal has many more 'bedroom users' than the European average, but averages in consumption of the sexualized media

Parental mediation



In terms of active mediation, restrictive mediation and technical mediation, Portugal is near the European average.

But Portuguese parents do *less* monitoring than the average of European parents.

Most of the youth who've seen sexualized content online are part of the group that has less mediation from parents.

But overall exposure is still quite low.

Parental concerns



45% of parents “worry a lot” about their child’s sexual activities

61% “worry a lot” about their children seeing “innapropriate material on the internet”

3,5% belive their child has seen images that are obviously sexual on the internet

1,6% believe their child has sem or been sent sexual messages on the internet

1% believe their child sent seomeone else sexual messages on the internet

» *These are amongst the lowest values in Europe*

Considering results



Lack of parental control and bedroom culture are generally thought to be related to greater levels of pornographic exposure

Yet, the conditions in Portugal don't translate into a greater than average exposure to sexualized material

The main difference (from offline porn) might be the risk of unwanted exposure (Mitchell et al, 2003; Flood, 2007) which seems to be confirmed here

Risk here is seldomly translated into harm

Considering results



Compared with other studies, the numbers found in this investigation are surprisingly low – in 1971 a USA commission estimated an exposure rate of 85% for male teenagers and 70% for female teenagers (pre-Internet)

Mitchell et al, in a non-representative study, found a rate of accidental access of 25%

Lenhart (2009) found a 4% rate of active sexters

49% of youngsters had a parent present when filling out the questionnaire

Considering results



Social desirability bias?

Cultural variables?

Moral panics?

Conflicting results on effects and rates of exposure?

Interactions with personal and sexual development?

Interactions with a lack of (formal) sexual literacy?