

**THE EFFECTS OF SEXTING AMONG THE YOUTH IN DAGORETTI NORTH
CONSTITUENCY, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination to any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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Date: November 20, 2020

Prof. Ndeti Ndati, PhD.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family; Cate Bukachi, Abigail Chapia and Christian Baraka Bukachi. Lecturers and 2017/2018 Class, School of Journalism and Mass Communication University of Nairobi.

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ABSTRACT

Technology has for the past decade reshaped the interactions and communication among youth. There has been an increase in reliance of technology among youth. Digital or online technology has been integrated by young people into their daily lives in complicated ways. They have used these media and new technologies to connect to each other, educate, communicate and map out a direction in their lives in a generational way. Sexting is one such phenomena that is core in eliciting debate around the lives of young people as they use technology to explore their online sexual practices and sexuality. This study therefore sought to investigate the effects of sexting among the youth in Dagoretti north constituency, Nairobi City County. The specific objectives were to: Find out whether youth engage in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. Investigate the communication channels that the youth use in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. Determine the impact of sexting of youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. The study used Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory and Technology Acceptance Model. Descriptive research design was used. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in a narrative form. The findings of the study are that: sexting is prevalent among youth of Dagoretti North Constituency; youth are sexting using their smartphones mostly through WhatsApp application; WhatsApp was preferred because it was easy to use, accessible and popular with youth; sexting had spiced up the relationship of youth; sharing of sexts with third parties had led to embarrassment, humiliation and cyberbullying. The study concluded that sexting was prevalent among youth of ages between 18 to 24 years within Dagoretti North Constituency; the youth were sexting mostly using WhatsApp but also using Instagram and Facebook chat; the effects of sexting is both positive and negative. It is therefore recommended that more similar studies be conducted within other constituencies in Kenya to provide data for comparison and comprehensive understanding of effects of sexting among the youth.

ABBREVIATIONS

CMC	-	Computers Mediated Communication
CPM	-	Communication Privacy Management
DNC	-	Dagoretti North Constituency
FGD	-	Focused Group Discussion
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	-	Information and communication technology
KII	-	Key Informant Interviews
KU	-	Kenyatta University
MU	-	Moi University
NACOSTI	-	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NCCG	-	Nairobi City County Government
SNS	-	Social Networking Sites
SPSS	-	Statistics Package for the Social Science
STD's	-	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TMC	-	Technology Mediated Communication
TUK	-	Technical University of Kenya

UoN - University of Nairobi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter contains the following sections; the background information of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study and objectives of the study. It also seeks to identify the research questions, scope of the study. It further outlines the significance of the study, limitations of the study, research assumptions, and winds up by providing definition of terms used in the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Technology has for the past decade reshaped the interactions and communication among youth: there has been an increase in the adoption and reliance of technology among youth (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014). Digital or online technology has been integrated by young people into the daily lives in complicated ways, they have used these media and new technologies to connect to each other, educate, communicate and provide direction and map out a direction in their lives in a generational way. Youth have used technology to practice and explore sexual relationships and romantic ventures in ways that policy makers and researchers have not been able to completely comprehend. Sexting is one such phenomena that is core in eliciting debate around the lives of young people as they use technology to explore their online sexual practices and childhood sexuality.

Lee et al. (2015) opine that sexting originated from the media through collapsing the two terms: sex and texting. “Sexting” is a term that has emanated from combining the terms “sex” and “text”. The application of the term has been attributed to the activity of disseminating text

deemed sexually explicit or images that are sexually provocative because of their nude or semi-nude nature. In many occasions, youth consider sexting as part of the communication process. Mitchell et al. (2012) and Agustina and Gomez-Duran (2012) vaguely defined sexting as an act of socially sending/ or receiving sexually provocative or suggestive messages or images by peers through a mobile phone. According to the Law Reform Committee of Victoria (2013), sexting is a number of activities such as a boyfriend/ girlfriend sharing pictures with each other, to showing of picture to other picture by a boyfriend/ girlfriend, to an adult disseminating an explicit text to “groom” a child. Sexting has therefore significantly become a cultural phenomenon, an area that has elicited media discussions and therefore been a target of interest by policy makers, researchers and law makers.

Sexting is a behavior that has attracted the attention of researchers, the media, policymakers and law makers alike. Academic research, policy developments and coverage of the media has brought out sexting as being predominantly a problem of the young people (Mitchell, 2012; Walker, 2012) even though it is also practiced by adults and celebrities and public figure (Curnutt, 2012). There have been some concerns that have directed the attention to the problem of sexting among youth in the media, law enforcers, parents and educators (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011; Koppel & Jones, 2010). A concern to the youth is that they are exposing themselves to child pornography by compromising their images online hence exposing themselves to legal sanctions (Klepper, 2011).

According to Davis et al. (2016), extensive studies have not been conducted to highlight the sexting practice. A study by Houck et al. (2013) established that there is a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and unintended pregnancies owing to an increase in sexual activities triggered by sexting. According to Rice et al. (2012), sexting youth

were twice as likely to have unprotected sex and seven times more likely to be active sexually than their peers. Girls who had sexted through sending their nude pictures were more likely to take part in risky sex such as abusing substances before intercourse and having multiple partners (Temple et al., 2012).

According to Benotsch et al. (2013), there has been an upward trend of cell phone usage in the United States with over 2 billion Americans sending text messages every year. This has seen an increase in the number of youth sending each other texts becoming more popular. The dynamics of sexting among young people has on an international level only received a significantly low comprehension attempt (Lee et al., 2015). According to Agustina & Gomez-Duran (2012) sexting is a particularly prominent behavior in the United States of American, though it is recently becoming a global phenomenon around the world. In relation to sexting, the estimates of its prevalence has considerably varied globally as influenced by the assessed population, the definition of sexting and how the survey was timed (Mitchell et al., 2012). Their study established that 2.5% of American youth had taken part or featured in sexually provocative photos texted to others while 7.1% were recipients of these provocative photos. Most of the nude or seminude photos it seems were exchanged between youth who were in a relationship or between individuals who at least one was interested in starting a relationship with the other (Lenhart et al., 2011; Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011).

In Africa, specifically South Africa, it is opined by IOL (2014) that youth in that country has already joined the culture of sexting without understanding its risks and dangers. It comes at the backdrop of an exponential increase in the use of mobile phones across Africa. This is despite a lack of significant knowledge of sexting culture in African countries especially the youth (Makgale & Plattner, 2017). Bose and Coccaro (2013) portray a picture of widespread

increase of sexually explicit content on mobile phones owned by youth across Africa. The concern is particularly observed in Ghana and South Africa where reports have shown an increase in sexting among youth (Porter et al., 2016). In Nigeria, increase in texting is attributed to an uptake in adoption of smart phones amongst youth, just like in other developed and developing countries (Olatunde & Balogun, 2016).

In Kenya, the situation is no different like in the rest of Africa and the world. According to Gathura (2017), risky sexual behavior has increased exponentially among youth in Kenya courtesy of sexting. The craze is reported to have made mitigating adolescent pregnancies a problem together with diseases such as sexually transmitted infections (STI) and HIV Aids. Hart (2015) opines that youth in Kenya have picked up sexting as a way of flirting. This they believe makes them more desirable. The culture is a secretive one owing to the lack of knowledge from their parent who can stop them. In the study, the youth in Kenya feel there is nothing wrong with sexting.

Kenya is a third world country with a population of young people about 75% borne during or after 1989 that is the age of 30 years and below. Out of this 22% are of ages between 18 to 24 years. The youth according to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) is between the ages of 15 to 34 years. This is a revision from the previous policy adopted in 2007 by the National Youth Service in which youths were categorized as aged between 15 to 30 years. The United Nation has however categorized youth as those aged between 15 to 24 years while for the East African Community it's between 15 to 35 years. Hall (2017) argues that the Kenya has about 10 million youth which is 20% of its population. This has made it experience a "youth bulge" (circumstances where at least 20% of the population of a country is between 15 to 24 years of age). Kenya is considered one of the leading countries in ICT adoption. One reason given by

Avis (2015) is the penetration of mobile phones. The rate of utilizing Facebook, Twitter and blogs is also widespread in Kenya. In a recent study by Asatsa (2017), it was found that sexting was prevalent among adolescent high school students in Nairobi County. The study targeted student within the ages of 12 to 18 in form 2 and 3. This study was a build up to that study as it targeted youth who are between the ages of 18 to 24 years in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County who are practicing sexting.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Sexting is considered to have positive effects among the youth who practice it as it is a way of relieving one's self from sexual frustration while others consider it to be giving them pleasure and amusement (Anastassiou, 2017). To the youth, sexting is a form of having fun, as they enjoy their sexuality. They text as a form of humor or a type of a joke within friendship groups (Bucket, 2015). They are simply flirting and having fun without really intending to have any sexual relations. Despite sexting being described by youth as an alternative of sex where there is no risk of pregnancy (Stanley et al., 2016), Sexting is a global phenomenon that has the interest of researchers, parents, media and policy makers. However, in Kenya this area has not been adequately researched to establish how sexting is affecting the youth, despite having taken up the culture tremendously (Asatsa et al., 2017).

This area of research is gradually growing as youth-sexting gains more attention from educators, lawmakers, and the media; however, it is still very much lacking in qualitative investigations that explore sexting in different contexts such as youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. Moreover, the existing body of research is predominantly

focused on heterosexual relationships, leaving a considerable gap in the literature regarding effects of sexting among young people. This study evaluated the chosen variables in a together. As a result, this study reviewed qualitative investigations into the effects of sexting among the youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.

1.3 General objective

The general objective of this study was to find out the effects of sexting among youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.

1.3.1 Specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Find out whether youth engage in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.
- ii. Investigate the communication channels that the youth use in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.
- iii. Determine the impact of sexting of youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.

1.4 Research questions

- i. Do youth engage in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County?
- ii. Which communication channels that the youth use in sexting in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County?
- iii. What is the impact of sexting of youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County?

1.5 Significance of the study

Youth

The findings of the study may assist youth throughout Kenya, Africa and beyond in understanding the implications of sexting on themselves and the society. Their understanding will assist them make informed choices on the practice of sexting.

Policy makers

The practice of sexting will be comprehensively highlighted and the findings provided. Policy makers may find the document insightful and eye opener, therefore enabling them to develop appropriate policy that will provide guide on how to handle sexting amongst the youth.

Researchers and academicians

Academicians and researchers will find the findings of this study literature worth exploring. The findings will advance more studies by the researchers in this area of study leading to more insights and findings.

1.6 Scope and limitation of the study

The study was limited to youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County, because it contains the highest number of youth within Nairobi City County between the ages 18 to 24 according to Kenya Census Report 2019, which forms our inclusivity criteria therefore giving the study access to a large number of youth for sampling. This study targeted youth aged 18 to 24 years in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County, to enable purposefully sampling to represent majority of youth to guide educators, parents and policy makers to develop guidelines on effects of sexting among the youth.

The study was limited to Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. The study was also limited to the responses of the respondents within Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. The sample selected from the target population was also limited to the study as well as the variables selected.

1.7 Operational terms and concepts

Culture: Particular behavior acceptable to the youth that they have accepted sometimes without giving much thought as a form of socialization.

Flirting: A sexual behavior of being attracted to someone by being playful without necessarily having serious intentions. It may either be through gestures, spoken or put down in writing.

Pornography: Is the use of sexually explicit materials which depict human beings in ways that objectify, dehumanize or degrade the user for the purpose of sexual arousal.

Reputation: The general characteristic of a person based on the judgement of others. It is based on the opinions of others on how they perceive a person.

Sexting: Sending and receiving nude and semi-nude images or/ and sexually provocative text through the phone or social media platforms.

Texting: An act of sending short messages through the use of phones. Texting is achieved through composing and subsequently sending messages that are electronic in format.

Youth: A person who has transitioned from childhood to adulthood irrespective of gender and between the ages of 18 and 24 years.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

According to Kumar (2011), literature is the process the researcher delves into for purposes of mastering and examine the research problem. A review of literature is an account by account narrative of previously published researches by accredited scholars on related topics. A researcher who completes a literature review hopes to achieve an insight into the topic being researched in order to discover areas that have previously been researched on, if they were completed, how it was approached, and what issues the research raised (Wisker, 2008). The aim for this literature review is to assess the effects of sexting among youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. This chapter contain: Empirical review, Theoretical framework, summary of Knowledge gaps and conceptual frame work.

2.1 Empirical Review

This is about opinions of other credited researchers who has done the same research with similar or almost same topic on finding out effects of sexting among the youth. Their findings, conclusions, recommendations, hypothesis by other researchers must be acknowledged.

2.1.1 Youth Engaging in Sexting

Youth exist in a social environment that has been altered by texts messages and instant messaging application among other forms of electronic mobile communication. It's now easier than before to send and receive texts and images courtesy of internet enabled mobile devices. According to Lenhart (2012), youth communicate mostly through texting. They send approximately 20 text messages daily. Sexting which is a coined from sex and texting is defined

as a form of communicating sexually provocative or suggesting texts and images through electronic media (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2013). It is not surprising that the youth are misusing such information and communication technology (ICT), this is because its phase of life. Studies have attributed sexting among youth to be influenced by curiosity (Hudson et al., 2014), immaturity (Giedd et al., 1999) and peer pressure (Makgale & Plattner, 2017).

Two school of thoughts have been advanced over the years. One supports sexting and sees it as a normal form of communication that is harmless and enhances the development of the youth's personal identity and various dimensions of their relationships and sexual expression (Jonsson & Svedin, 2016; Doring, 2014). According to proponents of this thought (Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Julia et al., 2014) youth use sexting as a way of expressing their sexual impulses without exploring them hence preventing transmission of STI's and pregnancies. The other school of thought advances sexting as a behavior that is deviant and risky that requires prevention and interventions (Van Ouytsel et al., 2014). The negative significance of sexting has reported a relationship between sexting and risky sexual behaviors such as being in multiple sexual relationships (Crimmins & Seigfried-Spellar, 2017). According to Jeff and HyeJeong (2014), sexting youth engaging in sexual practices are dating and having sex.

There is an increased possibility for youth who sext to be victims of online bullying, more so internet users who are female (Ofole, 2015). Such victimization leads to a reduction of their well-being. Practices of unprotected sex is also reported for those youth who are sexting. According to Temple (2014), abuse of drugs and alcohol use before sex is another effect related to sexting among youth.

Sexting youth believe that their parents, the media and their peers approve of their behavior (Houck et al., 2014). Lenhart (2009), in a study found that 4% of the youth were sending nude or seminude images while 15% had received them. Temple et al. (2012) later found in the prevalence of sexting youth. Sexting was found to be prevalent and increasing among youth of the age of 18 years and above.

There have been inconsistent findings on the number of youth who are sexting. This has also impacted the sex differences. Despite the lack of consistency in consensus, there exists a general agreement among most scholars that youth may be put at risk in future through compromising images being available online for family, institutions and potential employers' access (Lithwick 2017). Female youth have been found by some studies (Cox communication, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2012) to be sending sext more than male while other studies (Rice et al., 2012; Dake et al., 2012) did not show any difference in the sexes in regards to sending sexts. Other studies have also revealed that male youth were more likely than female youth to receive (Strassberg et al., 2013) and request (Temple et al., 2012) sexts. Madigan et al. (2018) concurs that their lacks consensus in the pattern on the behavior of sexting, which is crucial in directing future policy and research.

2.1.2 Sexting Communication Channels

Sexting is a word that is defined by different scholars in different ways. Its definition has varied according to different scholars as sexting is separated from pornography. Sexting according to Madigan et al. (2018), defines sexting as the use of electronic media to share messages, videos and images which are sexually explicit. Brown et al. (1997) opines that while

some scholars have defined sexting as transmission of nude and semi-nude images through electronic devices, others have incorporated the sharing or dissemination of text messages that are sexually explicit. Anastassiou (2017) on the other hand defines it as self-production of sexually explicit images. The broadest definition is offered by Chalfen (2009) who defines sexting as sharing of sexually suggestive images, or text by means of mobile phone and other social media.

Kiebsbye (2011) includes the use of video messaging, text and photos of implicit and explicit content to be part of sexting. An extended definition of sexting is presented by Bailey and Hanna (2011) who describes it as sending, receiving, forwarding, posting images or texts that are sexualized on a variety of digital platforms such as social networking sites (SNS), blogs, text messaging and e-mail. This definition encompasses a variety of media such as SNS's, blogs, E-mails and mobile phones. Therefore, extending research on sexting beyond use of mobile phones. According to Bailey and Hanna (2011), the extension of media is necessary because youth are sexting through use of a variety of technologies such as chat rooms.

It is particularly important to exploit the relevance of media and new technologies in the expression and exploitation of sexual practices now because individuals, organizations, associations and governments are struggling to clearly define what sexting entails and its legal control and consequences (Theodore, 2011). Sexting is a means by which youth are sexually behaving and communicating especially in these circumstances of communicated mediated by computers (CMC), technology (TMC) and information and communication technologies (ICT's) such as mobile phones. It does not come as a surprise therefore that sexting has been prevalent among youth in this digital generation (Hua, 2012).

Texting or sending of text messages is a common functionality that has enabled communication to take place much faster and effortlessly. Sending short messages SMS is therefore a preferred means by youth as a tool of communication (Thompson & Cupples, 2008). Photographic capabilities have furthermore advanced the functionalities of mobile phones and enabled them to message images and videos. This has enabled communication to take place through non-verbal communication apart from interactions of face to face. The youth as members of a digital generation have therefore been able to exploit the phone in order to participate in their youth culture. Sexting is one of those cultures that the youth have taken up to express their communication and sexual self-expression (Bosch, 2011).

Most youth own mobile phones or smart phones. Ben-Joseph (2018) therefore points that, most youth will find it easy to sext using these mobile gadgets. It is becoming easy for youth to send pictures, messages and videos through the use of smartphones and the internet because they are perceived to be private and anonymous by the youth. Most youth will connect with their friends and the world through smart phones, tablets and laptops, all which have the capabilities of connecting with the internet given the developments in communication technology. It has become easy for youth to communicate in such a way because they consider it private (Ben-Joseph, 2018). According to Haele (2018), sexting has over the decade become prevalent among the youth. This has been attributed to the increased ownership and use of mobile phones among youth. This has in turn increased sexting through mobile phones though others practice it through computers. Madigan (2018) also pointed out that youth's sext using their mobile phones more compared to computers. In the digital age, consensual youth texting has become a normal occurrence in the development of sexual behavior. The increase in the prevalence is particularly observed within older youth who are corresponding through their phones as they exploit their

sexual development. Elhage (2018) attributes this to older youth being more likely to own a mobile phone and possibly dating therefore the increasing in sexting with age. Youth are increasingly carrying phones and tablets and utilizing social media platforms, messaging applications among other communication applications. This has increased the risk to sexting exposure among youth (Hurley, 2019). The utilization of web and mobile phones by the youth in interacting with peers who are both known and unknown in establishing and maintaining relationships is increasing. These communication devices and platforms are therefore a tool by which youth interact and foster development of the sexual identity, self-expression and intimate relationships (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Moreno, 2011).

2.2.3 Impact of Sexting on Youth

Sexting is a form of interpersonal communication that is mediated by computers. It has contributed rapidly to the social and relational space within which youth operate especially digitally. The current social research has present abundant consequences of sexting. Some youth consider sexting as an acceptable practice or culture that takes place while dating or one is interested in the other. To others, it's a result of one's lapse of judgement. Irrespective of the reason that youth use to justify it, it has many effects on their sexual relationship.

There are several serious effects and impacts of sexting to those who receive and send them and as a result it's important to look at these effects (Gordon, 2019). Some have controversial findings on how sexting has affected youth sexual relationship. According to Ferguson (2011), there is a correlation between sexting among youth and engaging in sexual acts without use of protection. Youth engage in sexting because they intend not to become pregnant. This study did not however find a significant correlation between sexting and sexting behaviours including risk factors of having multiple sex partners, being infected with sexual transmitted

diseases (STD's), procuring abortion and unwanted pregnancies. Gordon-Messer et al. (2013) found that sexting had a non-significant relationship with sexual behavior and psychological effects among youth.

Other studies have found a link between sexting among youth and a variety of other demographic and behavioral variables. In a study, Dake et al. (2012) established a significant correlation between sexting and taking part in a variety of sexual practices, substance abuse and use and emotional health behaviors. Walker et al. (2011) therefore considers sexting a public health problem. According to Theodore (2011), sexting being influenced by technology is changing the sexual development of youth and is attributed to their sexualization. It in turn leads to eating disorder, issues in mental health and low self-esteem.

Sexting has the potential for negatively affecting youth through social, physical, emotional and legal punishment. Hua (2012) opines that sexting has more severe effects such as the youth experiencing cyberbullying, problems of emotional health and to extreme level, even suicide. Sexting has been projected as amusing (Burkett, 2015) and fun (Lippman & Campbell, 2014) among the youth. It's in this view that youth sexting has elicited a lot of "media panic" (Ringrose et al., 2012) which has led to concerns from the media, educators and parents alike. Its wide spread application has affected the behavior of youth (Anastassiou, 2017) because of its prevalence. Sexting as portrayed by Anastassiou (2017) involves self-production and dissemination of images deemed sexually provocative has been found to negatively affect the youth sexual behavior as it exposes them to pornography (Stanley et al., 2016) which leads to unwanted sexual practices (Bonino et al., 2006) and encourages sexual harassment (Brown & L'Engle, 2009).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In order to assess the study, it was guided by the following theories: communication privacy management (CPM) theory and technology acceptance model.

2.3.1 Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory

The origin of the theory can be traced to Sandra Petronio who developed it 1991. It was initially called communication boundary management. Communication privacy theory is a theory based on systematic research which values evidence as a means of gaining clarity on the reasons private information is revealed and concealed by people (Griffin et al., 2015). According to the theory a person will conceal or reveal particular information to the other person depending on the value of that information and how they are set to benefit from it. Private boundaries are set within those in communication that enables or disables revealing or concealing information therefore making it either private or public (Samimi & Alderson, 2014). The theory advances three fragments as it projects itself as a management system: privacy turbulence, privacy ownership and privacy control. Information that is personal and not disclosed to others is privacy ownership. It has boundaries and therefore not disclosed. The process by which a person goes through in deciding to disclose information, to who and when is referred to as privacy control.

When privacy boundaries concerning control and ownership are violated then it means whatever was planned has failed. This is known as privacy turbulence. Sexting being a social form of communicating private information relates to this theory. Sexting depends on attachment style and personality traits. Young people who were sexting were found to have some form of attachment with each other (Weisskirch & Delevi, 2011). Communication privacy management theory is about a person deciding to either reveal or conceal their private information to other given the consequences. Sexting involves disclosing private information by sending it to others.

The receiving of that sext has a choice also to make, either to keep it private as the recipient or to violate that privacy by exposing the sext to others not intended to. Sexting is inherently dialectical which means once the sext has been sent, very little can be done in a bid to reveal or conceal the sext. The creator of the sext considers themselves as the owners while the receiver also considers themselves as the owner which makes control a challenge.

2.3.2 Technology Acceptance Model

Davis (1989) is attributed to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). This model is particularly popular among researchers tackling technology acceptance due to its parsimonious and robust nature. According to TAM, new technology is positively perceived to influence optimism of easy use (perceived ease of use (PEU)), while its adoption results in increased productivity (perceived usefulness (PU)). So basically, Iqbal and Bhatti (2015) state that users who find any technology to be easy to use will have a positive perception towards it being useful. Which therefore means there is a positive influence between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. This model is majorly a behavioral one that subscribes to the attitude of the user. The attitude towards use of that particular technology will determine if it will be adopted or if it will be ignored.

A positive attitude will attract the user to the technology. A positive attitude will be influenced by how easy it is to use that technology and how useful they perceive the technology. A negative attitude will lead to the technology being shunned by the user because they will find not be seeing it as useful. Text messaging is not new though its application is considered new technology (Smith, 2010). The robustness and validity of TAM has informed its application in

different contexts of technology including texting. Sexting being an application of texting is one such areas that TAM has been applied to. Sexting among youth is considered a new application in the manner in which they communicate and share their feelings and thoughts for one another. Youth will pick up sexting because it already uses the available technology but in a new way. Their attitude towards sexting is based on how easy it is to take part in that communication behavior and the satisfaction they derive from sexting. Attitude, being a person's either negative or positive feeling will influence the youth in determining if they will engage in sexting with others using the available technology or the will stay away from it.

2.3.3 Knowledge Gaps

Ofole (2015) conducted a survey on sexting behavior among teenagers in Lagos Island: Imperative for Therapeutic Interventions. The study established that majority of the youth had sexted through skype, text, IM, and email. They were motivated by the pressure to look sexy to their partner. Those who had sexted were found not to be relating well with their parents and also had low perception of their body. This study was conducted in Lagos Island and had utilized multiple research instruments to collect data despite the complexity that comes with reconciling data both quantitative and qualitative from different tools. This could lead to inaccurate data analysis.

The study adopted correlational research design and randomly selected respondents from business centers, shopping malls, fashion houses and eateries. The study did not restrict itself to youth and to institutions of higher learning, it was open to all youth in Lagos Island. This study evaluated the chosen variables in a consolidated manner.

This study used purposefully sampling to find out effects of sexting among youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Hudson et al. (2014) focused their study on behavioral indicators and behaviors related to sexting among youth. The study found out that majority of the youth, had at least once in their life time taken part in sexting. Those who were currently sexting were nearly half of the current participants of the study. It also found sexting to be common despite being portrayed by media as a behavior that is risky. The exploratory study focused on youth in United States of America. It adopted a descriptive, cross-sectional design. The variables chosen differed from this study. They were: behavior related to sexting, self-reported behavior intentions, subjective norms and attitude. The technique for sampling was non-random, convenience sample. This study focused on effects of sexting on youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County, Kenya. Descriptive research design was used.

Makgale and Plattner (2017) focused their research on, sexting and risky sexual behaviors among youth in Botswana in an exploratory study. The study found out that most young people were sexting and it was happening among those in relationship. The reason behind it was to flirt, for fun or to initiate sexual activities. The study was conducted in Botswana among youth in only one institution that is the University of Botswana. The variables of the study were: sexting behavior, addressees of sexting, motivation to sext, forwarding of sexts, perception of the risk of sexting, use of alcohol and illicit drugs, sexual activity and risky sexual behaviors. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to determine association and differences between the variables.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

According to Young (2013), a conceptual framework is a visually explanatory framework that uses diagrams to characterize the existing connections between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Independent variables are those variables which are systematically varied by the researcher. Dependent variables are those variables whose values are presumed to depend on the effects of the independent variables. Robson (2012) suggested that a conceptual framework is often developed as a diagram. In this study, the independent variables are: youth engaging in sexting behavior, sexting communication channels and impact of sexting on youth. The dependent variable is effects of sexting on youth.

2.4.1 Youth Engaging in Sexting

Sexting is a social phenomenon brought about by advances in information communication technology. Youth being the early adopters of ICT have taken up texting in a much faster way as a means of communication. The role of mobile phone in the youth subculture has amplified their sexting behavior. The youth have therefore taken up sexting through their mobile phones as a means of attaching to themselves romantically. The sexting behavior has increased over the decade due to the increase in the number of youth who have access to mobile phone. Sexting involves use of mobile phones or other technologies including social networking sites and applications to send, receive sexually provocative images, text messages or videos to peers. This might be a deliberate act or through sharing. Sexting is prevalent within youth and is found to be mostly practiced by youth as they grow older due to their likelihood of owning a phone with age.

Studies have shown that youth frequently text on a daily basis: a number of times in a day. This makes them more likely to sext during that time. Studies have also shown that youth

are more comfortable sexting with a person they are in a relationship with. Sexting is observed to be taking place more between those youth who are dating as they explore their sexual experiences.

2.4.2 Sexting Communication Channels

A variety of researcher have defined sexting in different ways. What remains constant is that sexually provocative images, text messages and videos are deliberately sent to peers. Advances in information communication technology has enabled youth to have a variety of technologies at their disposal for private communication. This includes cell phones, social networking sites, blogs, e-mails, chat rooms among other technologies and applications. Most youth own a mobile phone that they use to text with. Advances in ICT have also equipped these mobile phones with camera, video and internet functionality. This together with the mobility of cellphones has made them their choice for sexting. Youth are currently accessing social networking sites, chat rooms and other social sites using their phones. They are also able to take photos and record videos of themselves and others with ease.

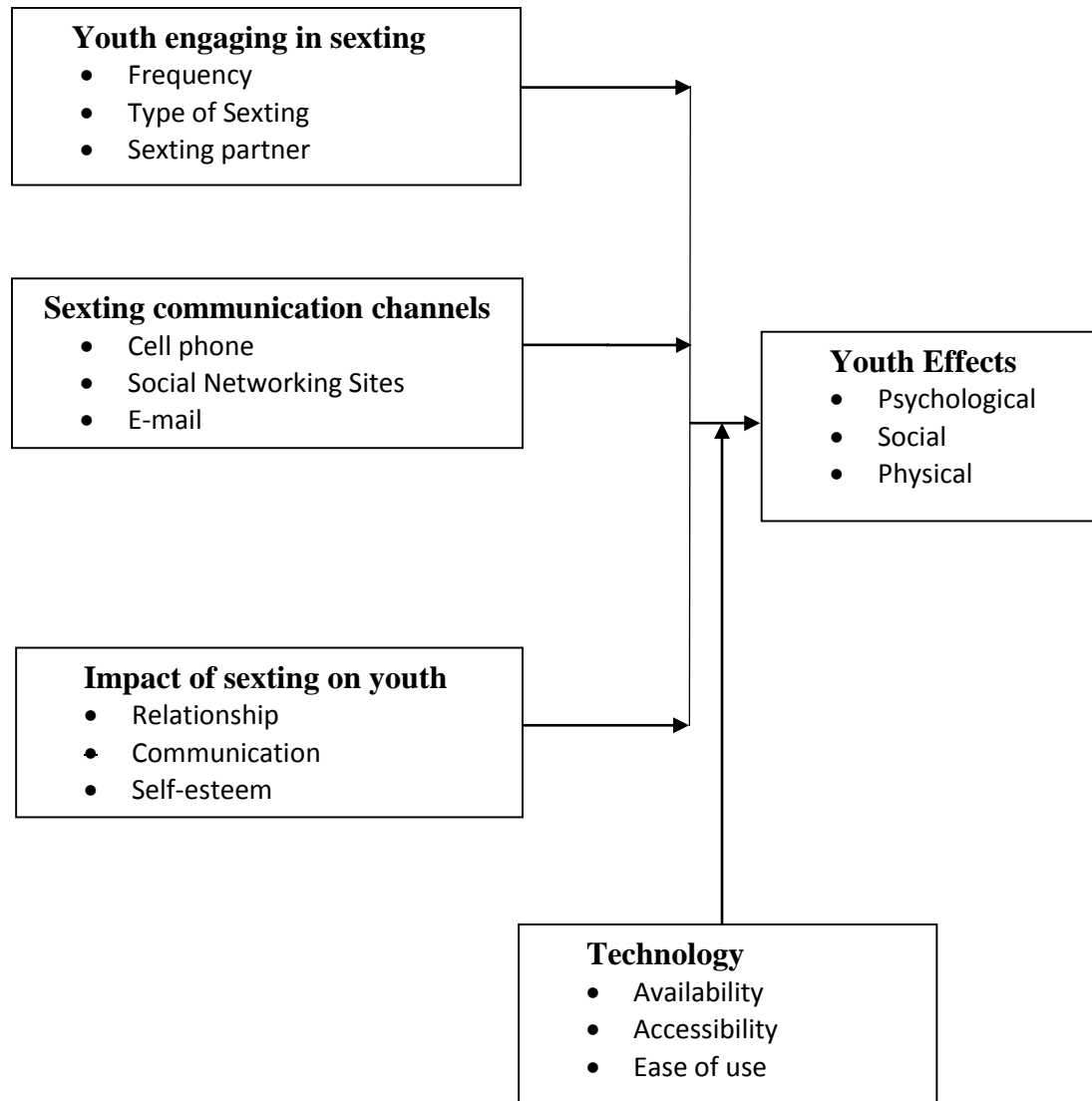
2.4.3 Impact of Sexting on Youth

Sexting has been found to have both negative and positive ramifications to both the receiver and sender of the sext. Sexting is a form of interrelation communication that youth use to explore their relationships and sexuality in what they consider as a safe environment. The youth who are in a relationship sext each other as a form of romantic engagement without the actual sex. Sexting might be practiced by those in a relationship but it also exists between those who are not dating or in a relationship. Youth regards sexting as fun and therefore consider it as a form of communicating among each other. This form of communication is important to youth

as it serves to enhance their sexual relationship. Those in a relationship text to spice up their intimacy and romance.

Independent variables

Dependent variable



Intervening variable

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author, 2020

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter offered an exploration of the methodology suitable for this study and which was used to attain set objectives. This chapter identified ways, description of methods and designed plans that was used to carry out this research to achieve general objective, aim, purpose or specific objectives outlined. This outlined procedure included: Research design, location or site, sample population and sampling types involved, tools and instrument of research. This led to progressive chapter of data collection, analysis, representations and interpretations.

3.1 Research Design

Kothari and Gaurav (2014) describe research design as arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. They continue to explain that research design as the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. This is therefore the plan that a researcher will adopt in answering the question of research.

According to Barbara (2006), the purpose of the research design is to establish how best evidence can be collected in order to effectively answer the research problem as unambiguously as possible. The researcher settled on a single type of research design where focus group discussion and interview guide questions was used to obtain responses from the identified respondents. A descriptive research design was used for this study because of its ability to

accurate portray the situation as it is without interference. It presented the description of the phenomena from the studies perspective.

3.2 Research Approach

Grover (2015) indicate that there are three important approaches that researcher can adopt. These are: quantitative, qualitative and mixed method. An approach is therefore dependent on the world view that a research adopts in explaining the study. Qualitative research techniques were considered for this study.

3.3 Target Population

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) states that a target population is a group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate, as a whole group of events, objects or individuals having a shared observable characteristic. They describe population as the total of all that conforms to a given specification. The target population was arrived at from the data derived from the 2019 census which places youth within Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County to be 68007 (30546 male & 37461 female). This gave the study a better opportunity of accessing respondents within its inclusive parameters which is between 18 to 24 years and actively involved in sexting. It also provided the study with a homogeneous population. Dagoretti North Constituency is well covered on social-economic scale representation of youth, from high class zones Kileleshwa and Kilimani wards, to lower class youth in slums of Kawangware, Gatina and Kabiro wards, thus homogeneous in nature and more suitable for this study. The 2019 census report was therefore the sampling frame for this study.

The study was conducted within Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. Dagoretti North Constituency in Nairobi City County is chosen due to its high number of youth within the ages of 18 to 24, therefore giving the study access to a large number of youth. It will also be considered because of homogenous nature and ability to provide a large and more diverse population homogenous nature of sample respondents. This is according to the data presented by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics for the 2019 census in Kenya.

3.4 Sampling Methods

According to White (2013) it is not possible to study the entire population of interest. Sekaran and Bourgie (2016), advises that instead of collecting data from several hundred or thousands of elements in a population, which would be time consuming and costly, one can sample the population instead. Sampling is a technique that allows a researcher to make inferences about a population based on the nature of the sample. Sampling is used to get a representative sample or a small collection of units from a much larger collection or population so that the researcher can study the smaller group and produce accurate generalizations about the larger group (Pyrzczak et al., 2017).

The study used purposive sampling which provided the required respondents within the age group necessary for this study which was between 18 to 24 years and only those who were engaged in sexting. The main concern of this study was selecting a sample that will be purposefully representative of the population of study. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify key informants and members of focus group discussion. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study (Saunders et al., 2012). Purposive sampling technique is a type of non-

probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money (Black, 2010). According to Saunders et al. (2012), purposive sampling is effective in a study because it is cost-effective, time effective and appropriate where limited primary sources can contribute to the study.

According to Nyumba et al. (2018), there is no consensus on the number of individuals to have within a focus group discussion. Krueger and Casey (2000) while acknowledging this recommends that participants should be in the range of 6 to 8. Prasad (2017) suggests an average of 8 participants in each focus group discussion terming a number bigger than 8 as being a crowd. This study therefore settled on 8 participants per group as suggested by Prasad (2017) and also being the maximum recommended by Krueger and Casey (2000). The researcher held five focus group discussions. In terms of gender, three were male and five females, in each focus group discussion making it a total of 40 participants (15 male and 25 female).

Previous research under literature review have established that female youth are mostly affected, that is why this study sampled 25 female against 15 male. A key informant was identified then used to identify other 4 key informants that participated as respondents during key informant's interview. This study therefore comprised of 5 key informant's interviews and 40 participants of the focus group discussion making it a sample of 45 respondents.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Rugg and Petre (2007) states that data collection is a term used to describe a process of preparing and collecting data. The researcher used focus group discussion FGD and key informant interviews with interview guide questions for focus group discussion. The choice of these data collection methods assisted the researcher in speedy gathering of data from the respondents.

3.5.1 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussion is an approach in which a group of individuals is chosen by a researcher in order to discuss a predetermined topic (Nyumba et al., 2017). This technique is mostly used as a qualitative strategy to gain extensive apprehension of social issues. The aim of this approach is to obtain data from a set of individuals purposively selected instead of a sample that is statistically representative of the target population (Khadka et al., 2013). This study used focus group discussion approach to collect qualitative data from participants. According to Gibson (2012), this approach is capable of yielding data that is observable and also qualitative in nature.

Focus group discussion provided an opportunity to investigate subjects not well comprehended or where previously few studies have been conducted. The five focus groups were coded as follows: KILE, KILI, KAWA, GATI and KABI. Each focus group had 8 participants coded from 01 to 08. For instance, KILE 01 denoting participant 01 in focus group KILE.

3.5.2 Key Informants Interviews

This is a qualitative extensive interview with individuals deemed knowledgeable in certain matters in the community. According to Davis (2019), key informant interview is an assessment conducted on a one to one basis allowing for insightful knowledge to be gained from key leaders and stakeholders. According to Oishi (2003) the primary goal of key informants is to acquire qualitative descriptive description of perception or experiences instead of measuring facets of the experience.

Key informants' interviews provide wide range of knowledge, experience and satisfactory practical answers and information that cannot be found on a different platform of information gathering. It also provides vital and necessary information about topical issues of discussion in the society, assessing the actual situations of the topical issues of discussion. Key informants' interview, with the help of interview guide questions, it provides very confidential information that cannot be accessed from other platforms. Due to experience and life lessons of key informant's, they provide in-depth information about a particular topical issues of discussion.

3.6 Data quality strategies

3.6.1 Pilot Study

Crossman (2013) describes a pilot study as a preliminary small-scale study that researchers conduct in order to help them decide how best to conduct a large-scale research project. It can be said to be a smaller version of a full-scale study as well as an exercise to pre-test certain research instruments such as; focused group discussion, key informant interviews,

questionnaires or interview schedule. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that during the actual study the respondents understand the questions as a result mistakes will be identified and corrected in good time. These anomalies which will be identified before focused group discussions FGD and key informant interviews to respondents in the target population during the pilot study. The researcher conducted a pilot study in Dagoretti South constituency, Nairobi City County. The study made use of 10% of the sample for pilot study as advised by Connelly (2008). The sample for the pilot study was 4 youth (one focus group) within 18 to 24 years and 2 key informants who resides in Dagoretti South Constituency, Nairobi City County.

3.6.2 Data Validity and Reliability

Validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure (Kumar, 2014). Validity is defined as the degree to which the researcher has measured what he has set out to measure (Wisker, 2008). The researcher will ensure validity of the research instrument by seeking the opinion of experts and investing on the supervisor's comments and corrections on the suitability of the questions and structure of the research tools. This will assist in improving the content validity of data collected by ensuring the research tool is revised and modified hence meeting the standards.

Blumberg et al. (2008) opines that reliability as the characteristic of measurement concerned with accuracy, precision, and consistency. To ensure validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was carried out in Dagoretti South Constituency, Nairobi City County. The responses were generalized as suggested by Stenbacka (2001) as the structure for

both doing and documenting qualitative research as a way of determining the trustworthiness or credibility and dependability of the data.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

According to Creswell (2014), data analysis is a practice in which raw data is ordered and organized so that useful information can be extracted from it. The process of organizing and thinking about data is a key to understanding what the data does and does not contain. Data Analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. According to Saunders et al. (2003), various analytic procedures provide a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal from the noise present in the data.

Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and results presented in a narrative form. According to Herzog et al. (2019), thematic analysis (TA) is a foundational and popular approach of analyzing data that is qualitative in nature through analytical constructs such as evaluation of patterns associated with themes, expressions of themes and coding. The research analyzed the content of the responses provided into different themes identified earlier in the study and then presented them in a narrative form under the relevant theme or sub theme. Inferences was made based on the data collected using qualitative approach. The qualitative data was taken, themed together and the outcome presented in a narrative form.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

According to Patton (2002), ethics encompasses the analysis and employment of concepts such as right and wrong, evil and good, transparency, responsibility and accountability. Mugenda (2008) continues by stating that in research process, ethics focuses on the application of ethical standards in the planning of the study, data collection and analyses, discrimination and use of the results. Adequate standards of research were supported by consistent and well-founded reasons. Prior to collecting data, the researcher sought an authorization letter from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for purposes of fulfilling the requirements set by the Ministry of Science and Technology concerning conducting research in Kenya. Request to conduct the study was also sought from the relevant administrative department; National government, Nairobi City County and Dagoretti North and South Constituencies. All information collected was treated with utmost confidentiality. The respondents were treated as anonymous. The researcher informed the respondents the aim of the study, so they participated without fear of the outcome and exploitation. All the information resources used is acknowledged.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

The outcome of the analyzed data is presented at this section followed by relevant discussion. The results are presented thematically in a narrative form using the objectives of this study as a guide.

4.2 Response rate

A total of 5 focus group discussions were conducted in Dagoretti North constituency. Out of the 5 focus group discussions conducted, only 3 focus groups had all the 8 members present. The other 2 focus group discussions had 7 members each. All the 5 key informants were interviewed. This makes the response rate to meet the required standards outlined. This high response rate therefore renders the study acceptable as stated by Babbie (1973) declaring a social research of 50% and above response rate as valid. Bailey (2000) also asserted that a response rate of 70% and above is both credible and acceptable in research.

4.3 Youth engaging in sexting

The focus group discussions started off with a short introduction by the researcher and the research assistant. This was to break the ice and make the respondents warm up. The aim of the study and the purpose of recording proceedings was explained. The ages of the respondents were ascertained by counterchecking their national identification cards putting them in the inclusion zone of ages 18 to 24 years.

4.3.1 Prevalence of sexting

The focus group discussion started off by asking key question if they practice sexting. All the 43 respondents taking part in the discussion responded in the affirmative. This was an important question for this study because it also formed part of the inclusion criteria. Since all the respondents were within the ages of 18 to 24 and were practicing sexting, the discussion continued.

Having ascertained that the respondents in the focus group discussion were practicing sexting, they were asked how frequently they practiced sexting. The following are the extracts from the focus group discussion:

Q1: How frequent do you practice sexting?

KILE 01: ‘Almost on a daily basis.’

KILI 03: ‘Once in a while.’

KILE 03: ‘It’s something I do every now and then.’

KAWA 04: ‘I sext back any time I receive sexting message.’

GATI 08: ‘I sext whenever I get opportunities, so long as I have bundles to go online.’

KAWA 01: ‘This is something that we engage in once in a while, just to spice up the mood of the conversation we are having.’

KABI 07: ‘When the opportunity presents itself.’

KABI 06: ‘I sext almost every time I am online or when am chatting.’

The respondents had divergent views on this matter. This was because each respondent in the focus group discussion was individually testifying to their own individual trend. A common ground could not be reached because sexting was individualized. It was a behavior that an individual was practicing at their own individual time and way. The fact that respondents indicated that they sext every time therefore means that sexting is a form of communication that is practiced by the youth. Makgale and Plattner (2017) found sexting among youth to be so

frequently with the practice mostly being a two-way practice. They found that the youth were highly sexting. Other recent studies (Madigan et al., 2018; Krishna, 2019) however, have in the contrary reported that the youth sexting phenomena has been heightened by the media because the prevalence that has been documented shows a considerable variation in the prevalence that makes it difficult to interpret.

As a follow up question, the respondents from the focus group discussions were asked who was most likely to sext first based on gender: male or female. The extracts of the responses were as follows:

Q2: Which gender initiate sexting, male or female?

KAWA 02: ‘The males are always the ones asking for this naughty picture.’

KILI 06: ‘Definitely male, they are the braver ones.’

KABI 01: ‘Without a doubt, it’s the man who will start off with the sexual conversations then females will of course follow up with an interesting picture.’

GATI 08: ‘I think it just happens. You can’t say it’s this gender or that which will be the most likely to send the first sext.’

KILE 03: ‘This is something that just happens. But men are bold to start the process.’

KILE 02: ‘Men love the curves of our bodies; hence they initiate sexting to explore’

GATI 02: ‘My girlfriend is exposed, she sent me the first sext after I approached her’

The discussion established that the male gender is most of the time the initiator of the sexts but the female gender is the one that spices things up by being the one who will follow it up with an encouraging picture. These sentiments are in tandem with findings of a study by McGraw (2013) that categorizes men as being on top of the chain in initiating sexting through content transmission. Females tend to react more by sending pictures. Makgale and Plattner (2017) also found male to be more likely to send sexts than female. This has been eluded by Silva et al. (2016) is because courtship is mostly initiated by male more than female. The male gender is therefore quick to see the value of initiating this form of communication as it is perceived to be beneficial to them.

The participants of the focus group discussions were asked about the sought of sext they send to each other. This was to ascertain if the sexts were in pictorial form, sexual words, videos, Tiktok or GIF. The extracts are as follows:

KABI 06: 'Just some naughty words over a text conversation.'

GATI 08: 'I do videos that are sexual in nature and send them.'

KILI 01: 'It could do a picture of private areas of my body to suggest sexual intentions.'

KAWA 05: 'It depends. At times you play around with several forms, it can be a series of short videos or pictures or sexual text or even a combination of two or three depending on the mood.'

KILE 02: 'The place where you are at times determines what you send. If you are in a public place or a place without privacy, then sexual words will do. If you have all the privacy, then you can record sexual videos or even take sexual pictures and share them.'

KILI 03: 'For some it's about what the person on the other side wants. If they request for a sexual picture, then that's what you send. If it's a sexual video they want, then that's what they get.'

GATI 04: 'It's hard to sext without words. So what starts out as a sexual conversation might end in the sending of a lot more in the form of pictures and videos.'

These results above show that youth are sending each other sexts in different forms. The sexts can be in the form of sexual text conversations, photos or video. The adopted technologies

as described from the theory seems to be favoring them as they experiment with various forms. The form of text can only be in the form of a sexual text conversation or it can combine a series of forms. This means that sexts are not only confined to one form as they can take a number of forms based on the technology being used. This is what perhaps has informed the broadening of the definition of the term sexting to include not only sexual texts but also sexually explicit video, GIF, tiktok and pictures (Strasburger et al., 2019) of either themselves or others.

The key informants in their interviews were asked about the concept and engagement of sexting among the youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. Their responses were as follows:

'The practice of sexting has become prevalent among youths in these areas.'

'The youths are sexting so much and it doesn't seem to bother them where they are when doing that'

'Youths in this area have taken up sexting so fast. They have embraced the behavior and they have come utilize available technology to their advantage in relation to this behavior.'

'Sexting as a practice has become a routine behavior that youths' practice so much.'

'The youths have taken up social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Tiktok, GIF among others and used them to communicate their sexts among each other. This is a classic example of youth taking advantage of available social media platforms to advance sexting.'

The key informants unanimously agreed that the practice of sexting was prevalent among the youth in the constituency. The behavior had become so common to a point that the youth were not bothered by where they were when going about this practice. The key informants expressed concern that the youth in the area were sexting so much so that it was becoming a routine or addiction, something they could not do without. In regards to the sought of sext the youth were sending each other. The key informants expressed their concern on how fast technology was providing new avenues for this practice. According to them, sexting had progressed from simple text conversations to sending of sexual photographs to sending of videos that had been captured and edited using apps within the phone such as Tiktok and Viv video. Introduction of new technology was leading to new forms of sexts in the form of GIF among others that disappear within 24 hours on WhatsApp. Some had even gone an extra mile of leaving each other naughty voice notes, suggestive stickers and even having arousing video sessions. The findings of this study are consistent with studies by Temple et al. (2012) who found sexting to be prevalent and increasing among youth. However other studies such as that of Madigan (2018), have found a lack of consensus in the pattern on the behavior of sexting, which is crucial in directing future policy and research.

4.3.2 Sexting partner

The study was interested in knowing who the respondents were practicing sexting with, so they were asked to discuss this in the focus group discussion. The study's aim was to establish if the youth were practicing sexting with people they knew or not and if they were in a relationship with them or not. The following are the extracts from the focus group responses:

KILE 05: *'The person I sext with is my boyfriend. He is the only person I can send sexual conversations with even though at times I receive some texts from other people I know but we are not in a relationship with.'*

GATI 08: *'We don't have to be in any relationship to send each other sext, though it has to be to or from someone I know. It is fun that way.'*

KILI 01: *'I sext with a number of people, but am not in any relationship with. They are just friends of mine.'*

KAWA 07: *'I have received sext from strangers and I have responded to them and I have been having this conversation for a while now. I don't know who it is but I enjoy the conversations we have. Yes, I am in a relationship and at time we do sext.'*

KABI 02: *'It is fun sending strangers sexual messages and even receiving them. I think not knowing them is what makes it interesting.'*

KAWA 01: *'Sexting strangers or anonymous people is exciting and fun. It helps boost my personality because they make me feel good.'*

GATI 06: *'Sexting people I know using fake account is fun, I learn how they react, and particularly my secret admirers or the people I have crush on them'*

The results of the focus group discussion show a variation in the people the youth were sexting with. Majority of youth were sexting with people they know or people they are in a relationship with. Few were sexting with strangers whom they have no relationship with whatsoever. The youth were sexting with anonymous people as a way of having fun. It excited

them not knowing the other person and also the compliments they got helped in boosting their morale. The youth also sext using fake account to people they admire secretly to have an intimacy relationship. According to a study by Anderson and Jiang (2018), it was found that youth were sexting among each other though in certain instances, it was taking place with strangers. These findings are therefore in tandem with the results of this study.

The key informants in their interviews were also asked about who the youths were sexting with. Their responses are as follows:

'Youths tend to sext with those they are in some form of a relationship with.'

'Sexting within youth is conducted within a social structure which might be done with friends or even friends of friends that they have been introduced to.'

'Certain youth have become so audacious to a point they are sexting with absolute strangers. These are people they know nothing about nor have they met them in person.'

'It is dangerous to know that youth do not have limits when it comes to sexting. While some sext with those within their circle of friendship others sext with strangers. This puts them at risk of humiliation, cyber bullying or worse because of the anonymity provided by social media.'

According to the key informants, the youth have metamorphosed from sexting within the social structures of being in a relationship to it being practiced with friends. Over time, the youth are now practicing sexting with absolute strangers, people they have not met or even know who they are. The key informants expressed the dangers the youth were exposing themselves to but

indicated that they youth were barely disturbed by their sexting behavior. Key informants also alluded that, youth use fake accounts to sext people they know but cannot approach them for sexual intimacy out of respect or fear.

4.3.3 Reason for sexting

Knowing the reason behind sexting is important. It helps in understanding really why youth sext. So the question was asked to the participant of the focus group discussions. Why do you sext? They responded as follows:

KAWA 08: *'I do it for no particular reason. It's just something I do to pass time. Sometimes I'm bored and I need someone to pass my time with so we send each other suggestive texts and photos just to kick out the boredom.'*

GATI 02: *'To me it's about spicing up my relationship. You know if you don't do these things with the person you are in a relationship with, they will find you boring.'*

KILI 05: *'Others are doing it so I do it.'*

KILE 03: *'I exchange these sexual conversations and pictures with my partner because they want me to. They are always asking for a sexual picture or video so I sent it to them.'*

KABI 01: *'I see no harm in engaging in sexual conversations so for me it's just for fun.'*

KILE 02: *'I sext because I receive so many sexts, so, sexting back is like a volunteer action or addiction.'*

The focus group discussion revealed that youth practice sexting for a number of reasons. Some practice sexting as a past timing activity. This is something they embark on when they are free to past time. They sext each other out of boredom, so as to keep busy. Other youth have considered sexting as a way of ensuring their relationship is spiced up. Sexting in this particular case is being projected as an activity of ensuring those in a relationship keep it going. So that they don't get bored or end up in a relationship which is stale. Youth also practice sexting out of peer pressure. They see others practicing it so they also do the same. The discussion also exposed the element of sexting where youth practice it because of some form of peer pressure from their partners. They would not be sexting if it wasn't for the other partner asking them to send them the sexual pictures and videos. Sexting is also being viewed as a fun activity. Some youth sext because they are hooked and addicted to sexting. They see no harm in the practice so they practice it for fun. The issue of perceived peer pressure which this study has stated in relation to sending of sexual pictures and videos is in tandem with studies by Dir et al. (2013) and Choi et al. (2016). Study by Madigan et al. (2018) and Englander and McCoy (2018) also tend to agree with these findings that sexting was being done as a form of flirting among youth. According to Lippman and Campbell (2014), youth were also engaging in sexting due to peer pressure and coercion. Youths were therefore picking up the practice based on its perceived value to them. This can be derived from the adopted communication privacy management theory.

As a follow up probing question, the youth were asked if they were the ones initiating the sexting or it was initiated by the other person. This was an important question in gendering sexting. The focus group discussion produced the following responses:

KABI 07: *'In my opinion, it's also the men who initiate these sexual discussions.'*

GATI 02: *'Well, I do believe it the boyfriends who are the initiators because they want their girlfriends to send them the nude.'*

KILE 01: *'In some instances you just get surprised by your girlfriend. You open your phone and find they have sent you a suggestive text or video.'*

KAWA 06: *'In my experience, I think as a man, I'm the one who always starts by sending my girlfriend a suggestive text or even a photo then she takes it from there.'*

KILI 08: *'My girlfriend is crazy, her love language is sending nudes and sexual explicit videos and text'*

This study has established that in most cases it's the male that send the sexts or are the initiators of sexting. Though in some few instances, the female takes up the initiative first. In four focus group discussions, male was perceived as the initiators of sexting. These findings contradict the findings by Kugler et al. (2017) who established that female youth initiated the sending of sexual images and video but at the request of male youth. However, Madigan et al. (2018) found that there was no significant gender difference in who initiates sexting.

The youth in the focus groups were asked about their experience in relation to sexting. This was to gauge their likelihood of continuing the practice or stopping it.

GATI 04: *'So far, it has been okay. I don't think I have anything to complain about.'*

KABI 07: *'I have had a bad previous experience. The person I was with in the previous relationship decided to share our conversations with others after we broke up.'*

KAWA 01: *'It has been well. The naughtiness brings out a lot of sparkle in our relationship. It keeps the relationship alive.'*

KILI 08: *'It's been fun, the conversations have made us to be free and easy with each other's sexuality.'*

KILE 06: *'We have bonded a lot using the sexts to a point we have become comfortable with each other's bodies.'*

KAWA 05: *'I feel like stopping this sexting behavior, but I can't it's like I am addicted.'*

The discussion highlighted various perceptions of youth in relation to their experiences. The experience of sexting has been projected by youth as positive. They have expressed their experience as “okay with nothing to complain about.” One respondent expressed it as bringing a sparkle to their relationship. Which means it was making their relationship better. Another perceived it as fun. An experience which made them free and easy with each other's sexuality. Others believed that sexting back and forth had made them bond with each other. Some believed sexting is addiction, though they would like to stop it. While others had positive things to say about their experience, some respondents had expressed a negative experience. A previous relationship had led to their sexts being shared by third parties. This experience was embarrassing. According to Crofts et al. (2015) vast majority of youth practice sexting for the sexy feeling, for flirtatious fun or as a sexy present for a boyfriend or girlfriend. These are the results that have been brought out in this study.

4.4 Channels of sexting

4.4.1 Types of social media being used for sexting

The study was keen on establishing the types of social media networks, channels and sites of sexting by youth in Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County, which ones they preferred and the reason why they prefer these channels or social platforms.

In the focus group discussions, the youths were asked about the different social media networks they use in sexting. Their responses were as follows:

KABI 06: *'I use WhatsApp, Facebook chat and Instagram. They are easily accessible on my phone so I can easily use them.'*

KILI 04: *'For me WhatsApp does it. It is already installed on my phone and most of the people I sext with have WhatsApp.'*

KAWA 02: *'Facebook chat is what I use. It gives me the privacy of meeting new people online that I can sext with. I can access it both on my phone and on a computer.'*

KILE 07: *'Instagram is an app I use and prefer. It provides a base for exchanging the naughty pictures and videos between us.'*

GATI 01: *'I prefer WhatsApp because I can chat, send and receive my naughty picture and videos and now I can explore the voice notes and even do a video call.'*

KILE 01: *'I use apps for both Instagram, tiktok, GIF and WhatsApp. They are easy to use plus they don't require use of a lot of data.'*

KAWA 06: *'WhatsApp is my preferred sexting platform, because it's cheap and available 24/7'*

The findings of the social media channels being used by youth indicated that there are four social media applications that were mostly being used. These applications were WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook chat and GIF or Tiktok. The four social media applications are both web based and in the form of mobile application. Bailey and Hanna (2011) opined that the definition of sexting needs to be extended because youth were sexting through a variety of technologies such as social media platforms including social networking sites (SNS), blogs, text messaging and e-mail. This definition encompasses a variety of media such as SNS's, blogs, E-mails and mobile phones.

The discussions established that WhatsApp was the social media application that was preferred by the youth. Though the other three social media applications (Instagram, Facebook chat & GIF or Tiktok) are also popular but not as popular as WhatsApp.

The focus group discussions established that the four social media platforms were preferred for different reasons. The youth were preferring them for different reasons that made the youth prefer them at a given time or period. The youth using WhatsApp as a sexting platform preferred it because it was easily accessible through their smartphones, allowed them to explore the different forms of sexts such as texts, videos, pictures and GIF. The Facebook chat was preferred because it could be accessed through the phone and also on a computer. Instagram was preferred because of its ability to send pictures and video. All the four platforms could be accessed through the phone in the form of applications. Another reason why WhatsApp was preferred was because youth were using the application, it was easy to use because it is economical. The results show that accessibility, ease of use and ability to accommodate multiple

formats was making one application more appealing than the other. According to Madden (2013), the proliferation of internet enabled handheld devices, sending messages and images has become easier than ever before. The youth have taken up the technologies and application depending on their ease of use as prescribed by technology acceptance model. This has in turn resulted in their adoption and use in sexting.

The key informants in their respective interviews were asked about the social media platforms and channels that the youth use in sexting in Dagoretti North constituency and which is the most preferable and accessible.

'Youths have adapted over time and learnt how to use various social media platforms in sexting.'

'Well youth have a lot of platforms that they are currently using. These include the famous WhatsApp, Facebook, Tiktok or GIF, and Instagram among others.'

'WhatsApp seems to be popular with youth hence they use it a lot to sext. This is because it's a popular phone application and also uses very little internet data.'

'There are several platforms in the market that are easily accessible through smart phones. These are the ones youth are currently exploring. They tend to go for popular phone applications which provide them with multiple forms of messaging such as text, video and pictures.'

In the interviews, the key informants noted that several social media platforms and channels were being used by youth in Dagoretti North constituency. The key informants named WhatsApp, Facebook chat, Instagram and GIF and Tiktok. They mentioned that these platforms were popular with the youth hence their adoption by the youth in sexting practices. The key informants expressed that the named social media platforms and applications were popular with

the youth in that area for sexting because they were easily accessible through their phone, they were downloadable for free, they provided the youth the privacy that came with sexting and they accommodated different forms of media such as text, video, pictures and GIF. Some of these platforms also came with features that allowed for photo and video editing. This suited the youth in creating their sexual creativity. This study is in tandem with a study by Madden (2013), which established that youth embrace technology so fast making them explore mobile phone applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram in their sexting practices. The adoption of these platforms is based on how easy it is to use them in sexting.

4.4.2 Ownership of smartphone/computer/laptop

The study was keen to establish if the youth own or have access to smart phone, computer and/ or a laptop. This was to determine if they are using these gadgets to practice sexting.

The first discussion question for the focus group was if they own either a smartphone and/or a computer and/ or a laptop.

KILI 05: 'I own a smart phone as well as a laptop.'

GATI 01: 'I have a smart phone.'

KILE 08: 'What I own is a smart phone but I have a desktop computer in the house that we use as a family.'

KAWA 02: 'I have both a smart phone and a personal desktop computer in the house.'

KABI 06: *I have access to a desktop computer in the office that is connected to the internet and I also own a smart phone.'*

KAWA 01: *I own a smart phone and a laptop, but I can access computer desktop at home though I don't like using it that much.'*

The discussions established that all the youth owned a personal smartphone. No one among the youth did not have a smart phone for their personal use. Some of the youth had access to personal laptops that were connected to the internet as well as desktop computers. Smart phones were owned by all the youth in the focus group discussions while some had access to desktop computers and laptops. Most youth own mobile phone or smart phone. Ben-Joseph (2018) therefore points that, most youth will find it easy to sext using these mobile gadgets. It is becoming easy for youth to send pictures, messages and videos through the use of smartphones and the internet. The youth as members of a digital generation have therefore been able to exploit the phone in order to participate in their youth culture. It therefore does not come as a surprise therefore that sexting has been prevalent among youth in this digital generation (Hua, 2012). Photographic capabilities have furthermore advanced the functionalities of mobile phones and enabled them to message images and videos.

Having established the communication gadgets, the youth owned and had access to, the focus group discussion shifted to establishing which communication gadgets they used to connect to the internet with.

KILE 04: *'My phone is internet enabled, so that is what I use most of the time to connect to the internet with.'*

GATI 01: *'I spend all my time with my smartphone. It's part of me. When I need to connect to the internet that is what I use.'*

KAWA 07: *'I have a phone that connects to the internet so that is what I use, but I also connect to the internet using a desktop computer while am at work.'*

KILI 05: *'I go online using both my laptop and my phone since I own both. So at times I use the laptop and at times I use my phone.'*

KABI 08: *'I use the desktop computer at home some of times but I prefer connecting to the internet using my smartphone.'*

The focus group discussions established that the youth mostly prefer to connect to the internet using their smart phones because that is the communication gadget that they mostly have access to. Most of the youth do not own or have access to computers and laptops so their connection to the internet using these communication gadgets is therefore reduced considerably. The few youth who connect to the internet using the desktop computer or laptop either have access to them at home or within their work places. Smart phones therefore remain the gadget used by the youth to connect to the internet because it's accessible, they already own internet enabled smart phones.

According to Ben-Joseph (2018) most youth will find it easy to sext using these mobile gadgets as it is becoming easy for youth to send pictures, messages and videos through the use of smartphones that can connect to the internet. Internet enabled smart phones are perceived to be

private and anonymous by the youth. Most youth will connect with their friends and the world through smart phones, tablets and laptops, all which have the capabilities of connecting with the internet given the developments in communication technology (Ben-Joseph, 2018). According to Haele (2018), sexting has over the decade become prevalent among the youth. This has been attributed to the increased ownership and use of mobile phones among youth. This has in turn increase sexting through mobile phones though others sext using computers. Madigan (2018) also pointed out that youth sext using their mobile phones more compared to computers. These communication devices and platforms are therefore a tool by which youth interact and foster development of the sexual identity, self-expression, intimate relationships and social well-being (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Moreno, 2011).

4.5 Impact of sexting on youth

This section discusses the impacts of sexting. The impacts discussed were both positive and negative in relation to youth and sexting. It also dealt with matters of physical sexual contact caused by sexting and the feeling the youth had when their sext was exposed to another person without their consent.

The youth in the focus group discussions were tasked with sharing on the consequences of sending sexually explicit pictures and videos of themselves to others as sext.

KABI 05: *'Me sending sexually explicit pictures and videos to the partner am sexting with is purely for amusement and sexual arousal. So the consequences are that my partner will continue being attracted to me because I have found means of being together despite the distance.'*

GATI 07: *'The problem of sending sexually explicit videos or pictures is someone else ending up seeing them without your permission. These pictures and videos might be shared or be viewed by others not intended for, therefore bringing me a lot of embarrassment.'*

KILI 01: *'To me, sending them spices up my relationship and so we end up having a stronger bond in our relationship.'*

KAWA 08: *'The problem with sending sexually explicit pictures and videos is that they may be forwarded or shared with a third party. I remember after breaking up with my partner, he decided to share sexually explicit video online. It wasn't a good experience. People online ended up trolling me and making very bad comments that tormented me so much. I was depressed for some time.'*

KILE 01: *'Sending sexually explicit videos and pictures has made my relationship fun to be in. my fiancée and I always make these short videos and share them among ourselves. It has improved our relationship sexually.'*

KAWA 08: *'These videos and pictures are arousing and so at times they put you in the mood for exploring sex. There was a time my partner was away and she sent me a sexually arousing video that left me touching myself in the house because I was alone in the house yet she wasn't there to assist with these feelings I was having.'*

KABI 07: *'Actually this time my girlfriend sent me an arousing video, it turned me on to a point I had to look for an alternative girl who was around to have sex with to counter the feeling.'*

KILE 05: *'The sexts are arousing so yes, the feeling of touching one's self is always alive.*

Where someone is will depend if they touch themselves or not. But no, it never got to the point where I sought sexual contact from my partner or someone else.'

GATI 06: *'Sometimes the feeling of arousal can be overwhelming. I find myself going to my fiancée's place to seek satisfaction or if they are far at times I seek someone else to fulfill my sexual needs.'*

KILE 05: *'Most of the times these sessions of arousal due to sexting have always led to sexual contact because the feeling is too much for me to control myself.'*

KILI 03: *'Sexting destroyed me, after it led me to irresponsible sexual behavior with any woman available, including our house girl, close family friends and my cousins'*

KILI 07: *'There is always the feeling of uncertainty once you send someone a sexually explicit video or picture because you never know where it's going to end up because you don't have control. I remember seeing some pictures I sent my boyfriend years ago surfacing online on a social media platform. I don't know how they ended there but they left me exposed. I was stressed and annoyed. I had to deactivate my social media platforms for some time because I was being bullied online by people I didn't even know. My morals were questioned by friends and family who came across them.'*

GATI 08: *'Women are more affected when these sexually arousing pictures and videos are posted online or shared with others without their consent.'*

KILE 04: *'Sexting has led me on several occasions to masturbation when my fiancée is far away from me, or seeking alternative available person to satisfy my sexual desires exposing me to various STDs'*

KAWA 04: *'Sexting during this lock down due to COVID 19 pandemic, it aroused my feelings and messed me up completely because I was not able to access my fiancée, and unable to control my sexual feelings. I cheated on several occasions and now I am almost two months pregnant'*

KILE 05: *'The society still judges women harshly when it comes to sexual issues. When their sexually arousing pictures or even videos are shared or posted online, women are vilified and projected as having loose morals.'*

KAWA 05: *'Men somehow get away with it when their sext is exposed or shared. The effect is not the same. The society is harsh on women than it is on men making the consequences real hostile to women.'*

KILE 04: *'Once these sexts are out to third parties, I don't think it matters much if they are of a woman or a man. To me the consequences are the same for both genders.'*

KAWA 06: *'I wouldn't say am aware that my sexual pictures or videos have been shared by any other person not intended to. My past and current situation therefore means I have no reason of stopping this practice any time soon'*

GATI 01: *'My previous experience was not good. My ex-boyfriend shared some of our intimate pictures and videos with his friends. Well that was the past, I believe not everyone is like him. So am going to continue hoping that it doesn't happen again.'*

KABI 05: *'Am a little cautious with what I share because I know anything can happen leading to my intimate moments being shared. So if it's a sexually explicit picture I always hide or blur my face, if it's a video, I make sure I cannot be identified.'*

The focus group discussions have shown a mixture of both positive and negative consequences of sexting, what we are terming as sending explicit pictures and videos. The youth have talked about the positive side of sexting. In this they have provided accounts of how sexting has resulted in spicing their relationships, their relationship bonds have become stronger and their partners have become more interested in them as well as making the relationships interesting. On the negative side of sexting, the youth have provided accounts of their sexts being shared with third parties without their consent or even their sexually explicit videos and pictures being posted online. This has consequently led to embarrassment, anger, depression, humiliation, harsh judgment and cyber bullying by people they know and even strangers.

To the youth, females were bearing more of the negative consequences as compared to their male counterparts. The youth believe the society is still intolerant to women when it comes to exposing their nakedness and sexual organs. The issue of physical sexual contact was divisive as some reported they were so aroused by the sexual videos and pictures to a point of seeking someone to satisfy their sexual urges with their partners or even strangers. In addition, some youth pointed to seeking multiple sexual partners owing to this practice, that led to masturbation or having multiple sexual partners. Others however were able to control the urge of seeking physical sexual contact from other people or their partners.

COVID 19 lockdown, activated sexting among youth who were locked down in different places, leading to multiple sexual partners, exposing the youth to STDs and unwanted

pregnancies. The youth have reported instances of their intimate moments being shared by others without their consent. Some of the youth have had their sexts shared, but there are determined to continue with sexting since they consider what happened to be in the past. Other youth also mentioned continue sexting though with caution such as taking measures to protect themselves.

According to Ferguson (2011), there is a correlation between sexting among youth and engaging in sexual acts without use of protection. Dake et al. (2012) established a significant correlation between sexting and taking part in a variety of sexual practices, substance abuse and use and emotional health behaviors as well as unwanted sexual practices (Stanley et al., 2016). Hua (2012) opines that sexting has more severe effects such as the youth experiencing cyberbullying, problems of emotional health and to extreme level, even suicide. Sexting has been projected as amusing (Burkett, 2015) and fun (Lippman & Campbell, 2014) among the youth.

The key informant's interviews also confirmed what had been revealed by the youth. The key informants indicated that:

'Sexting has and is affecting the youth though its impact depends on the individual.'

'The youth find sexting to be stimulating them sexually. This allows them to self-satisfy themselves without actual physical sexual encounter.'

'Certain sexting instances have impacted the youth negatively. It has led them to continuous masturbation or even soliciting for sex from friends or even strangers.'

'The sext ones sent take away their control as they can be shared a number of times with people not intended for. This can result in humiliation, depression or even suicide.'

The key informants stated that they were very concerned with how sexting was affecting the youth of Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County. They were concerned that sexting was leading this youth to self-stimulation which was a double-edged sword. On one side the self-stimulation was making the youth satisfy themselves in a personal level through masturbation. On the other hand, the self-stimulation was leading to youth engaging in risky behavior such as having sex without protection and in some cases having multiple sexual partners. The key informants eluded that the youth were hooked up to masturbation because of self-arousal caused by continuous sexting.

According to the key informants, the youth were not in control of the sexually arousing pictures or videos. This meant that the videos and pictures were at times ending up on online platforms. These pictures and videos once online were leading to public ridicule, suicide and depression among the youth. Their self-esteem was being lowered to dangerous levels by cyberbullying and tormentors who don't know when to stop or what harm they were causing to these youths.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The study is summarized within this chapter, conclusions established and recommendations provided for future studies in this subject area.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Youth engaging in sexting

The study was keen on establishing the prevalence of sexting among youth of Dagoretti North constituency. So the discussion started by establishing their frequency of sexting. The trends were individualized as each youth testified to their own trend of sexting. The study established that it was a behavior that an individual was practicing at their own individual time and way. The fact that respondents indicated that they sext every time therefore means that sexting is a form of communication that is practiced by the youth. The discussion established that the male gender is most of the time the initiator of the sexts but the female gender is the one that spices things up by being the one who will follow it up with an encouraging picture or video.

The participants were asked about the sought of sext they send to each other. The study established that the youth were sending each other sexts in different forms. The sexts can be in the form of sexual text conversations, photos or video. The form of text can only be in the form of a sexual text conversation or it can combine a series of forms. This means that sexts are not only confined to one form as they can take a number of forms based on the technology being used. The key informants unanimously agreed that the practice of sexting was prevalent among the youth in the constituency. The behavior had become so common to a point that the youth

were not bothered by where they were when going about this practice. They expressed concern that the youth in the area were sexting so much so that it was becoming a routine, something they could not do without. In regards to the sought of sext the youth were sending each other. The key informants expressed their concern on how fast technology was providing new avenues for this practice. According to them, sexting had progressed from simple text conversations to sending of sexual photographs to sending of videos that had been captured and edited using apps within the phone such as Tiktok and Vivavideo. Introduction of new technology was leading to new forms of sexts in the form of GIF among others that disappear within 24 hours on WhatsApp. Some had even gone an extra mile of leaving each other naughty voice notes, suggestive stickers and even having arousing video sessions.

The study established a variation in the people the youth were sexting with. A majority of youth were sexting with people they knew or people they were in a relationship with. Few were sexting with strangers whom they have no relationship with whatsoever. The youth were sexting with anonymous people as a way of having fun. It excited them not knowing the other person and also the compliments they got helped in boosting their morale. The key informants confirmed the views of the youth. They stated that the youth had metamorphosed from sexting within the social structures of being in a relationship to it being practiced with friends. Over time, the youth were now practicing sexting with absolute strangers, people they have not met or even know who they were. The key informants expressed the dangers the youths were exposing themselves to but indicated that they youth were barely disturbed by their actions. The key informants confirmed with the youth that, sexting led to incest after the youth got attracted to their cousins sexually.

The study established that youth practice sexting for a number of reasons. Some practice sexting as a past timing activity. This is something they embarked on when they were free to past time. They sext each other out of boredom, so as to keep busy. Other youth had considered sexting as a way of way of ensuring their relationship was spiced up. Sexting in this particular case was being projected as an activity of ensuring those in a relationship kept it going. So that they don't get bored or end up in a relationship which was stale. Youth also practiced sexting out of peer pressure. They saw others practicing it so they also did the same. Covid 19 lockdown was also another reason for sexting among the youth. The discussion also exposed the element of sexting where youth practice it because of some form of pressure from their partners. They would not be sexting if it wasn't for the other partner asking them to send the sexual pictures and videos. Sexting was also being viewed as a fun activity. They saw no harm in the practice so they practiced it for fun.

This study had established that in most cases it's the male that send the sexts or are the initiators of sexting. Though in some few instances, the female took up the initiative first. In most of the focus group discussions, male was perceived as the initiators of sexting. The discussion highlighted various perceptions of youth in relation to their sexting experiences. The experience of sexting had been projected by youth as positive. They had expressed their experience as "okay with nothing to complain about." One respondent expressed it having brought a sparkle to their relationship. Which means it was making their relationship better. Another perceived it as fun. An experience which made them free and easy with each other's sexuality. Others believed that sexting back and forth had made them bond with each other. While others had positive things to say about their experience, some respondents had expressed

negative experiences. Previous relationship had led to their sexts being shared by third parties. This experience was not only embarrassing but depressing, shameful and led to cyberbullying. Others sexting exposed them to incest, unwanted pregnancies, multiple sexual partners leading to spread of STDs.

5.2.2 Channels for sexting

The study was keen on establishing the types of social media networks and sites the youth of Dagoretti North constituency were using in sexting, which ones they preferred and the reason why they prefer these channels. The study established that youth were mostly utilizing three social media applications. These applications were WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook chat. The three social media applications are both web-based and in the form of mobile application. It was established that WhatsApp was the social media application that was preferred by the youth. Though the other two social media applications (Instagram and Facebook chat) are also popular but not as popular as WhatsApp. The focus group discussions established that the three social media platforms were preferred for different reasons. The youth preferred them for different reasons that made them to be used at a given time or period. The youth using WhatsApp as a sexting platform preferred it because it was easily accessible through their smartphones, allowed them to explore the different forms of sexts such as texts, videos, pictures and GIF. Facebook chat was preferred because it could be accessed through the phone and also on a computer. Instagram was preferred because of its ability to send pictures and video.

All the three platforms could be accessed through the phone in the form of applications. WhatsApp was also preferred because many youths were using the application, it was easy to use

and because it was utilizing very little internet bundles. The results show that accessibility, ease of use and ability to accommodate multiple formats was making one application more appealing than the other. The key informants noted that several social media platforms and channels were being used by youth in Dagoretti North constituency. The key informants named WhatsApp, Facebook chat and Instagram channel.

They mentioned that these platforms were popular with the youth hence their adoption by the youth in sexting practices. They stated that the named social media platforms and applications were popular with the youth in that area for sexting because they were easily accessible through their phone, they were downloadable for free, they provided the privacy that came with sexting and they accommodated different forms of media such as text, video, pictures and GIF. Some of these platforms also came with features that allowed for photo and video editing. This suited the youth in creating their sexual creativity.

The study was keen to establish if the youth own or have access to smart phone, computer and/or laptop. This was to determine if they are using these gadgets to practice sexting. The study established that all the youth owned a personal smartphone. No one among the youth did not have a smart phone for their personal use. Some of the youth had access to personal laptops that were connected to the internet as well as desktop computers. Smart phones were owned by all the youth in the focus group discussions while some had access to desktop computers and laptops. Most youth own mobile phone or smart phone.

The study established that the youth mostly prefer to connect to the internet using their smart phones because that is the communication device that is easily accessible and available. Most of the youth did not own or had access to computers and laptops so their connection to the internet using these communication gadgets was therefore minimized considerably. The few youth who connected to the internet using the desktop computer or laptop either had access to them at home or within their work places. Smart phones therefore remain the device mostly used by the youth to connect to the internet because it was accessible and it was already enabled to internet connection.

5.2.3 Impact of sexting on youth

The study had shown a mixture of both positive and negative consequences of sexting, what was being termed as sending of explicit pictures and videos. The youth had talked about the positive side of sexting. In this they provided accounts of how sexting had resulted in spicing of their relationships, their relationship bonds becoming stronger and their partners becoming more interested in them as well as making the relationships interesting. On the negative side of sexting, the youth have provided accounts of their sexts being shared with third parties without their consent or even their sexually explicit videos and picture being posted online. This had consequently led to embarrassment, anger, depression, humiliation, harsh judgment and cyber bullying by people they know and strangers.

To the youth, female was bearing most of the negative consequences as compared to their male counterparts. The youth believed the society was still intolerant to women when it comes to exposing their nakedness and exposing sexual organs. The issue of physical sexual contact was divisive as some reported they were so aroused by the sexual videos and pictures to a point of seeking someone to satisfy their sexual urges with their partners or other people. Also some

youth pointed to seeking multiple sexual partners owing to this practice, including cousins. Others however were able to control the urge of seeking physical sexual contact from other people or their partners.

The youth had reported instances of their intimate moments being shared by others without their consent. Some of the youth have had their sexts shared though they said they would continue with the practice because they considered what had happened to be in the past. Other youth also mentioned continuing with sexting though with caution such as taking measures to protect themselves.

The key informant's interviews also confirmed what had been revealed by the youth. The key informants stated that they were very concerned with how sexting was affecting the youth of Dagoretti North constituency. They were concern that sexting was leading these youths to self-stimulation which was a double-edged sword. On one side the self-stimulation was making the youth satisfy themselves in a personal level. On the other hand, the self-stimulation was leading to youth engaging in risky behavior such as having sex without protection and in some cases having multiple sexual partners and incest. The key informants eluded that the youth were hooked up to masturbation because of self-arousal caused by continuous sexting.

According to the key informants, the youth were not in control of the sexually arousing pictures or videos. This meant that the videos and pictures were at times ending up on online platforms. These pictures and videos once online were leading to public ridicule, suicide and depression among the youth. Their self-esteem was being lowered to dangerous levels by cyberbullying and tormentors who didn't know when to stop or what harm they were causing to these youths. The key informants though agreeing by pointing out the risks and impacts of

sexting among the youth of Dagoretti North constituency could unanimously agree on who was mostly at risk in regards to sexting. While some pointed out that both male and female youth were equally at risk, some pointed out that female youth were more at risk. Their argument was that male youth were being judged softly by the society because they are viewed as polygamous beings by nature while female youth were being viewed as being promiscuous.

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5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that sexting is prevalent among the youth of Dagoretti North constituency. The practice has been established by this study to be of considerable level of concern to the youth and other stakeholders. In most cases, the study has established that male youth often initiated the sexting but then the female youth often followed it up by sending a sexually explicit picture or video. The youth using the available technologies were sending sexts in the form of text, photos and videos. Either using one form or a combination of the different forms of sexts. Sexting has become so prevalent to a point the youth had become comfortable with the practice to even undertake in public spaces.

It was established that phone applications such as Tiktok and Vivavideo were being used to capture and edit photos and videos for sexting purposes. The youth were therefore sexting with both people they know or are in a relationship with and people they didn't know or strangers or anonymous people. This they did for fun or because it made them feel good because of the compliments they were getting. The reasons attributed to their sexting practice was to kill boredom, for fun, to spice up their relationship, peer pressure or pressure from their partners.

It was concluded by the study that the youth mostly used three applications for sexting; WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook chat. These social media applications are both web-based applications as well as smartphone installed applications. The most popular social media application being used by these youth is WhatsApp. The three social media platforms were being preferred for different reasons. WhatsApp was easily accessible, popular and supported text, video, picture and GIF. Facebook was preferred because it could be accessed both on the phone and on a computer.

Instagram was preferred because of its ability to post both pictures and video. Accessibility, ease of use and ability to accommodate multiple format of sexts made one application more appealing than the other. Allowing of photo and video editing was another reason as it suited their sexual creativity. The youth were mostly owning smartphones. This made it the preferred communication device for sexting. It was both accessible, offered privacy and internet enabled.

The study concluded that sexting had both positive and negative impact on the youth. Sexting had improved their relationships by spicing them up and improving their self-esteem as sexual partners. Sexting had also forged stronger bonds in their relationships. Sexting also had a

negative side. No control of send sext. This meant that they sext could be shared without their consent or even posted online. This resulted in embarrassment, anger, depression, humiliation, harsh judgement and cyberbullying by people they know and strangers. Sexting also resulted in sexual arousal which at times led to self-satisfaction through touching of the body and masturbation, incest and also seeking sexual satisfaction from their partners or other people. It was concluded that female youth were more affected by the negative impact of sexting than male youth.

5.4 Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations:

- i. This study established that, sexting is so prevalence among the youth, hence the study recommends a wider study to establish the true magnitude of sexting among youth in Kenya. This is important because currently the studies that have been conducted have not been wide in scope to provide a country perspective. This study only focused on youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County. It is recommended that further studies to be done in at least one constituencies of 47 counties in Kenya, to actual establish the preferences of effects of sexting among youth in entire country. The study can also go beyond the limitations of this study which is only targeting the youth between the ages of 18-24, to adults in relationships or marriages of ages above 24.
- ii. On channels of communications used for sexting, this study recommends control access to social networking sites on all web application portal that the youth use in sexting, particularly channels such as; WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram portals as commonly used platforms in sexting. The government of republic of Uganda and China has adopted control access policies to this social network platform to control sexting and deny access

to pornographic sites. The Ministry of Interior and Internal Security, in collaboration with ICT ministry, should come up with policies to regulate content on social platforms and stiff penalties through the Act of parliament to online social crimes, such as:

Cyberbullying, Sexting, uploading or sending of sexual content to be punishable by laws of Kenya. The study also recommends the main channels of sexting to have control access measures and detective monitoring system that can establish sexting chats and other obscene conversation online to actual know the exact sexting preferences among youth.

- iii. This study after evaluating and analyzing negative and positive impacts of sexting, it also recommends that: Parents, youth, religious leaders, politicians, educators, policy makers and any other persons affected directly or indirectly with impacts of sexting, to be included together with other key stakeholders to deliberate on this matter of sexting. This study recommends proper direction will only be provided if all the stakeholders come together to understand and address these negative impacts of sexting among the youth.
- iv. The study also recommends the Ministry of Education and Health Services to incorporate “Sexting” in training curriculum to enable youth in learning and tertiary institutions to understand effects and impacts of sexting to their sexual moral behavior. This will inform the youth in making informed decision on effects of sexting before getting involved directly.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

This study only managed to analyze youth between the ages of 18 to 24 years. It will also be important to study those who are married and how sexting affects them. Other studies similar to this should also be conducted though in other constituencies within Kenya to offer a platform

of comparison on the prevalence and effects of sexting. A country wide study needs also to be undertaken to establish the true magnitude and prevalence of sexting among youth. NGOs, CBOs, government departments and other interested stakeholders need to expand this study, to find out the effects of sexting on STDs or how sexting affects youth moral sexual behavior.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introductory Letter

Dear Respondent,

I am a Masters Student at the University of Nairobi, School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I am currently conducting a research on *the effects of sexting among the youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County*.

I hereby request for your assistance by participating in focus group discussion (FGD) or key informant interviews. This will provide necessary information required for this study. The information will be treated with confidentiality and it will be beneficial to the researcher as well as parents, policy makers, government institutions, religious groups and youth in general.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further information, contact me at:

Bukachi Gabriel Chapia

Tel: 0712800561

Email: chapiabukachi@gmail.com

Appendix II: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Note: All probing questions will be added in accordance with respondent's feedback.

Section A: Youth sexting

Q1: Do you practice sexting?

Q2: How frequently do you sext?

Q3: What sort of sext do you exchange? Pictures, sexual words, videos, or texts.

Q4: Who do you practice sexting with? Boyfriend, girlfriend, anonymous persons.

Q5: Are you still in a relationship with them?

Q6: Why were you sexting with anonymous persons?

Q7: What was the reason behind sexting?

Q8: Is it something you initiate or its initiated by the other person?

Q9: What is the experience like?

Section B: Social platforms and channels of sexting

Q1: What social networks and sites do you use? E.g. Facebook, Facebook chat, twitter, forums, blogs, other online chat, skype.

Q2: Which sexting channel do you prefer?

Q3: Why do you prefer these channels?

Q4: Do you own or have access to smartphones or/and computers/laptops?

Q5: Which one do you own, smart phone or computer/ laptop?

Q6: Which one do you use to connect to the internet with, smart phone or computer/ laptop?

Q7: Do you sext using your smart/ mobile phone/ computer/ laptop?

Q8: Is it through normal sending of texts or through websites and apps?

Q9: Which one do you prefer in sexting? Why?

Section C: Effects of sexting on youth

Q1: Are there any consequences or effects involved with sending sexually explicit picture and videos of yourself?

Q2: Can you provide any examples?

Q3: Are these consequences different for boys than for girls?

Q4: During and after sexting, have you felt the need for physical contact sexual behavior?

Give examples.

Q5: Did you go ahead with physical sexual contact behavior,

Q6: Can you share your experiences before, during and aftermath of physical sexual contact behavior?

Q7: Have your sexts ever been exposed to person not intended to without your consent?
Who?

Q8: What was that experience like?

Q9: Any lesson learnt from this experience?

Appendix III: Key Informant Interview Schedule

Note: All probing questions will be added in accordance with respondent's feedback.

Questions

Section A: How Youth Engage in Sexting.

1. How would you describe the concept and engagement of sexting, among youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County?
2. How would you describe the different types or forms of sexting, youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County are engaged?
3. How prevalent do you think the youth in Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County, engage in sexting?

Section B: Social platforms and other channels youth use in sexting

1. Which social platforms and channels are youth in Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County using to sext and Why?
2. From your understanding, which is the most available social platform or channel youth in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County use in sexting and why?
3. Share several sexting social platforms or channels used for sexting by youth from Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi City County.

Section C: Impacts of sexting

1. Which sex (Male or female) of youth do you think are mostly at risk in terms of sexting in Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County?

2. What do you think is the risks of sexting among the youth of Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County?
3. What do you see as the effects or impacts of sexting upon the youth of Dagoretti North constituency, Nairobi City County?