AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DIGITAL DATING AMONG THE YOUTH IN NAIROBI COUNTY

BY

JAMES OCHIENG ONYANGO

K50/12216/2018

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE AWARD OF MASTER'S DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

TO

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

OCTOBER 2021

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented to any other institution or forum for any other award before this declaration.
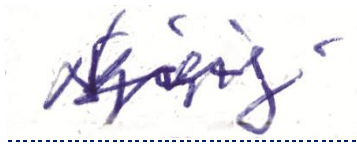
Signed ....   Date 10/11/2021

James Ochieng Onyango
K50/12216/2018

SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval and advice as the University Supervisor.

Signed ....   Date 15/11/2021

Dr. Samuel Ngigi
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Nairobi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving wife Sheila Kageha for her understanding, patience, and perseverance during the journey. To my Sons Jeremy, Elijah, and Jason, this work should be an inspiration and motivation to achieve more and scale greater heights in life. Finally, I also dedicate this to my late father Elijah Onyango Mumbo for the belief he had in me during my early and middle-level education. This, indeed, was one of his many lifetime dreams, and as he continues to dance with the angels, I know this indeed is a befitting honour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of online dating sites and mobile phone apps in Kenya has seen a steady rise in the number of people using such platforms to initiate romantic relationships. The main objective of this inquiry was to assess the changing perceptions about online dating among the youth in Nairobi County. Further, the study also aimed at analyzing the major contributing factors fueling digital dating among the youth, and finally to establish the challenges related to digital dating practices. The study is a descriptive research design with a mixed-method approach where quantitative data was collected using the survey method and qualitative data was collected from the respondents using in-depth interviews. The instruments used for collecting the data included a questionnaire for the survey and an interview guide for in-depth interviews. This inquiry was guided by two theories namely, Uses and Gratifications theory and Social Information Processing (SIP) theory. The target population was Youth aged between 18-35 years and living within Nairobi County. The sample frame was based on a Facebook dating group, Kenya Singles Network that had 32124 members at the time of this study. The Taro Yamane formula was used to calculate the sample population. From the formula, 100 participants were earmarked for the survey which registered a response rate of 82%. Stratified Random sampling was used to obtain the 100 participants for the study. The structure of the survey questionnaire accommodated closed-ended questions in addition to a single open-ended question. The data collected from the open-ended question provided the basis, which the study relied on to purposively identify participants for the Qualitative study. Some of the respondents had unique and rich experiences, which informed their selection through purposive sampling. From the 15 selected participants, only 12 respondents were interviewed given the saturation point attainment hence translating to a response rate of 80%. For the quantitative approach, the data generated was analyzed using descriptive methods while the analysis of qualitative data was based on inductive analysis which involves studying the data collected through emerging themes and descriptions. The Likert Rating Scale was used to gauge the respondents' attitudes and opinions on the various issues at hand. The analyzed quantitative data is presented in graphical representations of tables and a pie chart while the qualitative data is presented using narrative. From the data collected, the results indicate that online dating is gaining ground. For instance, the reduction of social stigma that was largely attached to online dating has contributed to the uptake of online dating. In addition, the growth in access to broadband internet and connected devices have also played a significant role in entrenching access to social networks among the youth in Nairobi, County. Still, the study also found that numerous challenges such as fraud, misrepresentation of user profiles, and safety of users among others continue to weigh down confidence among those engaged in online dating.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

TEAMS: The East African Marine System

U& G theory: Uses and Gratification theory

MOICT – Ministry of Information Communication and technology

ICT – Information Communication and technology

ICTA – Information Communication and Technology Authority

FtF: Face-to-face

iOS: iPhone Operating System

NASA: National Aeronautics and Space Administration

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background to the Study

For ages, it has been widely accepted that shared location and people's networks naturally stand out as common denominators that contribute towards influencing how to interact and eventually kick-start romantic relationships. According to Baym 2015, people are better placed to form relationships with those they can interact with, and that in most cases such interactions take place among people who in most cases simultaneously find themselves at the same place.

However, the emergence of digital communication technology is redefining how people can interact and initiate the formation of relationships through dating. Degim and Johnson 2015 contend that despite the early negative stigmatization of online dating, the emergence of new technologies has transformed the way people can interact. This they argue is based on the realization that forms of online dating have been embraced fairly quickly and embedded into the socio-cultural structures of various communities.

Ndemo supports the assertion noting, "In the course of human progress, an era characterized by disruption ensues. War, pestilence, climate change, or advances in technology are amongst the factors that could cause the disruption." (MOICT, 2019, p.8).

Indeed, Kenya has continued to witness tremendous growth in the uptake and adoption of technology-driven communication platforms. Globally, Kenya ranks high in social media usage, and social networks such as Facebook, TikTok, Whatsapp, Instagram, and Twitter among others stand out as household names especially in urban areas such as Nairobi County.

The expansion in access to the internet for communication purposes through smart devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers and the resultant emergence of interactive and instant messaging networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram are all contributing to the disruption that is being witnessed. On the other hand online dating apps and sites such as tinder, tagged.com eHarmony, badoo,

kenyanCupid.com, afrointroductions.com, datemekenya.com, dating.co.ke, firstmet.com, penzitamu.com, and mapenzichapchap.com among others have also expanded the digital space allowing Kenyan youth to initiate dating for purposes of relationship formation. These digital dating sites and applications are largely new media and are increasingly getting approval from the Kenyan youth due to their dynamism in terms of ability to virtually enable daters to interact and initiate the dating process.

Grace Mkinya shared her story on an online news site Tuko (2020) on how an online dating app served as a platform where she met her match and initiated their relationship that later transitioned offline until they officially tied the knot. According to Grace, her online dating match Angel Lobo sent her a message through Badoo saying 'hi' and that set the stage of what evolved into a strong bond. Three months later on their first date, the man proposed to her for a marriage, which she accepted. (Tuko, 2020)

Recognizing the growing popularity of the online dating market, Facebook also rolled out a dating application in 2019 through an app download available for both Android and iOs mobile operating systems. Within Facebook, several groups are focused on providing platforms for those keen to initiate online romantic relationships. According to Sharp 2019, Facebook Dating offers users a platform where they can initiate consequential interactions by aligning themselves to shared interests and activities. In addition, Sharp, 2019 argues that Facebook Dating makes it easier since it enables the creation of dating profiles by picking attributes from the main Facebook profile.

The youth in this study comprises individuals between the ages of 18-35 years given that in many cases they are single and keen to settle down for marriage. The Kenya 2010 Constitution also characterizes a youth as an individual between 18-35 years old. In Nairobi County, this age group also enjoys a high affinity to internet access given the wide coverage, reliable connection, and affordable costs.

Baym, 2015 posits that digital media has exposed various issues that society continues to endeavor to comprehend, their place in society, and how they affect peoples' lives. In addition,

society also continues to struggle to comprehend the consequences that such issues herald for people's personhood and how they relate with others. According to Baym, 2015, new technologies affect how people see the world, communities, and relationships with each other.

According to Chambers 2013, online interaction remains critical in igniting casual relationship and setting the stage initial stages of a serious relationship. Flirting on digital social networks elevates the confidence of people who develop a romantic interest in each other and thus find it less daunting to interact unlike in the case of traditional face-to-face platforms. These shifting dynamics thrust online dating as an emerging behavior that has the potential to redefine the way society views dating practice. Indeed as (Baym, 2015, p.2) contends, they lead to cultural organization and reflection.

1.1 Problem Statement

The proliferation of web and mobile-based dating platforms in Kenya has seen a steady rise in the number of people embracing online dating as a convenient and reliable platform for initiating romantic relationships before transitioning to offline or traditional face-to-face platforms.

A growing number of Kenyans are steadily embracing these digital platforms for reasons that have not been fully investigated. According to a study by Global Web Index, (2019), 25% of unmarried internet users in Kenya have used a dating or friendship app in the last month. This is indeed a staggering proportion given that Kenya is ranked second only to South Africa, which at 27% leads African countries in the study. Other countries that have a high potential of adopting online dating include Ghana at 23% and Nigeria at 19%, (Global Web Index 2019).

These shifting dynamics shine the spotlight on the need to identify and understand the driving force behind the upsurge in the use of digital dating as a viable platform for dating. This emerging scenario calls for more studies in this area to generate further knowledge and help in awareness creation among populations. In addition, such studies will also help society comprehend why digital dating is increasingly becoming a new normal. This study is thus important since it will contribute towards closing the knowledge gap that currently exists around the subject area.

Further, there is no doubt that such studies will also help create awareness of emerging trends and will go a long way in educating people about the emerging changes. This in a way will contribute towards reducing potential conflict that could emerge in situations where the quest for the preservation of cultural practices that relate to dating and marriage practices are held in high esteem. The dearth of local information in this area also means that a lot of available literature on this subject is largely focused on developed economies in the Western world. Very little information thus exists to shine the spotlight on developing countries such as Kenya. According to Degim et al. (2015), across many countries in the world, there has been very scanty literature that focuses on local aspects of online dating and its diverse extraction. In addition, Degim, et al. (2015), further contend that romance is viewed through different optics when it comes to religion, politics, and gender. There is a need to understand how the emerging dynamics are likely to change the scenario on the ground as more Kenyan youths take to social online networks and platforms to identify and initiate conversations with potential future spouses.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives:-

1.2.1 General Objective

The main objective of this study was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi County.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

  i) To analyze the perceptions associated with online dating among the youth in Nairobi County.
  ii) To assess the major contributing factors fueling online dating among the youth in Nairobi County.
  iii) To establish the challenges related to online dating practices.

1.3 Research Questions

This study was anchored on the following research questions:-

  i) What are the motivating factors that have propelled the uptake of online dating among the Youth in Nairobi County?
  ii) What are the perceptions and experiences of the participants regarding online dating?

iii) What are the challenges attached to online dating practices?

1.4 Justification and Significance for the Study

1.4.1   Justification of the Study

The centrality of dating in the marriage process has always been held in high esteem among most people and communities across the world. Indeed, Kenya, which is home to close to 50 ethnic communities, is no exception. There is no doubt that the dating process is a critical stage that holds the key to the success or otherwise of a potential journey towards a romantic relationship. With the advent of information technology driving communication, there is a sharp rise in the number of relationships that are initiated online before transitioning to offline or face-to-face set-ups.

Dating is thus a critical stage whose outcome may largely determine the success or failure of any potential union in a marriage or relationship. This was carried out so that a deeper and more informed understanding can be brought to the fore to help highlight the key elements that are driving the growth of online dating among the target population. Additionally, this inquiry also sought to establish a deeper understanding of the emerging issues that are viewed as challenges that weigh down or stifle the uptake of online dating.

1.4.2   Significance of the Study

This study sheds light on the changing trends of how the dating practice is viewed in our society. For a long time, online dating was viewed with a lot of trepidation and negative stigmatization (Degim and Johnson 2015), but with the growth of digital platforms and ease of access to the internet, a lot has since changed.

For this reason, this inquiry will immensely contribute towards creating awareness on the nature and impact of social networking platforms with a focus on how the practice of online dating is being embraced by the youth. In Kenya, scientific information relating to this area remains very scanty and this inquiry will serve to inform further scientific studies in critical space that has a massive impact on society's foundation for present and future generations. In addition, the youth in Nairobi County enjoy immense privileges relating to reliable and affordable access to the internet. This means they hold the potential to easily visit online dating sites through an array of

digital devices such as smartphones, laptops, computers, and tablets among others, and are thus very much pre-disposed to these dating sites and applications.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This section looked at the proposed scope and limitations of the study.

1.5.1   Scope of the Study

This inquiry sought to assess the changing perceptions about online dating among the youth in Nairobi County. In addition, it also investigated the challenges that are attached to online dating practices. The participants for the study were individuals who are presently involved or have had experience in online dating within the County of Nairobi. The selection of Nairobi County was based on the realization that Nairobi is the most vibrant and robust city with a huge chunk of youth having a high affinity to social media networks. They also can stay connected to the internet and thus able to exploit the myriad opportunities that abound on the information superhighway.

1.5.2   Limitations of the Study

This study targeted the youth between the ages of 18-35 years living within Nairobi County. It was therefore limited to young people within that age bracket. This is because most of this population is made up of unmarried individuals and are keen to embark on the process of settling down for marriage. In addition, the study was limited to relationships that revolve around potential heterosexual partners that purely revolve around a man and woman as a couple and not those that relate to lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) communities.

1.6 Operational Definitions

Digital dating: For this discussion, digital dating implies the usage of online platforms for purposes of wooing a marriage. Essentially, how the process progresses in seeking an intimate or romantic relationship that eventually leads to a serious heterosexual relationship or marriage.

Wi-Fi: Refers to wireless networking technology capable of providing high-speed internet connection on devices such as phones, computers, laptops, and other smart devices.

Bots: are programs on a network such as the internet designed to operate autonomously, and can interact with systems or users. An example is where programs are executed to play interactive games like in video games.

Leapfrogging: Essentially refers to taking advantage of next-generation technology to advance an emerging market.

Social media: Refers to platforms that are designed to allow users to create and share content with the intent of social networking. Such platforms could be in the form of websites or mobile applications or apps.

New media: Largely refers to digital media that are interactive and incorporate a feedback mechanism or two-way communication.

Apps: These are platforms that enable interaction and in some cases support or activity-based application on digital devices such as tablets and smartphones among others.

Log on/off: For this inquiry, to log on means to gain access to a media platform such as social media sites or dating platforms for purposes of interaction. To log off means to exit the platform.

Bandwidth: This is the maximum amount of data that can be transmitted over the internet connection in a given amount of time.

Emoticons: Refers to situations where typographic symbols are used to portray facial expressions.

Emoji: An ideogram and smiley used in an electronic message.

Cyber-dating: The practice of seeking online romance from the digital space through the use of digital devices.

Cat-fishing: This is the act of creating a false profile with the intent of fraudulently seducing another person.

Cyber-bullying: Occurs when users of digital platforms are harassed through threats and insults. There are cases where the act involves the relay or circulation of inaccurate information about someone.

LGB: Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

iOs: Mobile Operating System created by Apple.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews the relevant existing literature around online dating, as well as the historical perspective of traditional methods of face-to-face dating among a cross-section of local and global cultural communities.

2.1 Introduction

Across the world, there is a gradual but steady shift towards a more digitally powered global economy. Kenya, for instance through the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) has rolled out a blueprint that charts a roadmap tilted towards a fully digitized economy. According to ICT Authority (ICTA), the body mandated to promote and regulate ICT standards in Kenya, ICT is set to accelerate the country's ability to achieve its envisaged national goals and leapfrog into a transformed economy in which citizens are better placed to access the opportunities that boost their livelihoods. (ICTA 2019-2023).

This envisaged scenario captures the pulse of the country as one that is driven towards fully embracing information technology in a bid to accelerate growth across all spheres and sectors of life. Already, Kenya has managed to stomp its presence on the global map thanks to its robust technological innovation prowess in the mobile telephony money sector. This is after Safaricom's M-Pesa mobile money service edged out leading global brands such as Netflix Streaming, Google search, and Walt Disney among others to emerge as the ninth Most Influential Project globally, (PMI 2019).

The advent of technologically-driven innovations spurred by affordable access to the internet has also set off a massive paradigm shift in changing lifestyles as people test the veracity of opportunities accorded by the internet. Indeed, the internet has also spurred the emergence of social media communication known as new media. Some of these include networks such as Facebook, Google, Whatsapp, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, Weibo, and Twitter among others. These are digital frameworks that incorporate features of traditional media such as communication and dissemination of information albeit in digitized forms.

However, of particular general interest to this study was to assess the changing perceptions that swing around an array of dating platforms such as Facebook, Tinder, KenyanCupid.com, dating.co.ke, datemekenya.com, and Badoo which have taken the internet by storm in re-defining how people meet, initiate and sustain romantic relationship via the internet (digital). These digital dating networks and platforms are spearheading the growth of a new cultural emergence where individuals subscribe to the belief that digital platforms offer a better environment in initiating a romantic relationship.

According to Degim et al., (2015), digital courtship refers to the romantic relationships which are initiated in online environments such as social networking sites, blogs, online dating websites, and mobile telephony-based apps among others. For digital dating to be actualized, the interactions should be those that lead to experiences of sharing romantic or intimate thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Ultimately, such romantic relationships founded online should aim towards offline interaction, (Degim et al. 2015).

2.2.1 The Historical Perspective

Just like in the case of other parts of the world, Kenya has a deep cultural/traditional background around practices and beliefs that revolve around dating. This is mainly because, in some communities, dating forms the foundational basis on which communal marriage activities are anchored. According to Southworld, (2017), before a marriage ceremony takes place among the Borana community, there are several stages and long negotiations which can go on even for two years. The same scenario obtains for many communities and cultures around the world where cases of courtship and marriage are 'brokered' or spearheaded by a third party in what is commonly known as a 'go-between'. According to Ayayo (1976), this is the same practice that was practiced by the Southern Luo.

That it extends beyond Sub-Saharan Africa is captured by Degim et al., (2015), who note that outside Western Europe, many pre-industrial societies engaged in a system of arranged courtship or marriages which were driven by the desire to ensure that the new couple would be able to function as an economic unit that respects and recognizes the wider kin groups.

In addition, this kind of courtship was also critical given that in most cases such couples would benefit from inherited property and thus the need to ensure that the same was bestowed in safe hands to contribute towards the sustenance of the community and its economy. In addition, historically, courtship was not wholly driven by the quest for romantic love or personal choice but largely based on the intervention of parents, kin, and the larger community, Degim et al., (2015), Frias, (2013). Over time, courtship transformed and became more formalized such that young couples were not just paired through some process of brokerage but had the privilege of being formally introduced to one another before being allowed to speak, (Frias, 2013).

According to Frias, (2013), that transition marked the emergence of modern-day traditional face-to-face dating in which where dating has largely been epitomized by some distinctive attributes such as the ability to self-select spouse, emotional attachment, increased independence from parents and kin before marriage among others. There is no doubt that most face-to-face relationships are formed based on being able to interact and being in the same place at the same time, (Baym, 2015).

2.2.2 The Advent of Technology

Technological innovation and advancement on the global front have continued to accelerate the pace of digital connections among the world's populace. These developments have continued to redefine the way people interact especially for online dating which faced massive negative stigmatization during its early formative years. According to Degim and Johnson (2015), digital dating forms have become entrenched in the cultural practices of various societies. The growth of social media networks, digital dating services, and mobile apps have been embraced fairly quickly across the world. As of April 2020, Facebook which is currently the biggest social networking service commanded a whopping 2.6 billion subscriber base of active users spread across the entire world, (Statista, 2020). This massive figure paints a picture of a platform with footprints virtually across all corners of the world.

As a leading hub for technological innovation, Kenya stands at a vantage point in the assimilation of global technologies and related services. In addition, the country enjoys reliable

and affordable access to the internet thanks to the fibre optic that connects Kenya to the world. With the 5000km undersea cable investment largely known as The East African Marine System (TEAMS), the government sought to spur reliable access and provision of internet services through the infrastructure backbone. Together with other fibre-optic service providers such as SEACOM, Kenya is one of the countries with the most reliable internet connectivity around the world, (TEAMS).

The Government of Kenya outlined its roadmap towards a digital culture in a document - the Kenya Digital Economy Blueprint 2019. In the document, the government notes that as new horizons emerge, digital technologies are fast becoming the cornerstone of people's daily lives and thus individuals, businesses, and governments must move fast to adapt to the new reality, (Kenya Digital Economy Blueprint 2019).

Indeed, the mushrooming of new digital technologies has continued to transform the country in driving changes within traditional cultural settings. The growth of online dating platforms is fast gaining momentum and stands to redefine social and cultural settings. According to a study by Global Web Index, (2019), 25% of unmarried internet users in Kenya have used a dating or friendship app in the last month. *See Appendix I.*

2.2.3   Digital Dating

According to Johnson and Fu (2015), dating takes place when two people engage in an interaction largely driven by the desire to get into a romantic relationship. The dating stage potentially sets the stage for engagement and eventually marriage. In situations where such dating takes place online and eventually transition to offline for romantic encounters then that is taken as digital dating. The growth of new technologies has expanded the space for digital interactions through the growth of digital platforms from social networking forums, online dating websites to mobile phone apps which have capabilities to enable the exchange of verbal cues vital to the success of a dating process, (Johnson and Fu 2015).

According to tuko.com, some of the notable digital dating sites and apps in Kenya include the following; www.datemekenya.com, www.kenyancupid.com, www.tagged.com, tinder, badoo,

www.firstmet.com, www.dating.co.ke, www.cloudromance.com, www.afrointroductions.com, www.datememe.com, www.lavaplace.com, www.rubride.com, www.mingle2.com, www.pure.dating, www.datingvip.com, www.hivdatingkenya.com, www.mapenzichapchap.com, www.penzitamu.com, and www.metrodate.com among others.

2.3 Preference Accelerators for Digital Dating

These are potential factors gathered through literature review and have largely been proven as central to positively influencing the uptake of digital dating across many and diverse societies.

2.3.1 Ability to Integrate Dating Activities into Daily Activities

Apart from the technological advancements, growth of the internet, affordable cost of access devices, and the proliferation of online dating platforms, Blossfeld and Schmitz (2012) contend that the rise of online dating has also been fueled by its ability to enable interactions in relative independence of time and space.

This emerging scenario holds the potential of enabling online dating to displace the traditional necessity of having all the parties present at the same time to continue in the dating presence. This is because online dating platforms enable the capability for individuals to integrate their dating activities in effective ways that reduce or eliminate the possibility of unnecessary time loss, (Blossfeld and Schmitz, (2012).

According to Hasler and Hamburger, (2013) individuals on online dating sites and platforms have the leeway to plan when to start and finish their online connection or interaction through the ability to log on and off. This enables them to have more time at hand to compose their text messages. Unlike in the case of traditional physical interaction, Online dating enables individuals to exercise control of the communication process effectively enabling a strong feeling of security and power. In most cases, online interactions also offer the ability for immediate back and forth real-time feedback mechanisms enabling individuals to enjoy a sense of co-presence, (Hasler and Hamburger 2013).

2.3.2 Global Reach of Online Dating

With the global reach of internet connections, digital dating platforms have enabled interactions that take place from across the world. Such interactions contribute to significant reduction of cultural differences as interactions move from online to offline platforms to possibly set the stage for engagement and marriage process. According to Johnson and Fu (2015), digital dating in more traditional societies can mean finding a partner for marriage in places such as India, China, and Turkey while in other places digital dating can mean different things to different people. For instance, for some, it can mean a platform for passing time, a space for webcam sex, company, or one-night stands. Such instances typify how varied in context online dating can be perceived from different parts of the world interconnected and linked through technology and social networks (Johnson and Fu (2015).

2.3.3 Platforms Offer a 'Spoilt for Choice' Moment

According to Blossfeld and Schmitz, (2012), the architecture of digital dating platforms supports interactions and connections with multiple potential partners at the same time. This capability provides users with an opportunity to 'cast their net wider' in search of potential matching partners. The ability to simultaneously contact different partners increases the chances of a perfect match.

2.3.4 Convenience and Changing Lifestyles

The dynamic nature of changing lifestyles that define the daily routine of most people especially those who fall within the baby-boomer category has put enormous strains on peoples' schedules in ways that deny them free time for face-face interactions or encounters. Frias, (2013) contends that the demanding nature of work-related lifestyle is forcing people to strike a balance of multiple roles and responsibilities with little time to spare for conventional traditional dating.

2.3.5 Functionality and Reliability

Digital dating platforms have evolved tremendously over the years and are today able to accomplish tasks that were once thought to be near impossible. Contrasted against traditional face-to-face methods of dating, digital dating platforms today have capabilities that are supported by higher bandwidths enabling not only rich and fulfilling connections but also great communication experiences. According to Wang and Lu (2007), a richer medium can achieve

the immediacy of feedback in which it becomes easier for those communicating to adjust their responses to not only acknowledge receipt but also be able to signal understanding, agreement, or confusion. In addition, Wang and Lu note that the evolution of digital dating services, apps, and platforms have also enabled the use of many different cues which in addition to the message's literal substance imply the ability to transmit different types of information while being able to appeal to different senses of the communicators at the same time. Rapid technological advancement and the expansion of the internet have contributed towards enabling and supporting rich media/multi-media which today has seen the ability to use and share video clips and engage in video calls for real-time chats and connections. Similarly, the use of emojis in communication serves to enliven tweets, texts, and captions, (Baym 2015). The application of emoji is informed by the desire to strengthen or even maintain friendly linkages or bonds between participants in conversation even in times when texts, chats, or messages have negative connotations in their contents, (Danesi 2017).

The above view is further supported by Hamburger, (2013) who notes that as the popularity of social networking sites soars, so does that of digital dating sites and platforms. This is attributed to the presence of sufficient bandwidth which can support online activities such as webcam connections, video downloads, sharing photographic images, and playing music among others. These capabilities were in most cases time-consuming and near impossible some 15 years ago, (Hamburger, 2013).

2.3.6 Reduced Social Stigma

The evolution of digital dating has experienced its share of challenges as well. Luckily, some of those challenges have been overcome - consequently paving way for increased growth in the number of new subscribers, (Frias 2013) asserts that early romantic relationships which were founded on online dating platforms saw participants suffer from negative social stigma. However, a lot has since changed and that scenario no longer obtains. The negative social stigma came about given that such relationships were viewed as having emerged from unconventional and unrecognized methods of meeting a partner, (Frias 2013). According to Hamburger 2013, people who initiated their romantic relationships online were frequently stigmatized. Even more tragic was the realization that in most cases, individuals were expected to practice patience since

there was no concrete opportunity to be sexually satisfied immediately via erotic talk. Despite early claims by some theorists that online relationships could lead to an individual's psychological health problems, it soon became evident then that the internet offered a very interpersonal space that supported the formation and maintenance of healthy relationships, (Hamburger 2013).

Fullick, 2013, contends that today there is much less stigma attached to online dating as was the case in the past given that the more the practice becomes acceptable - the more people are able to participate hence creating a critical mass that contributes towards more social acceptance. Blossfeld and Schmitz (2012) assert that online dating has over the years evolved from an odd and stigmatized medium to one which is socially accepted as a basis of friendship and partnership formation which at the same time has transcended into the business sphere as a lucrative business model. For Baym (2015) online platforms play a significant role in blurring the social boundaries thereby being able to challenge social norms of appropriateness.

2.3.7 Confidence Behind the Keyboard

One of the key leading accelerators for the growth of digital dating has been the ability to initiate online interaction with firm confidence that the space is highly private and secure. Given this understanding, the internet thus serves as an empowering medium that offers a solid platform for those who suffer from communication anxiety and are shy when interacting with others in the process towards the formation of meaningful relationships. Frias (2013), contends that people who suffer from communication anxiety prefer online dating platforms so that they can exercise effective framing of messages and control before such messages are relayed.

Hassler and Hamburger (2013) contend that most social factors that contribute to communication anxiety and uncertainty especially during face-to-face encounters do not exist in digital interactions. For instance, participants are not put under visual scrutiny like in the case of face-to-face encounters. Additionally, they are also not under pressure to respond on the spot. This means that digital dating participants can feel much at ease with each other hence find it easy to express themselves as opposed to situations that revolve around face-to-face encounters.

2.3.8 Identity Preservation

Social network sites and digital dating platforms have also largely thrived on the perceived nature of privacy which in some cases enable users to remain anonymous as they interact with others. On the other hand, there is also a growing shift towards making the spaces personal. For instance platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and even blogs are increasingly moving towards embracing frameworks that require users to present their selves online. For digital dating users, this means that participants or users can be confident that they are interacting with real and credible human beings as opposed to mere bots on the internet, (Blossfeld and Schmitz, 2012).

2.3.9 Everything Moving Online

There is no question that the world has continued to witness massive evolution that revolves around technological advancement. Coupled with the presence of reliable internet connections linking all parts of the world, everything has literally gone online. According to Frias (2013), this is an age where the internet has evolved and today drives countless uses that revolve around commerce and industry such as shopping, trade between individuals, business to business, and governments. In addition, the internet age is also facilitating educational classes, healthcare services, and banking among others. With such kind of evolution, it would be unthinkable to rule out the possibility and appropriateness of using digital dating platforms to find a significant partner, (Frias, 2013).

2.3.10 Erosion of Traditional Venues for Meeting

According to Hamburger (2013), a lot of transformation on the traditional dating front has contributed towards the growth of online dating platforms. This is because traditional venues such as health clubs, nightclubs, bars, and restaurants among others are increasingly being considered luxurious given that they call for time and monetary input which in some cases may outweigh the costs associated with accessing an online dating platform. This is especially more evident once such meetings become regular in occurrence. Further, Hamburger (2013) contends that the convenience afforded by digital dating platforms has seen a surge in numbers as people who have difficulties in finding potential mates in traditional dating settings turn to online dating platforms.

2.3.10.1 Success Stories

Users of digital dating platforms who have successfully managed to find partners and settled down in marriage have often shared their stories/experiences with the world. Such testimonies contribute towards encouraging others to consider digital dating as a viable roadmap to actualizing their dreams of a romantic relationship. Frias, (2013) contends that today, more people can pinpoint individuals with positive experiences including successful relationships and even marriage initiated through online dating interactions.

2.4   Challenges Lurking Behind Digital Dating

Whereas digital dating has experienced massive growth and acceptance over the years, there is also no doubt that challenges have continued to persist. Degim et al., (2015), assert that digital dating platforms have suffered from cases of dysfunctional behaviors such as stalking which have become rampant. Miller, (2011) drawing from a previous study conducted by Pew Institute notes that a good number of people on online dating sites are prone to deceptive tendencies which revolve around lies about marital status. Some of these setbacks have served to contribute to skepticism that people hold towards digital dating and courtship. Potential users of digital dating platforms are also are exposed to the risks of deception that arise from interaction with users whose profiles do not reflect the true picture of their identity, (Blossfeld and Schmitz 2012).

Wang and Lu (2007) note that misinformation has been a vexing phenomenon for cyber-dating whose dangers have widely been covered in the popular press. Further, Wang and Lu (2007) posit that while digital dating sites and chat rooms enable predators to have an easy path locating victims, they also help in the facilitation of fraudulent activities and some cases even end up exposing children to inappropriate material. Lamphere and Pembroke (2019), assert that fraudulent activities and practices are not new and have always existed in the online dating space.

In Kenya, concerns have also been raised about the safety of online dating with users being warned about the risks of cyber attacks disguised as dating sites. According to Cyber security Kaspersky, cyber criminals use the names of popular dating services to spread malware and

thereafter bombard users with unwanted advertisements. In some cases, subscribers are lured into costly paid subscriptions, (Nation, 2019). The Kenya Police Service through the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI) has also warned Kenyans and foreigners to be wary of online dating sites. This came after a spate of incidents in which users of the sites were lured by criminals, kidnapped, and forced to withdraw money from their accounts, (Nation 2020).

Another form of challenge is the emergence of a new form of scam widely known as 'cat-fishing in which a person creates a false profile with the intent of fraudulently seducing another person. For Frias (2013), Cyber-bullying poses a real threat given that cyber-bullies may end up disclosing victims' data such as names and addresses. In some cases, cyber-bullies publish material that ridicules or defames a subject. In certain situations, cyber-bullies engage in the practice of sending emails, chats, and texts messages of threats or sexual connotation and even hate speech to people who have already indicated disinterest from the sender. (Frias, 2013).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Kombo and Tromp (2018), theoretical framework is a compendium of ideas that are anchored on different theories. They further posit that theoretical frameworks endeavor to explain phenomena in an attempt to create a comprehensive knowledge of why prevailing circumstances are the way they are. Hamburger (2013), notes that the emergence of digital dating has necessitated the development of new theories that seek to explain how people initiate, develop, and maintain relationships in cyberspace and eventually how they progress to offline spaces. For this inquiry, theories are important since they offer a systematic explanation of the relationship among phenomena to have a generalized picture of the reasons behind the occurrence of the phenomena under study. To achieve this, this study was anchored on the following theories:-

2.5.1   The Uses and Gratification Theory

Several studies around mass communication have been anchored on the Uses and Gratification (U&G) theory. Generally, this theory revolves around what people use the media for as opposed to how the media affects the people. Jay Blumler and Denis McQuil conceptualized this theory in

1964. They were keen to establish the motivations that drove people to watch political programs in the United Kingdom during the time of 1964 election.

Whereas it has largely concentrated on an audience-centered approach to mass media studies, U&G theory has also delved into studies focusing on the internet and social networking platforms such as Facebook. The U&G theory seeks to explain how individuals utilize the media to achieve their desires for self-accomplishment (gratification). In the use of mass media, people seek a variety of gratifications. These can be clustered into five categories such as affective needs, social integrative needs, cognitive needs, tension-free needs, and personal integrative needs.

This inquiry will employ U&G theory to establish the following:-

a) Understand what motivates participants in this study to join digital dating platforms

b) Establish the gratifications gained from the use of digital dating platforms.

2.5.2 Computer-Mediated Communication Theories (CMC)

For web-based communication, the back and forth interaction and feedback mechanism play a critical role in aiding in the exchange of information between individuals involved. Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic, 2004, contend that CMC is any form of communication between humans that is facilitated using computer technology. CMC is thus a critical component in online communication since it offers the channels through which information exchange takes place between individuals.

Most theories about CMC have been criticized for lack of non-verbal cues which would enable easier and faster expression of feelings given that most are based on textual messaging. For instance according to Walther 1992, unlike in face-to-face interactions where individuals can express their feelings through verbal and non-verbal cues evident in 'body language' such as smiling, grinning, and proxemics among others, CMC has limitations that lead to the longer duration for processing information, (Walther, 1992).

Walther postulates that essentially this means that in digital communication where the use of textual messages like in the case of chat messages, individuals will take much longer time to

develop interpersonal development unlike in the case of face-face communication. However, not all theories of CMC suffer from these shortcomings.

2.5.2.1 Social Information Processing Theory

Social Information Processing (SIP) theory is relevant to this inquiry since individuals rely on Computer-Mediated Communication. The theory was developed by Joseph Walther in 1992 to initiate and develop interpersonal impressions among individuals keen to build and nurture their relational communication. According to Walther 1992, SIP theory serves as a cornerstone in situations where the use of media is generally restricted to textual symbols, and communicators have to become accustomed to the absence of nonverbal cues. In this regard, Walther postulates that individuals who use online channels are able to make use of the capacity of such media to actualize richer interactions just like in the case of face-to-face settings. The only limitation is that actualization of such interactions especially in social relationships require ample time to be realized. (Walther 1992).

For Walther, SIP theory rejects several positions in non-verbal communication arguing that non-verbal message does not control the entire framework of communication in the dissemination of social communication.

Proponents of SIP further argue that several cues can be substituted in a way that maintains or achieves the same intended function. For instance in SIP theory, the use of emoticons or emojis enables users to replace social information that revolve around lack of non-verbal cues when individuals engage through CMC.

Danesi, 2017 posits that in the internet age, the popularity of mobile devices has continued to encourage writing as opposed to speaking and that consequently; writing has taken up many of the functions of face-to-face communication. The use and spread of emoji which replaced emoticons Danesi, (2017) have become a key component of chatting providing to bridge the gap of non-verbal cues. In reinforcing SIP theory to enable individuals to adapt in CMC settings, Baym, 2015 notes that developers have moved fast to come up with richer and interactive means for communication to meet people's passion for online social interaction. Additionally, platforms such as Facebook for instance have created a huge repository of pictures.

On the other hand, WhatsApp and Telegram have managed to enable the exchange of both text message and video-based communication in essence giving room for the expression of non-verbal cues. YouTube and TikTok have also created platforms that enable sharing of videos. For online dating individuals using the sites and platforms are also able to enjoy a wide array of multi-media capabilities that hold the potential to enhance the expression of non-verbal cues.

SIP theory is therefore relevant for this study since it will shed light on how individuals engaged in CMC for digital dating practice adapt to maximize the potential of the richness of online dating through the available bandwidth for information exchange.

2.6 Conceptual Framework of Independent and Dependent variables

Figure 2.0: Conceptual framework of independent and dependent variables
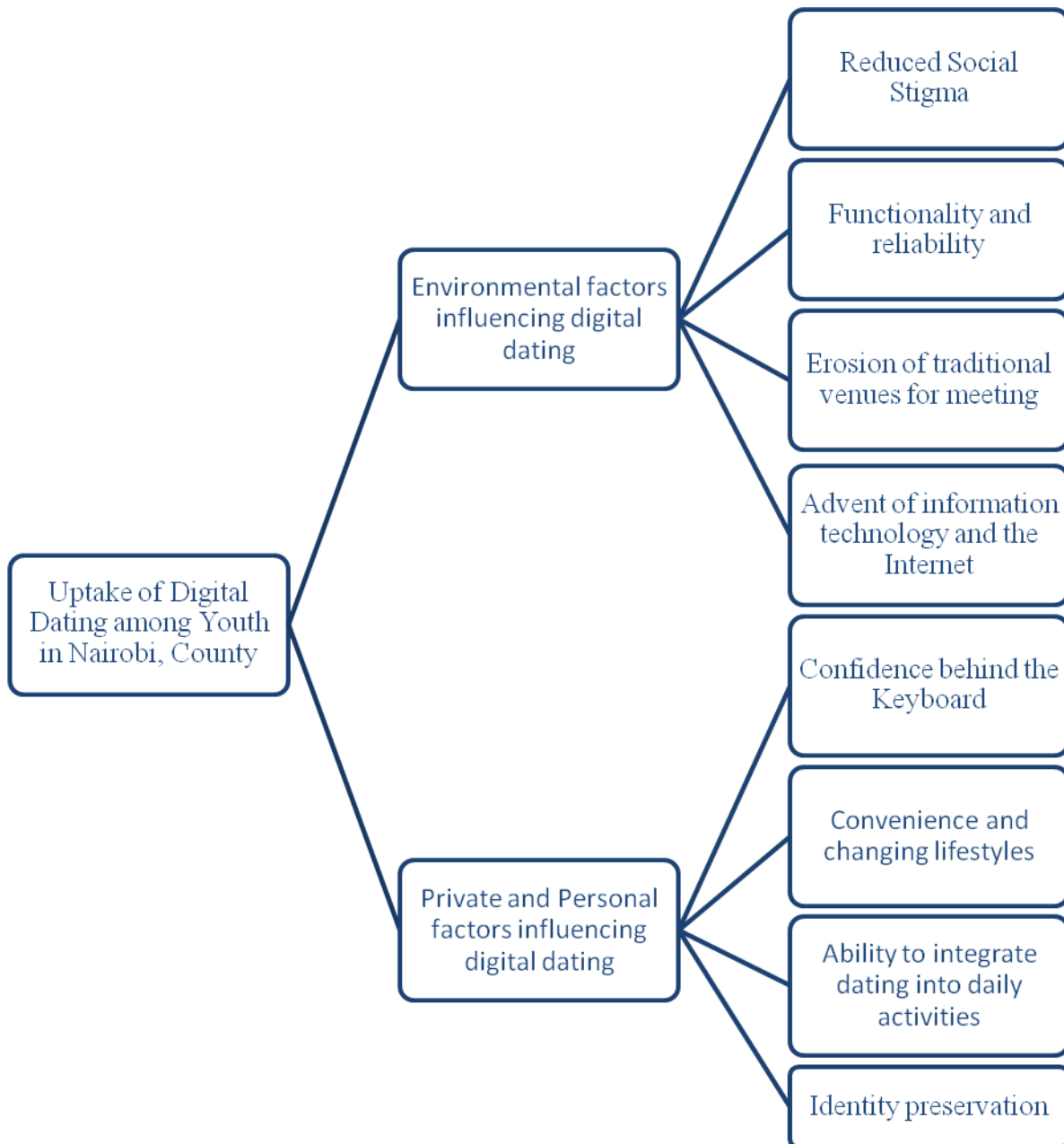
Several personal and environmental factors could potentially influence individuals to join a digital dating site or download a smartphone application for initiating an intimate or romantic relationship. These factors could revolve around an individuals' perceptions, behavior, or attitude. To catalyze the shift in behavior, attitude, or practice, there are intervening variables that play a huge role in influencing individuals' perceptions of the phenomenon under study, which is digital dating.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design approach used in carrying out this inquiry.

3.1 Study Design

A research design is the scientific structure that outlines the framework process to be involved in the collection and analysis of data to respond to the study's purpose, (Kombo & Tromp 2018). For this inquiry, the main objective was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi County. This study thus relied on a descriptive design to guide the process of managing, collecting, and analyzing data. Kombo & Tromp, 2018 posit that the core function of descriptive research is the ability to describe the state of affairs in the exact manner in which it is and that the researcher has to report the findings. In gathering data for this inquiry, this study relied on primary data which was derived from research survey using a questionnaire and from the in-depth interviews using the interview guide. On the other hand, secondary data was derived from books, journal articles, and topical resources from the internet.

According to Kombo & Tromp 2018, Descriptive research design can be broad and may go beyond the mere collection of data. In essence, Kombo & Tromp 2018, assert that descriptive research design can involve a broad range of data manipulation including measurement, classification, analysis, comparison, and interpretation. Generally, however, Descriptive Research design involves administering of questionnaire to a sample of individuals to collect information. The information could revolve around people's attitudes, habits, opinions, or on issues that revolve around social interests. Indeed, descriptive research comes in handy in collecting information on areas that revolve around people's attitudes, opinions, habits, or other areas that relate to issue of social interest. Descriptive research design is important in describing elements of a specific population and analyzing the relationships that exist between variables, and figuring out the common traits of a group. To achieve the best results from descriptive study design, Kombo and Tromp 2018 assert that the researcher should endeavor to adhere to a set of parameters such as construction of questions that attract relevant and useful information around the study's objective. Additionally, achieving the best results from descriptive study design calls

for ability to identify the sample population and therein identify cases, or individuals to participate in the survey. Further, a descriptive study design also dictates the specific steps to be followed in identifying how the survey will be conducted. Summary of the data must also ensure that it captures and depicts descriptive information that revoves around the study's objectives. (Kombo & Tromp 2018).

3.2 Study Site

This study was carried out in Nairobi, County. The selection of Nairobi County was based on purposive sampling given that the County is endowed with massive access to reliable and affordable internet. According to National ICT Survey 2010, the majority of youth in Nairobi between the ages of 30-34 years represented the highest internet usage while those aged between 20-24 years were reported to be 15.4 percent of the population. This study targeted youth living in Nairobi and was conducted through an online survey and telephone interview. To reach the target group, the researcher relied on the Kenya Singles Network Club, a local Facebook group with a membership of 32,124 individuals. The group was formed on April 30, 2012, and had a listing of members who have indicated their geographical location as Nairobi. The study site was thus aptly placed to effectively respond to the objectives of this research project.

3.3 Research Approach

This study embraced a mixed-methods approach which incorporated quantitative and qualitative research to enable deeper comprehension of the emerging issues from the respondents. According to Creswell, (2016), the mixed-method approach involves the amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative research techniques to create a better comprehension of the research problem. Accordingly, Creswell, (2016), argues that the mixing or blending of the data enables the researcher to draw from quantitative and qualitative research and minimizes possible limitations that may exist in either case. The mixed-method research approach, on one hand, offered a chance for the collection of quantitative survey data, which largely has been explained in detail by the in-depth qualitative data enabling a deeper understanding of the issues at hand.

3.3.1 Research Methods

Descriptive data derived from the questionnaire was critical in providing a picture of the issues at hand and in response to the study's objective. This study was also anchored on the participant's accounts of personal reflections hence it made use of narrative analysis to gain insights into the personal reflections and accounts of the respondents. The use of narrative analysis also significantly allowed for context-based evaluations and helped bring to the fore how changes occur and evolve from personal perspectives.

3.3.2 Data Needs, Types, and Sources

This study focused on respondents for the provision of primary data while literature review was used as a credible source of secondary data. To generate the requisite primary quantitative data, the study used a survey questionnaire as the preferred tool. On the other hand, an interview guide was also incorporated to generate primary data for the qualitative research approach. In addition, textual analysis of the problem question based on literature review was also critical in providing insights into the problem.

3.4 Study Population

According to Maina, (2015, p.40), in research studies, a population represents a complete set of individuals, objects, or cases having some common characteristics that can be observed. According to Kenya Constitution 2010, the youth is made up of individuals within the age bracket of 18-35 years of age. This is the age group that the study targeted. According to the National ICT Survey 2010, Nairobi at 25.9% is home to the highest proportion of internet users. Central is ranked second at 6.7% while Nyanza takes the third slot at 5.5%. According to the survey, Youth in Nairobi between the ages of 30-34 years had the highest proportion of internet usage. 15.4 percent of the youth in Nairobi reported having used it during the last six months while those within the age group 20-24 ranked second at 14.9%, (National ICT Survey 2010). The population for this study was drawn from the Facebook Dating Group under the umbrella of Kenya Singles Network Club which had a membership population of 32,124 individuals, (Kenya Singles Network Club 2020). The Group came into existence on April 30, 2012, and has a category listing of members within Nairobi as their geographical location. According to

Mugenda & Mugenda, (2003), to generate or draw data from this population, there is a need to identify the accessible population from the target population through a sampling procedure.

3.5 Sampling Size and Sampling procedure

3.5.1 Sample Size

Through probability sampling, the study relied on the Stratified Sampling technique to obtain the 100 participants who took part in the study. According to Leavy, (2017), Stratified Random Sampling dictates that elements in the study population are put into groups which are known as strata. These groups or strata were based on a shared characteristic. For this study, the strata or groups were based on two common characteristics such as the duration spent since joining an online dating platform and the average amount of time spent every day engaging in an online dating platform.

3.5.2 Sampling Procedure

Quantitative methods:-

According to Israel, (1992), the selection of the sample size is influenced by several factors such as the objective of the study, the study population size, the allowable sampling error, and the risk of selecting a bad sample. The sample size for this study was calculated using Yamane's formula as quoted by Israel, (1992).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where, n = the same size,

N = the size of the Population

e = the error of 5 percentage points

By using Yamane's formula (1967) for sample size calculation with a margin of error of 10% and with a confidence coefficient level of 95% the calculation from a population of 32,124 is as follows:-

$$n = \frac{32124}{1+32124 \,(0.1)^2}$$

$$= 100$$

3.5.3 Qualitative methods Sampling Procedure

The structure of the survey questionnaire accommodated closed-ended questions in addition to a single open-ended question. This open-ended question provided a glimpse into the potential uniqueness and richness of the respondents' experiences and opinions. Responses from the single open-ended question served as a basis for purposive identification of participants with "information-rich cases" for the qualitative study. Some of these respondents had unique and rich experiences providing information-rich cases that ultimately informed their selection for participation in the Qualitative study. From the 15 selected participants, only 12 respondents took part in the in-depth interviews since no new insights were forthcoming hence the saturation point. The qualitative study thus recorded a response rate of 80%.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection includes methods that are used to yield data for a study, (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). For the quantitative data collection, the survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended questions and a single open-ended question. These questions were administered to the target population to generate the requisite data relevant to the objectives of the study. Maina, (2015), postulates that closed-ended questionnaires contain all possible answers, which are pre-written allowing respondents to select the most appropriate choices. Creswell, 2016), posits that survey research helps in generalizing from a sample to a population enabling the drawing of some inferences about attitude, behavior, or characteristic. A survey design for data collection enables a quicker turnaround in data collection and can be affordable to administer to the target population. Identifying a sample population through scientific methods also ensures that a sample size can be drawn from a very large population.

According to Neuman, (2014), printed questionnaire or formal interviews are the basis upon which a survey research aimed at collecting data from big populations that revolve around backgrounds, attitudes and or behavior is anchored. A large number of people selected using random sampling can be asked dozens of questions in a short timeframe. To achieve this, the study relied on an online survey platform – Surveyplanet to administer the questionnaire to the target population. Creswell, (2016), notes that in (Nesbary, 2000; Sue & Ritter, 2012), the use and administration of web-based survey has received extensive interrogation.

Data collection for qualitative methods for this inquiry was anchored on in-depth interviews, based on the dictates of the interview guide. The in-depth interviews enabled the collection of in-depth data to respond to the objectives of the study. According to Mugenda & Mugenda, (2003), a research response rate implies the actual percentage of the respondents who take part and complete a questionnaire or participate in in-depth interviews. A response rate of 50% is billed adequate for analysis and reporting, while a rate of 60% and 70% and above are clustered as 'good' and 'very good' respectively. (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.7 Research Instruments

3.7.1 Structured Questionnaire for Quantitative data

According to Creswell, (2016), in quantitative research, a researcher should always provide detailed information about the actual survey instrument for use in the study. For this inquiry, the use of a web-based survey tool, which was accessible online and known as Surveyplanet was deployed. Surveyplanet served as a platform that allowed participants to access and complete the questionnaire. A hypertext link that enabled access to the questionnaire was posted on the Facebook Group Kenya Singles Network Club for the research population and invited participants to take part in the study. Creswell, (2016) notes that increasingly more instruments are being developed and cites the case of Survey Monkey and Zoomerang among others. The software programs can generate results and send updates to the researcher in the form of descriptive information or graphed information. Once the data have been exported, the researcher is then able to download and analyze the results using spreadsheet software.

3.7.1.1 Likert Rating Scale

To measure respondents' attitudes and opinions, this study relied on the Likert rating scale which offers respondents the ability to agree or disagree with the issue or phenomenon at hand. For this study, questions gauging opinions and attitudes utilized 5-point scale with scores ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In between, the Likert scale has a moderate or neutral option picked by respondents who hold a divided opinion about the topic and decide to strike a middle ground.

The Likert rating scale used for this study was structured as follows:-

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:*

A rating of 5 is Strongly Agree; a rating of 1 is Strongly Disagree.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

As a web-based survey platform, Surveyplanet has received endorsement from several institutions and organizations that have vouched for the reliability of its services. Some of the institutions that have endorsed Surveyplanet include Stanford University, Amazon.com, Hilton, NASA, Oracle, and American Redcross among others, (Surveyplanet.com). The platform therefore a credible tool and thus very reliable and meaningful inferences can be drawn from the scores obtained.

3.7.2 Interview Guide for Qualitative data

To collect data for qualitative methods for this inquiry, the use of in-depth interviews based on an interview guide was deployed. The in-depth interviews enabled the collection of in-depth data to respond to the objectives of the study. The interview guide served as an effective preferred tool given that it enables the possibility to explore a participant's perspectives and experiences in detail. According to Creswell (2009), the interview guide serves as a roadmap for the process that should guide an interview process and enable a better understanding of questions sequencing. The interview guide was administered through telephone interviews, which were recorded for purposes of transcription during the data analysis stage. The researcher downloaded a mobile application to record the interviews.

3.8 Pilot Testing

To ensure relevance, accuracy, and social desirability of the interview questions and the questionnaire, the researcher relied on close friends and workmates who fall within the specified age range to pre-test its veracity and strengths while also identifying potential weakness areas for correction.

3.9 Data Analysis

Once data is collected from the participants and still in raw form, it poses difficulty in interpretation. To overcome that challenge, the data has to be edited, given codes, manipulated using a computer program, and analyzed, Mugenda & Mugenda, (2003). According to Maina, (2015), data analysis is the process of looking at the collected data and summarizing it to extract useful information that can be used to draw conclusions. For this inquiry, data analysis was done in such a way that all the information that was collected was put together. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately by following the protocols are set out. According to Creswell, (2009) analyzing data revolves around the ability to comprehend the information that exists in the collection, manipulating and representing such data using various methods such as graphical representation or narrative, and finally interpreting the larger meaning of the data collected. The analysis process was undertaken as follows:-

3.9.1 Quantitative Data – Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis involved the use of statistics to organize and synthesize the data for ease of interpretation. Descriptive statistics enabled a meaningful description of the distribution of scores using a few indices. Quantitative analysis of data was vital given that it enabled a quantifiable and easy way to understand the results from the data.

For this study, the web-based platform, Surveyplanet served as an appropriate software tool for summarizing the data and drawing patterns in the form of graphical representations notably tables and pie charts. This data was then reviewed, and the information was analyzed with a view of interpreting the meaning. Once summarized, the researcher was able to interpret and draw conclusions from the data. Finally, a report was generated to highlight and capture the emerging issues from the study.

3.9.2 Qualitative Data – Inductive Analysis

Thomas (2003) asserts that the inductive approach is an organized step-by-step process that is widely used for performing analysis of qualitative data in situations where such a process is based on a set of clear objectives. The inductive analysis supports research findings from

frequent, significant, or dominant themes that are pertinent in raw data. According to Thomas, (2003), several frameworks potentially determine the need and merits of using the inductive analysis approach including:-

i) The need to synthesize diverse and high volumes of raw text data into a concise and summarized format.

ii) The need to create clear links between research objectives and the summary findings generated from the raw data and to make sure that these links can be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research).

iii) To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the text (raw data), (Thomas, 2003).

According to Neuman, (2014) qualitative data can be in the form of texts gathered from documents, transcripts from open-ended interview, and notes made from observations among others. All the relevant data that is collected must be analyzed.

Neuman, (2014), asserts that in qualitative methods, the analysis of data is iterative such that as the collection and analysis takes place simultaneously. However, such analysis is usually provisional and not fully comprehensive. To analyze the data involves systematic organization, integration, and examination. At the same time, the analysis process must endeavor to search and identify patterns and relationships among the specific details, (Neuman, 2014). For this inquiry, data analysis was hinged on identifying similar phrases, themes, and relationships between themes. According to Neuman, (2014), to analyze data entails the ability by researchers to connect particular data to concepts, identify broad trends or themes and advance generalizations. Thus, data analysis is important since it not only helps in improving understanding but also helps to expand theory and knowledge.

Similarly, (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003), also postulate that the process of collecting data and analyzing is done concurrently in a qualitative study approach. For this inquiry, data analysis was anchored on a systematic approach whereby as data was being collected from the respondents, the researcher wrote down memos and followed these tenets:-

- Data organization, creating categories, themes, and patterns, using code (s) to represent/serve as a link between raw data, analyzing and interpreting information, and writing the report.

According to Maina, (2015), coding and entering the data is to be undertaken before the data is processed, analyzed, or reported. The coding process is important in the data analysis technique since it helps in organizing the data and providing means to introduce interpretations. For this study, the first step involved the collection of raw data in the form of interview notes from the respondents. This was followed through by organizing and preparing the data for analysis in stages such as identifying the data and classifying them based on emerging themes and patterns. At this stage, the accuracy of the data was also validated to ensure that the information intended for use was accurate. Thereafter, the researcher read through all the data which had been verified to ensure accuracy. Once that was done, the researcher then made use of codes to represent links between data with similar or common themes and descriptions. The coding process involved organizing data that are alike or similar or which share properties into groups (datasets) to help in the process of analysis. Through thematic analysis, emerging themes and patterns across the groups of data were identified. The emerging themes created clear links with the research objectives.

Figure 3.0: Analysis of data in a qualitative process.
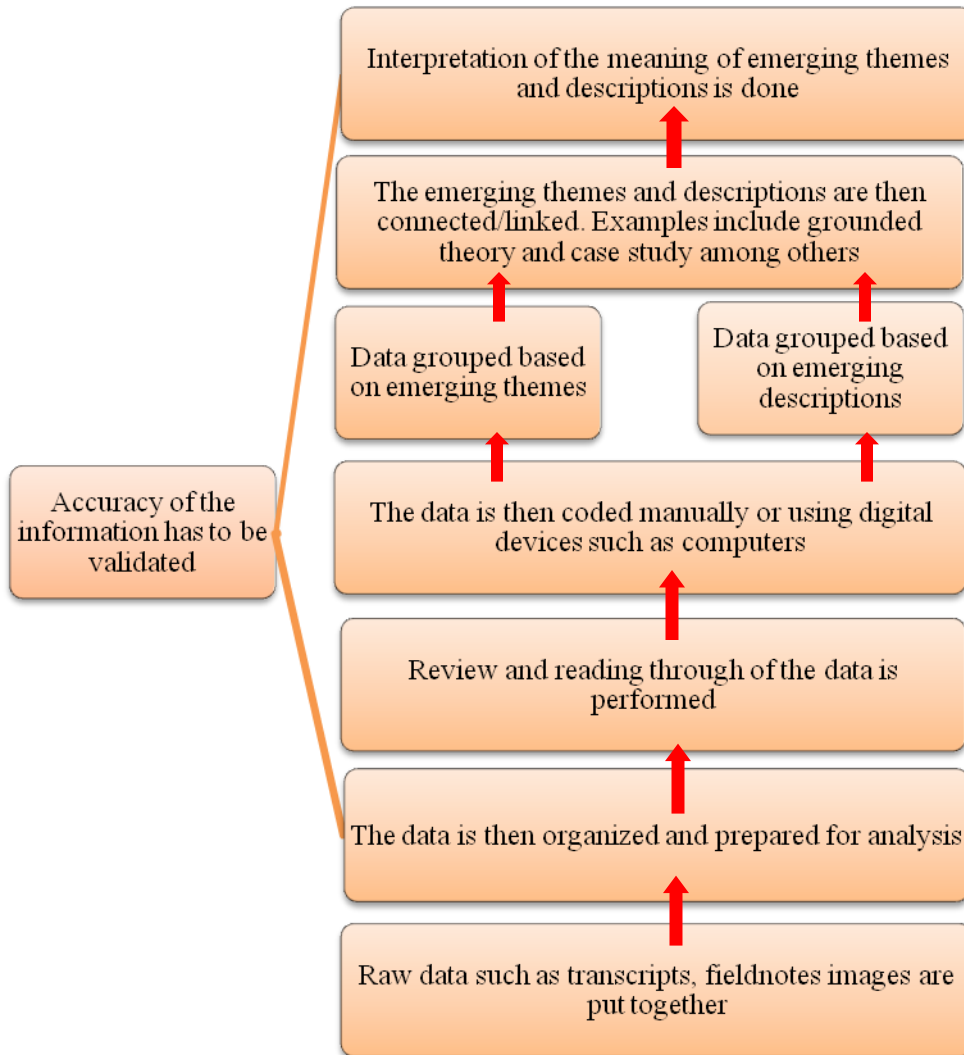
Source: Neuman, W.L (2014)

3.10   Validity and Reliability

3.10.1 Validity

Creswell, (2009), posits that validity is critical as it enables the researcher to use a set or standard procedure to verify the accuracy of findings. Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003), amplifies this explanation asserting that for research results to be valid, inferences have to accurate and meaningful. Further, according to Creswell, (2009), the viewpoint on the accuracy of the findings adopted by researchers, readers of the accounts or participants play a significant role in determining the validity of a study. For this inquiry, achieving validity from the data collected was based on how the information collected was able to reflect and respond to the study's

research questions. During the study, efforts were made to ensure that invalid information not aligned to the research questions was discarded. This inquiry also reviewed the collected information based on authenticity, trustworthiness, and credibility. This study applied the use of triangulation as a strategy by taking advantage of multiple data sources and data collection methods such as the use of questionnaires other than just interviews to verify results/outcomes and ensure they are reflective of each other. This was instrumental in verifying the accuracy of the findings and enable readers have confidence in the substance of the inquiry.

3.10.2 Reliability

For Neuman, (2004), reliability refers to the dependability or consistency of the techniques used to record observations in a qualitative approach. Such techniques include interviews, document studies, photographs, and participation among others. Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003), postulate that reliability in a research study refers to the ability of a research instrument repeatedly produce consistent results. Thus, reliability is important since it helps gauge and deepen the accuracy of a study approach by ensuring potential consistency of results by different researchers.

For this inquiry, the use of credible research instruments played a significant role in ensuring that that reliability was achieved. The interview guide and the survey questionnaire which were the measuring instruments for this inquiry, were designed and administered consistently among all the participants. In essence, this implies that other inquiries on a similar study should yield the same or near similar outcome. Further, the researcher also endeavored to ensure that transcripts were repeatedly checked to ensure errors that may have been committed during the transcription process were identified and eliminated. Pilot testing was applied to improve the study's reliability of the research instruments. Creswell, (2009), asserts that it is important to maintain consistency in the definition of codes and any drift in the definition impairs the reliability of a study.

3.11   Ethical Considerations

To ensure that participants enjoy a sense of comfort in taking part in the inquiry, it was important to reassure them that their responses were to be treated with the utmost regard for privacy. For this reason, this study, for instance, endeavored to assure respondents who were not keen to have

their identities revealed that their responses were to be treated with the highest possible levels of confidentiality. According to Neumann, (2014), ethical considerations should ensure that studies do not cause unnecessary or irreversible harm such as loss of privacy and embarrassment to participants. In addition, it was important during the study to secure consent with a highlight of the basis of the study and what it entailed. This enabled the potential respondents to fully comprehend the basis and nature of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This section details the analysis of the data and the presentation of the study findings. In addition, the section also looks at the interpretation of the findings as set out in the methodology. For this inquiry, the main objective was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth within Nairobi, County. The results presented in this study were derived based on the study's research questions. A survey questionnaire and an interview guide as research instruments provided the platform from which data was drawn from the respondents.

4.1 Demographic Information

4.1.1 Respondents' Location

To meet the set objectives of the inquiry which ring-fenced this project within the precincts of the County of Nairobi, the questionnaire as a research instrument set the valid participants for this study to be respondents who reside within the set boundaries. According to the findings, 97.6% of the respondents were from Nairobi while the remaining 3.4% were not from the study location. The implication is that the study was able to restrict participation to only those individuals who reside within the county of Nairobi.

4.1.2 Age of the Respondents

This study targeted youth aged between 18-35 years in line with the study's objective. Participants outside that age bracket were deemed irrelevant and consequently eliminated since they did not meet the objective of the inquiry. According to the Kenya Constitution 2010, the youth in Kenya are individuals aged between 18-35 years.

To ensure that that objective was achieved, the results indicated the following. Three percent of the respondents were between 18-22 years old, 19.7% were aged between 23-27 years old while the bulk of the respondents at 40.9% were aged between 28-32 years.

The last age set group that was eligible to participate in the study was between 33-35 years old which recorded a response rate of 28.8%. The remaining 2.4% of respondents fell outside the age scope of the study. These results indicate that 97.6% of the respondents met the eligibility

criteria based on the study's objective to strictly focus on the youth aged between 18-35 years. This also means that the individuals were fully competent as respondents to take part in the study.

4.1.3   Gender of the Respondents

Though gender was not a major factor of inquiry in this project, the researcher nonetheless felt that it was imperative to have respondents identify the gender given that dating for this particular study was premised on heterosexual relationships and not those that relate to LGB. For this reason, 64.2% of the respondents registered as female while the remaining 35.8% registered as male respondents.

4.2 Popular Online Dating Sites

To assess if the participants in the study actually engaged in online dating, the question of preferred online dating platforms was pivotal. This is because, the study sought to analyze if at all the respondents have been able to participate in online dating. This was done by seeking information about their knowledge of popular online dating platforms. Based on the data collected, it was established that Badoo and Facebook, and Tinder are regarded as the most popular sites for dating. At 23.5% Badoo ranked top followed by Facebook at 22.9% and Tinder at 21.7%. The other sites ranked as follows; Tagged.com 15.7%, OkCupid at 6.6%, and the rest at 9.6%.

4.3 Span of Presence in Online Dating

To assess the changing perceptions about digital dating, the study sought to engage respondents on how long they have been engaged in online dating. From the results obtained from the data, 30.3% of respondents have been on digital dating for less than a month. This is followed by those who have spent a year engaging in online dating, those who have been dating for between 7-9 months. Each scored 12.1%. The next groups are those that have been online for 2+ years and those who have stayed for between 1-3 months. Their ranking is tied at 10.6% apiece. Based on the results, respondents who have been engaged in online dating for 3+ years constitute 6.1% of the total score while those who have spent between 4, 5, and 10 years cumulatively command 12.1% of the respondents.

4.4 Average Time Spent Every Day on Preferred Dating Site

To assess the level of engagement with online dating among the respondents, this study analyzed the average span of time that respondents spent online on daily basis for purposes of dating. The results are as captured below.

- 40.9% of respondents spent an average of 1 hour every day on online dating sites
- 28.8% of respondents spent less than one hour every day on online dating sites
- 22.7% of respondents spent an average of 2hours on online dating sites
- The rest (7.6%) of the respondents spent an average of between 3 and 4 hours on online dating sites.

4.5 Factors Fueling Digital Dating

This inquiry was designed to assess the changing perceptions about online dating and evaluate of the factors that have accelerated the uptake of digital dating. From the data collected, the findings point to a strong bias towards several factors that have propelled the growth of online dating. These include the ability to preserve one's identity while online, reduced social stigma, the convenience offered by connected digital devices, and affordable cost for getting online compared to traditional avenues for meeting potential partners such as clubs, gyms, and even religious venues among others. The findings from the study are captured, explained, and presented in the sections that follow.

4.5.1   Online Dating and Identity Preservation

Table 4.5.1 captures the findings from the study regarding people's ability to preserve their identity thus fueling confidence in online dating. From the results, 70.7% of the respondents strongly agree that being able to preserve their identity has boosted their confidence in online dating. This stems from the fact that online dating is largely a private engagement and individuals might decide to hide their identity until such a time when they feel confident enough of the other person's intentions and goals. Cumulatively up to 80.45% of the respondents agree with the proposition that the ability to preserve one's identity has fueled users' confidence in online dating. About 11% of the respondents are neutral while the remaining 8.52% of the respondents disagree and reject the notion that the ability to preserve people's identity has contributed to the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. From the

Interview Guide, the phenomenon of identity preservation is highlighted under the motivating factors that drive online dating. During the study respondents were asked to cite some of the advantages of online dating they are aware of and one of these was about the ability to preserve one's identity while online. Under the prism of perceptions, the respondents were also asked about how they perceive the appropriateness of online dating as a dating platform. From our in-depth interviews, one of the themes that emerged is the ease of approaching strangers whom they had initially met online. For instance, a respondent noted, "Online dating offers a choice given that it is not like physical setting where it is hard to approach someone. In online dating, everyone is there for the same reason unless they are a fraud."

Table 4.5.1: Identity preservation in online dating

Identity Preservation	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	58	70.70%
Agree	8	9.75%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	10.97%
Disagree	1	1.21%
Strongly disagree	6	7.31%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field data 2020

4.5.2 Online dating and Reduced Social Stigma

According to the survey findings, reduced social stigma ranks high as a catalyst for the growing uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi County. According to Table 4.5.2, a total score of 70.7% of the respondents is of the view that reduced social stigma has fueled the consumption of online dating among the youth in Nairobi County. Of the total respondents, 11% neither agree nor disagree that online dating has picked up owing to reduced social stigma. The remaining 18.3% of the respondents are however convinced otherwise and do not support the assertion that online dating among the youth in Nairobi County has grown largely owing to reduced social stigma. From the Interview Guide, the question of Social stigma is tackled as one of the possible motivating factors that have fueled the growth of online dating among the youth in Nairobi. A respondent asserted, "Online dating is slowly but steadily picking up because

unlike in the past when it was mostly associated with say prostitution, that is not the case today. We have seen many successful relationships that were founded online. Another respondent quipped: "Our parents and relatives are slowly accepting that yes people from different corners of the world can meet virtually, become friends, and eventually join each other as couples and start families." These experiences mirror the scholarly works of Frias, (2013) who asserts that early romantic relationships which were founded on online dating platforms saw participants suffer from the negative social stigma which came about from the perception that such relationships emerged from unconventional and unrecognized methods of meeting a partner. From the narrative analysis, it is also evident that there is reduced negative stigma associated with online dating. According to a respondent, "Men should understand that women who are dating online are not prostitutes out to sell their bodies or maybe people who have to find a rich guy…it should be a safe place where people come to know each other like a social gathering."

Table 4.5.2*: Social Stigma around online dating*

Online dating and reduced Social Stigma	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	46	56.10%
Agree	12	14.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	11.00%
Disagree	5	6%
Strongly disagree	10	12.30%
Total	**82**	**100.00%**

Source: Field Data 2020

4.5.3 The Convenience of Digital Devices

The emergence of connected digital devices has continued to escalate especially among the youth in Nairobi, County. A huge chunk of these devices can connect to the internet given the growth of broadband access its reliability and affordability. Table 4.5.3 captures these findings indicating that a large part of the respondents at 82% strongly agree with the statement plus an additional 8.53% of respondents who also agree that the convenience offered by connected devices has accelerated the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. In total 90.23% of all the respondents agree that the convenience offered by connected devices such as

smartphones, tablets, laptops, and computers have fueled the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. From In-depth interviews, one of the major themes on the motivating factors revolves around the convenience of digital devices as a driver for the practice of online dating. Most respondents contend that it is a 'good platform' and one which "Offers as a choice given that it is not like physical where it's hard to approach someone." Another respondent said: "It is very cool because, from the comfort of your Smartphone, you can log in and make the search." Yet another respondent who also supports the perception of connected devices quipped: It is great since it's convenient and easily accessible hence more affordable." Even then, it is not a completely rosy picture for some of the respondents. "It is easy and convenient but at the same time, it can get frustrating since in many cases you don't get what you see. Fake profiles and images are all over." That convenience aspect of connected devices is amplified by Blossfeld and Schmitz, (2012), who postulates that the architecture of online digital dating platforms supports interactions and connections with potential partners at the same time. One of the themes that emerged from the qualitative survey was that in online dating, an individual has access to a long array of potential suitors and all it takes is for one to swipe right or click 'like' and then wait for the other person to respond. The Social Information Processing (SIP) theory is implicated here. According to Walther, 1992, Computer Mediated Communication provides an enabling framework for individuals desire to engage in social relationships and that using Computer Mediated Communications is just as effective as in the case of face-to-face settings. However, for this to be realized, ample time will be required, (Walther 1992).

Table 4.5.3*: Convenience of connected devices*

The convenience of connected devices	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	67	81.70%
Agree	7	8.53%
Neither agree nor disagree	4	4.87%
Disagree	1	1.25%
Strongly disagree	3	3.65%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, 2020

4.5.4   Online Dating and Changing Lifestyles

In analyzing the motivating factors that have propelled the uptake of online dating, the issue of changing lifestyles has been cited among scholars as a key factor that has propelled its growth. From the findings, changing lifestyles is a strong factor that has motivated the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. From the findings, (Table 4.5.4) slightly over 60% of the respondents agree that changing lifestyles have contributed to the growth of online dating. According to Frias, (2013), the demanding nature of work-related lifestyle is forcing people to strike a balance of multiple roles and responsibilities with little time to spare for conventional traditional dating. From the findings, it is also evident that opinion is still largely divided given that 23% of respondents are not able to make a clear choice on the issue while the remaining 15% do not support the opinion that people engage in online dating because they have busy schedules and are confronted with changing lifestyles.

Table 4.5.4: *Online dating and changing lifestyles*

Changing Lifestyles	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	30	36.58%
Agree	20	24.39%
Neither agree nor disagree	19	23.17%
Disagree	4	4.87%
Strongly disagree	9	10.97%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2020

4.5.5   Access to online platforms

From the study's findings, (Table 4.5.5) a huge chunk of respondents believe that online dating is comparatively affordable as opposed to traditional venues for meetings such as clubs, restaurants, bars, and religious outlets among others. Of the respondents, 71% agree with the view that online dating is less expensive while 21% of the respondents disagree. The remaining 7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposition that access to online dating had contributed to the growth of online dating. According to one respondent from the study, access to online dating platforms has accelerated the growth of the practice given that it,

"Makes dating easy since you cover a lot of ground before you eventually meet and get to know the other person in real life." Another respondent noted, "Online dating is fun, cheap, enjoyable and gives you room for a wide range of potential friends to meet up with." These sentiments are supported by Blossfeld and Schmitz, (2012), who contend that the architecture of digital dating platforms supports interactions and connections with multiple potential partners at the same time. The ability to simultaneously contact different partners through these online platforms increases the chances of a perfect match.

Table 4.5.5*: Access to online platforms*

Access to online platforms	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	33	40.20%
Agree	26	31.70%
Neither agree nor disagree	6	7.30%
Disagree	3	3.65%
Strongly disagree	14	17%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2020

4.5.6   Trust during Online Dating

In Table 4.5.6, 60% of respondents in the study said they do not trust the people they meet online. According to Miller, (2011), in a study conducted by the Pew Institute, a good number of people on online dating sites are prone to deceptive tendencies that revolve around marital status. This outcome conforms to views presented by several scholars in various pieces of literature. For instance, Blossfeld and Schmitz, (2012) also note that potential users of digital dating platforms are also exposed to the risks of deception that arise from interaction with users whose profiles do not reflect the true picture of their identity. Trust is a key issue in propelling a relationship from one level to the next. It is therefore a very critical aspect of the online dating phenomenon that respondents were asked about. From the findings, 60% of the youth in Nairobi who engage in online dating activity are not very comfortable with the people they interact with online. Only 16% of the respondents feel confident enough about the trust they bestow on the strangers they intend to interact with as they engage in online dating. 24% of the respondents also find

themselves unable to strike a concrete opinion on the question of trust. From an in-depth Interview, "The challenge mostly lies in not being able to trust the person you are chatting with online- If they are truthful and if at all they are the same people (faces) they say they are." Given that the level of trust is very low, another respondent added: "I discovered that not all were genuinely there seeking what I was seeking and so I was cautious and took my time getting to know the people first online before I met them physically and for sure I have no regrets whatsoever - no bad experience so far." For another interview, another respondent asserted: "One may not trust the partner from the other end unless a meeting has happened."

Table 4.5.6: *Trust during online dating*

Trust during Online Dating	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	1	1.20%
Agree	12	14.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	20	24.30%
Disagree	17	20.73%
Strongly disagree	32	39%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source; Field data, 2020

4.5.7 Safety of Users Online

From Table 4.5.7, 41% of the respondents expressed their reservations about their safety while engaging in online dating. This compares to 25% of the respondents who expressed confidence in their safety while engaged in online dating. 34% of the respondents remain undecided on whether they feel safe or otherwise every time they venture online to engage in dating. According to a statement from an in-depth interview, one of the reasons that have led to low levels of trust is because "People tend to hide their identities a lot and present photos that do not represent them in their profiles." According to Wang and Lu, (2017), misinformation has been a common problem whose dangers have been widely covered in the popular press. In addition, the scholars note that while digital dating sites and chat rooms enable predators to have an easy path in locating victims, they also help in the facilitation of fraudulent activities and some cases end

up exposing children to inappropriate material. Lamphere and Pembroke, (2019) contend that fraudulent tendencies are not new in online dating.

Table 4.5.7: Safety of users online

Safety of users online	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	4	5%
Agree	17	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	28	33.75%
Disagree	14	17.50%
Strongly disagree	19	23.75%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, 2020

4.5.8 Privacy in Online Dating

From *Table 4.5.8*, 50% of the respondents believe that the levels of privacy on online dating sites are reasonable while a further 28% think otherwise. The remaining 30% of the respondents are not able to conclusively decide which choice to make in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with the opinion. Privacy of users online entails the assurance that the interactions that happen on the platforms cannot be leaked to the public and that adequate structures are in place to guard against possible such acts.

Table 4.5.8: Privacy in online dating

Privacy in Online Dating	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	12	14.80%
Agree	30	35.80%
Neither agree nor disagree	25	30.80%
Disagree	4	4.90%
Strongly disagree	11	13.58%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, 2020

4.5.9 Friendship during Online Dating

There is no doubt that online dating has had a significant impact on the youth in Nairobi County. Table 4.5.9, shows that majority of the respondents at 75% claim to have made friends with people that they met online. On the other hand, only 20% of the respondents claim not to have made friends with people they met on online dating platforms. 1.2% of the respondents remain undecided on the question of making friends from online dating sites. From the in-depth interview, one respondent noted, "Well, most guys I have communicated with didn't seem to align with my intentions hence I rarely meet them past online." Another respondent added, "I discovered that not all were genuinely interested in what I was seeking and so I was cautious and took my time getting to know the people first online before I met them physically and for sure I have no regrets whatsoever - no bad experience so far." Another respondent said: "I was just trying to experience something different from the ordinary dating so I went on dates but I made friends from it - So far, not all has been well, I have never gotten a serious person. All are just for fun."

Table 4.5.9: Making friends with people online

Friendship and Online dating	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	45	54.87%
Agree	17	20.73%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	1.21%
Disagree	3	3.65%
Strongly disagree	16	19.51%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field data, 2020

4.5.10 Building Dating Relationship Online

Online dating is largely regarded as using digital platforms to initiate romantic relationships. The ultimate goal is to work towards transitioning to offline dating or a relationship where romantic encounters can be actualized. This study, therefore, sought to find out if some of these relationships initiated online have managed to transition to offline avenues. The findings according to *Table 4.5.10,* a majority of respondents at 59.75% have been able to start a dating

relationship with someone they met from online dating platforms. On the other hand, 30.71% of the respondents submitted that they have never been able to build a dating relationship with someone they met or found online. From the response gathered from in-depth interviews, those who have managed to build dating relationships with those they found online contend that the process is effective in delivering positive results. "I met several people with twisted minds but finally got my Mr. Right – I am living the happiest days of my life thanks to online dating." According to another respondent, "It was never easy meeting real people behind the profile pictures - but I was glad to have met a lady whom we met physically on a date and we went on to date for several months." The other respondent disclosed her experiences saying, "I have had both good and bad experiences - bad experiences include fraudsters, players, etc - good experiences, met someone whom we have dated for 4 years now."

Table 4.5.10: Building dating relationship

Building dating relationships Online	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	37	45.12%
Agree	12	14.63%
Neither agree nor disagree	7	8.54%
Disagree	6	7.32%
Strongly disagree	20	24.39%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, 2020

4.5.11 Influence of Digital Culture on Online Dating

The growth of the digital culture has been touted as one of the key drivers of online dating. For instance, across the world, virtually all sectors of the global economy are increasingly going digital. This means that a lot of activities that were traditionally analog-based such as banking, learning, trade, and health among others are increasingly shifting gears and going digital. The net effect is that even dating is also following suit and more people are slowly embracing the new phenomenon. Based on *Table 4.5.11*, a majority of respondents at 68% agree that the phenomenon has contributed to the growth of online dating while 18% of the respondents are convinced that the growth of the digital culture has not played any role in fueling its growth.

13% of the respondents remained neutral on whether the growth of digital culture contributing to the rise of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, county.

Table 4.5.11: *Influence of digital culture on online dating*

| Influence of Digital Culture	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	45	56%
Agree	11	12.30%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	13.50%
Disagree	3	3.70%
Strongly disagree	12	14.80%
Total	**82**	**100%**

Source: Field Data, 2020

4.6 Challenges around Online Dating

According to the study, the respondents identified some of the leading challenges which have contributed to slowing down the uptake of online dating. In terms of ranking, misrepresentation of user profiles poses the biggest challenge followed by cases of fraud as a major issue of concern. The last issue of concern among the respondents and which is also a challenge revolves around cyber-bullying. Still, the issue of the safety of users of online dating platforms also comes out as a key challenge given that there have been cases of kidnapping emerging from relationships that were initiated online. 41% of the respondents also expressed their reservations about their safety while engaging in online dating. This compares to 25% of the respondents who expressed confidence in their safety while engaged in online dating. (See figure 4.6). According to responses from in-depth interviews, online dating still poses serious risks and misrepresentation of facts. "Chances of some people telling lies about their personalities and characters are high." Other respondents also indicated that cyber-bullying still thrives and that not every other profile photo represents the real person behind the photo. "Not everyone in online dating is real…most of them are scammers, so one needs to be very cautious." For instance, respondents noted during interviews that through online dating works, people have to be careful since there are cases of fraud and abduction that have been reported in the local dailies, (Nation, 2019; Kimuyu, 2010). "In dating sites, there are many challenges but it takes

one to choose whom to chat with - and I have met good people - but also there are others who are jokers." During this study, the themes revolving around fraud and misrepresentation of user profiles were significant. According to one respondent, not everyone engaged in online dating is real as some are scammers. "I tried once and the relationship lasted only 2 months. The guy was a fraud so I wouldn't vouch for much for online dating – it is too risky."

Figure 4.6: Safety of users online
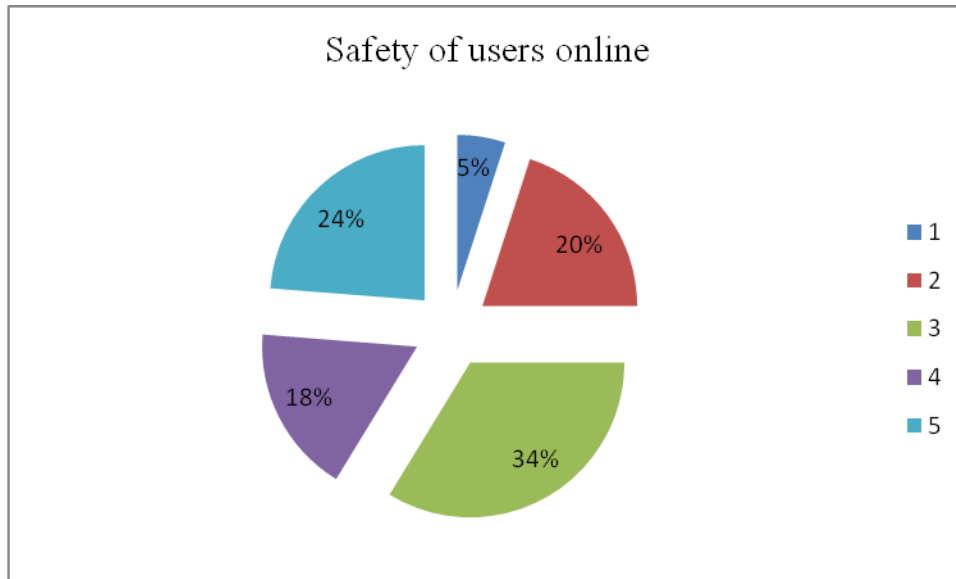
Key:

1 (Strongly agree) 2 (Agree) 3(Neither agree nor disagree) 4. (Disagree) 5. Strongly disagree

Source: Field Data, 2020

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The objective of this study was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. Based on the foregoing, this Chapter summarizes the findings drawn from Chapter four and also outlines the conclusions and recommendations that were drawn from the study.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study adopted a Descriptive design where both quantitative and qualitative methods were put to use. It is therefore, essentially, a mixed-method study approach. For collection of quantitative data, the survey method through a survey questionnaire as the research instrument for data collection was used. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were done using an interview guide as data collection tool for the qualitative approach. The target population was Youth living within Nairobi County aged between 18-35 years and the sample frame was based on a Facebook dating group that had 32124 members at the time of this study. To calculate the sample population, the Taro Yamane formula was used posting an outcome of a sample population of 100 participants. The survey registered a response rate of 82%. For the quantitative approach, the data generated was analyzed using descriptive methods. The Likert Rating Scale was used to gauge the respondents' perceptions around attitudes and opinions on the various issues spelt out in the research questions.

The survey questionnaire was structured to accommodate closed-ended questions in addition to a single open-ended question. This open-ended question provided a glimpse into the potential uniqueness and richness of the respondents' experiences and opinions. The open-ended question provided the basis, which the inquiry relied on upon to purposively identify participants for the Qualitative study. Some of these respondents had unique and rich experiences, which informed their selection through purposive sampling. From the 15 selected participants, only 12 respondents were interviewed since no new insights were forthcoming hence the saturation point. The qualitative study thus recorded a response rate of 80%.

This study focused on the main objective of assessing the changing perceptions about online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. Towards that realization, the study was hinged on three research questions. These questions sought to answer the following: the key motivating factors that have propelled the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. Secondly, the prevailing perceptions regarding online dating among the participants and the challenges faced by the participants. Data analysis, results, and discussions in Chapter four provided the basis of summary of the findings. Qualitative data is presented in narrative adopting verbatim quotes to complement the quantitative data. This inquiry was premised on three specific objectives and the summary of the findings from the research questions are highlighted below:-

5.2 Analyzing the motivating factors that have propelled the growth of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County

5.2.1 Online dating and preservation of identity

The study findings show that the ability to preserve one's identity online has supported the growth of online dating. Over 70% of respondents noted that the ability to preserve their identity contributed to boosting their confidence online. This is because preservation of identity ensures one to post true identity ensuring the ability to confidently initiate conversations. This increases the chances of being able to meet the perfect match from the online platforms as it goes away to help push away the initiation of conversations with those who have hidden their identities. Given that online dating is largely a private engagement, individuals might decide to hide their identity until such a time when they feel confident enough of the other person's intentions and goals.

5.2.2 Online dating and reduced social stigma

From the findings of the study, it is apparent that reduced social stigma that was traditionally attached to online dating is slowly waning. This is because as access to the internet and digital devices expands, more people can log into online dating platforms. The widespread acceptance means that society is slowly embracing online dating as a medium for initiating dating relationships which can then be transitioned online and eventually lead to marriage and the formation of families. Unlike the past when such practices were widely viewed with scorn and negatively characterized, the trend is shifting to acceptance given that there are

also success stories of people who have managed to find real love from online dating platforms.

5.2.3 The convenience of digital devices

The emergence of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and even tablets which can be accessed from the convenience of one's comfort has ramped up the growth of online dating. This is notable from the way people can use these devices on the go and can keep in touch with their potential match anytime they log into the dating platforms. The findings from the study support this claim with over 90% of the respondents indicating that the convenience offered by digital devices has played a critical role in enabling their embrace of online dating practice.

5.2.4 Online dating and changing lifestyles

According to the results, majority of respondents at 60% contend that changing lifestyles has played a significant part in contributing towards the growth of online dating. This is characterized by the changing nature of the workplace, which puts more pressure on the people to deliver. This then means that people end up with limited time opportunities for socializing thereby being forced to turn to online dating. For some people, the pressure of work which could in some cases involve working overtime, traveling, and meetings leaves them with very little time to go out and interact with potential matches and therefore are only able to find consolation in the online dating platforms.

5.2.5 Access to online platforms

As the information superhighway, the internet offers a lot of opportunities for almost everyone. The number of online dating platforms has continued to grow as more people embrace the practice. Unlike in the past when access to such platforms required substantial access fees, today, most can offer basic services such as matchmaking at a minimal cost of free of charge. This has therefore enabled more people to join the platforms and search for their potential daters. The findings show that majority of respondents at 70% agreed that access to online dating platforms has contributed to the growth of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County.

5.2.6 Influence of digital culture on online dating

The global economy has continued to witness a significant shift in the architecture of its mode of engagement and operation. For instance, there has been a sustained shift towards a digital culture where business and related activities are conducted virtually or online. Several activities that were traditionally viewed as physically based have gradually transitioned to online networks. For instance, today, several medical-related procedures can be done virtually. The same obtains with education where online learning is increasingly gaining currency across the world, Kenya included. The emergence of leading conglomerates such as Amazon has catalyzed trade and commerce across countries and spurred the growth of digital culture across all spheres of life. Dating too has continued to embrace global practices and has continued to gain online prominence. The findings show that majority of respondents at 68% support the claim that the growth in the global digital culture has contributed to influencing the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County.

5.3 Assessing the perceptions of the participants regarding online dating

5.3.1 Trust during online dating

From the findings of the study, trust remains a key issue that was viewed differently by the respondents. Only 15.8% of respondents said they trust the people they meet online while a majority at 60% revealed that they do not trust the people they meet on online dating platforms. These findings are in tandem with scholars such as Bossfeld and Schmitz, (2012) who postulated that potential users of digital dating platforms are exposed to the risks of deception that arise from interaction with users whose profiles do not reflect the true picture of their identity. A respondent from the study summarized it thus: "One may not trust the partner from the other end unless a meeting has happened."

5.3.2 Making friends online

Online dating platforms are used to initiate a dating relationship which should then transition to the traditional offline face-to-face platform. In some cases when that happens, it could lead to possible friendships which could develop further into a relationship. According to the findings, 75% of the respondents agree that they have made friends with people that they met online. This then means that online dating platforms are capable of supporting the growth of friendships. The perception among the majority of the respondents indicates that online

dating is a strong foundation that can be used to initiate, nurture and grow a friendship that could mature into a serious relationship.

5.3.3 Safety of users online

For online dating, safety is a vexing issue given that users have different experiences. A majority of users 41% contend that online dating platforms are not safe given that there are myriad risks that exist. Only 25% of the respondents are confident about their safety while using online dating sites. Perhaps given the cases and experiences that have been highlighted in the press such as kidnappings, there is no doubt that most people perceive online dating platforms as being risky given that one might not know the real intentions of other people. There have also been cases of people using fake profiles to lure other users into illicit trade and activities which could be criminal hence the low level of trust in the safety of online dating platforms.

5.3.4 Privacy in online dating

The findings show that majority of respondents believe that the levels of privacy on online dating sites are reasonable while a further 28% think otherwise. Privacy of users online entails the assurance that the interactions that happen on the platforms cannot be leaked to the public and that adequate structures are in place to guard against possible such acts. From the findings, the dominant perception is that online dating platforms have good levels of privacy and therefore the interactions that take place therein are securely guarded by the companies that offer the services.

5.3.5 Building dating relationships online

The success stories from others who capitalized on online dating platforms to start their relationships have contributed to more people turning to such platforms in a bid to replicate the successes of others before them. From the findings, 49.9% of the respondents disclosed that they had been able to start a dating relationship with someone they met on online dating platforms. There is therefore a strong conviction that online platforms offer a strong foundation for building and sustaining strong dating relationships.

5.4 Establishing the challenges attached to online dating

From experiences of interacting with people whose profiles are fake to others whose aim is to extort money from users, online dating sites have recorded a fair share of challenges. Some respondents warned of the need to be cautious when interacting with people online since some

do not harbor good motives but are out to scam and engage in criminal activities. Misrepresentation of user profiles also poses a significant challenge given that users end up opening up to the wrong people online only to realize their mistake when physical interaction takes place.

5.5 Conclusions from the Research

This study was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. From the study, it can be concluded that digital dating is still taking root in the County. According to several respondents, the numerous positive experiences continue to support the uptake of online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. Successful cases of dating that have transitioned from online spaces and grown into solid relationships and marriages provide strong inspiration for those keen to take the path of online dating. In addition, from the study, it is clear that factors such as reduced social stigma, preservation of identity, growth of digital culture, access to online communication networks, changing lifestyles, and access to connected devices have contributed to fueling the uptake of digital dating. Some issues are also of concern which if not addressed could water down the gains that the practice has registered. For instance, cases of fraud and abductions threaten the safety of those engaged in the practice and slow down the uptake of online dating.

5.6 Recommendations from the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the changing perceptions about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi County. Many young people are increasingly turning to online dating platforms to initiate relationships that could evolve into serious romantic engagements. There is need to support them in this endeavor given that global trends are shifting towards a digital culture that embraces online communities. It is therefore clear that trying to slow down the evolution will yield much given that an increasing number of young people falling within the youth category are widely exposed to digital devices and social networks platforms that offer online dating services. The reduced social stigma attached to online dating has ramped up optimism among the youth that the practice will be widely embraced. It is therefore critical for the larger society to embrace these changes to enable seamless transition and reduce potential clashes with traditional cultures. In addition, this is also important given that cases that emanate

from online dating have brought about successful family foundations. The penetration of the digital culture and the internet will considerably play a significant role in entrenching online dating among the youth in Nairobi, County. This is because the cost of connected digital devices continues to drop and access to high-speed internet increases every other day across Nairobi and other major towns. As this happens, more people will be able to get online and enjoy reliable connections using their connected devices. It will be helpful to enhance access to reliable and affordable internet service provision to all corners of the country especially in the informal settlement where connection has been lagging. This will enable more opportunities to spring up and enable the youth to take advantage of technology and connection to connect and engage in online dating. The need to address vexing issues is critical and firms that are involved in developing the platforms should endeavor to close the gaps that some unscrupulous people are taking advantage of to demoralize those keen on taking part in online dating. Governments should ensure that laws that govern cybercrime activities are fully enforced to discourage such criminal activities.

5.7 Recommendations for Further Research

Online dating platforms are social networks that offer communications capabilities for populations. Online dating platforms such as Facebook Dating, Tinder, and Badoo among others are critical to the expansion of the communication space in society. The researcher is of the view there is a need to have more studies conducted in this area to capture the pulse of a larger population and not just the youth in Nairobi County. Such a study will immensely contribute to the building of the body of knowledge critical to understanding the changing dynamics in perceptions and attitudes about online dating. I also recommend the need for further research especially in the area of the impact of online dating on traditional cultural dating practices among the Kenyan communities. This is because the expanding access to information and access to online dating platforms have the potential to permeate and invade our traditionally held beliefs about dating and marriage.

References

American University, Washington DC. (n.d). *Discover Kenyan culture.* Retrieved from

    https://www.american.edu/aunairobi/culture.cfm

Ayayo, O. (1976). *Traditional ideology and ethics among the southern luo*. Scandinavian

    Institute of African Studies, Uppsala: Sweden.

Baym, N. (2015). *Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (2nd edition). Polity Press

    Cambridge: UK.

Blossfeld & Schmitz (2013). *Introduction to the special issue Online dating: Social innovation*

    and a tool for research on partnership formation. Retrieved from https://www.seman

    ticscholar.org/paper/Introduction-to-the-special-issue-Online-dating%3A-a-Blossfeld-

    Schmitz/e44673ef66e18b339db2bd56735adacd5da0d801

Blossfeld, H. P. & Schmitz, A. (2012) *Introduction to the special issue online dating: social*

    innovation and a tool for research on partnership formation. Retrieved from https://w

    ww.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/45670

Cabrera-Frias, (2013) *Cyber courtship computer matchmaking and trends in online romance*.

    Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/349c/4828c5abf7b6c0571720

    51bd612112fa3b85.pdf

Chambers, D, (2013). *Social media and personal relationships online intimacies and networked*

    friendship. University of Newcastle*:* UK

Creswel, J,W. (2016). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach*.

    Sage. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches, Third Edition*. Sage Publications. Los Angeles: California.

Danesi, M. (2017*). The semiotics of emoji.* Bloomsbury Academic An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2017 New York, USA

Dawson, C. (2002). *Practical Research Methods*. How to Books Ltd, Oxford: United Kingdom

Degim, A., Johnson, J., Fu, T., (eds.) (2015). *Online courtship interpersonal interactions across borders.* Institute of Network Cultures and Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam: Netherlands.

Fullick, M. (2013) "*Gendering" the self in online dating discourse*. Canadian Journal of communication. https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2647

Global Web Index. (2020). *Online dating across the world infographic*. Retrieved from https://www.globalwebindex.com/hubfs/Downloads/Online%20dating%20infographic%202020.pdf?utm_campaign=Generic%20nurture%202019&utm_source=hs_automation&utm_medium=email&utm_content=83204221&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9Ca1aTLqveZl7ESoORUbyxiXQaAoZgpeKYu3F4D1fYVu_fsmCx66NSyQ-YMNldlP6cIGAwQLDBehPZt9R1lQYnmpAoCw&_hsmi=83204221

Guler, P. (2019, October 14). *Top 10 dating apps worldwide for September 2019*. Retrieved from https://www.mobileaction.co/blog/app-business/top-dating-apps-september-2019/

Hamburger, A. Y (2013). (Ed.) *The social net: understanding our online behavior (Second edition)*. Oxford University Press: United Kingdom.

Wang, H. Lu, X. (2007). *Cyberdating: Misinformation and (Dis)trust in Online Interactions.*

59

Retrieved from https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Cyberdating%3A-Misinformati
on-and-(Dis)trust-in-Wang-Lu/44786b601607d359a8197c7262cafc8d890bf8b7

Internet World Stats (2020). *Internet users statistics for Africa. Africa Internet usage, 2020
population stats and facebook subscribers.* Retrieved from https://www.internetw
orldstats.com/stats1.htm

Intrabartola, L, (2018 February 12). *Love and courtship in the digital age.* Rutgers, the State
University of New Jersey. Retrieved from https://www.rutgers.edu/news/love-and-
courtship-digital-age

Israel, G.D. (1992). *Determining sample size*. University of Florida IFAS Extension. Retrieved
from https://www.tarleton.edu/academicassessment/documents/Samplesize.pdf

Kenya Population and Housing Census Volume 1 (2019): *Population by county and sub-county.*
Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, November 2019. https://www.knbs.or.ke/?wpdm
pro=2019-kenya-population-and-housing-census-volume-i-population-by-county-and-
sub-county

Kimuyu H, (2020). DCI busts online dating robbery ring (Nation, 2020) https://nation.afr
ica/kenya/counties/kiambu/dci-busts-online-dating-robbery-ring-2463468

Kombo, D, K and Tromp, D.L.A (2018). *Proposal and thesis writing, an introduction.* Paulines
Publications Africa, Nairobi: Kenya.

Lamphere, R. D. & Lucas, K.T (2019). *Deceptive online dating, catfishing, romance scams, and
"Mail Order" marriages*. University of North Carolina Pembroke, University of North
Carolina at Greensboro, USA. Retrieved from https://www.igi-global.com/view

titlesample.aspx?id=230771&ptid=218293&t=online+romance+in+the+21st+century%3a
+deceptive+online+dating%2c+catfishing%2c+romance+scams%2c+and+%e2%80%9c
mail+order%e2%80%9d+marriages

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts based, and
community based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Press, New York.

Maina, M.S, (2015). *Qualitative & quantitative research methods, simplified*. UNES Bookstore
Nairobi, Main Campus, University of Nairobi. Nairobi, Kenya.

Mburugu, E.K., Adams B.N. (2004). *Families in Kenya*. Retrieved from https://www.corwin.co
m/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/4948_Adams_Chapter_1_Families_In_Kenya.pdf

Miller, C.T. (2011). *The cultural adaptation of internet dating: attitudes towards online
relationship formation*. University of New Orleans. Retrieved from https://scholarw
orks.uno.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2316&context=td

Ministry of Information Communication and Technology. (2019). *Kenya Digital Economy
Blueprint.* Retrieved from https://ca.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Kenyas-Digital-
Economy-Blueprint.pdf

Ministry of Information, *ICT Authority Strategic Plan FY 2019-2023.* Retrieved from
http://icta.go.ke/powerassets/uploads/2019/12/THE-ICT-AUTHORITY-DRAFT-
STRATEGIC-PLAN-2019-2023.pdf

Mugenda, O. M and Mugenda, A.G (2003). *Research methods, quantitative & qualitative
approaches*. African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS). Nairobi: Kenya.

Nation, (2020). *Dating sites put Kenyans at risk*. Retrieved from https://nation.africa/kenya/bu
siness/dating-sites-put-kenyans-at-risk-250314

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*,
(Seventh Edition), Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh Gate.

Ocholla-Ayayo, A. B. C. (1976). *Traditional ideology and ethics among the southern luo.*
Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. Retrieved from http://nai.diva-
portal.org/smash/get/diva2:280191/FULLTEXT01.pdf

PEW Research Center, (2019). *Internet use is a prevalent part of many people's lives across the
globe*. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ft_
2020.04.02_globalinternet_01.png?resize=640,628

Project Management Institute (2019). *M-Pesa: For delivering cutting-edge mobile technology
that allowed Kenya to leapfrog past more advanced economies and start a banking
revolution (most Influential projects: #9 PM Network, 33, 26–27).* Retrieved from
https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/top-50-projects-m-pesa-11761

Sharp, N, (2019), *It's facebook official, dating is here.* Retrieved from *https://about.fb.com/ne
ws/2019/09/facebook-dating/*

Shiundu, L. (2020, November 20). *Kenyan woman says she married husband of Indian descent
after he said 'hi'.* https://www.tuko.co.ke/392093-kenyan-woman-married-husband-
indian-descent-online.html

Sobania, N. (2003). *Culture and customs of Kenya*. Greenwood Press, London: UK

Statista (2020). Active facebook users. https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-

       monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/#:~:text=How%20many%20users%20d

       oes%20Facebook,network%20ever%20to%20do%20so.

The East Africa Marine System Ltd. (n.d). *TEAMS fibre optic cable*. Retrieved from

       https://teams.co.ke/

Thomas, D. R, (2003). *A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis.* School of

       Population Health University of Auckland, New Zealand. Retrieved from http://www.fra

       nkumstein.com/PDF/Psychology/Inductive%20Content%20Analysis.pdf

Thurlow, C, Lengel, L and Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer mediated communication, social*

       interaction and the internet. Sage Publications Limited. London: UK

Walther, J. B. (n.d). *Theories of Computer Mediated Communication and Interpersonal*

       Relations. Retrieved from http://wiki.commres.org/pds/TheoriesInNewMedia/42241_

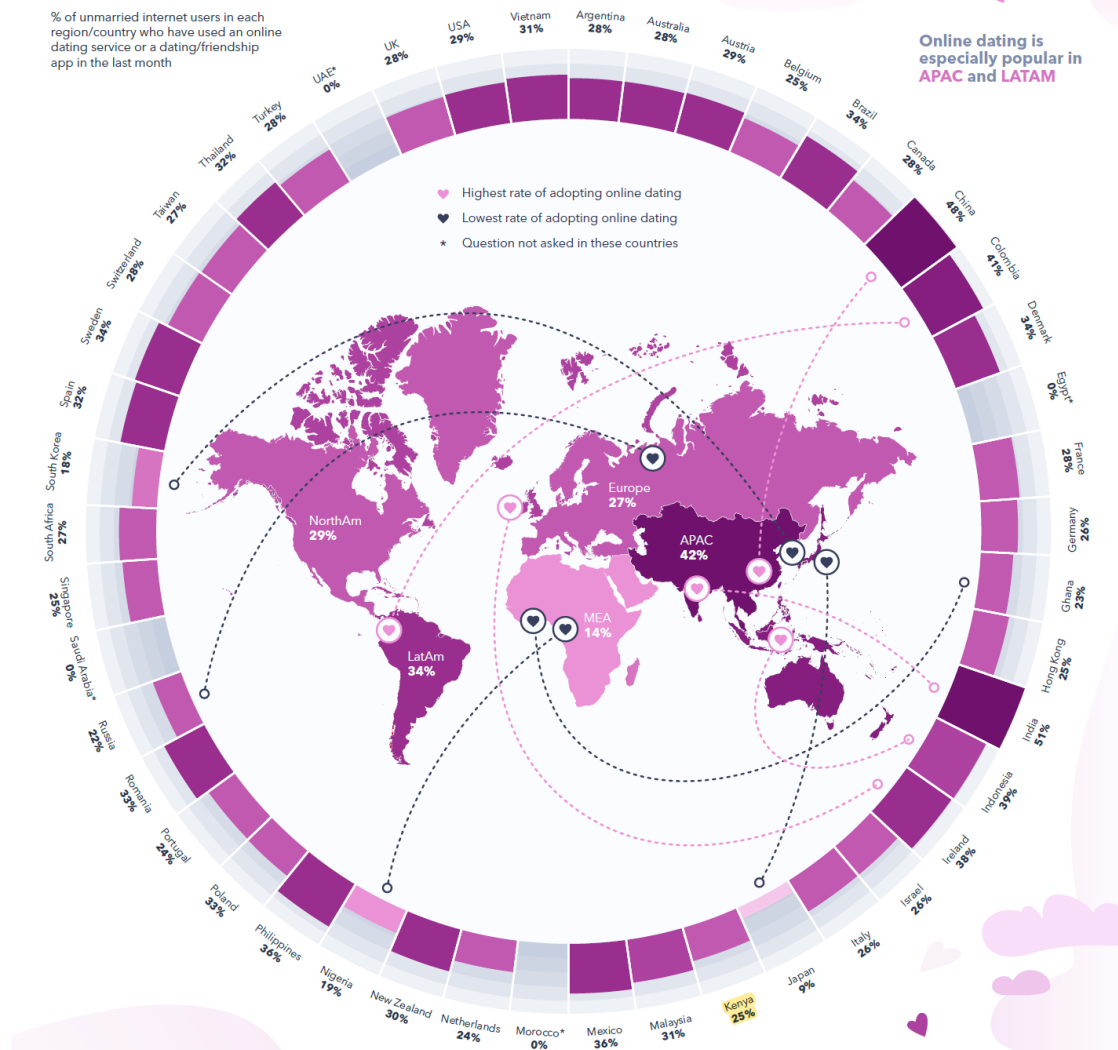   14.pdf

Appendix i: Online dating across the World

Source: Globewebindex

Appendix ii: Interview Guide

Platform/Research Site: Nairobi County

Interviewee Background

(Name/Alias): _____

Age _____

Interviewer: _____

Survey Section Used:

_____ A: Interview Background

_____ B: Perceptions Perspectives

_____ C: Motivating factors

_____ D: Environmental factors

_____ E: Challenges of digital dating

Other Topics Discussed:_____

_____

Documents Obtained: (if any)_____

_____

Post Interview Comments or Leads:

_____

Introductory Protocol

Hi _____ _____ (name/alias to be inserted)

If and once they respond, I will then introduce myself and explain my interest

Hey, I am James, and I have an interest in your engagement. I am a student undertaking a research study on digital dating kindly request your indulgence.

If and once they consent then I set out the parameters as follows;

   i.   *For your information, only my supervisor and project lecturers will be privy to the contents of this conversation. This means that all information will be confidential.*

  ii.   *Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.*

 iii.   *I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

We have planned this interview to last no longer than 45 minutes but of course, since it's not face-to-face, chances are that you might get distracted or get some engagements elsewhere. Should that happen, then we can pick up next time when you are available to complete the line of questioning. During our 45 minutes, I will be sending several questions that I would like to cover.

Introduction

I have selected you for this study because I have identified you as someone who has a great deal to share about online dating. My research project as a whole focuses on the perceptions revolving around digital dating and how the practice/behavior is redefining dating practices in Kenya.

Of particular interest is understanding how individuals like yourself are engaged in this activity, your views about digital dating, what people you know think about it, the motivating factors, and the reasons you believe are contributing to the growth of online dating. This study does not aim to investigate your personal or private experiences but a general feel about digital dating and in Kenya. This is a learning experience for me and I am confident your contribution will help shed more light on how the world is moving.

SECTION A
INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND
How long have you been on digital dating platform (s)_____?
Probes:

    i.   *Interesting background information:*

    ii.   *How many people have you managed to interact with so far _____?*

SECTION B
PERCEPTION PERSPECTIVE
Briefly tell me more about digital dating and how you perceive it in terms of its appropriateness as a dating platform.
Probes:

    i.   *What about the people you know - What are they saying about it?*

ii.   *What can you say is changing about dating from the way we know it?*

iii.   *Can we trust these online dating platforms and sites?*

SECTION C

MOTIVATING FACTORS

What do you think are some of the reasons that have made digital dating popular among Kenyans?

Probes:

i.   Why do you believe digital dating offers a good platform for potential dating mates?

ii.   What are some of the advantages of digital dating you know of?

SECTION D

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Have you heard or know of someone or people who met online and ended up as a family through marriage?

Probes:

i.   What did their parents or relatives and friends think about that?

ii.   What are the issues that might keep you away from being online and looking for love?

iii.   Is there anything (s) that you wish could be done to make the digital dating experience better?

SECTION E

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED ON DIGITAL DATING PLATFORMS

What do you think are some of the challenges you encounter when it comes to pursuing love through these digital dating platforms?

Probes:

i.   Is it possible to overcome these challenges?

POST-INTERVIEW COMMENTS AND/OR OBSERVATIONS:

Thank you very much (Interviewee) for your time and for the responses that you have given. It's been a pleasure. Your participation will certainly contribute towards helping create knowledge and awareness among our people about online dating/courting. Thanks!

Appendix iii: Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

An assessment of the changing perception about digital dating among the youth in Nairobi, County

Do you live in Nairobi?

  ○ Yes   ○ No

Please select your gender

  ○ Male   ○ Female

Please select your age group

  ○ 18 - 22

  ○ 23 – 27

  ○ 28 - 32

  ○ 33 - 35

  ○ Above 35

How long have you engaged in online dating?

  ○ Less than one month

  ○ 1-3 months

  ○ 4-6 months

  ○ 7-9 months

  ○ 10-12 months

  ○ 1+ years

  ○ 2+ years

  ○ 3+ years

  ○ 5+ years

  ○ 10+ years

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

A rating of 5 is Strongly Agree; a rating of 1 is Strongly Disagree.
Online dating has grown because of reduced social stigma multiple:

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

The ability to preserve one's identity has enabled many people to have confidence in online dating.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

The convenience offered by connected devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops among others has fueled the uptake of online dating.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

People engage in online dating because they have busy schedules and are confronted with changing lifestyles.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

Online dating is less expensive compared with traditional venues for meeting such as clubs, bars, restaurants, and gyms among others.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

I trust the people that I meet on online dating sites

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

I feel safe on online dating sites

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

I think the levels of privacy in online dating sites are reasonable

	1	2	3	4	5

	○	○	○	○	○

I think the levels of privacy on online dating sites are easy to understand

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

I have made friends with people that I met from online dating site

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

The growth of digital culture such as digital banking, online education, online marketplace among others have inspired the uptake of digital dating

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

Which of the following online dating sites have you ever used? Multiple choice

○ eharmony

○ Firstmet.com

○ Tinder

○ Badoo

○ OkCupid

○ Tagged.com

○ datemekenya.com

○ dating.co.ke

○ Facebook.com

○ Other

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.
A rating of 5 is Strongly Agree; a rating of 1 is Strongly Disagree.

Fraud is still a major issue of concern for online dating.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

Cyberbullying is a reason for concern for online dating.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

Misrepresentation of user-profiles popularly known as 'Cat-fishing' poses a serious challenge for online daters.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

During an average day, how many hours do you spend on your preferred online dating site?

○ Less than one hour

○ 1 hour

○ 2 hours

○ 3 hours

○ 4 or hours more

Online dating helps individuals to initiate romantic relationships. Briefly describe the experience you have encountered while seeking love or friendship online.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____