YOUTH EXPERIENCES OF EXCHANGE OF SEXTING MESSAGES AND MITIGATING PERCIEVED CONCERNS AMONG MIDDLE LEVEL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN NAIROBI, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

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I dedicate this thesis to my late grandparents, George and Teresiah, for bringing me up and taking me to school before anyone else did.

ABSTRACT

The rapid uptake of smartphones has coincided with an increase in sexting among young people globally. Recent research shows that sexting has escalated despite the societal efforts put forth to discourage the behavior. There are hardly any studies that examine sexting from the perspectives and experiences of Kenyan youth with a view to suggesting ways to deal with the perceived concerns and dangers. The aim of this study was to analyze how the use of smartphones interrelates with exchange of sexually inclined messages in everyday life of middle level college (MLC) students in Nairobi, Kenya, and suggest a framework to address the perceived concerns and challenges. The study had four research questions: What are the perceptions of MLC students on the use of smartphones with regard to sexting activities? How does exchange of sexting messages relate to daily social activities among the selected MLC students? What are the concerns around experiences of sexting by MLC students? And what framework can the study suggest to address the perceived concerns pertaining to sexting among the MLC students in Kenya? The study was guided by Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behavior and was anchored on relativist-interpretivist research paradigm. Qualitative research approach utilizing multiple case study method was adopted to conduct the study. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to identify 65 students aged 18-24 years from five MLCs that were purposively selected. Data was generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The data were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding procedures, and the ethical issues that were considered included consent, disclosure and protection from harm, and confidentiality and anonymity. The key findings were: students felt a sense of privacy and control while using smartphones to share sexual content, and ability to switch between user-level and group-level interactions on instant messaging applications increased the extent of exchanging the sexually inclined messages; exchange of sexting messages was mostly intertwined with practices of forming romantic relationships, peer-social interactions and conversations, and sharing commercial online pornography among the selected youth; and concerns participants identified converged around perceived dangers, poor child-parent communication, awareness needs and invention of 'safe' sexting methods. The study concluded that most students had misconceptions about sexting and rarely discussed its challenges and dangers with peers, therefore open and bold discussions about sex, sexting, dating and effects of digital technologies between adults and youth should be encouraged. The study recommended use of collaborative approaches to formulate strategies that promote effective youth-adult relationships and communication, and that foster desirable perceptions and norms about sexting and use of digital media technologies. Based on the findings, a framework that conceptualizes and describes how elements of socialization processes should work together in dealing with concerns and challenges of sexting among Kenyan youth was formulated.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCTV   Closed Circuit Television

DJ   Disk Joker

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

FGM   Female Genital Mutilation

AID   Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

HIV   Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICT   Information and Communications Technology

MA   Master of Arts

NASCOTI   National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

SMS   Short Messaging Service

TAM   Technology Acceptance Model

TV   Television

TPB   Theory of Planned Behavior

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Closely knit: Throughout this Thesis this term is used when describing online social groups composed of members who physically know each other.

Densely knit: This term is used to describe virtual communities (groups) that comprise of people who do not physically know each other (online acquaintances). In some instances, the term refers to virtual groups with a mixture of people who do and do not physically know each other.

Interactional capability: Throughout this Thesis these terms are used to describe the tasks (affordances) one can perform using smartphone or social application, for example creating or join a virtual social group

Middle level colleges: Refers to post-secondary education institutions that offer various courses without awarding a degree to those who complete such courses.

Sex chatting: Refers to composure and exchange of sexually explicit text messages. The term is also used to describe sexually explicit photos and/or videos that are sent together with sex text messages in the process of sex chatting.

Sexting materials: In this thesis this composite term is used to refer to sexually explicit/implicit photos, videos and text messages. Sometimes the terms sexting content(s) or sext materials are used in its place.

Sexting: In this Thesis, sexting is used to refer to creation and exchange of sexually explicit or implicit text messages, videos and photos via smartphones social applications.

Social applications: Refers to instant messaging (WhatsApp, Messenger) and social networking applications (Facebook, Instagram).

Social connections: This term is used to refer sex chat groups and virtual communities that are established and maintained through social application. Portable social connections imply these social connections are accessed through smartphones which are already portable devices.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter introduces the study area by providing the background, rationale and context within which the research was postulated. The research problem and research questions that guided the study are also stipulated in this chapter. The chapter begins with a background of use of mobile phones among the contemporary youth and how sexting is perpetuated through smartphones in Kenya, African and globally.

1.2 Background and Context of the Study

This study is about how the use of smartphones interrelates with exchange of sexually inclined messages in daily life of youth in Kenya and how to address the perceived concerns and challenges. Specifically, the study analyzes the perspectives, experiences and practices of middle level college students on the use of smartphones to create and share sexually oriented text messages, photos and videos with the intention of formulating a framework to address the perceived concerns and challenges. The study is situated on digital communication and health communication which are disciplines of communication studies. Specifically, the issues explored in this study boarder on technology mediated social interactions, health and sexual communication and effects of media content use.

Scientific studies conducted in Africa and the rest of the world portrays an increasing demand, ownership, and usage of smartphones by young people (AlTameemy, 2017;

USIU-Africa, 2019; Csibi et al, 2019). As succinctly put by Frith and Ozkul, mobile phones have become the dominant medium of everyday communication:

> The mobile phone has become possibly the dominant communication technology of our time. And that dominance has only become more pronounced with the growth of smartphones as polymedia that have become the central technology people use to do everything from communicate with one another to mass broadcast information to watch videos (2019: 2)

As a result, there is an increasing attention to the negative experiences and communication behaviors that come as a result of use of smartphones. For instance, scientific studies, especially from the UK, USA, Australia and also different parts of the developing world have documented how sexting takes place through mobile devices among adolescents and young adults (Draper, 2012).

Sexting is a portmanteau of the words 'sex' and 'texting', and refers to the activity of exchanging sexually explicit or implicit text messages, photos and/or videos through digitally enabled communication technologies (Baumgartner et al, 2014; Walrave, et al, 2014; Poltash, 2013). Youth sexual communication precedes digital age but proliferation of smartphones has made sexting become a trend (Hasinoff, 2014).

Recent research indicates that the number of youth involved in sexting is growing exponentially in all parts of the world as a result of evolving sophistication of digital communication technologies (L'Engle et al, 2016; Smale, 2017; Harris & Cooper, 2018). So far, several issues pertaining to this youth behavior have been explored in research but there are gaps that communication scholars need to take note of so that they could conduct more studies to address them. In many countries, sexting has been studied with

reference to deviancy framework and therefore the behavior is considered to be exclusively risky and dangerous (Doring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2013). Accordingly, several prevention and educational programs aimed at making the youth aware of the ramifications of sexting and consequently stop engaging in it at their own volition have been suggested (Walker et al, 2013). Moreover, most jurisdictions, including Kenya, have formulated child pornography laws that would prosecute anyone (including adolescents) guilty of disseminating explicit images or videos of minors (Eraker, 2010).

Youth sexting has escalated instead of diminishing despite the societal responses put forth to discourage the behavior (Hasinoff; 2013). The preventive efforts treat sexting as distinctly negative and dangerous and that could be a reason why such initiatives have achieved limited success (Hasinoff, 2013; Asatsa et al, 2017). As sexting gets more prevalent, communication researchers need to systematically analyze the perceptions and experiences of youth on all aspects of the behavior. What sexting means to youth is poorly understood because studies rarely provide in-depth analysis of their lived experiences and perceptions despite being the ones with firsthand information about the behavior (Walrave et al, 2014). For example, some studies have acknowledged that the practice is important in exploration of sexual matters and identity formation by adolescents (Burkett, 2014). A section of these studies also consider sexting a harmless form of communication that youth pursue to experience pleasure and fun, and express love and affection towards members of opposite sex (Klettke, Hallford, & Miller, 2014).

When listening to perceptions, experiences and activities about sexting, communication scholars should particularly seek insights of the youth on what should be appropriate ways of addressing negative experiences pertaining to the behavior. By deducing

information on what young people think are suitable approaches to deal with consequences of sexting, details might emerge as to why the existing interventions have not succeeded. Some scholars argue that existing societal responses have failed partly due to lack of youth involvement during their formulation (Hasinoff, 2013). Therefore, this study advocates for the use of inclusive approaches that brings together all agents of socialization processes (including the youth) when suggesting ways to address concerns and challenges of sexting in Kenya.

The study was developed in a way that allowed in-depth examination of perceptions and experiences of youth on how smartphones were used to create and send sexting messages during daily interpersonal and group communication. The study further explored how youth think the concerns and challenges they have about sexting could be addressed. Insights generated from the study were combined with existing literature to suggest a framework to address concerns and challenges of sexting among Kenyan youth. In African and particularly Kenya, studies that provide in-depth examination of how sexting takes place during interpersonal and group communication among young people are generally scarce, let alone suggesting response mechanisms.

Moreover, most studies have focused on explicating the percentages and extent (quantity) of sexting messages without highlighting much about the communication aspects of these messages (North et al, 2014). In addition, perceptions of youth with regard to use of certain features of digital communication technologies have not been explored much in existing literature. This thesis conceptualizes that analysis of features of sexting messages, processes of exchanging these messages and contextual factors such as perceptions of technology used would yield more meaningful insights compared to that of

frequency of exchange of the messages. This study consequently asked participants questions relating to the nature of sexting messages they exchanged with each other and how the different kinds of messages were perceived with reference to social risks during interpersonal and group interactions. The study further explored the interaction modes that were instituted on instant messaging and social media applications during sexting. The contextual background of areas that were addressed by the study is expounded further from an international, regional and local context.

1.2.1   International context

Globally, youth sexual communication that involves use of smartphones and other digital technologies to create and disseminate controversial images and videos has emerged as a strong sexual, health and moral issue (Simon & Wanjiru, 2014; Gezgin, 2017). Mobile phones afford numerous interactional capabilities and it is therefore important for communication scholars to understand their usage patterns and behaviors especially among children and young people (Gezgin & Cakir, 2016). The growing body of literature consistently shows that use of mobile phones has widened the scope and bread of youth sexual communication and expression (Campbell, & Park, 2014; Burket, 2015; Doring, 2014). Chalfen (2010) posits that "new devices, applications and electronic innovations" are used by adolescents "as a means of personal expression and self-discovery" and in the process the practice of sexting has become more prevalent (p.3). Sexting has emerged from "visual telephony, interpersonal communication, and adolescent culture" (Mukonyo, Mugo & Kabue, 2020: p. 2). The ability to create and share sexually-oriented messages "virtually anytime any location" explains why the behavior is strikingly escalating (Mukonyo et al, 2020: p.2).

Hasinoff (2014) considers the increasing rate of sexting among adolescents as driven by desire for "interpersonal intimacy, communication, and expression" (p.3). Sexting can serve as a way of seeking information about one's sexuality and at the same time provide a means to communicate and talk more about sex and dating (Walrave et al., 2014). Youth consider mobile phones as a "symbol of independence, of belongings and self-identity" (Grimus, 2014 p.3). Youth nowadays "do not stay in touch with scented paper, but with the endless array of technological gadgets" (Eraker, 2010: p. 5). Eraker (2010) goes on to argue that "teens rely on cell phones as a critical tool to maintain their social connections" which serve different purposes related to their communication needs (p. 7). Campbell and Park (2014) use a 'social emancipation' standpoint to illuminate why young people have embraced mobile phones as an integral part of their social interaction and connectedness.

Davidovitch & Yavich (2018) argue that contemporary adolescents grow up in environments where internet and smartphones are perceived as part of daily communication and self-identity. They further posit that "the virtual world has become an inseparable part of the physical world of children and teens" (p. 2). Bata (2019) similarly considers a mobile phone to be an integral device in the youth communication culture. Schrock (2015) reiterate that young people have converted mobile devices into primary tools for online social connections and interactions.

Global statistics indicate that young people aged between 15- 29 years are more likely to access or own smartphones compared to older people (Deloitee, 2019). This implies profound young people's "eagerness to use new mobile technologies" in their everyday social communication (L'Engle, et al, 2016: p. 2). Some studies have reported lower age

brackets with reference to smartphone use and internet access. For example, Murray (2018) projects that 91% of 12-17 years old children in the UK own mobile phones and use them to access the internet. He further observes that about 75% of 5-7 year olds have access to mobile phones and internet, and about 25% of the 8-12 year olds have active social networking profiles (Murray, 2018).

An online survey of 533 teenagers in the UK and Scotland revealed that the rate of recording "indecent communication online or via texts" increased between 2014 and 2017. England and Wales reported 131% and 60% increase respectively. In this survey, about 40% of the participants had friends who engaged in sexting (Murray, 2018). A similar large-scale survey conducted in the US indicated that 60% of the youth shared sexually explicit photos with dating partners, 20% sent to someone they wished to date and 40% shared the photos to experience fun (Angelides, 2013). A study conducted among college students revealed that girls share sexting photos to make their boyfriends happy (Renfrow & Rollo, 2014; Englander et al, 2015). Another analysis by Drouin et al (2013) concluded that sexting within college students often take place among committed partners and those in casual sex relationships.

In their study, Milton et al (2019) noted a significant increase in the number of young Australians who endorsed two-way sexting (42.21%) between 2012 and 2014. The report also noted an increase in the number of those who talked about receiving sexting content from 2012 (27.39%) to 2014 (30.93%). Furthermore, the number of those who sent sexting content increased from about a quarter (25.43%) to almost a third (31.99%) the same period.

Global statistics further reveal that among adolescents and young adults, college and university students form the group of users with the highest adoption rate of smartphones and social media communications technologies (Ndlel & Mulwo, 2017; Mbise & Gwao, 2017; Winkelman et al, 2014). Studies conducted in countries such as the UK, Australia, USA, Saudi Arabia and South Africa indicate that between 86-94% of students in higher education own and highly use smartphones (Wyk & Ryneveld, 2018). Results of studies on cell phones use in Kenyan universities corroborate findings generated elsewhere. For example, a study carried out among Kenyan university students revealed higher penetration of mobile phones (95.6%) compared to that of the general population and 89.6% of the participants owned a smartphone (Ojino & Mich, 2018).

Inconsistencies have been noted on the definitions of scope and extent of youth sexting the world over (Mitchell et al., 2011; Temple et al., 2012, 2014). In fact, the majority of scholars have operationalized communication activities of youth sexting based on frequency of occurrence (Lee et al., 2013; Vanden Abeele et al., 2014). Therefore, much of communication activities known concerning the practice are about rate and quantity of messages exchanged compared to actual content characteristics of these messages (Burkett, 2015; Campbell, & Park, 2014; Judge, 2012). Limited scientific knowledge about the features of messages is problematic because sexting is communicative and expressive in nature (Walrave et al, 2014).

Emphasizing more on frequency and quantity of communication of sexting messages betrays a weak conceptualization of complexities of the behavior (Harris, 2017). Therefore, the existing findings are questionable and incomplete and this is likely to curtail our understanding of youth perceptions of social-sexual dynamics of the behavior

(Albury et al, 2010).). For instance, though debatable, the content characteristics of sexting messages exchanged in context of dating or peer social interactions is likely to elicit different concerns with regard to perceived dangers and psychosocial problems (Phippen, 2012). Young people who share photos or videos of their genitals are likely to experience more social harm as opposed to those who share text messages of similar nature in case the content is forwarded to other people. In that sense, a girl who captures photos of her private parts and sends to the boyfriend would experience more risks in case the photos were forwarded to other boys compared to the one who instead uses text messages to describe the sexual parts.

This study conceptualizes that more communication research is required on the nature of the actual messages and contextual factors that influence the content characteristics of these messages than on the rate and frequency of exchange of the messages. In an attempt to address this gap, the present study explored aspects of nature and features of the sexting messages that were exchanged by the college students during interpersonal and group interactions. The study particularly sought to understand what was depicted or described in the kind of photos, videos and text messages exchanged and the reasons for sharing messages of that nature. Researchers have shown that quality and communicative characteristics of messages are stronger determinants of the intention and outcome of the messages than the frequency (Scott & Caughlin, 2010)

Furthermore, perceptions of the youth about the characteristics of the media technologies used to create and send the sexting messages have largely been ignored (Ouytsel et al., 2016). This is a critical issue touching on the dynamics of intersection of technology and sexting. Communication scholars need to examine how mediated communication is

perceived by youth intending to share sensitive messages. Specifically, it is important to know whether individuals feel safe, anxious or bold when communicating sensitive topics via particular mediated devices than others (Ouytsel et al., 2016). It is critical to find out whether these perceptions affect the content of the message and the precautions taken to reduce the perceived social risks of sharing explicit materials.

Some studies have revealed that people feel more confident and safe to start conversations and sexual interactions that finally lead to asking for sex and requesting to be sent private photos when using certain digital communication tools (Alvarez et al, 2014). It was noted that technology mediated communication makes people less nervous when talking about sex because the other person does not see the facial expressions and emotions that are native to face to face interactions (Alvarez et al, 2014). It has further been observed that some individuals are too shy to discuss sexual matters face to face but experience thrill, satisfaction and fulfillment when using smartphones to do so (McDaniel & Drouin, 2015).

Moreover, research show that young people tend to be strategic about the medium they choose to create and send sex videos and images (Ouytsel et al., 2016). In fact, youth perceive the various online and mobile technologies to afford different interactional capabilities that enable them to pursue sexting differently (Ouytsel et al., 2016). Consequently, sexting is conducted through multiple devices and channels such as smartphone, social media, email, instant messaging and text messaging (Rice et al., 2012). Technology and the technological terrains in which youth use digital systems are rapidly changing (Houck et al., 2014). It is therefore important for communication researchers to explore and interpret perceptions of young people on how technology

mediates sexting and other forms of sexual communication (Dake et al., 2012).Consequently this study sought to understand how students perceived use of smartphones in light of their sexting behaviors.

Multiple scholars underscore the need to conduct elaborate qualitative analysis of perceptions of adolescents on the communication tools and devices that are used to create and send sexting content (Ouytsel et al., 2016). A deep understanding of how digital technologies are perceived in light of exchange of sexting messages will help in rethinking safe digital environments for youth to use to engage in the practice. It will further contribute towards development of education programs meant to teach youth how to behave ethically and responsibly during online interactions and engagements (Hasinoff; 2013). This study assumes that analysis of youth perceptions on social contexts of technology will further help communication scholars to devise ways of delivering digital safety messages on social risks and consequences of youth sexting.

Furthermore, communication scholars will be in a position to understand the perceptions of youth about communication affordances provided by digital media technologies in connection to enactment of various interaction modes during sexting activities. This study argues that understanding reasons and perceptions why young use media technologies in certain ways will help to shed light on the extent the youth are willing to employ these technologies to create and send sexting messages. This study also conceptualized how technology should contribute in addressing the challenges of youth sexting and this was fused in the formulation of the proposed framework.

Majority of scientific studies conducted the world over on sexting tend to relate the practice to negative communication behaviors and experiences (Drouin &Tobin, 2014). As such, sexting is largely analyzed using the deviance discourse that portrays the behavior as dangerous and risky (Doring, 2014). Adolescents have particularly attracted more scholarly attention because of vulnerabilities and risks perceived to be associated with their emotional and psychological development (Campbell, & Park, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2012). The behavior is considered to bleed "catastrophic and long-term influence" to those who engage in it (Murray, 2018, p.1). Martinez-Prather & Vandive (2014) posit that media production which involves active recording and dissemination of one's naked body through smartphones more readily "infiltrates the brain causing unprecedented health, social, emotional and sexual problems" (p.2). For example, sexting is linked to feelings of guilt, resentment and shame when the private messages are forwarded to unintended recipients or posted on the internet (Mukonyo et al, 2020).

Studies also link sexting to sensation seeking, unhealthy online hookups and exposures (Ringrose et al, 2012). Research has also found that adolescents who engage in sexting are likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors such as unprotected sex activities as well abusing drugs and substances (Mitchell & Ybarra, 2014). Sexting has also been associated with unprecedented cyber-bullying, online harassment and loss of privacy when the private images or videos are forwarded without consent (Hasinof, 2013; Eraker, 2010).

In light of deviance framework, sexting is further linked to sexual violence and several negative psychosocial outcomes such as low self-esteem, resentment, guilt and suicidal tendencies (Dake et al, 2012; Drouin & Tobin, 2014). It seems that use of deviance

framework to analyze youth sexting stems from tenets of moral panics (Doring, 2014). In light of moral panic perception, sexting is interpreted as negative and likely to lead to sexual exploitation and violence against women who engage in the behavior (Ringrose et al., 2013; Lippman & Campbell, 2014).

The perceived negative consequences of sexting are seen to strongly influence development of societal responses to mitigate the behavior (Drouin et al. 2013; Willard, 2011). Most countries have passed child pornography laws to prohibit adolescent sexting (Eraker, 2010; Strasberg et al, 2014; Wallard, 2011; Doring, 2014). In Kenya, youth sexting is outlawed in the penal code and cyber-crime and computer misuse act of 2018. In most cases scholars consider use of child pornography laws to prosecute youth guilty of sexting too punitive and devastating (Eraker, 2010; Ringrose et al, 2012; Hasinoff, 2013). They instead recommend development of restorative and education programs to raise awareness on consequences of sexting among young people and children (Hasinoff, 2014). As a result, a number of intervention initiatives meant to make young people stop sexting or realize its dangers have been devised (Wicks, 2017; Harris 2017). These response frameworks have majorly combined school-based interventions and media educational programs that teach youth about the negative consequences of risky sexual behaviors and online activities (Pearce, 2013).

There is a general consensus among scholars that despite the societal efforts put forth to discourage sexting, the behavior is still rampant among adolescents globally (Doring, 2014; Poltash, 2013; Asatsa et al, 2017). In fact, the debate on appropriate ways of dealing with youth sexting is still ongoing (Ringrose, 2012; Hasinoff, 2012; Walker & Moak, 2010). Therefore, this thesis argues that, besides the legal and

educational/training-based initiatives, there is a need to explore alternative frameworks and strategies. As such, this thesis advocates for use of collaborative approaches that bring together all the agents of the social environment in which young people grow, live and practice sexting. The study particularly suggests a framework that conceptualizes and describes how elements of socialization processes should work together in addressing issues of youth sexting, especially countering negative perceptions and instilling the right information and knowledge on usage of digital media technologies. As stipulated in one of the research questions, developing a strategy to deal with perceived concerns and dangers of sexting was one of the objectives of this study.

Sexting is getting more prevalent and consequently researchers have begun to recognize the perceived positive experiences youth associate with the behavior, although some of their findings have been inclusive and somewhat contested (Doring, 2014; Burkett, 2014). Normalcy discourse has largely been used to present scholarly perspectives that examine sexting in light of perceived delectations, pleasures and related positive experiences and outcomes (Doring, 2014; Burkett, 2014). Multiple scholars consider sexting as a form of sexual communication which is an important means of exploring sexual matters and identity by adolescents (Hasinoff, 2013; Walker et al, 2013). With reference to normalcy framework, sexting is considered part of contemporary intimate communication and young people therefore need to be educated about the social risks and consequences so that they engage in the behavior responsibly and respectfully (Ouytsel et al., 2016). Some of these studies consider sexting to be harmless if the people involved are mature, responsible and observe important etiquette that make this form of communication safe and risk free (Hasinoff, 2013). It is believed that pleasure is

experienced when youth use sexting messages to express love, affection and intentions to date someone (Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014). Somehow the behavior is considered a safe way of exploring sexuality without engaging in the physical activity thus reducing the risks associated with premarital sext (Dake et al, 2012).

This thesis argues that as sexting becomes more prevalent, it is important for communication scholars to systematically analyze the positive communicative aspects and relational outcomes of the behavior. Communication scholarship should particularly assess whether sexting is perceived to impact positively the interpersonal and group interactions within which it takes place. By doing so, it is likely to get clearer the kind of strategies to use to address the behavior. Consequently, this thesis took a balanced approach to sexting and therefore explored both negative perceptions and positive experiences of sexting in daily social communication and interactions of young students.

The existing studies show that sexting is common and integrates with digital lives of Kenyan youth in colleges and universities and manifests itself in dating and peer activities (Mukonyo et al, 2020; Wamathai et al, 2014). Therefore it was important for me as a communications researcher to understand what youth say about their motivation or reason for sexting and at the same time examine the issues, challenges and negative experiences they associate with the practice.

Much of the available research on sexting does not involve use of theoretical frameworks to analyze and interpret the findings. Therefore, communication scholarship should take note of this gap and conduct studies that are guided by theories and relevant frameworks. Communication scholars should as well strive to develop theories and conceptual models

that explain sexting having considered the various social, sexual and technological dimensions of the practice. Use of existing theoretical frameworks or developing more theories to explain the practice will eventually lead to better "conceptualization and operationalization of sexting" (Harris, 2017: p.15). In this study, sexting was explicated by applying technology acceptance model and theory of planned behavior, and a model was suggested to address its perceived concerns by youth in Kenya.

Most studies conducted on sexting are quantitative in nature (Bentley, 2015). We need more in-depth qualitative analysis of experiences, activities, and behaviors of adolescents on group and interpersonal sexting. Klettke et al (2014) reiterate that we should endeavor to carry out research that uses methodologies that inspire to provide "greater depth than prevalent methods that studies currently afford" (p. 5). They further recommend use of techniques that explore personal experiences such as in-depth interviews in order to fully comprehend issues of youth sexting. Gassó et al (2019) feel that communication scholars should strive to use approaches that provide elaborate analysis of the "process surrounding sexting-what happens, what motivates, how youth reacts to sexting etc" (p. 6).

Most of the studies conducted in sexting have not suggested measures to address the challenges and concerns youth have concerning the behavior. Furthermore, existing societal responses have not adopted inclusive approaches during their formulation. In addition, studies reveal that sexting has been hardly analyzed from the perspectives and experiences of young people who practice it. In that sense, inputs of youth have not been considered while developing the preventive measures and this could be one reason such efforts have not succeeded. Consequently, this study was developed in a way that

provided in-depth analysis of perspectives and experiences of sexting and how the problems associated with it can be addressed from the understanding of youth who engage in the behavior. Specifically, the study examined how the use of smartphones interrelated with exchange of sexually inclined photos, videos and text messages in everyday life of middle level college (MLC) students in Kenya. The present study conceptualizes that communication scholars need to thoroughly understand adolescence sexting norms in order to develop effective measures to address the concerns and dangers associated with the practice.

1.2.2   The African Context

Developing countries are also experiencing unprecedented growth in cellular phone penetration (ITU, 2014). In Africa, mobile phones are emerging as the dominant medium of communication among all categories of people (Eyong, 2013). According to Greenleaf et al (2020) sub-Sahara Africa has the fastest cell phone market in the world. It was projected that half of the African population would access mobile phone services by the year 2020 (Choi & Short Fabic, 2018). Data suggest that South Africa and Nigeria mobile phone ownership replicate that of developed countries (Pew Research Center, 2015). Njenga et al (2013) reiterate that mobile phone products are among the most widely consumed products in Africa.

The rate at which young people are using mobile phones in Africa has been expanding exponentially as well (Greenleaf, 2020). As such, teens and young people are the main consumers of mobile devices and media (OAfrica, 2013, Ademakhe, 2015; Njenga et al, 2013; Jibril, et al 2014). Young people use the various affordances provided by mobile

devices more than other members of the African society (Ademakhe, 2015). For example, in South Africa, studies on mobile communication across different social groups indicate that 75% of youth aged 15-24 years own a mobile phone (Beger et al, 2012).

The increased accessibility of smartphones by young people has also increased the adoption and use of social media applications such as Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp for interaction and sharing of information (Njenga al, 2013; Ademakhe, 2015; Zhao & Lindley, 2014; Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017). The extent of adoption of social media for social communication and interaction is succinctly expounded by Ephraim:

> Social media is increasingly becoming mainstream; serving as important tools for facilitating interpersonal communication, business and educational activities. Qualitative analyses of relevant secondary data show that children and youths aged between 13 and 30 constitute Africa's heaviest users of social media (2013:3).

Similar to findings of studies from developed countries, surge in uptake of smartphones and internet by African youth has coincided with an increase in consumption of sexually explicit videos and photographs (Olatunde & Balogun, 2017). Recent studies conducted in South Africa and Nigeria show that a significant number of young people are using smartphones to download or record and share nude images and videos (Hudson & Marshall, 2017). For example, a study of a large sample (N=1354) of teenagers in Lagos Island, Nigeria, aged 10-19 years, showed that 30.8% had either sent or received sexually explicit content via email, instant messaging and Skype. About 27% had created and sent sexy messages, videos or photos about themselves (Ofodile & Ofole, 2018). Another study conducted among secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria concluded

that prevalence of using mobile phones to send sex messages and nude pictures was on the rise (Kolawole & Ayeni, 2018).

Researchers have found that sexting messages are used to communicate love, affection and express intention to engage in sex in romantic relationships (Walker et al, 2013). Young boys interested in dating send sexting images, videos and text messages to prospective girls to communicate their intentions and vice versa can also happen (Ringrose et al, 2013). Some studies have interpreted these kinds of sexual communication as likely to positively impact perceptions of sexual satisfaction among those dating and committed in heterosexual relationships (Rehman et al, 2013). However, similar to Western Countries, studies in Africa have tended to use the deviance discourse to examine sexting and therefore the behavior is mostly correlated with problematic sexual expression and risky activities. For example, a study of sexting prevalence among postsecondary school youth aged 14-24 years in Ibadan, Nigeria, revealed that male sexual activities were associated with sending and receiving sexting content through mobile phones (Olatunde & Balogun, 2017).

Research is inconclusive about sexting being associated with both negative and positive experiences (Doring, 2014). More research is required to fill the literature gaps and this will require studies that use a balanced approach. Communication scholars need to understand the dangers of sexting in order to suggest response measures and at the same explore the positive aspects youth associate with the behavior. Comprehensive conceptualization and contextualization of social-sexual dynamics of youth sexting will help communication scholars to develop effective response frameworks.

There are gaps in research on how youth perceive concerns and challenges related to sexting could be mitigated. Sexual communication practices such as sexting are considered to be important in talking about sexual issues and exploring sexual health related topics (Hasinoff, 2013). Therefore, it is important for communication scholars to generate balanced data that explores perceptions of both risks and benefits of sexting in social interactions. This thesis involved the youth in contributing ideas on how sexting should be addressed by analyzing both the negative and positive experiences of the practice. The data generated informed development of the proposed model.

Most of the studies in Africa have not suggested mitigation mechanisms. In addition, most of them have child pornography laws in place which they could readily use to curb sexting (Eraker, 2010). Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the ongoing debates point to the ineffectiveness of such laws in eradicating youth sexting. In fact, latest research suggests steady increase in rates of sexting activities among adolescents in Africa despite the harsh laws (Asatsa et al, 2017). Moreover, most African scholars have hardly suggested awareness, education or restorative frameworks to address youth sexting. Lack of better interventions and perceived failure of legal responses should prompt desire from communication scholars to develop alternative frameworks. These alternative frameworks should address the existing controversies over most appropriate measures and role of the youth in addressing issues associated with the behavior (Doring, 2014; Burkett, 2015; Campbell, & Park, 2014). Compared to sexting, youth health related issues such as HIV/AIDs, FGM and substance abuse have been systematically investigated and interventions suggested thereof. The data generated by this study was

used to formulate the proposed model meant to address challenges and concerns of youth sexting.

1.2.3   The Kenyan Context

In Kenya, major legal and structural reforms in the communications industry have led to improved telecommunication networks (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017; Nielsen, 2019; CCK, 2020). This has not only increased availability of mobile network services but also accessibility and adoption of mobile devices. The rapid increase in ownership of mobile phones and their use has caused major sociocultural and economic changes (Intermedia 2013; Nyambura, & Waema, 2013). A study of emerging economies (like Kenya) associated use of smartphones with enhanced access to information (Pew Research Center, 2019).

According to Ndlela & Mulwo (2017), Kenya is among countries in Africa with the highest mobile phone and internet penetration rate. Internet subscription in Kenya is steadily increasing and the majority of the users access the internet via their smartphones (CCK, 2020). A study of 'quotidian' uses of new media among rural communities in Uasin Gishu County (Kenya), revealed that "more and more Kenyans now have access to the Internet and social media because of increased penetration of smartphones" (Nielsen, 2019: p.9).

According to Deloitee (2019), "rich media-centric social interactions and increasing adoption of instant messaging services such as chat, voice and video are driving usage" of smartphones in Kenya. Social networking and instant messaging tools have become the epicentre of smartphone use in different communities around the world, with "WhatsApp

and Instagram each having over 300 million daily active users, and WhatsApp users sending 60 billion messages a day", (Deloitee, 2019: p.7).

In Kenya, penetration of smartphones has led to rapid adoption of internet and social networking platforms for different ways of individual and group communication (USIU-Africa, 2019 Intermedia 2013; Nyambura, & Waema , 2013). Majority of the Kenyan people use WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram (Deloitee, 2019). Instagram is more common with young users (USIU-Africa, 2019). According to Deloitee (2019), decline of voice calls is looming in favor of "other forms of communication, driven by the proliferation of messaging" and social networking tools (Deloitee, 20291: p. 1). Text messaging seems to be the dominant mode of communication with 78% Kenyans using instant messaging systems to communicate through social media.

Majority of the Kenyan population that uses smartphones comprises young people mostly in the ages of 18-24 years (Intermedia, 2013; CCK, 2020). Increase in smartphone accessibility and mobile internet use has led to a corresponding increase in the uptake and consumption of instant messaging and social networking among this group (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017). Equipped with smartphones and social media tools, youth can easily access information, share text messages, videos and images, and engage in synchronous chatting with other people in colleges or campuses, as succinctly captured by Ndlela & Mulwo:

> Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are increasingly becoming an integral part of everyday life for many young people in the country, permeating virtually every aspect of their lives including social interactions and engagements in political discourses amongst others (2017: 3).

A study by Ndlela & Mulwo (2017) revealed that college and university students use social media platforms especially WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram to "connect and maintain contact with their friends, family and classmates. These platforms provide "an online public sphere through which they discuss issues affecting them in their everyday life" (p. 3). The study also noted that college students belonged to several social groups on WhatsApp and Facebook which were formed to perform specific functions. The study further indicated that WhatsApp groups were used as channels through which students "could (re)establish and maintain contacts with their former classmates, current classmates, and family members, among others" (p. 6). Students who consider smartphones and social media an integral part of their daily communication use these tools as a major source of news and information and hardly rely on 'traditional media' to get such content (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017).

Proliferation of social media has also made young people experience a surge in the amount of sexually inclined materials posted online (Chege & Wanjiru, 2017). For example, in early 2015, sexual text messages a certain member of parliament sent to his female employee were forwarded to online blogs and social media websites. In late 2015, a famous DJ's sexually explicit video was shared on Telegram and Facebook. In 2018, a naked video depicting one of the deputy governors was published on online blogs, Facebook and YouTube. In March 2020, naked photos showing one of the two youth presented by the president for having fully recovered from Covid-19 were shared on Facebook, Instagram and online blogs. In June 2021, one of the general election presidential aspirant's naked video was shared on social media websites. In October

2022, naked photos of a famous Kikuyu Gospel songs musician were uploaded on social media.

Smartphones, social networking tools and mobile networks have also converted young people into explicit media content producers. Recently, media reports have highlighted numerous cases of young people using smartphones to create and share/post their own sexual imagery and sex text messages. For instance, in 2018, a group of teenagers were arrested at the Michuki Park in Nairobi while recording nude photographs and videos which they intended to post on their online profiles. Mukonyo et al (2020) posit that proliferation of digital media technologies has provided Kenyan youth with "comfort and lack of restraint" to create sexual knowledge and information and use such content to explore their sexuality (p.3).

Studies have examined how Kenyan youth integrate new media such as smartphones into their daily communication and social interactions. Some of these studies have examined how sexting is increasingly practiced through smartphones, internet and social media in contexts related to everyday communication practices (Kamaku & Mberia, 2014). Mukonyo et al (2020) reiterate that sexting among Kenya youth has escalated as a result of availability of internet, affordable smartphones and unrestricted consumption of online content. Young people are using smartphones to produce and consume sexting videos, photos and commercially produced pornography (Nyongesa, Kiprop & Chumba, 2019). For example, a study by Wamathai et al (2014) showed that 93% of the male respondents in selected Kenya universities had accessed sexually explicit content in some form.

Wamathai et al (2014) argue that university students in Kenya are "more exposed to internet use than any other group" because these institutions have "invested heavily in the development of technologies to enhance learning" (p.2). Besides smartphones, students own other mobile devices such as laptops and tablets, which they frequently use in class to access the internet (Wyk & Ryneveld, 2018). North et al (2014) posit that "privacy that mobile phones provide give university students more freedom in their day to day lives" (p. 4).

Smartphones provide functions that enable adolescents to exchange large strings of explicit text messages via SMS (Schrock, 2015; Deloitee, 2019). In addition, Kenyan youth use smartphones to create, store and disseminate large amounts of raunchy videos and pictures through social media and instant messaging (Mukonyo et al, 2020). Availability of uncensored online information makes Kenyan youth effortlessly browse and access sexual materials, and as well create and disseminate sexual related content and "engage in real-time, virtual sexual interactions with other people almost anywhere" (Mukonyo, et al, 2020, p3).

Most studies in Kenya have tended to show that sexting is a simple linear exchange of explicit messages mostly between two people whereby one either sends or receives the messages (Kamaku & Mberia, 2014). Communication scholars should strive to explore the transactional nature of sexting and how the practice takes place in multi-dimensional contexts, specifically the interpersonal and group communication settings in which the behavior is practiced (Currin et al., 2016). Additionally, existing studies have not explored the content characteristics of sexual messages youth exchange with respect to motivation and perceived social risks. According to Manning (2013), sexting does not

only involve exchange of messages that are sexual in nature but also include interpretations that elicit sexual meaning from the recipient. For example, if a man sends a compliment message on a woman's choice of dress, it may be interpreted to be a sexual advance or not (Harris, 2017).

This thesis analyzed the nature of messages (text messages, videos, pictures etc), content characteristics (nude, seminude, revealing) and the actions that were performed during the messages creation and exchange (receiving, forwarding, sending without being asked etc). In particular the study sought to understand the parties that were involved in the interpersonal and group communication of sexting messages. Additionally, the study analyzed the motivations or intentions of creating and sending the sexually inclined messages in the different contexts. The aim was to understand how the students communicated sexting messages and people who were involved in such communication, especially within interpersonal relationships and group interactions.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies that assess perceptions Kenyan youth have on the extent to which certain smartphone applications are convenient to perform sexting activities. Furthermore, analysis of the kind of interaction modes that youth in Kenya enact on social media and instant messaging during exchange of sexting content is missing in literature. This study assumes that investigations into the modes of interaction that can be instituted on digital communication technologies could give more insight on the way youth perceive risks of sharing self-made videos and photos of sexual nature.

This study will seek to understand youth perceptions of use of smartphones with regard to composure and dissemination of sexually-oriented messages in daily social interactions

especially during interpersonal and group communication. This will provide an understanding of perceptions of social contexts that surround use of technology by Kenyan youth to engage in sexting activities. Exchange of sexting messages takes place through multiple communication platforms (Mukonyo, et al, 2020), nevertheless, much is not known about perceptions of youth on use of these channels to send and receive explicit content. It is expected that young people have justifications for use of certain online and mobile applications to create and send sexually inclined messages.

Research on sexting by youth in Kenya is progressing albeit lack of mention of strategies to address the perceived challenges and concerns. Prior research has overemphasized on the potential dangers and consequences of sexting but has not provided solutions (Wakoli, 2018; Nyongesa, Kiprop & Chumba, 2019). Therefore, studies are required that systematically explore sexting from perceptions of youth with the intention of unraveling the perceived concerns and challenges and provide strategies to address them. In this era of widespread technological use, communications scholars should strive to conduct studies that provide elaborate analysis of perceptions of the importance of sexting in youths' sexuality and dating culture. Consequently, the scholars should formulate effective policies and campaigns aimed at promoting desired norms and perceptions about the practice.

Literature reveals that exchange of sexually inclined messages by young people is practiced as a way of flirting or playing with romantic partners and colleagues (Mukonyo et al, 2020). The practice is further interpreted as a safe way of developing and experimenting with romantic relationships (Mukonyo et al, 2020). Other perceived positive aspects of sexting include improved communication on sexual matters and

increased expression of sexual pleasure and identity (Tannebaum, 2018). Previous research has shown that sexual communication and expression is associated with positive sexual experiences such as experiencing satisfaction in sexual relationships (Kristen & Jozkowski, 2012; Rehman, Rellini & Fallis, 2011). In dating relationships sexting is regarded as a communication tool to express sexual desires and intentions to date (Tannebaum, 2018).

The present study analyzed both positive experiences and negative outcomes of sexting and insights developed from this data informed formulation of the proposed framework. Like most jurisdictions around the world, Kenya would respond to youth sexting through legislative mechanisms, specifically child pornography laws, penal code and Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act of 2018. It was earlier noted that legislative frameworks have not succeeded in preventing onset and continuous sexting by young people.

Consequently, communication scholars should advocate for strengthening of alternative societal responses like educational programs and media awareness campaigns or similar mitigation frameworks that do not necessarily promote use of punitive measures (Doring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2013). Communication scholars should as well be on the forefront when it comes to formulation and implementation of these alternative frameworks. A central argument of this study is that we can effectively address youth sexting through use of approaches that promote joint efforts of agents of socialization processes.

Moreover, studies have not analyzed firsthand perspectives and experiences of Kenyan youth on sexting and their views on ways to address the concerns, challenges and dangers surrounding the practice. This justifies why the present study deployed qualitative

techniques with FGDs and in-depth interviews involving young people aged 18-25 years who used smartphones to engage in sexting activities. Based on participants' perspectives and existing literature, the study proposed a framework that conceptualizes how agents of socialization processes should work together in developing youth with the desired attitudes and norms on sexting and the right skills and knowledge on use of ICTs.

The present study presumes that research into sexting by Kenyan youth is vital in order to contextualize and localize the issues of concern, and consequently develop worthwhile societal responses. It was earlier noted that Kenya and the rest of Africa lack much data on smartphone sexting and this is likely to hinder development of policy and behavior change communication programmes. Asatsa et al (2017) posit that "… lack of Afro-centric research compels" researchers to "use international statistics to contextualize" issues of youth sexting. We require studies that "comprehensively analyze the current practices of how teens are using their smartphones" (p.3).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The increased accessibility and adoption of smartphones and internet have coincided with an increase in scope and breadth of sexting among the youth and older people (Mitchell et al, 2012). Most studies have analyzed sexting in connection with expression of risky sexual behaviors and negative online experiences (Burkett, 2014; Chege & Wanjiru, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2012; Strassberg et al., 2014; Van Ouytsel et al, 2016). As such, much research has not contributed to the development of scholarship that conceptualizes sexting from a balanced approach, particularly experiences and perceptions of what youth consider as the positive aspects of the practice (Doring, 2014). Emergent frameworks and

scholarly perspectives suggest that sexting is important in the development of skills necessary in peer social expression and interactions, social emancipation and sexual agency (Hasinoff, 2013).

Treating sexting as presumptuous and exclusively wrong and overemphasis on the risky framework has curtailed development of scientific perspectives that are likely to contribute to formulation of effective measures to address concerns, challenges and dangers of youth sexting (Eraker, 2010). In fact, societal efforts put forth so far have tended to emphasize total eradication of sexting due to its association with risky behaviors, an approach that has failed to discourage sexting among the youth (Stephen et al, 2017).

Research on sexting by youth in Kenya is progressing albeit lack of mention of strategies to mitigate the challenges and dangers surrounding the practice despite portraying the behavior as predominantly dangerous and risky. The ongoing debates in Kenya and outside seem to suggest that communication technologies are widespread (Mukonyo et al, 2020). Therefore, studies should critically analyze youth perceptions of the social and technological contexts in which sexting is practiced (Mukonyo et al, 2020) with the intention of formulating policies and campaigns to address perceived challenges and promote desirable use of ICTs.

Much of the existing research and preventive efforts have failed to recognize sexting as a complex and multifaceted social behavior (Chege & Chebii, 2020). As such, societal response interventions that seek solutions from the same social context the behavior is practiced have hardly been suggested. For example, prior studies have hardly analyzed

views of the youth on how sexting should be addressed and as such their position on formulation and implementation of intervention strategies is unknown, despite being the ones with firsthand information about the behavior. Alienating the voices of the youth will inhibit our understanding of what sexting means to them and aggravate the problem of formulating ineffective strategies to address the concerns and dangers pertaining to the behavior.

Research to youth sexting and formulation of response frameworks thereof should adopt a balanced approach. In that sense, studies should penetrate the 'social world' of youth and seek multiple perspectives on how sexting is interpreted in interpersonal and group interactions and also seek their views on ways to address the concerns, challenges and dangers around the practice. This would require an in-depth analysis of how sexting takes place during daily social interaction of young people, what sexting means to them, and how their experiences could contribute towards formulating strategies to address the perceived concerns and challenges about the practice. Further, it will be significant to use a holistic approach when formulating strategies to respond to youth sexting.

To address some of these gaps, this study sought to analyze sexting from experiences and perspectives of those who practice it. The study delved into how the exchange of sexting messages via smartphones draws up or interrelates with daily social practices of youth in Kenya. Additionally, the study sought perspectives of participants' on the appropriate measures to be put in place to address the concerns, challenges and dangers associated with youth sexting.

1.4 Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of this study was to examine how the use of smartphones interrelated with exchange of sexually inclined messages in everyday life of middle level college (MLC) students in Nairobi, Kenya, and suggested ways to address the perceived concerns and challenges pertained to the behavior. Specifically, the study analyzed the perceptions, experiences and activities of MLC students on the use of smartphones to create and send sexually inclined photos, videos and text messages, and assessed the concerns and issues around the practice with the intention of proposing a framework to address the concerns and challenges of sexting among MLC students in Kenya. This study was conceptualized and presented in the background that when communication scholarship considers perspectives of the youth, effective societal responses are likely to be developed to address concerns, challenges and dangers surrounding adolescence sexting in Kenya. Based on the aforementioned aim, research problem and the background presented earlier, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1.4.1 Research Questions

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

I.   What are the perceptions of middle level college (MLC) students on the use of smartphones with regard to sexting activities?

II. How does exchange of sexting messages relate to daily social activities among the selected MLC students?

III. What are the concerns around experiences of sexting by MLC students?

IV.   What framework can the study suggest to address the perceived concerns pertaining to sexting among the MLC students in Kenya?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope describes what was covered in the study. The study analyzed how the use of smartphone-based social applications interrelated with creation and sharing of sexually inclined messages in the daily social activities of youth in Kenya. Specifically, the study examined perspectives, experiences and activities on use of smartphones to create and send sexually explicit or implicit images, videos and text messages among middle level students aged 18-25 years in Nairobi, Kenya. The study used the term sexting to refer to use of smartphones to create and exchange the sexually explicit or implicit text messages, photos or videos.

Further, the study sought perspectives of the participants on the measures that could be put in place to tackle the challenges associated with the behavior, with the view of proposing a framework to address issues of youth sexting in Kenya. The study did not intend to focus on the sexual images and videos downloaded from the internet and shared between individual and groups. However, it was noted that consumption of online pornography was interrelated with creating and sharing own explicit or implicit images, videos and text messages. As such, internet pornography was analyzed as it was found to have a high interplay with exchange of sexually inclined content created and shared by the participants of this study. The study has not addressed use of sexting by sexual predators and cyber-bullies to exploit the youth.

The legal framework and other societal responses which conceptualize sexting as an illegal activity and form of pornography have not succeeded in preventing onset or continuous sexting (Schubert & Wurf, 2014; Simpson, 2013). Therefore, this study advocates for development of alternative frameworks which encompass less punitive measures, mostly in the form of educational programs and media awareness campaigns. As such, based on the findings, the study proposes a framework which conceptualizes and describes how agents of socialization processes should work together in equipping the youth with the right information, knowledge and perceptions about proper use of smartphones.

In this study, sexting is investigated not just as an individual practice but also as a group activity. Researchers have argued that sexting does not only involve the person who composes and sends the explicit content, but permeates and influences the entire social group one relates to in many different ways (Ringrose et al, 2012). Therefore, the study was qualitative in nature involving FGDs and in-depth interviews with a sample of 65 students drawn from five middle level colleges in Nairobi.

The research chose to investigate youth sexting from perspectives of urbanized students aged 18-25 years because previous research shows that this age bracket heavily adopts smartphones, internet and social media for interaction and communication (Walrave et al, 2014). Furthermore, the student population in middle level colleges in Nairobi possesses diverse social demographic characteristics in terms of ethnicity, religion, residence, lifestyle/social economic background, courses studied at school, dating status among others. In chapter three of this thesis, it is described how the sample used for the study constituted a cohort of students with diverse demographic characteristics. Moreover, past

studies have shown that social demographic characteristics influence the rate and nature of sexting among the youth (Walrave et al, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2012).

It is also important to note that this was not a comparative study. The intention of studying smartphone sexting from samples of students obtained from five different colleges was not to compare the results but to achieve multiple perspectives and hence 'richness' and triangulation of the results. The study did not analyze the perspectives of parents, caregivers and experts on sexting and how it should be addressed. The aim of the study was to focus on young people since they have firsthand information about sexting and how it occurs in their daily social interactions. It was further presumed that young people have rich perspectives on ways to deal with challenges and dangers around experiences of sexting. The study however recommends further studies on sexting that incorporate voices of other important stakeholders and experts such as psychologists, policymakers among others.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

A sample of five colleges and a sample population of 65 students used in this study may not be adequate for the results to be transferred to a wider population of students in Nairobi. The findings of the study were not based on a national representative sample so the results cannot be transferred to the wider population. The study used a qualitative design conducted using multiple case study method which may have incurred varying degrees of subjectivity. The design of the study was also unable to establish whether those individuals who engaged in sexual behaviors were likely to be the ones engaging in sexting activities. Another limitation was that use of self and group-narrated data on

perspectives, experiences and activities of mobile phone mediated sexting may have biases in expression by the participants.

1.6 Rationale for the Study

Despite the ever increasing rate of youth sexting, most scholars place more emphasis on the deviant framework, which tends to connect the practice to negative consequences and unpleasant experiences (Doring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2013). Emergent frameworks and scholarly perspectives however seem to suggest that sexting is important in sexual, social and psychological development of the young people (Walrave et al., 2014; Vanden Abeele et al., 2014; Albury et al 2013; Hudson et al, 2012). Nevertheless, these positive aspects of the behavior have not been systematically analyzed, especially by researchers in Africa. In fact, scientific research into sexting by Kenyan youth is limited besides lack of mention of positive experiences and pleasant outcomes adolescents tend to associate with the behavior (Chege & Chebii, 2020). Furthermore, only a few researches the world over have suggested measures to address youth sexting (Chege & Masibo, 2020). Some scholars have endorsed the use of child pornography laws to curb sexting while others have faulted use of these measures but have not provided alternative response mechanisms (Hasinoff; 2013; Eraker, 2010).

It has generally been noted in literature that preventive strategies have not succeeded in preventing ongoing and initiation of sexting by youth (Chege & Masibo, 2010; Asatsa et al, 2017). There is also a growing concern that use of child pornography laws to respond to adolescent sexting is too devastating and punitive and therefore there is need to explore alternative measures (Hasinoff; 2013). There is a need for communication scholars to

work towards developing better social responses to address issues and concerns youth have with regard to sexting. In addition, the few existing preventive measures suggested in literature hardly use or show how inclusive approaches could be employed to address youth sexting issues and challenges. In fact, prior studies have rarely conceptualized sexting as a complex and multifaceted social issue whose solutions could be sought in the same social context it is practiced (Chege & Masibo, 2020).

Most research publications describe sexting from perspectives that do not include voices and experiences of young people despite being the ones with first hand details about the behavior (Hasinoff, 2013). In this case, data generated to describe sexting and formulate preventive measures is mostly quantitative in nature and therefore has gaps in providing the details needed to contextualize social and contextual factors of the practice (Mitchell et al., 2011; Temple et al., 2012, 2014). The present study conceptualizes that scholars need to provide qualitative analysis of sexting by examining perspectives, experiences and activities of youth with firsthand information. The study further conceptualizes that detailed analysis of sexting will capture the voices of young people which will consequently become important input in formulation of response frameworks.

The scientific relevance of this study was to bring into academic/scientific discourses and practice strategies that could be employed to tackle challenges and dangers of youth sexting. Based on the findings the research proposes a framework that describes how elements of socialization processes should work together in addressing challenges, issues, misconceptions and negative perceptions young people have around sexting and use of digital media technologies.

The suggested model adopts a holistic perspective in the sense that it describes the role each social element should play in order to promote development of youth with positive perceptions about sexting and right knowledge and information on use of digital technologies. As noted above, prior research has hardly employed inclusive approaches when formulating strategies to address challenges of youth sexting. The proposed framework was developed from data generated from participants on how challenges they experienced during sexting could be addressed, supplemented by existing literature. The proposed framework is conceptualized as consisting of two interacting zones; information and knowledge on one end, and actions and sustainability on the other. As mentioned previously, most studies conducted on sexting have not suggested measures to deal with issues and challenges of youth face while engaging in the activity (Chege & Masibo, 2020).

Another scientific significance of the study was to bring into academic/scientific debates the voices and perspectives of the youth on sexting. This ensured understanding of the sexting phenomenon from the standpoint of those who engage in the behavior. This was important because the discussions on sexting have been dominated by academicians, lawmakers and scientists. As noted earlier, the voices and perspectives of young people with firsthand information on sexting has not featured much in scientific literature (Hasinoff, 2013). Providing accounts of sexting from the viewpoints of young people is of critical scientific relevance. This is because the information generated would inform formulation of mitigation strategies that incorporate perspectives and concerns of those who engage in the activity. In fact, as mentioned previously, the input of young people is needed in order to develop worthwhile intervention strategies.

By drawing varied perspectives and experiences from students who engaged in sexting through mobile phones, the study contributes to the emerging research literature that seeks to unravel the relationship between mobile technology and sexual communication in everyday life of adolescents. Previous scientific studies have adopted quantitative research approaches that have tended to explore youth sexting from experts and institutional perspectives, and this is how perceptions and concerns of young people have been suppressed (Judge, 2012). The present study adopts qualitative techniques that seek to provide detailed and rich analysis of youth on issues related to sexting and how to address the behavior.

In addition, the study analyzed both the positive perceptions and negative experiences of sexting from participants' accounts. This study emphasizes the need to adopt balanced approaches when examining sexting in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing social norms and perceptions about the behavior. An understanding of what sexting means and the concerns youth have about the practice informed development of the proposed framework.

According to Asatsa et al (2017) Africa including Kenya lack data to contextualize and localize issues of youth sexting and by extension understanding the challenges and concerns young people have about the practice. This study will be relevant to teachers, parents, policy makers, communication scholars and other relevant practitioners interested in getting information about youth sexting and how to address it. As noted earlier, so far, attention has not been given to formulation of strategies to address concerns and challenges of sexting and particularly in Africa (Chege & Masibo, 2020).

Multiple researches have shown that sexting is linked to several psychosocial and health problems (Mukonyo et al, 2020) and therefore attempts to understand the concerns and challenges and suggest solutions should form critical components of communication research. This study provides an in-depth examination of sexting in connection to daily social interactions and communication activities of youth and formulates a model to address the perceived challenges and problems. This knowledge is useful to teachers, parents and other scholars interested in understanding the social context of sexting and contributes to literature on how the behavior could be addressed.

This study explored how sexting is intertwined with processes of dating and formation of romantic relationships and peer interactions. In the proposed framework, the role of critical elements of socialization processes such as parents, teachers and key adults in discussing sexuality, dating and sexting with youth is emphasized. This knowledge will be relevant to teachers and parents in rethinking the importance and strategies of discussing with adolescents about sex, relationships, sexting and broad range of related issues such interpersonal communication, critical decision making, self-esteem, self-concept and identity. Policy makers in education and sexual health experts could use the knowledge of this study to suggest curriculum and protocols of how the said issues could discussed in schools and media.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter, the background and context within which the study was conceptualized and postulated have been presented. Statement of the problem, aim of the study and research questions that guided the study have also been presented in this chapter.

Moreover, the chapter presents a description of scope, limitation and significance of the study. A number of key issues have emerged from the discussion of smartphone mediated sexting by youth across African and rest of the continents. It was noted that popularity and access of smartphones has risen steadily and this has in turn led to increase in youth sexting. A number of scholars consider youth sexting as an emerging trend and contemporary form of media production and sexual expression.

Youth sexting has emerged as a concern and pressing topic of scientific inquiry because of its association with devastating health, social, psychological and legal consequences. The psychosocial consequences have largely driven the desire to understand sexting with intentions of developing intervention measures and behavior change communication programs. Nevertheless, much of the prevention measures, especially the legal framework have largely failed to stop onset or continuous sexting. Failure of existing intervention strategies has prompted scholars to promote and bring about suggestions on how youth should be provided with information, skills and awareness (education) on consequences of sexting and other irresponsible online risky behaviors.

Besides educational initiatives, there is a need to explore alternative frameworks and strategies. This study suggests use of a holistic framework that brings together all the agents of the social environment where children grow, live and practice sexting. The framework seeks ways of addressing negative perceptions and norms, and developing skills and competences in terms of knowledge and information necessary to promote responsible use of ICTs.

Much of the available data on sexting is generated from studies conducted in developed countries. Lack of adequate studies may have denied African countries the opportunity to contextualize and localize the issues of youth sexting. Specifically, little scientific evidence has negatively impacted development of intervention programmes. For example, in Kenya, there are no elaborate educational or awareness frameworks to mitigate issues of sexting despite the popularity of the behavior among young people (Asatsa et al, 2017). Furthermore, prior studies, including the ones conducted in developed countries, have majorly used quantitative techniques and rarely analyze sexting from the perspectives and experiences of youth. In order to develop worthwhile mitigation measures and behavior change programs, the contribution of those with firsthand information is critical. The next chapter provides the literature reviewed relating to young peoples' sexting activities. The chapter also presents an analysis of the gaps the present study sought to address.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter starts with an analysis of the theoretical frameworks that were used to analyze and present the findings of the present study, notably the Theory of planned behavior (TPB) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). After discussing the theories, relevant and recent literature on past studies conducted about youth sexual communication and sexting is presented. Finally, the chapter presents a critical appraisal of previous studies on sexting and thereafter an analysis of the gaps that exist in literature as a way of justifying this study.

2.2 The Theoretical Frameworks

This section explores the theories that provided the foundation upon which students' use of smartphones to create and share sexting messages was analyzed and interpreted. The study was underpinned on two theoretical models; Theory of planned behavior (TPB) and Technology acceptance model (TAM). TAM was relevant in the sense that it provided concepts and assumptions that helped in analysis and interpretation of perceptions on use of smartphones and social applications with reference to exchange of sexually inclined messages. On the other hand, TPB was relevant in interpreting participants' perspectives and experiences on peer social contexts in which sexting took place, especially how peer norms and peer pressure influenced them to engage in sexting. TPB was also important in interpreting participants' perspectives on ways of developing measures to address issues and concerns of youth sexting in Kenya.

2.2.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model is among the most popular models and theories used to describe how technology is applied in different contexts (Durodolu, 2016). Ma & Liu (2005) posit that TAM is "...one of the most widely used models to explain user acceptance behavior" of technology (p.3). TAM was developed by Davis (1986) to describe how technology is understood and adopted by users. TAM has since become the most widely used and empirically tested framework with respect to acceptance and adoption of technology (Mugo et al, 2017).

In his proposed model, Davis (1986) posits that the user attitude (motivation) towards a technology/system can determine whether he/she approves or rejects using the system. The attitude of the user is influenced by the two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In other words, the motivation (altitude) of users determines adoption and use of technology. The motivation can be described by three conceptual predictors: perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and attitude towards using the system. The relationship of these predictors is illustrated in figure below.
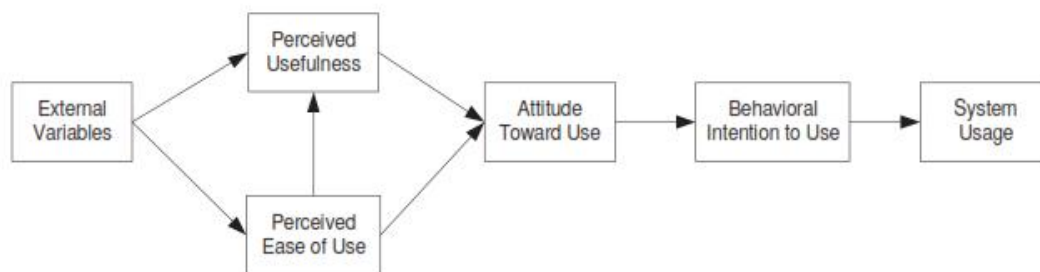
Figure 2.1 : Technology Acceptable Model (Davis, 1986)

Davis conceptualized the perceived ease of use to have direct influence on the perceived usefulness. Then he perceived both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness to be directly influenced by external factors such as system characteristics. He defined the two constructs as follows: perceived usefulness is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would enhance his/her job performance. Perceived ease of use is the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort. In summary, people use or not use technology in reference to the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

> *"... people tend to use a system to the extent that they believe it will help them perform their job better (perceived usefulness) and also that the beliefs of the efforts required to use a system can directly affect system usage behavior (perceived ease of use)* (Davis, 1986: p.3).

In this study, the application of TAM was primarily to assess and interpret how smartphones were perceived with reference to creating and sending sexually explicit or implicit images, videos and text messages. TAM was used to interpret how creating and sending videos by use of smartphones was perceived with reference to perceived ease and perceived usefulness. Affordances of smartphones with reference to sexting may be perceived as easier than other forms of sexual communication because of accessibility and portability of sexting messages (Schrock, 2015). TAM may predict that users are likely to choose smartphones to create and send sexting messages because of the perceived ease of use to execute sexting and perceived usefulness of sharing the electronic messages (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016; Walrave et al, 2014). As expounded on the findings presented in chapter four, perceptions of feeling in control, perceived privacy

among other variables were associated with the beliefs that mobile phones were safe to use to perform sexting.

2.2.2 Theory of planned behavior (TPB)

TPB was first suggested by Ajzen (1991) as a revision of the theory of reasoned action, a framework proposed earlier by the same person. Ajzen (1991) clearly states that he designed the theory to "predict and explain human behavior in specific contexts" (p.4.). TPB posits that intention to perform behaviors of different kinds can be predicted by "attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control". These intentions, together with "perceptions of behavioral control", account for considerable variance in actual behavior. (Ajzen 1991, p.8). Therefore attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are "seen to be related to appropriate set of salient behavioral, normative and control beliefs about the behavior" (Ajzen, p.1).

In other words, according to TPB, intention to engage in a given behavior is determined by three conceptually related predictors, which include attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Asare, 2015; Chiou; 1998). Therefore, TPB attempts to explain and predict behavior by providing an understanding of how antecedents of attitudes, subjective norms and behavior control ultimately determine human intentions and actions. Ajzen (1991) describes how the three predictors interact in relation to the intensity and how this determines the likelihood of the specified behavior being exhibited. TPB is believed to be the "most popular theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between beliefs and behavior" (Claire et al, 2021: p.3). The relationship of these concepts is illustrated in the figure below.
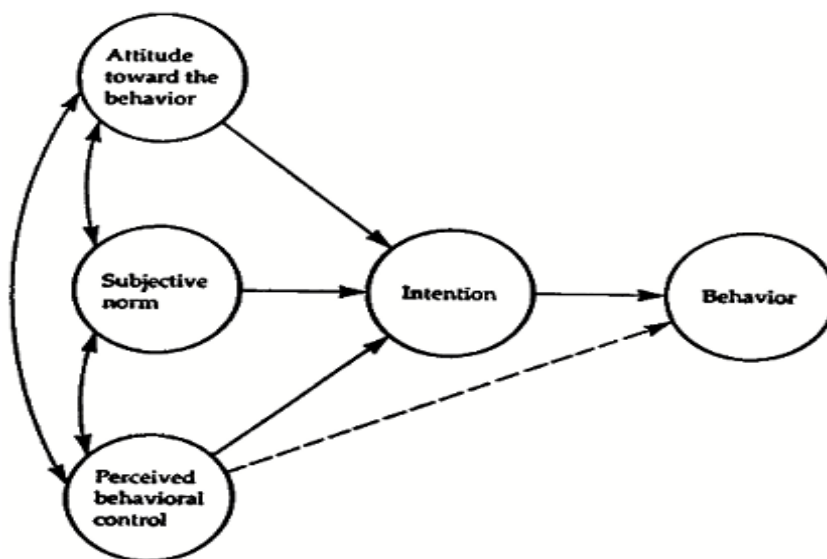
Figure 2.2: Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

In this study the major constructs of TPB (attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control) were used to guide in interpreting and describing sexting activities of the MLC students. The study used TPB to explain how attitudes towards sexting (positive or negative beliefs about sexting), subjective norms (beliefs about social/peer pressure from friends and dating partners influenced decision to engage in sexting) and perceived behavioral control (how smartphones interactional capabilities enhanced sexting) influenced the intentions to create and share sexually inclined messages (willingness to engage in sexting).

Attitudes: Attitude towards the behavior is "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Ajzen, 1991: p. 11). Scholars argue that people develop attitudes from beliefs they have about the object of the attitude (Kan & Fabrigar, 2017). Generally, individuals form positive attitudes towards behaviors they perceive to produce desirable outcomes and negative attitudes towards the ones they perceive to be primarily associated with negative experiences

(Walrave et al, 2014). Consequently, people prefer engaging in behaviors that are associated with desirable consequences and avoid the ones associated with negative outcomes. As such, attitudes whether negative or positive together with the other predictors influence intentions to engage in sexting (Liong & Cheng, 2017). As presented earlier, studies show that adolescents perceive sexting to produce both positive experiences and negative outcomes in contexts of dating and peer social interactions (Doring, 2014). In the present study, TPB was used to assess and interpret findings on how attitudes that were formed by the students about sexting influenced their intention or decision to engage in the behavior in contexts of dating and peer social interactions.

Subjective Norms: Subjective norms are social factors that refer to "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, p. 1). Normative beliefs are concerned with the extent to which members of the social group or referent individual approve or disapprove performing a given behavior (Walrave et al, 2014). Subjective norms are therefore the function of the strength of each normative belief and one's motivation to comply with the social pressure (Ajzen, 2014). Subjective norms, particularly social and peer norms have been found to have a prominent effect on youth decision to engage in sexting (Claire et al, 2021). Studies have shown that during transition from childhood to adulthood peers and dating partners become strongly influential on the kind of behaviors adolescents are involved in (Hasinoff, 2013). This may mean that adolescents become more vulnerable to activities of sexting of peers and dating partners. It was earlier described that the adolescence stage is a period of increased dating activities, identity formation and sexual exploration and therefore sexting in interpersonal and group contexts may intensify at this period. In this study, TPB was used

to assess and interpret results of how romantic partners and friends influenced the selected students to engage in creation and exchange of sexting messages.

Perceived Behavioral Control: Perceived Behavioral Control which is an important construct of the TPB refers to "people's perceptions of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest" (Ajzen, 1991: p.6). TPB places the perceived behavior control "within a more general framework of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behavior" (Walrave et al, 2014, p.7). Actual control over the behavior is not only determined by the intention but also the availability of opportunities. In other words, "a person should succeed in performing given behaviors if the required opportunities and resources are present" (Smith, 2015: p. 71). In the present study, the perception and extent to which smartphones enhanced or increased sexting activities among the selected students were partly interpreted with reference to TPB.

*Intention***:** A person's intention to perform a given behavior is one of the central constructs in the TPB. Intention is understood as the motivational factors that influence performance of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p.4). The greater the intention to engage in a given behavior, the greater the likelihood the behavior will be performed. In the present study, TPB was used to assess and interpret results on the reasons (motivation) that influenced the selected students to engage in sexting activities.

In summary, this study seeks to understand the nature of sexting in the context of use of smartphones by the youth in Kenya. It is important to understand the social factors that make young people create and share explicit content. Social factors that influence youth to engage in sexting encompass the role of peers, romantic partners, the social

environment and the intention to engage in sexting.   TPB further explicates how availability of 'requisite opportunities' and resources (e.g. smartphones and social media) make young people engage in creation and exchange of explicit content.

In order to understand the social context of sexting, this study analyzes attitudes (positive or negative), subjective norms (social factors such as role of romantic partners and peers), perceived behavioral control (use of smartphones and social media) and intentions or reasons (motivation such as to share fun) of engaging in the behavior. TPB was relevant in assessing the reasons and social contexts in which sexting took place, particularly how social norms and perceptions of peers and dating partners shaped the way students engaged in sexting and interpreted their perceptions and activities about the practice.

2.3 Review of Previous Research on Youth Sexual Communication and Sexting Practices

This section is organized in four broad areas. They include review of rise of sexual communication and sexting among youth, analysis of interactional characteristics of smartphones and social applications, appraisal of intersection of use of smartphones and youth sexting activities, elaborate analysis of sexting and everyday life of young people, and critical appraisal of past studies on sexting.

2.3.1 The rise of youth sexual communication and sexting

Use of mobile phones to communicate has become widespread with young people taking center stage in the use of this technology to access and share information (Rice et al., 2012). Mobile phone communication predominantly takes place through text and photo

sharing and video streaming (Park, 2014; Judge, 2012; Deloitee, 2017). Mobile phones can be used by young people living in different locations to communicate messages and share information about their daily activities and relationships (Schrock, 2015; Wyk & Ryneveld, 2018; Bentley et al, 2015). Sharing photos or live video messages using social applications such as SnapChat or WhatsApp help youth to leverage the gaps between face to face and online communication (Manning, 2014; Bayer et al, 2015). A number of studies have described the importance of smartphones in communication and expression in emerging adolescents' interpersonal and group interactions (Gezgin & Cakir, 2016; USIU-Africa, 2019; Reese-Bohold, 2013; Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017).

Increased use of digital technologies for communication, expression and social interaction has also made discussions and conversations about sexual matters move from face to face to online (Balakrishnan & Raj, 2012; Wamathai et al, 2014). Sexting is a perfect example of sexual communication that is taking place online especially through use of mobile phones, social media and internet (Dir et al., 2013). Much of the research on sexting demonstrates that the practice predominantly takes place through smartphones (Ringrose et al, 2013; Van Ouytsel et al, 2016). Youth use the various mobile applications, social networking platforms, dating sites and instant messaging systems to exchange sexually -oriented text messages, videos and pictures (Mukonyo et al, 2020). Technology is believed to facilitate communication in relationships as it is perceived to decrease physical and psychological barriers (McKie, Lachowsky, & Milhausen, 2015). As such, sexting is seen to afford individuals comfort and confidence to talk about sexual desires, interests and communicate intentions to have sex (Chege & Chebii, 2020).

Different kinds of sexting have been identified in scientific literature (Bianchi et al, 2021). Calvert (2009) distinguished between primary and secondary sexting. Primary sexting is a consensual form of sexting where participants share sexual images or videos they have recorded about themselves while secondary sexting involves forwarding of sexting content received from other people with or without their consent (Calvert, 2009).

Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell (2012) further distinguish between experimental and aggravated sexting. Experimental sexting is considered to be predominantly consensual and mostly take place in contexts of dating and romantic relationships (Wolak, et al, 2012). Sexting in the context of romantic relationships is considered to be common and usually driven by the desire to express and explore sexuality and identity (Levine 2013; Hasinoff, 2013). Sexting with a dating partner is perceived to be a way of experimenting with sexuality in romantic associations (Burkett, 2015). On the other hand, aggravated sexting is believed to constitute sexting that occurs as a result of coercion, cyber bullying, aggression and intentions to cause harm (Eraker, 2010).

Sexting is complex and an evolving form of sexual communication and it is therefore likely to be characterized by different forms of messages, mediated through different media, and takes place in different and emerging contexts and terrains (Chege & Chebii, 2020). Furthermore, smartphone characteristics and communication applications are evolving every day and therefore scholars need to investigate the emerging terrains and social contexts in which these systems are used to communicate and share information (Chege & Chebii, 2020). Communication scholars need to know about the technological contexts and motivations that are increasing rates of sexting especially in the realms of dating and peer social interactions. More knowledge of how young people think about the

models of visual communication afforded by smartphones and the internet would be important. Furthermore, insights about how youth think challenges of sexting should be addressed are equally important. In particular, communication researchers need to investigate what youth think are the consequences of sexting and exposure on the internet and how such risks can be addressed or mitigated.

The present study assesses how sexting relates to daily social interactions and communication activities of young people. The aim is to understand youth perceptions and experiences of use of smartphones to compose and dissemination sexually-oriented messages during interpersonal and group interactions. This will provide an understanding of social contexts that surround use of technology by youth in Kenya to engage in sexting activities. It is expected that young people have justifications for use of certain online and mobile applications to create and send sexually inclined messages. The perspective of the researcher in this study is that we need to closely examine sexting from the experiences of youth with firsthand information in order to understand the issues and concerns and contribute to literature on how to address the challenges.

2.3.2 Interactional characteristics of smartphones and social applications

Interactional characteristics relate to the nature of functionalities devices provide to the user to perform tasks. Certain interactional characteristics make mobile devices to be considered as favorable means of communication by the user (Raudaskoski, 2013). For example, mobile phones allow secluded communication between two people, which is a perceived interactional quality. Interactional characteristics of medium make the sender and receiver think about the nature and form of the message. Social media and new media

technologies have created diverse forms of communication. Therefore, it is important to examine the kinds of interactions provided by these tools in the everyday life of the youth.

Scholars argue that use of technology is largely shaped by technical and social factors (Raudaskoski, 2013; Norman, 1998). As such, communication characteristics are both inherent and perceived. For example, a camera has inherent (built-in) ability to record videos and images, but social norms (social context) determine how such media is exchanged between the sender and receiver. Perceived affordance implies that there are 'limitless' ways a medium or channel could be used to send and receive the messages.

Developers and designers of mobile phones have continued to develop sophisticated hardware and software to facilitate communication and exchange of information. These hardware and software have specifically provided users with the ability to engage in different and complex modes of interaction (Wyche & Olson, 2018). Smartphones provide universal communication functionalities like texting, instant messaging, recording and sending photos and videos, accessing the internet, social networking, sharing files through Bluetooth and other short range networking capabilities.

Young people regularly use the interactional functionalities provided by smartphones and social media platforms to communicate messages of different genres with friends, family members and romantic partners (Boyd, 2013). Youth also use communication characteristics incorporated on mobile phones and social media for various informational purposes such as reading emails, watching news, browsing the web and so forth.

Smartphones also allow users to keep pictures, videos, memories, personal information, contacts and digital links with friends, family and dating partners (Bayer et al, 2015).

Another way of using interactional capabilities provided by social networking and instant messaging platforms is creating or joining open or closed social chat groups (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017). These social groups form important digital spaces or portable social connections where young people interact, share ideas and content of all kinds and "interrogate issues represented in the mainstream media" (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2017: p.3). Social groups on Facebook and WhatsApp are also important avenues where young people share stories and information regarding activities of their everyday experiences.

Young people also make use of interactional characteristics provided by the internet and mobile phones to generate and share sexually explicit or implicit content. Use of smartphones and social applications, and their perceived interactional characteristics is part of everyday life of young people. Consequently, it is crucial to investigate the implications of opportunities and challenges offered by these interactional characteristics for communications of all kinds (Fullwood et al. 2017).

Affordances framework has offered an alternative model to describe how social media and social networking sites have altered online communication (Majchrzak et al., 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Schrock (2015) proposes four categories of affordances of mobile media; portability, availability, locationality, and multimediality. Frith & OzKul (2019: 2) posit that "people move with their media to exert a sense of control over their experience of space". Lloyd identifies mobility, connectivity, content creation and curation as qualities common to all mobile devices (Lloyd, 2019). Perceived

communication characteristics of mobile phones is a suitable framework for analyzing the complexities of young people's perceptions of suitability of smartphones for performing sexting activities.

Smartphones provide a number of interactional functionalities that make young people engage in different forms of communication that are more complex than face-to-face interactions. For example, perceived privacy afforded by mobile phones gives young people perceived control over the messages they compose and send. Perceived control has been found to be a key consideration when it comes to exchange of explicit content among adolescents (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). Likewise, interactional characteristics of mobile phone tools could be analyzed in terms of promptness and ease at which young people access and share sexual content.

2.3.3 Intersection of use of smartphones and youth sexting activities

Most scientific scholars have examined the surge in practice of youth sexting in the context of technological growth. Notable technological developments include convergence of mobile phones with internet technologies, and instant messaging and social networking applications (Walrave et al., 2014; Ringrose et al, 2012). In this perspective, sexting is interpreted as a phenomenon that has instantaneously emerged as a result of sophistication of communication technologies, which are considered part of adolescence "interactive experience" (Burkett, 2015; Campbell, & Park, 2014).

Del Reay et al (2019) posit that use of new media technologies to share sexual imagery "has become another form of intimate sexual communication attuned to today's technology-driven society" (p.1). Milton et al (2019) regards sexting as an increasingly

"controversial part of the information and communication technology transformation" (p.1). Walrave et al (2013) remarked that the basic requirement for a teenager to engage in sexting is a mobile phone. This perspective is clearly captured by Barrense-Dias et al in the following extract:

> "Technology progress and development of communication and sharing means, including growth of the Smartphone market and conception of new applications, frequently lead to the creation, the evolution or the facilitation of certain behaviors such as sexting, the contraction of sex and texting" (2017: 1)

A section of scholars however differ with the notion that youth sexting is as a result of growth in technology. They argue that creation and exchange of sexual imagery or the practice of mobile technology mediated sexual communication is not a new phenomenon (Klettke, 2014; Karaian, & Meyl ,2015). As such, desire for sexual expression and exploration is rather a deep-seated human instinct. In that sense, smartphones and social media have only increased the breadth and scope of this form of sexual expression (Karaian & Meyl, 2015). Debates about sexuality and technology "arose first in the wake of the telegraph and have arisen anew from the development of every new technology" (Green & Clark, 2015: p. 247).

Whether regarded as a new or old phenomenon, scientific evidence suggests high prevalence rates of sending and receiving sexting materials through mobile phone enabled technologies, especially among young people (Milton et al, 2019; Ringrose et al, 2012). As earlier pointed out, much of the scholarly inquiry into sexting has focused on adolescents and young people because of the social, mental and health consequences associated with this activity (Benotsch et al, 2013; Rice et al., 2012; Temple et al., 2012).

A recent national representative study carried out in Australia concluded that the prevalence rate for those who received sexting messages was growing steadily. To be specific, 43% -49% of young people sent sexts, 42%- 67% reported to have received sexts, and 40% to 46% sent and received sexts (Milton et al, 2019). A survey carried out in different regions of Kenya by InterMedia (2013) established that young people had "dirty talk" conversations with strangers online and wished to meet these people offline. The study also found exchange of sexually explicit conversations to be more common compared to suggestive self-exposure among the participants.

Most studies have concluded that exchange of sexting messages predominantly takes place on smartphone applications such as SnapChap, WhatsApp and Messenger. Results of a study by Van Ouytsel et al (2016) showed that participants mostly sent and received sexually explicit photographs and videos through text messaging applications. Similarly, the aforesaid study by Milton, et al (2019) concluded that instant messaging apps are perceived by young people as more "...convenient, safe, and informal means of sexting communication than other mediums, such as e-mail or Facebook, regardless of the actual risk of unauthorized distribution" (p.5). In their qualitative study among 12-15 and 8-10-year-old British adolescents, Ringorse et al (2013) concluded that sexting mostly took place through BlackBerry Messenger.

As described earlier, instant messaging applications such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and Messenger provide certain communication characteristics that make young people perceive them as safe for sharing sexually inclined messages (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016; Litt & Hargittai, 2014). For example, the ephemerality characteristic of SnapChat which makes images or videos sent through this app get deleted after 1-10 seconds has made the

application gain popularity among young people interested in sharing 'embarrassing' materials (Worthma & Rhodes, 2013; Katz & Crocker, 2015; Utz et al, 2015).

In the aforesaid study, apart from WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Instagram and Kirk, participants frequently used Snapchat to create and send sexting messages, videos and pictures (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016). Snapchat was particularly considered safe for sending and receiving self-made sexts because of the perceived lower "risks" 'compared to other applications. SnapChat's interactional characteristic that allows the sender to "set the length of time the photographs will remain visible to the receiver before disappearing" made participants particularly like the application (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016: p 16). They however argued that ephemerality of Snatpchat gives young people a false sense of security in that they feel in "control of the terms under which they share sexually explicit photographs" (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016: p. 16). Similar sentiments were earlier echoed by Fox & Potocki (2014) that "SnapChat really gives users a sense of security about the privacy of their images" (p.114).

The study further revealed that participants considered Facebook as "too open and direct" for sharing self-created sexting photographs and videos, while other digital communication technologies such as emails were considered too formal for sexting (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016). The study therefore concluded that "smartphone messaging applications" such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and Messenger are perceived to be "more convenient and safer for sexting communication that other mediums" such as Email and Facebook (Van Ouytsel, 2016: p. 15).

Several studies have also concluded that perceived speed and convenience are some of the justifications why young people use WhatsApp and Snapchat to send videos, images and text messages (Walrave et al, 2014). Empirical evidence show that adolescents perceive smartphone applications convenient because they can use the phones and internet anywhere anytime to access their sexting messages (Fox & Potocki, 2014)

2.3.4 Sexting and Everyday Life of the Young People

Scientific studies that analyze sexting in the context of everyday life of young people make heavy reference to a number of dominant standpoints and frameworks. These include youth sexual expression, exploration and identity formation (Boyd, 2011; Hasinoff, 2013), gender and power dynamics (Ringrose *et al.*, 2012) social norms and peer influence (Drouin et al, 2013; Lippmann & Campbell, 2014; Strassber et a, 2014, Walker et al, 2013; Sasson & Mesch, 2014), queer times and spaces, with sharp focus on cultural, political and technological changes especially modernity and consumerism (Walrave et al., 2014; Harbaugh, 2015), 'sexualisation' of culture (Walker et al, 2013; Dobson, 2015) and psychosocial consequences (Eraker, 2010; Doring, 2014; ; Rice et al., 2012; Temple et al., 2012). Feona & Smith (2014) posit that consumerism, changing culture and sexuality, technology and representation of self in the contemporary 'pornified' society could broaden and contextualize youth sexting and pornography discourses.

A section of scholars believe that adolescence is marked by a stage of curiosity, and desire to be independent and 'emancipated' from supervisory roles of parents (Hasinoff, 2013; Wallis, 2011). As a result, the number of adolescents exploring sexuality and

sexual related information, and forming peer-social relationships soars at adolescence stage (Walrave et al., 2014; Vanden Abeele et al, 2014). Van Ouytsel et al, (2016) explicitly put it that as children grow up, they reach puberty stage where they "begin developing their sexuality and start experimenting with dating and forming relationships" (p.3).

Mobile technologies have become easily accessible tools for fostering romantic and non-romantic relationships (Karain & Mery, 2015). Smartphones and social networking platforms are used to create and share sexual and normal videos, photographs and text messages (Walrave et al, 2015). Internet and new communication technologies are "socializing tools particularly appreciated by adolescents with the development of their communication skills" (Paus-Hasebrink et al, 2019, p.4). Smartphone-mediated communication and other new media channels allow for sexual expression, forming friendships, dating and passing information related to general issues (Humphreys & Liao, 2011).

Milton et al (2019) argue that "construction of a personal identity also strongly implies a sexuality exploration" (p. 4). In that sense, mobile phone mediated sexting plays a positive developmental role in the lives of adolescents (Temple et al, 2014; Temple & Choi, 2014 Walrave et al, 2014; Yan, 2015). Use of smartphones and other digital technologies to send and receive sexting materials is considered an avenue for young people to explore their emerging sexuality and sexual identities (Karain & Mery, 2015; Walrave et al, 2014). This scholarly perspective assumes that sexting is an expression of social emancipation.

According to Doring (2014), "exercising sexual agency and emancipating oneself from childhood roles and parental control are development tasks" in adolescent life (p. 7). Mobile phone mediated communication is considered important in social emancipation of the youth. Using mobile phones, youth can easily express their emerging sexuality and develop social skills required for active roles of sexual beings (Hasinoff, 2013, Eraker, 2010). Bond (2011) argues that mobile phones emancipate adolescents from surveillance role of parents as they navigate complex sexual terrains of peer culture. Baumgartner (2013) considers the less parents and adults surveillance over adolescents as an opportunity and freedom to engage in sexting.

'Sexualisation' of culture is perceived as saturation of media with pornography and sexual activities (Mitchell et al, 2011; Wakoli, 2018). This manifestation of a society's hyper-sexualized culture relates to increasing portrayal of sexual scenes on T.V and pornographic videos and images on the internet (Walrave et al, 2014; Karaian & Meyl, 2015). Pornography produced by professionals and amateur intercourse has become readily available on the internet. Portraying sexual behaviors as "glamorous, exciting, and risk free" make adolescents develop permissive, unrealistic, stereotypical sexual attitudes which are unhealthy for responsible living (Karaian & Meyl, 2015). Exposure to pornography on the internet and mainstream media make adolescents less sensitive to exchange of self-created sexually explicit videos and photographs (Walker, e t al, 2011). 'Sexualisation' of a society has been used to explain preoccupation with sexual identities, values and practices, and increased sexting activities amongst youth and children as Walrave et al assert:

> In this context, 'sexting' has emerged from the conjunction of two important evolutions: first, over the last two decades, digital technologies have permeated

the vast majority of households and adolescents' lives in general; second, a 'sexualisation of culture' has been observed. This latter phenomenon is characterised by an increasing preoccupation with sexual identities, values and practices, the emergence of new sexual experiences and the proliferation and normalization of sexual texts and images (2013: 2)

Hasinoff sentiments corroborate the standpoint that 'pornfication' of culture makes young people especially girls to record and send sexting images in an attempt to reproduce what they see on sexualized media. Hasinoff further alludes to sexual agency (emancipation framework) to interpret sexting as a way of expressing emerging sexuality:

> If the question is: "Why are girls sexting?" One answer that might seem appealing is "Sexualization." The theory is that girls create suggestive images of themselves on their mobile phones because they are imitating what they see in mass media. Most people do not seem to consider that in some cases, sexting might be a choice to express oneself sexually (2014: 1)

Equipped with smartphones and new communication technologies young people have become active consumers of online pornography. Using these devices, they can search, download and forward controversial materials to friends during online and offline interactions (Karaian & Meyl 2015; Van Ouytsel et al.,2016). A study conducted in Tanzania to explore how high school students use smartphones revealed that 27% searched for pornographic content from the internet (Mbise & Gwao, 2017). In their study of negative effects of social media, Nyongesa et al (2019) discovered that young people's increased access to smartphones coincided with greater capacity to access sexual content from the internet.

Peer pressure and social norms within romantic relationships and peer groups serve as strong sources of influence to engage in sexting (Drouin et al, 2013; Walrave *et al*., 2014). Assumptions about the extent to which peers influence behaviour of others are largely illustrated in frameworks such Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Norms

Theory (Ferguson, 2011). Nearly all studies show that exchange of self-made sexting materials predominantly take place between romantic partners and close trusted friends (Albury & Crawfor, 2012; Lippmann & Campbell, 2014; Strassber et al, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2013).

In dating relationships, sexting messages are used to flirt romantic partners or communicate love or sexual feelings (Albury & Crowford, 2012; Hunt et al, 2014). Compared to face-to-face communication, use of smartphones and instant messaging is perceived to be more convenient in expression of sexual feelings and desires (Paus-Hasebrink et al, 2019; Walker et al, 2013).

In their study, Van Ouytsel et al (2016) found out that teens flirt and exchange sexting photographs as a "sign of trust or gift" to a romantic partner. The study further revealed that adolescents send sexting photographs to "strengthen mutual feelings of trust and commitment within romantic relationships". In that sense, sexting is used as a form of "self-disclose" when partners wish to create "a feeling of intimacy within dating or romantic relationships". Self-disclosure is a way of sharing personal and intimate information with "trusting romantic partners" (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016: p. 16). Sometimes a sender may create and share explicit content with a dating partner without being prompted, coerced or requested to do so, especially when there is motivation to seduce or catch attention of the partner (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016).

A study conducted in different parts of Kenya among young people aged 13-17 years revealed that girls in Nairobi South B and Kisii were aware of the risks of self-exposure but they were willing to negotiate for their privacy. Girls in Kawangware and Kitui would create nude self-exposures. The study further revealed that online conversations involved use of strong sexual language and jokes, and exchange of pornographic content among those in romantic relationships. Online conversations with friends or romantic partners constantly resulted into request for sexual exposure especially among girls compared to boys. Nevertheless, sexually explicit conversations were more common than suggestive self-exposures in both boys and girls (Intermedia, 2013).

Though sexting has been largely described as a first step to debut of sexual activity within romantic relationships, some studies have found out how the practice is used as an alternative to sexual activity by adolescents (Lippman and Campbell, 2014). Additionally, sexting can be used to express interest in willingness to date a person. In this case, sexting messages are used as means of sending a sexual joke or intention for bonding (Abury & Crawford, 2014).

Numerous studies have established that romantic partners are a constant source of pressure to engage in sexting (Drouin et al., 2013; Walrave et al., 2014; Wakoli, 2018). Van Ouytsel et al (2016) argue that perceived pressure is manifested, for example, when someone creates and sends a sexy photo in anticipation of getting a similar photo from the recipient. A section of studies have reported outright coercion or threat from dating partner as reason for sending sexually explicit videos or images (Walker et al, 2013). Further, studies have indicated that explicit cases of coercion and pressure are experienced more by girls than boys (Ringrose et al, 2013). In their study involving

young adults, it was revealed that 20% of the participants were under pressure to send sexually explicit picture or text message (Drouin et al., 2015).

Desire to conform to peer-pressure and social norms have also been pointed out as important predictors for high rates of sexting among adolescents (Gordon-Messer et al, 2013; Ringrose et al, 2012; Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2014). The central argument is that the widely held misconceptions may encourage the youth to engage in sexting in an attempt to conform to perceived norms (Hasinoff, 2014; Eraker, 2010; Judge, 2012). For instance, the underlying subjective misconceptions might make college students overestimate the level and nature of sexting activities of their peers. The subjective assumptions might as well make sexting activities increase among students who presume sexting to be common and normal. Sexting is sensitive and private and therefore rarely discussed openly which increases the possibility of gathering misconceptions about other people's sexting activities (Sasson & Mesch, 2014). Sexting is related to sensation and attention seeking (Ringrose *et al.*, 2012) and therefore peers might overrate their own sexting activities in order to be perceived as strong in their peer groups.

Related to peer-pressure, majority of adolescents engage in sexting to fit in peer social groups, get attention of others or attains high social status among peers or else sext as part of the group activity (Walker et al, 2013; Ringrose *et al.*, 2012; Burchell et al., 2013). A number of researchers have concluded that "perceived social norms of peers [are] the most important predictors of adolescents' intentions to engage in sexting" (Van Ouystel et al, 2016: p. 5; Walrave et al, 2014; Walrave et al, 2015).

Peer social norms could be interpreted in the context of the wider social socio-cultural and technological changes (Marcum et al, 2014). Modern ways of expressing sexuality seem to combine sexiness, beauty and social attractiveness with bargain for social recognition, status and attention. Social status may be interpreted as a way of modern sophistication, characterized by admiration and perceived higher social recognition among one's social group.

Tade and Adekoya (2012) posit that modernity and consumerism have greatly influenced how young people engage in heterosexual relationships. Social pressure from men/boys is likely to make some girls to, on their own volition, record and post explicit images/videos to satisfy the perceived wider social expectations and norms regarding women's beauty, sexuality and sexiness. Celebrities like musicians and actors post racy images and videos of themselves on social media and instant messaging systems to attract fame and attention (Chege & Wanjiru, 2017). Similarly, young people who believe sexting would make them famous are likely to record and post raunchy images/videos on social media (Chege & Wanjiru, 2017).

When analyzed within the context of alternative (emergent) frameworks, sexting is seen as a way of youth rebelling against the dominant social norms (Walrave et al. (2014). Halberstam (2005) suggest that 'queer time and space' could be useful frameworks for analysing both cultural and political changes in the modern and postmodern times. Queer time and space frameworks explain emergence of queer sex subcultures which have developed contrary to dominant institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. Sexting and other sexual behaviours like commercialised sexual relationships that society

seems to contend with might be considered as emerging social behaviour (Tade & Adekoya, 2012).

As described as the begin of this section, most scholars have made unprecedented reference to psychosocial consequences related to youth sexting, especially legal ramifications (Eraker, 2010; Doring 2014), cyber-bulling, damage of reputation and social shaming (Klettke et al, 2014; Alison, 2013) and risky sexual behaviours (Campbell, & Park, 2014; Benotsch et al, 2013; Rice et al., 2012; Temple et al., 2012). A study conducted among high school students in Kandara sub-county in Kenya revealed that respondents invariably experienced various forms of sexual harassment such as unwanted sexual texting and solicitations perpetuated mostly through social media (Kamaku & Mberia, 2014).

In most jurisdictions, as earlier noted, child pornography laws that prohibit youth sexting have been passed and therefore anyone found guilty of possessing or distributing naked images of minors risk being prosecuted (Ringrose et al, 2012; Walker & Moak, 2010). In Kenya, the recently enacted Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act 2018, outlaws sexting and other forms of indecent exposure involving children. Besides legal ramifications, studies have established associations between sexting and sexual harassment, verbal abuse, loss of self-esteem, cyber-bulling, shamming and damage of reputation, paedophilic behaviours, and suicidal thoughts and behaviours (Lippman & Campebell, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2013; Dake et al, 2012; Van Ouystel, 2016).

There is general consensus that the aforementioned mental, social and psychological problems are caused by non-consensual distribution of sexting images or videos shared

between consenting partners or trusted friends (West et al, 2014; Karaian & Meyl, 2015; Mitchell, et al., 2012). In a study mentioned earlier, Drouin et al., (2013) found college students likely to forward sexting messages shared in casual relationships. Fleschler Peskin et al (2013) concluded that at least 30% of the high school students who participated in their study shared sexting messages without consulting the sender. As noted earlier, desire to stamp out peer authority especially among boys, deliberate move to damage reputation of the person depicted in the photo or video and show off are among reasons students share sexts received from trusted colleagues or dating partner (Van Ouytsel et al, 2016; Walrave et al., 2014).

As descried earlier, risking taking, substance abuse, dangerous sexual activities, and negative sexual attitudes are serious psychosocial problems linked to youth sexting (Benotsch et al, 2013; Rice et al., 2012; Temple et al., 2012). In most cultures, studies show that sexual debut occurs at an early age and sometimes involve multiple partners (Wakoli, 2018). Use of mobile phones to engage in exchange of sexual content is likely to cause sexual activity to start early and accelerate the rate of this behavior (Ringrose et al, 2013). In the study described earlier, it was found that the secondary students in Kenya who used phones to exchange sexting materials engaged in casual sex (Asatsa et al, 2017). Studies by Omollo (2014) and Patricia & Ndungu (2014) reported use of drugs and illicit sexual activities among teenagers aged 15 years and above in suburbs such as Karen and Runda. This is the candidate age of sexting, forming romantic relationships and early sexual debut (West et al, 2014).

When sexting becomes intertwined with casual sex among adolescents, it would become challenging to address challenges connected to both sexting and casual sex. For example,

it might be difficult to design and implement intervention programmes meant to address issues related to risky sexual behaviours and sexting such as teen pregnancy and spread of STDs (Wakoli, 2018). It is well documented that irresponsible sexual activities lead to unplanned pregnancy and infection with STDs like HIV/AIDs (Barnett et al, 2010; Walrave et al, 2014; Mumah et al, 2014).

2.3.5 Critical Appraisal of Past Studies on Sexting

Systematic review of literature suggests that there is no consensus on the rates of prevalence of sexting among the youth (Mitchell et al, 2011; Ringrose et al, 2012, Kinsley, 2014). These inconsistencies have been attributed to the differences in operationalization of concepts and lack of well-established measures of sexting (Baumgartner, 2013; Drouin et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2012; Walrave et al., 2014). Researcher are inconsistent as what constitutes sexting, the form of content (photos, videos, text messages) or the nature of content (sexually implicit or explicit) Benotch et al., 2013; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Drouin et al., 2013). The sampling techniques sometimes differ significantly which further exacerbates existing disparities among previous studies (Temple et al 2012).

As described earlier, prior scholars have generated divergent views on whether sexting is safe or dangerous, and to a certain extent this has generated numerous conflicting sentiments (Doring, 2014; Hasinoff, 2013). Scholarly perspectives have tended to lean on either of the two dominant frameworks and discourses when analyzing risks and opportunities presented by sexting. Doring (2014) has dichotomized the two frameworks as deviance discourse and normalcy discourse. The two competing arguments

respectively resonate with dominant perspectives and emergent perspectives as succinctly

captured by Kosenko et al in the following extract:

> Two discourses dominate this debate, both in the academic literature and in the popular press. The prevailing discourse frames sexting as inherently risky, a deviant behavior in need of intervention and prevention. The competing frame positions sexting as a normal, even healthy aspect of sexual expression and relationships. (2017: 1)

Negative psychosocial impacts and deviant behaviors associated with sexting are mostly

analyzed within the deviance discourse (Erake, 2010). On the other hand, studies that

legitimize sexting suggest that the activity need to be recognized as a legitimate form of

sexual expression among the young people (Boyd, 2011; Campbell & Park, 2014).

Kosenko et al (2017) further notes that "evidence in support of normalcy perspective is

growing", but most studies focus on risky behaviors and negative consequences when

analyzing issues of youth sexting (p.1)

Contemporary empirical studies suggest that sexting is complex and multifaceted and

therefore risk-opportunity dichotomy cannot adequately address the issues associated

with the behavior (Gordon-Messer et al, 2013; Pearce, 2013). Consequently, analysis of

youth sexting should take into consideration certain broader social, cultural, moral and

technological issues that form part of the complex social environment in which sexting

take place (Pearce, 2013).

Inconsistencies are also inherent in the descriptions of means of transferring the sexting

content, whether it is over mobile phones, email or internet (Drouin et al., 2013; Lippman

& Campbell, 2014). Some studies mention the internet without measuring the device or

medium used (MTV & AP, 2009), others do not mention the transmitting medium or

device (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Ferguson, 2011). Youth commonly use mobile based

software applications such as Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, and WhatsApp for sexting (Drouin et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2012). Each of these media has unique features, opportunities and risks that can influence engagement in sexting differently. The present study seeks to analyze how smartphone social applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Messenger are used by young students to create and send sexually explicit or implicit text messages, videos and photographs.

2.3.6 Research Gaps in Literature

Mobile phones have become indispensable means of youth sexual and social expression (Wyk & Ryneveld, 2018). These devices have brought significant changes in the way young people communicate, interact and share information (Bentley et al, 2015). Increased adoption of smartphones has significantly altered young people's social environment, especially the way they share sexual information and present their sexualized identities (Drouin et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2012). In developing countries, including Kenya, studies that examine how youth use smartphones to create and exchange sexual messages are however few or ongoing. Even where such studies are available, they have hardly studied smartphone mediated sexting from the perspectives and experiences of young people.

As earlier pointed out, review of literature reveals that sexting has been majorly investigated using quantitative methods (Temple et al 2012). Use of quantitative techniques has tended to under-represent the meanings, perspectives, perceptions, opinions and activities of youth with firsthand information about the behavior (Baumgartner, 2013). Consequently, detailed analysis and insights are missing on

everyday nature of youth sexting, specifically how the activity interrelates or draws upon daily social practices of young people in Kenya. In order to develop effective frameworks that address youth sexting and promote responsible use of mobile phones, studies that provide in-depth and elaborate analysis of the interplay between technology and daily social communication are required.

This study bring into perspective youth's perceptions and experiences on the way smartphones are used to create and exchange sexually inclined videos, photos and text messages. The study does this by utilizing in-depth interviews and FGDs to explore perspectives, meanings and activities of sexting from a sample of students who used smartphones to perform sexting. Specifically, the study delves into youth perceptions on interactional characteristics of smartphones with regard to exchange of sexting materials. Further, the study examines sexting in the context of daily social interaction and communication activities of youth. In addition, the study explores users' perspectives and experiences on possible intervention measures to address the challenges and dangers of youth sexting in Kenya.

It was described earlier that much of the existing social responses have not succeeded in discouraging youth sexting (Hasinoff, 2013). Consequently, there is a need for communication scholars to incorporate views of young people in suggesting solutions to challenges they face when sexting. Much of the preventive strategies have been suggested by legal scholars and other professionals without much involvement of the young people who happen to be the center of attention (Eraker, 2010)

As earlier noted, researchers who wish to suggest frameworks aimed at addressing issues of youth sexting should adopt a holistic approach that brings together all the relevant stakeholders. Attempt to eliminate the behavior by stipulating harsh penalties in form of child pornography laws would not work (Eraker, 2010; Hasinoff, 2013. This study develops a framework that recommends involvement of several elements of the social environment in which children grow, live and practice sexting. The proposed framework recognizes that sexting is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon whose solutions could be found in the same social environment it is practiced. The suggested framework conceptualizes and describes how agents of the social environment should collaborate to develop children and youth with the right information, knowledge and perceptions about sexting and use of digital media technologies.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the scientific literature that was reviewed relating to sexting and mobile phone mediated sexual communication among young people. Literature presented in this chapter focuses on the rise of adoption and use of smartphones and social applications by students locally and globally, interactional characteristics of smartphones, intersection of sexting and smartphone technology, sexting and everyday life of the young people, and critical appraisal of the past studies on sexting. The chapter also provides a description of the relevance of theoretical frameworks, namely Technology acceptance model and theory of planned behavior that underpin this study. Finally, for purposes of showing the justifications for this study, the chapter presents an analysis of the gaps that exist in literature.

During literature review, a number of key issues emerged. It was noted that although sexting is not new, the escalation of the phenomenon has come as a result of the proliferation of smartphones and social applications. Technology Acceptance Model renders itself as a relevant framework for understanding how users' perceptions on interactional characteristics of smartphones and social applications interrelate with sexting activities. On the other hand, Theory of Planned Behavior provides a relevant framework for interpreting perspectives and experiences on social contexts of sexting, especially social norms, peer pressure and other factors that influence how sexting takes place. TPB was also critical in analyzing how youth with the right information, skills, and perceptions and norms are likely to positively use smartphones and shun irresponsible online behaviors. The next chapter presents a description of the methodological principles that were used for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the philosophical paradigm, research approach and research methods used to address the research questions. The chapter also presents the sampling techniques, data generation techniques, instruments and processes, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and the ethical issues that were put into consideration during the study. The chapter begins with the researcher's line of arguments in support of the research paradigm and research approach as well as discussion of the qualitative methodological considerations. This is followed by discussion of the rationale behind the sampling strategy, data generation techniques, outline of the steps taken in the analysis of data and review of the ethical issues that featured in the study.

3.2 Philosophical paradigm

This study adopted the relativist-interpretivist philosophical paradigm. Paradigms are patterns of thinking held by a person or groups (Creswell, 2009). Kafle (2011) conceptualizes a paradigm as a "loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research" (p.2). To understand the different stances, philosophers make a distinction between epistemology (the nature of human knowledge, and how we obtain it) and ontology (the nature of the world (knowledge) irrespective of our attempts to understand it). Kafle (2011) supports this distinction when she observes that ontology is concerned with the nature of reality while epistemology is about theory of knowledge.

The perspective someone uses to look at social reality and gather knowledge affects how he/she goes about collecting, analyzing and interpreting data about the phenomenon(Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011). Most qualitative scholars like Yin (2014), Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011), and Stake (2011; Stake, 2014) opine that researchers should state explicitly the philosophical standpoint that informed choice of their perspectives, research questions, methodologies, methods and conclusions. In the process of this study, as advised by the scholars stated above, the researcher strived to describe the philosophical paradigm that underpinned the study. As explained in the subsequent paragraphs and stated earlier, the study adopted the relativist- interpretivist philosophical stance. As such, the ontological position was relativism while interpretivism was the epistemological stance.

Ontology is the study of "nature of existence and what constitutes reality". The assumption is that 'out there' exists in reality irrespective of our methods to access that reality'. Therefore, ontology "embodies understanding" of what constitutes reality (Gray, 2014: p.6). In terms of research, one's ontological position is related to what is considered to be the nature of knowledge in the field of enquiry or social phenomenon under investigation. In this study, valid information about sexting is considered to be contained in the experiences, perspectives and activities of those who engage in the behavior. Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) argue that specifying ontological position in the process of carrying out research helps to appraise the methodologies, findings and conclusions.

Epistemology on the other hand is concerned with what methods are "legitimate and adequate" and how knowledge is acquired and justified (Gray, 2014: p.6). Epistemology is the study of nature (or theory) of knowledge and concerns itself with how knowledge is

obtained and from the sources it is obtained from, and the assumptions or claims the researcher makes about the phenomenon (Gray, 2014; Levers, 2013). Hence, epistemology is concerned with 'how we know what we know'. This refers to the notion of researchers' contribution to knowledge. Most scholars conceptualize epistemology as the process by which the researcher makes the knowledge claim (Creswell, 2009; Kafle, 2011; Kawulich, 2012).

Epistemological position is fundamental because it helps the researcher to clarify important issues related to the research process. Grey (2015) posits that epistemological position in a study serves purposes related to justifying issues of research design. This includes but is not limited to how the evidence is collected, analyzed and interpreted, kind of evidence sought, and from where the evidence is collected. In other words, philosophical stance helps the researcher determine which research design would work for a given set of research objectives. Creswell (2009) observed that a researcher's epistemology, which is literally his/her theory of knowledge, serves to decide how the social phenomenon is studied.

With reference to research, the ontological stance and epistemological perspective constitute the paradigm (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011). Paradigmatic orientation starts with having an ontological assumption that later informs the epistemological perspective. Epistemological perspective then influences the structure of the research design including the research approach, method, research questions, kind of evidence needed, tools of data generation, and assumptions generated. In other words, choice of particular paradigms automatically leads to particular theoretical perspectives, methodologies, approaches and methods. For instance, if one adopts an objectivist-positivist/post-positivist perspective,

the research is more inclined towards quantitative techniques while relativist-constructivist/interpretivist paradigm tend to emphasis on qualitative approaches (Gray, 2015; Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011)

Consistent with the arguments of the scholars cited so far, I hereby describe the philosophical paradigm that was adopted for this study. As mentioned earlier, I regard my paradigm as relativist-interpretivist. In other words, this study is qualitative in nature and it is anchored within relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. I hereby describe the decisions that informed this perspective.

Relativism is linked to subjectivism. Relativism holds that there are multiple realities of accessing the social world we live in. This differs from positivism that imposes a world that is "independent of our knowledge of it" (Gray, 2015: p. 7). Grey further notes that positivist belief in objective reality 'out there' and therefore "reality is seen as being composed of clearly formed entities with identifiable properties" independent of our subjective perceptions (p.7). Relativists reject representation of knowledge and reality as absolute entities and instead believe in social reality that is understood in perspectives, interpretations and meanings by social actors in such worlds.

The symbols, words and concepts we ascribe to our social and natural worlds reflect our understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon. Relativism rejects truth and meaning that seem to stem from belief that there exists some external world abstract of our consciousness. In contrast, relativists consider valid knowledge and meaning to be "created by the subject's interactions with the world" (Gray, 2015: p.7). Therefore, knowledge and meaning are constructed by people from different interpretations they

give to phenomena in their social environment and this results in the notion of multiple realities.

Interpretivists hold that the nature of human knowledge is subjective and contained in multiple realities that people construct as they try to understand their existence or make sense of their social environment and social actions (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, reality is context specific, changes over time and space and depends on individual or group perceptions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Kawulich, 2012). The perceptions influence the language, meanings, and interpretations people give to their natural and social phenomenon (Gray, 2015). That means human knowledge is subjective, socially constructed and dependent on the individual or group's view of the social world (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, researchers who believe that knowledge can exist external to the object consider individual perceptions, meanings and beliefs as constituting valid and legitimate knowledge. However, the researcher is required to demonstrate how the information about the perceptions was obtained in the research process.

When applied to qualitative research, reality is perceived as a person's perception of different situations (Pereira & Alvaro, 2013). This is the belief that realties are multiple and subjectively constituted (Creswell, 2009). Interpretive studies attempt to understand peoples' experiences, perspectives and views of these experiences. In other words, the world is socially constructed and therefore in order to understand human actions and behavior we first need to understand the meanings and perceptions people give to their own and other's actions and to situations, circumstances and events (Creswell, 2009; O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015).

Qualitative research endeavors to unravel the dynamics of the social processes with a view that truthful and trustworthy knowledge lies with people's voices about their own experiences (Creswell, 2009). In light of arguments presented by quantitative scholars and my epistemological position, this study was informed by one major assumption, that data about sexting is contained in the subjective experiences and perspectives of young people who engage in the activity. This explains why college students who engaged in sexting were involved in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In order to understand how youth perform and interpret sexting, the researcher needed to investigate the perceptions and experiences of students who engaged in sexting activities. To broaden knowledge on sexting, the study strived to understand how young people undertake and speak about sexting. The focus was on perceptions and experiences of how they used mobile applications to create and share sexually explicit/implicit videos, images and text messages in interpersonal and group interactions, and their understanding of how the challenges related to this behavior could be addressed.

This study notes that researchers interested in understanding sexting must seek complexity and richness of views from those with firsthand information. The study assumes that exploring meanings, perceptions and activities of how sexting takes place in individual and group interactions among young people would yield meaningful and worthwhile findings. This justifies why the study chose a philosophical paradigm that adopted techniques which allowed analysis of responses emanating from in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion of students articulating how they performed sexting. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how sexting takes place through mobile applications among young people.

3.3 Research approach

This study adopted the qualitative research methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches have been recommended for studying everyday social media interactions (Bernd, 2013). This study sought to understand how sexting is practiced from a broad and diverse group of young people. The emphasis was on the qualitative dimension of sexting, particularly meanings, interpretations, experiences and activities of young people concerning the behavior. The choice of a qualitative approach was informed by a number of factors including the aim of the study, nature of the study and the theoretical framework underpinning the research. A qualitative approach is most appropriate when the researcher strives to provide an in-depth and elaborate analysis of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2014).

Rich and detailed data on perceptions and experiences of sexting would most appropriately be achieved through techniques that allowed in-depth enquiry into the practice. Use of qualitative techniques allowed the research to conduct in-depth analysis into perceptions and experiences of sexting and activities of how the messages were created and sent through smartphones. Furthermore, qualitative techniques enabled the researcher to provide an in-depth enquiry into language and meanings college students attached to sexting during interpersonal and group interactions. Through qualitative techniques, it was also convenient for the researcher to deeply examine the experiences of students on concerns and challenges of sexting and perceptions of how these negative experiences could be mitigated. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to use in-depth interviews and FGDs to yield data about subjective experiences of sexting of

college students from a diverse group of urban youth who used smartphones to engage in the practice.

During interviews, the researcher listened to students elaborate in a detailed way their personal experiences and activities of creating and sending sexting messages. Qualitative research enabled the research in this case to generate a deeper understanding of sexting from personal experiences of multiple individuals. In the FGDs, the researcher received elaborate discussions of how sexting was perceived and practiced in interpersonal and group settings.

In this study, detailed qualitative analysis generated personal and group data on perceptions and experiences of sexting. Therefore, the qualitative techniques were useful in the study because the researcher managed to provide a detailed analysis of experiences, perceptions and activities of sexting, specifically how sexting was practiced, how it was perceived in terms of concerns and challenges in both interpersonal and group settings, and perceptions of how the negative experiences could be addressed.

In the previous chapters, it was noted that quantitative techniques do not sufficiently elaborate on the nature of sexting among the youth. As such, qualitative data is required in order to provide a greater understanding of the underlying issues and how to address the behavior. Quantitative studies mainly report statistics about prevalence of sexting but rarely provide detailed accounts of how the behavior is perceived and can be addressed from the viewpoint of those who practice it.

In other words, quantitative studies do not provide deep insight on nature and how sexting manifests itself in the everyday life of young people. Therefore, this study looked

deeper into the individual and group perspectives of how smartphones are used to create and share explicit and implicit content, and the social context in which this takes place.

3.4 Research method

This was a qualitative research inquiry that used a multiple case study method involving sixty-five middle level college students in Nairobi, Kenya. The study was guided by Yin's (2014) arguments that insights developed from multiple case study would be stronger and more valuable than single case study. Multiple-case designs are used when a researcher utilizes more than one single case. This study is a multiple case study in the sense that it incorporates several students who in each case is an individual case study.

Scholars concur that case study method involve in-depth and elaborate investigation of a given case or cases (Creswell, 2009, Litchman, 2014, Yin, 2014). Therefore, researchers utilizing multiple case study method attempt to seek multiple perspectives in relation to the issue being investigated (Yin, 2014). Qualitative case study method resonates with the constructivist/interpretivist approach since the method provides the researcher with an opportunity to interact with the case (s), analyze the case and discover the case (Stake, 2014). In other words, case study approach is suitable if one is interested in unraveling people's experiences, perspectives and activities concerning a given phenomenon. Yin (2014) posits that case study method is relevant where your questions require an "extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon" (p.34) Case study method seeks to understand the meanings, perspectives and experiences of people in regard to a particular issue in the environment they live and operate (Creswell, 2009).

The present study sought to understand perspectives, experiences and activities of middle level college students on use of smartphones to create and send sexually inclined messages. The choice of case study method relates to the nature and aim of the study which was to provide an in-depth analysis of how sexting takes place through mobile applications. As noted earlier, case study is a viable method when one's aim is to provide a thick description of a phenomenon through analysis of perspectives, meanings, as well activities of those who experience the phenomenon. Yin (2014) advises that cases study is suitable when "your questions require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon" (p.34).

Use of the case study method was influenced by the desire to understand young people's perceptions and experiences of the technological and social contexts of sexting and what the sexting activities means to them. The focus was to understand sexting behaviors from the eyes and actions of those who engaged in the activity. In order to delve and have a deeper insight into the individual and group perspectives and experiences of youth sexting, this study adopted case study method, utilizing in-depth interviews and FGDs techniques of data collection. This way, the study managed to elucidate and provide detailed account of how students used smartphones to exchange sexual content during interpersonal and group interactions. In-depth interviews and FGDs allowed the participants to describe their meanings, perspectives, experiences and activities on use of smartphones to share sexting content. In other words, case study was a suitable method for this study in the sense that it allowed use of techniques that sought views, opinions and feelings about sexting from people who were engaged in the activity.

Interviews and FGDs generated rich data on perspectives about use of smartphones with reference to sexting activities, and views on appropriate measures to be put in place to address the perceived concerns and dangers connected to the behavior. The focus was meanings, perceptions and activities about individual and group sexting activities. The aim was to probe deeply into the individual and group perceptions, experiences and attitudes relating to use of smartphones to participate in exchange of sexting messages. Based on scholars' arguments on qualitative studies about thickness and richness of data, the study dealt with students who used smartphones to send sexting messages during interpersonal or group interactions. Thus, case method provided a chance to offer a thick and extensive analysis of sexting from viewpoints of multiple students who used smartphones to engage in the behavior. The sample size and sample procedures used to obtain participants for the study are explained in the next sections.

Yin (2014: 80-86) talks about literal replication and theoretical replication. In theoretical replication, the researcher compares findings, contrasting elements in the results with the aim of confirming some theoretical assumption or prediction. Since this study is not a comparative analysis of sexting among college students, the reason for using multiple cases is to achieve literal replication of the behavior (Yin, 2014). After analyzing experiences, perspectives and activities of smartphone mediated sexting from different cases, the aggregated results provided strong supporting evidence for the arguments presented from the questions that guided the study. In other words, this study entails a replication approach that seeks to understand smartphone sexting from multiple perspectives of young people who engage in the activity.

Qualitative scholars identify different types of case study research. For example, Stake (2014: p.134-139) distinguishes among three types of cases study. These include intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study. Intrinsic case study is undertaken when the researcher wants to have a "better understanding of a particular case". The case is the center of attention because "in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest". The researcher has an "intrinsic interest" in this case. A life history analyzed using the case study approach would best fit this illustration, for example the study of Kenyan education system.

Instrumental case involves studying a particular case because it [the case] provides insight into an issue or to generalize the results to a large collection of cases (Stake, 2014). The case is "of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role and facilitates understanding of something else" (Stake, 2014). The case is scrutinized in its totality but the researcher's interest is to "pursue external interest" (Stake, 2014). As such, the case(s) is chosen to help in understanding of other interests. In collective case study, the researcher "jointly studies a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition" (Stake, 2014: p. 25). This is an instrumental case study that incorporates several cases. These cases are chosen because the researcher believes that by investigating them he/she will illuminate an issue or get to generalize the results to a larger collection of cases.

Further, Yin (2014: p. 86-89) distinguishes between holistic and embedded case studies. Holistic and embedded case studies apply to both single-case and multi-case studies. Embedded cases studies involve analysis of the case or object or "unit of analysis at more than one level". Embedded case study analyzes subunits within a single case or multiple

case. Therefore, multiple evidences are collected on single or multiple cases on different salient aspects of the case(s).

Embedded cases studies do not necessarily rely on qualitative techniques only. They may allow for use of different methods within the subunits. For example, quantitative techniques may be applied to obtain quantitative data that may later be subjected to statistical analysis (Tietje & Scholz, 2013). In holistic case study, it is only the 'global nature of an organization, program or issue that is examined (Yin, 2015: p.87). This involves thorough descriptive analysis of the case(s) through qualitative techniques (Tietje & Scholz, 2013). The nature and purpose of the study determines the category and type of the case study the scholar choses.

This study used multiple instrumental -holistic case study design. The study was multiple instrumental case study in the sense that it used 65 college students to understand how young people in Kenya use mobile-based social applications to engage in sexting activities. This study was holistic in nature in the sense that it explored the sexting issue as a whole without any classifications. In other words, the study did not have subgroups (subunits) in the classification of experiences, perspectives, meanings and activities on use of smartphones to exchange sexting content among college students.

3.5 Sampling

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select five middle level colleges in Nairobi. Then from these colleges, sixty-five students were purposively selected to constitute the research participants. As a criterion for selecting research sites, the researcher considered colleges that offered many different courses (Business, Engineering, Hospitality, Media,

Tourism etc), had high student population, and were located in the Central Business District (CBD) of Nairobi. In colleges of such calibre, the researcher expected to get students with diverse social demographic characteristics such as courses studies, age, level of study, gender, marital/dating status, living arrangement, religion and having parents or not.

When selecting participants for inclusion in the study, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilized to only pick students who used their smartphones to create and send sexually explicit and/or implicit text messages or videos and/or pictures. The researcher worked with students who practiced sexting in order to achieve the desired level of in-depth and richness of data about experiences and perceptions of sexting of college students. Besides considering only students with firsthand experiences, the researcher selected a sample with diverse social demographic characteristics of age, courses, religion, living arrangements and education level.

The study worked with students in middle level colleges aged between 18-24 years. The nature of the study and existing literature's analysis of adolescence sexting behaviors informed the decision of using college students to study experiences of sexting among the Kenyan youth (Ringrose et al, 2013; Hasinoff, 2014) Empirical research suggests that adolescents and emerging adults are more likely to use digital technologies to engage in sexting on social media and instant messaging (Walrave et al, 2014, Walker et al, 2013). The sensitive nature of the study required the researcher to work with the age of consent in Kenya. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were required to sign the consent forms. Therefore the researcher needed to work with age appropriate students who were free to make decisions. Furthermore, the age 18-25 years was considered

because consensual sexting escalates at this stage (Walrave et al, 2014). This is also the age at which formation of sexual relationships and peer social interactions intensifies among the youth (Burkett, 2015). Peers and romantic partners influence exchange of sexually inclined messages among the youth (Lippman & Campbell, 2013; Angelides, 2013). The selected students were actively involved in creation and exchange of sexting messages and therefore analysis of their perspectives, experiences and activities with regard to the behavior helped to advance the knowledge of sexting by Kenyan youth.

Gender played out automatically in the sense that more girls than boys participated in the interviews and FGDs. During the pilot study and actual data collection phase, it was discovered that female participants had richer experiences about sexting and thus yielded more data than their male counterparts. The researcher had planned to work with a similar number of boys and girls but more female participants were used to reach data saturation point, which was achieved earlier for the boys. Generating data from girls until saturation point was reached was important because the researcher was able to bring out aspects of how gender dynamics manifest itself during youth sexting. Several scholars have examined gender factor as an important predictor of sexting among adolescents (Ringrose et al, 2013; Hasinoff, 2013). Working with a sample of 65 participants was determined by data saturation point and richness of data. Detailed procedures of how sampling was carried out are provided in the subsequent section.

Qualitative studies researchers concur that non-probability sampling techniques used to select sample elements are based on the nature and aim of the study (Yin, 2014). Qualitative studies are normally concerned with generating rich and in-depth data that

represent the voices of the research participants rather than pursuing intricate cause-effect relationships or hypotheses that seek to generalize the research findings (Creswell, 2009)

3.5.1 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

It is important to note that the greatest challenge for the present study was how to define the unit of analysis (the cases). The researcher pondered whether the 'cases' should be the colleges or students. After careful consideration of the aim and facets of the study, the researcher resolved that the unit of analysis (the cases) should be the students who engaged in sexting. College students were used to understand how young people in Kenya use smartphones to create and share sexting messages. Yin (2014: p. 83-86) posits that researchers fairly to extremely experience the problem of defining the case to be studied. He however advises that the kind of questions the researcher attempts to answer determines the case or group of cases chosen to address the questions.

Stake (2014) gives varying examples of what would constitute a case (unit of analysis). A case can be an individual person, program, classroom of students, doctor, event etc. When an individual person is the case and such several individuals are studied, this constitutes a multiple case study. As described above, the study did not consider the colleges where the students were drawn to be the cases. In defining the cases, the study was informed by Yin's sentiments that case study that use individual persons as cases could help the scientist understand the real experiences and perspectives (Yin, 2014).

The populations of the five colleges from which samples for this study were drawn are summarized in table 3.1. The study explored sensitive issues of sexting and expression of

sexual behaviors through images and photos, therefore in order to respect privacy and anonymity of the colleges and participants codes were used to identify them. It is important to note that the number of girls included in the sample is not dependent on the number of female students in each college. As described in this chapter, gender played out automatically which led to inclusion of more girls in the study. The table is used just to show the population of students in each respective college during the time of data collection.

Table 3.1: Student population of colleges from which the samples were drawn

College Code	Number of Students		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
[KM]	1222	1534	2756
[HR]	826	878	1704
[DM]	893	890	1783
[VI]	1457	1253	2710
[KP]	1771	1767	3538

Later in this section, it will be shown that the study strived to explore sexting with a sample that constituted students from diverse social, academic and religious backgrounds. This was besides selecting only students who were active in creation and exchange of sexually explicit/implicit photos, videos or text messages using smartphones. Quantitative researchers posit that characteristics such age, social-economic backgrounds, education level among others are likely to have a bearing on nature and frequency of sexting among young people (Walrave et al, 2014; Temple et al, 2012).

As previously mentioned, this study was conducted with a diverse sample of 65 students due to its nature and purpose. Purposive sampling strategy utilizing both purposive and snowball techniques was used to select the participants. To achieve the desired in-depth and richness of data, only participants who engaged in sexting were considered for inclusion and this justifies why purposive and snowball techniques were used. It is worth noting that only students who were conversant with sexting and used smartphones to engage in the behavior were considered for inclusion in the study.

During the induction phase, the researcher asked questions to potential participants to determine their level of knowledge of sexting and use of smartphones to create and share sexting messages. Some students were recommended to the research through the snowball method, but they were not picked to participate in the study unless their level of conversancy with the subject and use of smartphones was assessed with respect to the inclusion criteria. This further explains how the researcher purposively selected the students to take part in the study. A number of qualitative research scholars consider purpose sampling as the most appropriate technique especially when dealing with interviews on sensitive topics (Dempsey et al, 2016; Elmir et al, 201; Liamputtong, 2019).

Thirty in-depth interviews (11 males, 19 females; N=30) and seven FGDs (N=35) with the selected students were conducted. Potential participants for inclusion in the sample were students aged 18 years to 25 years who were actively involved in sexting through smartphones. Only one female participant turned out to be 26 years old during interviews. The decision to use participants aged between 18-25 years was informed by varied

reasons. One, a number of quantitative studies report higher levels of consensual sexting among older adolescents and young adults (Walrave et al, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2013, Campbell & Lippmann, 2014). Two, 18-25 years is the age at which most adolescents form romantic relationships. As earlier presented, and corroborated in the present study, sexting frequently takes place between present or future dating partners (Ringrose et al, 2013; Burkett, 2015; Phippen, 2012). Three, in Kenya, 18 years and above is the age of consent, and dealing with people of legal age is appropriate when one is interviewing on sensitive topics related to sex behaviors and sexting.

Details of how purposive and snowball sampling were conducted are given in the subsequent parts of this section. Details of sample size and distribution are captured in table 3.2. Ethical issues as explained in the ethical consideration section of this chapter. Middle level colleges were considered the most appropriate areas to get youth aged 18-25 years because the majority of these institutions offer courses that take a maximum duration of three years and attract relatively young students.

Table 3.2: Sample Size and Distribution

Sample Size				Sample Distribution						
				College Code	Interviews			FGDs		
					M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Male		**Female**		[KM]	1	2	3	2	3	5
Interview	11	Interview	19	[HR]	1	4	5	3	2	5
FGD	15	FGD	20	[DM]**	2	4	6	4	6	10
				[VI]	3	3	6	3	2	5
				[KP]**	4	6	10	3	7	10
Total	26		39	5	11	19	30	15	20	35

** Two focus groups were conducted in [DM] and [KP].

To draw individual students to constitute the sample, as mentioned earlier, purposive sampling was used to select five colleges in Nairobi. The study endeavored to explore sexting with a sample constituting a broad range of urbanized students from diverse social, academic and religious backgrounds. Therefore, the colleges selected for consideration were those believed to have students with diverse characteristics as earlier indicated. These were colleges presumed to have students from diverse backgrounds in terms of courses offered, examination bodies of courses offered, location within Nairobi, affordability in terms of fees paid, gender representation, no discrimination in terms of religion, number of student population etc. Details of sample characteristics are presented in table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Sample Characteristics

	[KM]	[HR]	[DM]	]VI]	[KP]	Total
N=65	8	10	16	11	20	**65**
Gender						
Male	3	4	6	6	7	**29**
Female	5	6	10	5	13	**36**
Interviews	3	4	6	6	10	**29**
Focus Group Discussions	5	6	10	5	10	**36**
Mean Age						
Course Taken in College						
Mass communication	2				2	**4**
CPA (Accountancy)			3	5		**8**
Automotive Engineering					1	**1**
Architecture					3	**3**
Electrical and Electronics Engineering					2	**2**
Civil Engineering					1	**1**
Purchasing & Supplies Management/Procurement	1	5	3		3	**12**
Hospitality Management					2	**2**
Community Development/Social Work			4			**4**
Public Health			2		2	**4**
Human Resources Management		6				**6**
International Fleet Management				4	2	**6**
Business Management/Administration	6		3	3		**12**
Relationship status						
Dating/In a relationship	5	7	6	8	8	**34**
Married					2	**2**
Dating multiple people				1	2	**3**
Non-dating	5	4	8	3	6	**26**
Religion						
Christian	7	11	14	11	15	**58**
Muslim	2		1		2	**5**
None					1	**1**
Both Christian and Muslim				1		**1**
Residence /Living Arrangement						
Live with both parents	3	3	3	3	6	**18**
Live with one parent/Single parent	2	3	4	2	3	**14**
Live with non-parent (Relative/Siblings/Spouse)	1	1	2	2	4	**10**
Live with non-parent (Non-family member)			1	1		**2**
Non-parent (orphaned)					1	**1**
Live in hostel	1	3	1	1	1	**7**
Live alone/rented room	2	1	4	3	3	**13**

3.5.2 Accessing Research Sites and Participants

Before accessing the research sites to recruit the participants, first the researcher sought for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). A copy of the research authorization letter issued by NACOSTI is attached in Appendix I. Then, after careful selection of five colleges, written requests were made to administrators seeking permission to be allowed to conduct the study. Upon receiving authorization to conduct the study, clarification on the best approach to use to access the students in each respective college was sought from the administrators. In Appendix II, a copy of the letter issued to the researcher in order to access the premises of one of the colleges to recruit participants/conduct the study is provided.

Once granted permission, the researcher set out to purposively select the primary participants. To recruit potential primary participants, the researcher was guided by the aim and nature of the study, and consequently recruited only students who used smartphones to exchange sexting messages. The study used purposive sampling for the first set of primary participants. Purposive sampling is considered the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the primary participants (Creswell, 2009).

To recruit the participants, some of the colleges required the researcher to work in consultation with lecturers. In such cases the researcher was introduced to the students during classes. Whenever the researcher was given an opportunity during classes to explain about the study to the students, he requested those who wished to participate to give their contacts and time they wished to be contacted. In some of the colleges, the researcher was authorized to recruit students by interacting with them while they were

sitting outside during lunch-time breaks or sessions between classes. In most cases, students were available during class breaks, especially between 10 am and 5pm. Contact details of the students who volunteered to participate in the study were recorded in the field notebook. In all instances, students were sensitized in advance that the study was about how students used smartphones to create and share sexually inclined messages during interpersonal and group interactions. This way the students would at outset have clear information about the nature of study they wished to participate in.

The researcher later used the contacts recorded on the field book to communicate to the potential participants. When the researcher met the volunteers he further familiarized them with the study and recorded important details in the field notebook. The researcher further explained to each one of them about the nature of the study and its purpose. After describing about the nature of the study, some of the volunteer participants were noted to get anxious. The researcher had to therefore communicate clearly and clarify on the roles they were expected to play in the study. For example, the researcher clarified that the participants were not expected to show the contents of their smartphones or the sexual messages they exchanged with each other.

The familiarization stage involved the researcher asking volunteers questions relating to their courses, year of study, religion, parenting, residence, dating status and use of smartphones. On use of mobile phones, the researcher specifically asked the potential participants questions relating to use of social applications to send and receive sexually explicit or implicit photos, videos or text messages. The ones who used smartphones to create and send the said messages were requested to participate in the study and glossary of their contact and other details updated for later communication. These introductory

sessions allowed the researcher to identify the most appropriate candidates for the study besides creating a rapport with the potential participants. The chosen participants who agreed to participate in the study were requested to suggest the most convenient time when the interviews or FGDs would be conducted. Having determined the criteria for inclusion in the sample, the researcher continued to recruit more participants.

3.5.3 The Pilot Study

Researchers underscore the importance of a pilot study and thus recommend one to be carried out before the actual data generation (Creswell, 2009). Yin (2014) argues that a pilot study helps the researcher to refine the research questions, tools for data collection, and the entire procedure (design), ultimately improving the whole research process. In the current research, both in-depth interviews and FGDs guides were subjected to the pilot study.

The pilot study proceeded as follows. After identifying several colleges following the criteria explained above, the researcher picked one of them to act as the site for the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted to pretest the research tools and assess whether the students were willing to talk about sensitive matters pertaining to sexting and expression of sexual activities through pictures and videos. In the college identified for the pilot, students were recruited using purposive sampling method. The college that was selected for the pilot was not considered for the main study. This college [NB] was chosen for the pilot because the students had similar characteristics with the study group. They were of the same age, dating and social status and possessed similar conversancy about use of smartphones to engage in sexting with the study group. In other words, the college

identified for the pilot had similar characteristics with the ones selected for the main study.

After identifying participants for the pilot, the researcher conducted one FGD with five students (2 males and 3 females) and two interviews, with a male and a female participant. The pilot FGD and interviews were conducted when the students were available (had a free slot in the class attendance schedule). With permission of the participants, the interviews and FGD were audio recorded using a digital audio recorder for later transcription. The audio recordings of the pilot study were transcribed verbatim using Listen N Write Transcription software to produce exact textual documents of the audio transcripts. The text documents were thematically analyzed and consequently used to write a sixty-page report which was shared with the supervisors. The findings of the pilot were used to identify areas on the research tools that required modification and questions that were ambiguous. The research instruments were revised by rephrasing some questions and probes to ensure the guides captured what was required as per the research question.

Specifically, the pilot helped the researcher to revise the questions and the probes to ensure that the discussions in the interviews and FGDs would answer the research questions. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, the pilot revealed that participants needed considerable leeway to take control of their discussions in order to eliminate the perception of dominating researcher vs submissive subjects. In the pilot the researcher tried to test how it would turn out to be if participants were made to feel they were not being interrogated on personal issues. The researcher presumed that participants were likely to feel disempowered and subsequently fail to disclose personal information if they

perceived were being interrogated instead of discussing the issues at hand. That is why the questions and probes were articulated in ways that gave participants considerable freedom to talk the way they wished but at the same time allowed the researcher the opportunity to elucidate the required information from them.

Before the pilot study the researcher was anxious that the participants, especially girls, would refuse to discuss their sensitive and private matters with a male researcher. In fact, during the pilot study the researcher started with the female participant in order to confirm or reject his anxiety. Then, next the researcher conducted the interview with the male participant. Surprisingly, the female participant was more articulate and never shied away from describing her own sexting behaviors and related sexual activities. In fact, the interview with the female participant lasted longer than that of the male counterpart.

In the pilot FGD, the researcher also learnt that students were generally willing to discuss sexting issues and associated sexual matters. In this particular FGD, a female participant reckoned that young people needed such forums in order for them to articulate the issues they faced when sexting with colleagues and romantic partners. Therefore, besides improving the research tools, the pilot study boosted the researcher's confidence in conducting the research and in recruiting the participants. The pilot was also important because it taught the researcher how to elicit private information from the young students. Through the pilot, the researcher also leant that girls yielded more data about sexting compared to boys, an observation that was later validated during the actual data generation.

Therefore, the pilot showed that when participants felt in control of the conversations, it eliminated the perception of a dominating researcher interrogating submissive respondents and this allowed them to easily disclose personal matters concerning their own sexting activities. Moreover, the pilot showed that participants did not perceive any risk when discussing sensitive matters pertaining to sexting with the researcher.

3.6 Data Generation Process

Having revised the research tools following the pilot study, the actual data collection process was embarked on. Actual data generation began three weeks after the date of conducting the pilot study. During data generation primary participants were recruited in the five identified colleges. The primary participants were further requested to recruit additional students who they knew were involved in sexting. As well, during interviews and FGDs, participants were requested to recruit more participants who had the information needed. As a result, participants suggested a number of students they knew would be willing to participate in the study. For each student suggested, personal details such as name and contacts were written in the field notebook and this information was later used to reach them.

When contacted, most of the students referred to the researcher agreed to meet him for the induction process of the study. During the familiarization meetings, similar to what was done with primary participants, the researcher probed them on their courses, religion, residence, dating status and sexting activities using smartphones. Those who were found to be conversant with sexting by way of practicing it were requested to suggest the most convenient time and place for them to participate in the interviews or FGDs. Using this

technique, the sample snowballed into multiple numbers of potential participants. Previous studies have suggested snowball as a convenient method of expanding the sample by asking informants or participants to recommend others for the study (Creswell, 2009).

This was a purely qualitative study that took prolonged time periods to conduct the interviews and FGDs and therefore recruitment of participants and collecting data occurred simultaneously. The entire process of data collection in the field took three months to conclude. The challenge was to determine the size and characteristics of the sample. Qualitative researchers like Creswell (2009) and Martínez-Mesa et al (2016) suggest that researchers in qualitative studies should have the freedom to choose the research participants and sample size depending on the aim and nature of the study, the methodology used and other factors like the data saturation point. According to Creswell (209), participants in a qualitative study should be carefully selected to include individuals who have experience with the phenomenon under investigation in order for the researcher to ultimately manage to forge a common shared understanding. Similarly, Martínez-Mesa et al (2016) opine that when undertaking research that is reliant on qualitative methods, the sample size is characterized by the knowledge of the research participants concerning the phenomenon under scrutiny.

The bone of contention among qualitative researchers is usually on the sample size. As noted earlier, qualitative researchers' main focus is on depth and richness of the data obtained (Yin, 2014). According to Creswell (2009), data saturation occurs within the first few interviews. Data saturation point is reached when no new information emerges with increasing sample size. Sample size and sample characteristics utilized in a

qualitative study largely determine the time the researcher achieves data saturation (Yin, 2014). Data saturation point can be achieved by studying "a few individuals or few cases" (p.209) with the data the researcher is looking for.

The aim of the present study was to generate in-depth and rich data from samples of students who engaged in sexting activities using mobile phones. The sample size was therefore guided by data saturation point whereby no additional information emerged with increasing number of interviewees and FGD participants. However, major diversities in sample characteristics were considered. This was done to ensure that the sample characteristics reflected the diverse characteristics of the population from which it was drawn. These formed important characteristics fused in the presentation of data for this study.

As described earlier, age was one of the important factors that determined the students who were included in the sample. Gender dynamics played out automatically during recruitment and collection of data which explains the unequal number of males and females in the interviews and FGDs. Female participants yielded more data about sexting experiences and activities. Therefore, more female participants than male counterparts were involved in the study to reach data saturation point. The researcher also conducted one female only FGD in one of the colleges [KP]. During interviews, it also emerged that due to the sensitive nature of sexting, girls would articulate more issues when discussing it with fellow girls. Generally, in the rest of the FGDs, girls did not express discomfort when articulating issues about sexting even when put together with the boys. A number of previous studies have however alluded to different sexting experiences between boys and girls (Lippman and Campbell 2014; Ringrose et al. 2013).

The various courses offered in colleges were assumed to demand varying amounts of time and effort from the students. Some courses (e.g Engineering and Architecture) were presumed by the researcher to be more demanding compared to journalism and media, Hospitality etc. Less demanding courses were presumed to allow students more free time which they would use to create and forward sexual content. Boredom and plenty of free time is said to increase use of smartphones to communicate with peers, browse the internet, and sometimes exchange sexting messages by young people (Ringrose et al, 2013).

While in college students either lived with parents, relatives or fellow students in hostels or rented rooms. Parent-child relationship has been documented as an important variable that influence engagement in sexting, initiation of sexual activity and related problematic behaviors (Vanden Abeele et al, 2014). Researchers have particularly questioned the role of parents in the wake of readily available smartphones (Judge, 2013; Doring, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2014; Phippen, 2012; Wallis, 2011).

Finally, relationship status was considered as an important factor in sexting activities. Dating partners or marital partners have been mentioned as sources of pressure or influence for engagement in creation and distribution of self-made explicit messages and related problematic behaviors like early sexual debut (Ringrose et al, 2012; Lippman and Campbell, 2014).

3.6.1 Data Generation Techniques

To obtain data for the study, in-depth interviews and FGDs were used. Most scholars concur that qualitative studies benefit from use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 2014,

Creswell, 2009). Specifically, triangulation and interpolation of data from multiple sources of evidence strengthens the findings or conclusions of a study and ultimately increases the utility value of the research artifact (Yin, 2014). This study combined in-depth interviews and FGDs in order to generate rich insights about sexting activities from multiple perspectives and experiences of those who engaged in the activity.

The interviews and FGDs were audio recorded using a digital audio recorder with the permission of the participants for later transcription. Digital recording of participants' voices provided an opportunity for the researcher to concentrate on the responses during the conversations and consequently minimized chances of missing out on important points. As such, the researcher was able to identify leads for further probes. Occasionally, the researcher took notes which served as remainders or pointers to important questions and insights that needed to be pursued later in the conversations or during subsequent interviews or FGDs. Additionally, participants were allowed time and opportunities to ask questions or seek clarifications to questions and probes used in the course of the discussions. Guides that contained the set of questions and probes on the areas the researcher intended to elucidate responses were used during interviews and FGDs. Nevertheless, the guides acted as references to direct the discussion but not strict formats to be adhered to.

The researcher strived to elucidate as much meanings, perceptions, experiences and insights from the participants as possible. Participants were allowed to respond to the research questions in the direction they wished. This provided an opportunity for participants to freely reflect and report on their own experiences, perspectives, opinions,

meaning and interpretations on use of smartphones to engage in sexting activities. Furthermore, this approach gave participants more room to provide details of how they experienced and interpreted sexting in their individual and group interactions. Notably, this approach yielded detailed and interesting responses even on perspectives and insights the researcher had not anticipated.

3.6.1.1 Individual In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were used as the main technique to explore issues of sexting supplemented by FGDs. Yin (2014: p.136-138) reckons that interview constitutes one of the major techniques of data collection in case studies. Yin particularly recommends use of in-depth or intense interviews when the researcher wishes to delve into an issue. In this study, in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to delve and probe deeply into the individual behaviors, perceptions, experiences, attitudes and activities in relation to use of smartphones to create and share sexting messages.

Furthermore, in-depth interviews allowed participants to disclose sensitive and personal information concerning sexting and related sexual behaviors. Interviews were convenient for participants' disclosure of their own sexting activities given the sensitive nature of the topic. In fact, the researcher encouraged participants to report their personal experiences and activities since the anonymity of their disclosure was guaranteed. The questions asked here requested participants to talk about their own personal use of smartphones to create and share sexting messages with romantic partners or colleagues. In other words, participants were asked personal questions on how they used smartphones to create and send sexually inclined text messages and pictures and/or videos during interpersonal and

group interactions. As such, participants were asked to describe how they used smartphones to carry out sexting, the motivation of doing so and the people who were involved in such activities.

Participants were as well asked questions that sought to understand how their sexting activities were linked to engagement in sexual activities such as having sex with the people they sexted with or experience of sexual desire after sexting. Participants were also asked to describe the concerns and challenges they experienced while sexting and how these negative issues came about. They were further asked to explain how they navigated around the negative issues they identified when sexting. Participants were asked to refrain from sharing identifying information like their names, colleges, contacts or details of the people they shared the sexting messages with in order to protect their privacy and anonymity.

Yin (2014) reiterates that in-depth interviews conveniently explores respondents' interpretations, opinions, events, insights, meanings and explanations related to the issue under investigation. As earlier pointed out, participants were purposively selected to comprise only those who used smartphones to create and share explicit videos, pictures or text messages.

The interviews were conducted in secure and quiet places (away from other students) in the college environment/premises when participants were free to guarantee privacy and confidentiality. Quiet lecture halls away from other students and furthest corners in the open fields were particularly chosen to host the interviews. This was done to ensure that nobody listened to what the students were saying about personal sexting experiences and

activities. The researcher also made sure that no other student came near the spots where the interviews were being conducted from in order to make participants comfortable in disclosing personal information about their sexting behaviors. Owing to the sensitive nature of the study, the researcher presumed that conducting the interviews in familiar territories (college premises) made the participants relax and feel psychologically safe to talk and disclose personal information about their own sexting activities. It was very likely that if the participants were taken away to unfamiliar places to undertake the interviews, they would have felt anxious and uncomfortable to talk about sensitive personal activities and issues about sexting. In unfamiliar places, the participants would have feared talking about sexting for not being sure whether someone else was listening to what they were saying. Furthermore, institutions that granted permission for the study insisted that the interviews and FGDs were to be conducted within the premises due to security and welfare of the students who were considered to be relatively young.

Overall, eleven males and nineteen females participated in in-depth interviews. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 125 minutes. Time spent on each interview was determined by participant's conversancy with sexting, extent of use of mobile phone to engage in sexting and level of willingness to disclose information about personal sexting activities. Thirty in-depth interviews with participants drawn from the five purposively selected colleges were conducted. On the outset of each interview, the researcher presented the purpose of the study and stressed the importance of keeping the participants and their contributions anonymous. Additionally, the importance of recording participants' voices with assurance of safeguarding the audio transcripts was stressed.

As described above, a guide was constructed and deployed to help control execution of the interview process. Questions and probes contained in the guide explored respondents' personal use of smartphone's social applications to create and share sexually explicit/implicit content. These questions required individual students to report how, why, and with whom they exchanged sexting messages using smartphones.

A copy of the interview guide is included in Appendix III of this document. The researcher conducted, moderated and controlled the recording of each interview session. As described above, the interviews were conducted using an open ended approach to allow participants express their sexting experiences and activities freely. Additionally, this approach provided an opportunity to discern the appropriate time during interviews to delve deeper into reported aspects of individual, interpersonal and group sexting activities. Information was collected from participants until data saturation point was reached.

3.6.1.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Hennink et al (2012) conceptualize FGDs as interactive discussion between six to eight pre-selected participants led by a moderator and focusing on a specific set of issues. They further allude that FGDs are useful techniques for studies aimed at developing a social context of an issue. Therefore, FGDs are important when the researcher aims at discovering socially held perspectives, norms and common behavior (Hennink et al,2012; Rebecca, 2012).

In this study, FGDs were used to generate data about peer-social interactions and group views that explain the intricate nature of youth sexting. During FGD sessions,

participants ignited each other into meaningful interactions and responses that ultimately generated new ideas and data that were not anticipated during conceptualization of the study. Similar to in-depth interviews, participants for FGDs were purposively selected to constitute students involved in creating and sending sexually explicit/implicit sexual images, videos or text messages via smartphones. All FGDs were constituted of five participants, both males and females, except one which was made up of female participants only.

Gender influenced the size and composition of FGDs. The FGDs were conducted during the time the students were free as per the class attendance timetables. As previously described, it was noted that girls yielded more data about sexting compared to boys. Therefore, more girls were involved in both interviews and FGDs. One FGD which consisted of girls only was conducted in one of the colleges [KP]. When articulating sexting issues without the presence of boys, it was noted that the female participants relaxed and confidently reported sexting experiences without being prompted. It was also noted that they went to the extent of describing their own sexting activities in the FGD. It was earlier noted that girls were likely to discuss sexting issues more openly with fellow girls but that did not imply that they shied away when put together with the boys.

Similar to the interviews FGDs were conducted in secure and quiet places in the college environment, preferably in quiet lecture halls and furthest points of the open fields in the premises. This was done to ensure that the students were free to discuss sexting without fear that someone was listening to what they were saying. None other than the participants in the respective FGDs were allowed near the spots where the sessions were being conducted to guarantee privacy and confidentiality of participants' conversations.

The researcher presumed that conducting the FGDs away from the college premises would have made the participants anxious and uncomfortable to talk about sexting.

In the FGDs, participants were asked questions that required them to describe their perspectives and experiences of how sexting took place in interpersonal and group settings. The questions and probes were constructed in a way that elucidated participants' responses on broad areas of group sexting activities. These included peer norms, social identity, social/peer pressure and the perceptions of sexting as interpreted in group interactions. These questions were asked in order to explore group perspectives on the social contexts of sexting and how the behavior interrelated with daily group social activities and communication practices.

Participants were also asked to describe the concerns and challenges they experienced while sexting and the circumstances they thought brought about these issues. They were as well asked questions on how they felt the challenges and concerns students experienced while sexting could be addressed or mitigated. In addition, questions and probes were used that sought participants' views on the appropriate strategies to address youth sexting and promote responsible use of smartphones. Most of these areas were also examined during in-depth interviews.

In the FGDs, participants were requested not to share or mention information that was likely to identify them like their names, names of their colleges, friends and contact details in order to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher did not ask the FGD attendees to explicitly describe their own sexting behaviors. This was done to prevent participants from feeling embarrassed and vulnerable considering the sensitive

nature of the topic at hand. Nevertheless, participants were advised to use a third person's voice in case they wished to describe their own sexting activities or those of colleagues known by the FGD attendees. Questions and probes on the guide were not strictly adhered to in order to ensure that the discussion delved deeper into youth sexting activities and behaviors. Often, depending on the responses, the researcher rephrased questions and probes and formulated additional ones whenever deemed necessarily in order to delve deeper into the specific issues brought forth by the participants. The researcher used a guide in order to effectively control and moderate the conversations during FGDs. A copy of the FGD guide is provided in Appendix IV.

At the outset of each FGD, an overview of the purpose of the research was given and the importance of keeping participants' identity and contribution anonymous was stressed. With emphasis on how information generated through FGDs would be kept confidential, the importance of audio recording was also stressed. In other words, consent was sought from the attendees to record the FGD proceedings, which was unanimously agreed. In sum, seven FGDs were conducted with eighteen males and twenty-four females and lasted between 75 and 107 minutes. In two of the colleges [DM] and [KP], two FGDs were conducted in each.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

In this study, the data was audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding procedures. As well, the coding strategy mostly applied *posteriori* codes. Ongo'ndo and Jwan (2011) conceptualize data analysis as the process of making sense of the data. They further point out that data analysis in qualitative studies "involves looking at the data and assigning categories and putting together emerging issues into themes" in

order to answer the research questions (Ongo'ndo and Jwan, 2011, p. 103). Creswell (2009) observes that data analysis involves the analyst going through the data (transcriptions) and highlighting "significant statements", sentences or quotes that suggest insights and understanding into how the participants experience the phenomenon under scrutiny. Then the researcher develops "clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes" (p.77).

To analyze the data in this study, to begin with, the researcher converted audio data obtained through in-depth interviews and FGDs into text data (text documents) using Listen N Write transcription software. Then the data was coded and thematically analyzed by reading through the text documents. According to Ongo'ndo and Jwan (2011), thematic analysis involves identification of themes that are used to organize data contained in voluminous texts generated from interview transcripts and other documents.

Creswell (2009) suggests several possible approaches and templates for analysis and presentation of data by qualitative researchers. Approaches suggested by Ong'ondo and Jwan, Creswell and Braun and Clarke were used to analyze data in this study. As such, steps of data analysis adopted in this study included: 1) Transcribing the interview and FGD data, 2) reading through the transcripts to familiarize with the data, noting salient features about the data and writing analytic notes (memos), 3) developing clusters (segment of texts) and assigning codes (names) to these clusters, 4) organizing clusters into themes by collapsing similar themes, 5) using the themes to organize data and compose the report (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data analysis procedures the researcher used after carefully reading about

thematic coding suggested in Ong'ondo and Jwan (2011, pp. 105-124) is presented by the diagram in **figure 3.1.**
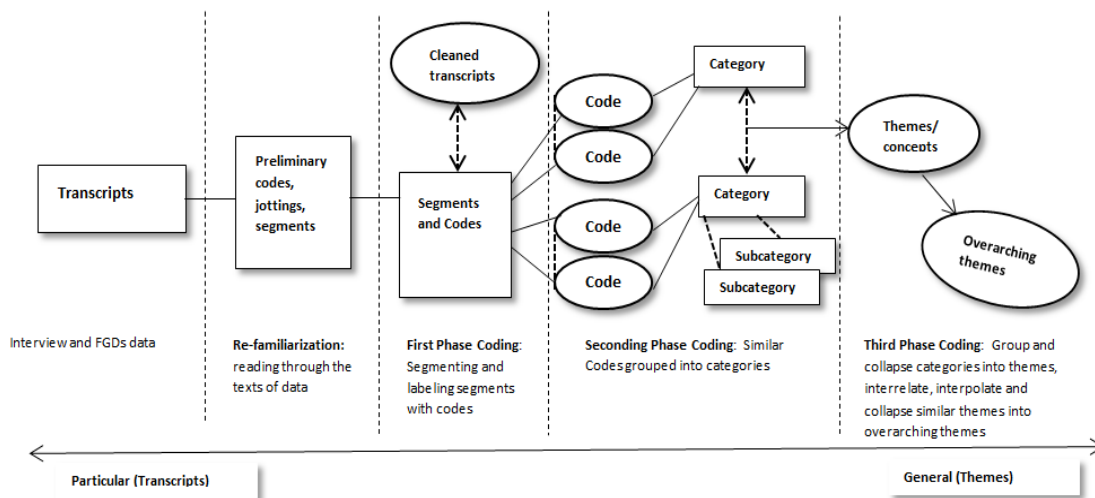
Figure 3.1: Diagram of the thematic coding process adopted in this study (Author, 2018)

Transcribing the interviews and FGDs data: Qualitative data analysis was done systematically following the procedure described above**.** Data analysis began when the researcher was in the field collecting the data. The researcher made notes, and jottings about what he felt was important during formulation of themes and writing of the report. After data collection, analysis involved developing codes (segments of data), categories and themes from text transcripts developed from interviews and FGDs conducted during data generation. The process proceeded as follows.

Once the data was collected, the interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim using the Listen N Write transcription software in order to produce equivalent text documents of the voices contained in each audio transcript. This was done to ensure that all the issues that emerged were captured for analysis. The text transcripts for each interview and FGD were then read iteratively to familiarize with data and form a general

interpretation about the participants' responses. During this cycle of coding, preliminary codes, segments, jottings, comments and analytic notes were indicated alongside the text data which would assist during later analysis.

Reading through the transcripts to familiarize with the data, noting salient features about the data and writing analytic notes: The researcher read through the transcripts several times highlighting segments of data that contained salient features related to the study. Identification of distinct features from text transcripts was guided by the research questions. The researcher strived to label each segment of data identified with a unique code. The codes and analytic notes that were identified were noted down on the margins of the text documents.

Developing clusters (segment of texts) and assigning codes (names) to these clusters: After the researcher developed a list of codes, he proceeded to the next phase where he iteratively regrouped, collapsed and merged codes into categories, and sometimes renamed them.

Organizing clusters into themes by collapsing similar themes: Resultant themes were developed from collapsing and merging the categories. Recurring themes were interpolated, collapsed or interrelated to form overarching (supreme) themes. The researcher further reviewed and re-reviewed the transcripts and categories in an attempt to understand the themes he had developed. As development proceeded with analysis, he came to a point where he had to reduce and combine the categories into themes.

Composing and writing the report: Final clusters and themes used to organize and present the data in this report were achieved through repetitive and iterative process of

qualitative analysis described above. Using thematic analysis, the researcher managed to unravel the patterns of meanings, experiences and activities across the reported data sets in relation to use of smartphones to create and send sexting messages.

Creswell (2009) and Ong'ondo and Jwan (2011) allude to coding strategies that either use *apriori* (deductive) codes or *posteriori* (inductive) codes. *Apriori* codes are pre-existing or preconfigured codes often derived from literature or theories while themes or codes allowed to emerge from the data are considered to be *posteriori* (emergent). These authors consider the later to be more salient for it reflects the 'emergent' views of the participants which are typical of qualitative studies. As the researcher proceeded with coding, his coding strategies mostly applied *posteriori* codes in the sense that categories and themes emerged from the data. The aim and nature of this study required participants to describe sexting from their own experiences, perspectives and activities and therefore posterior coding was suitable for capturing emerging issues. Furthermore, much literature is not available about nature, contexts and motivation of sexting among youth in Kenya.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness is a means of ensuring that research findings are truthful and claims made thereof are valid (Creswell, 2009). To make valid and justifiable claims, the researcher needs to demonstrate that the process of arriving at the research claims was not flawed (Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2011). In quantitative studies, researchers mostly talk about internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity when describing the level of trustworthiness in their studies (Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2011). On the other, qualitative scholars tend to use terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability to talk about the criteria of how trustworthiness has been achieved in their research (Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2011; Creswell, 2009)

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is a critical component of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Ong'ondo & Jwan, 2011). Creswell (2009) suggests several forms of validating qualitative studies: (1) Triangulation where data from multiple sources is converged; (2) members checking the findings; (3) providing rich and thick descriptions to communicate the findings and (4) peer review of the study findings by independent people. Ong'ondo and Jwan (2011, p.134) allude to different types of triangulation as; "data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and triangulation of data generation techniques.

Credibility in this study was majorly enhanced through methodological (data) and source triangulation. Data triangulation was achieved by generating data using different techniques in order to acquire detailed descriptions of sexting activities of the selected participants. . Interviews and FGDs were used to generate rich, thick and detailed data about students' experiences with sexting through mobile phones. Data from interviews and FGDs were corroborated and merged to provide thick and rich description about use of smartphones to mediate sexting among college students.

To achieve data source triangulation, different participants were used to explore how students engage in sexting. Students who participated in FGDs were different from the ones who participated in in-depth interviews. The decision to use different participants for FGDs and interviews was done in order to achieve data source triangulation. This

made it possible to get multiple perspectives and experiences from different participants on the same phenomenon. The large sample size, use of both in-depth interviews and FGDs techniques and collecting data until saturation point was reached ensured the credibility criteria was achieved.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability of a study is maintained when the researcher demonstrates convincingly that the research was conducted using rigorous methods and procedures claimed in the methodology (Creswell, 2009). As such, the researcher should clearly articulate by way of documenting all the stages and facets of the research process. The researcher should therefore be clear and truthful about every step that was followed in the study to generate and analyze the data (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011). Therefore, the process that was followed in selecting participants and eliciting data should be clearly presented (Creswell, 2009). In that sense, the more the researcher demonstrates consistency and logical flow of activities in the research procedures used to conduct the study, the more the results are likely to be dependable (Creswell, 2009). Conversely, mistakes made in conceptualizing the study, generating the data, analyzing and interpreting the results, and reporting the findings diminish dependability aspects of the study (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011).

In this study, the research process followed to collect and analyze the data is thoroughly described in the previous sections to demonstrate dependability. The procedures describing how the researcher went to the field to generate the data by in-depth interviews and FGDS are logically and systematically presented. The steps that were

followed to conduct the interviews and FGDs and the process that was used to analyze the results are also provided in great detail in the previous sections.

3.8.3 Transferability

Transferability is synonymous with externally validity or generalization in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative studies, generalization is approached with caution and implies the evidence the research gives to show that the results of his/her study could be 'transferred' (applicable) to other similar contexts and populations (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011). The findings of the present study could be transferred to explain activities, experiences and perceptions of sexting of students in other middle level colleges in major urban areas in Kenya provided the students share similar characteristics.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability implies that the research findings are based on participants' perspectives, words and narrations rather than biases from the researcher (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011). Confirmability therefore requires the research to demonstrate that the findings are shaped by the participants and not the qualitative researcher's assumptions (Ong'ondo and Jwan, 2011). In this study, the researcher tried not to influence its findings by bracketing biases, knowledge, assumptions and perceptions he had about (youth) sexting during data generation. Furthermore, different participants were used to conduct interviews and FGDs and this further enhanced the confirmability of the results in the sense that multiple and diverse responses were generated about sexting. Moreover, interpretation and presentation of the findings in the final report have been enhanced and enriched with

direct quotes from the participants and this further strengthens confirmability of the findings.

3.9 Ethical Issues Consideration

Conceptualization of this study began with recognition and acknowledgment of likely ethical challenges. Studies that analyze sensitive topics such as sexting and sexual activities may present various ethical dilemmas to the researcher. As a way of navigating the complexities of ethical dilemmas, the researcher concentrated on the focus of the study. As such, the researcher probed participants on their experiences of sexting and avoided much details on sexual orientation, harassment and abuse. Issues of ethical concerns that were specifically addressed in this study included seeking relevant permission and authorizations, informed consent, disclosure and protection from harm, and confidentiality and anonymity.

3.9.1 Permission and authorizations

The first authorization was through a letter issued by the Department of Publishing, Journalism and Communication Studies, Moi University. The letter was to be used by the researcher to apply for the requisite permissions and authorizations to conduct the study. Given the sensitive nature of the study and as a statutory requirement to conduct research in Kenya, as previously described, the researcher obtained the research permit from NASCOTI [Ref No: NACOSTI/P/17/16600/15390]). A copy of the research permit is in appendix V. The research permit was crucial in accessing the research sites and while recruiting the target students. The researcher used the permit and letter from University to seek permission from the college administrators. The researcher subsequently obtained letters of authorizations from each college. Letters from the colleges and the research

permit were always used to gain entry into the research sites and to discuss the study with the potential participants. With the use of the letters and research permit it was easier to discuss and demonstrate authenticity of the study to potential participants. It was specifically easier to convince the students that the research was for academic purposes only and not an exercise to scrutinize their private lives by the colleges.

3.9.2 Informed Consent

When recruiting participants and before the start of interviews and FGDs, students were given pertinent details about the nature and purpose of the study and the kind of information they were expected to provide. Further, the researcher informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any stage. They were assured that withdrawal from the study for whatever reason would not affect their relationship with the college and the researcher. They were also informed that their responses would be confidential and only to be used for the purposes of the study. The nature of the study and details of how it was to be conducted were communicated way before so that the participants could be aware of the kind of study they were seeking to participate in.

Details of how the study was to be conducted including the venues, liberties, audio recording and topic for discussion were clearly communicated in order for the participants to make conscious and informed decisions. The responsibilities of the researcher and that of the participants were clearly communicated. Participants were informed that they were at liberty not to participate in the study and declined to answer questions they were not comfortable with. At the outset of the interviews and FGDs, participants were informed that they were free to ask any question or seek clarification on

all the matters that were being discussed. Participants were informed about the areas where the study was to be conducted and their permission was sought about the use of an audio recorder to record their voices. The researcher also made it clear that participation was voluntary and as such no efforts were to be made by the administrators to coerce or entice the students to take part in the study.

In order for the selected students to participate in the study the researcher obtained their consent by signing the consent forms and filling such documents with the researcher. Each participant who participated in the study filled a consent form. The consent forms provided the participants with relevant information about the purpose, nature, responsibilities and background of the study. This enabled the participants to make conscious and informed decisions to participate in the study. In the consent forms participants were also provided with written assurance that their personalities and the data obtained from them would be protected to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The research permit and the letters obtained from the colleges were also useful while seeking consent of the participants to participate in the study. A copy of the consent form is provided in Appendix VI.

3.9.3 Disclosure and protection from harm

As previously described, during interviews and FGDs, a strategy was adopted where participants were advised to refrain from mentioning their names, colleges , contacts and details of the people they sexted with in order to protect their privacy and anonymity. In the FGDs, participants were discouraged from disclosing personal information about their own sexting behaviors and related sexual activities. Instead, participants were encouraged to use another person's reference when talking about personal issues related to sexting

and specific expression of sexual activities. This was meant to insulate participants in FGDs from suffering embarrassment and feeling vulnerable in presence of their colleagues.

In the interviews, it was possible to protect anonymity and confidentiality of personal information shared by the participants. Therefore, participants were advised to disclose details of how they created and sent sexting messages and the people who were involved in such activities without mentioning their names. They were also requested to talk about how their sexting activities were related to expression of sexual activities.

In addition, the sensitive nature of the study required the researcher to work with the age of consent. The researcher obtained full consent of participants to participate in the study without involving the parents or teachers since the age considered was appropriate. Dealing with participants who had attained age of consent also made the researcher to comfortably ask them to freely disclose personal information about sexting and sexual activities.

It was presumed that participants would show emotional distress such as guilt or embarrassment when describing their own sexting experiences and activities. Nevertheless, prior and after the interviews, none of the participants showed signs of being overwhelmed by reflections or articulations of their own sexting activities. During interviews, participants especially girls disclosed personal information related to sexual activities and online harassment and solicitations but none of them seemed to be under any threat. Majority of the girls termed these forms of harassment as normal and common

part of their online interactions. In case participants showed signs of distress, the researcher would have advised them to seek out professional guidance and counseling.

3.9.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Sexting is a sensitive topic in the sense that it required participants to share personal and private information about exchange of personal messages and expression of sexual activities through videos and pictures. Therefore revealing the names of the colleges and identity of the participants would injure their reputation. Preserving research sites anonymity and that of the participants meant that the names of the colleges and participants were concealed. It also means that information that is likely to be used by others to identify the research sites and participants was avoided. In this study, the researcher neither disclosed the name of the research sites nor described them in a way that readers would figure them out. Instead, the research sites were given codes (symbols) to identify them in order to preserve their anonymity. Similarly, the names of the participants were not disclosed and codes were also assigned to them to preserve their privacy and identity.

It was presumed that the participants would shy away from sharing personal and secretive information with the researcher who was a stranger and senior in age compared to them. It was particularly presumed that girls would avoid disclosing private and personal details to a male researcher. In order to address this shortcoming, the researcher clearly articulated how confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was to be protected and that way participants agreed to participate in the study. Participants were also informed that their responses would be confidential and only to be used for the purposes of the study. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher did not mention the names

of the research participants and those of the institutions. Specifically, as noted previously, codes were used to identify participants and the institutions. The colleges were given codes such as [KM], [HR], [DM], [VI] and [KP]. Symbols were used to identify participants in order to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. In the interviews, female participants were identified using symbols such as [F1INT], [F2INT], [F3INT] etc. On the other hand male participants were assigned codes such as [M1INT], [M2INT], [M3INT] etc. In both cases, the number in the code implies the sequence of the interviews, for example [F1INT] was the first female interview participant while [M1INT] was the first male interview participant. In the FGDs, female participants were assigned codes such as [FG01] while male participants were given codes such [MG01]. The number in the code referred to the sequence number of the FGD, and as such 01 was the first FGD.

The symbols assigned to the participant were sufficient to describe perspectives, experiences and activities of their sexting behaviors and at the same time protect their identity. Before interviews and FGDs, participants were informed on the importance of recording the conversations using an audio recorder but they were assured that the audio files would be protected from unauthorized access. Participants were as well informed that the data obtained from them would be used only for the purposes of the study. The audio data transcripts were stored on the researchers' laptop and Google Drive and a password was used to protect the audio files. None other than the researcher had the password to access the audio files. Participants were finally informed that the information obtained from them would be used to write out a thesis or journals and findings could be

presented in conferences but again they were assured that even in such cases their identity would remain protected.

3.10 Reflexivity

This study involved carrying out in-depth interviews and FGDs with young male and female students on sensitive and private issues. The study was entirely carried out by the male researcher with guidance of the two academic supervisors. During the study, especially the data generation stage, I encountered situations and circumstances that were indeed very thought provoking and insightful as far as the process was concerned. It is the sensitive nature of the topic I dealt with that has made me critically reflect on the entire process of data collection and the entire PhD experience. It is imperative that I describe my 'position' and the role I played in a study that interviewed young students, including girls on sensitive matters about sexting and related behaviors. In the last section of this thesis, I have provided a detailed account of the strategies that were used to successfully collect data on sensitive topic of sexting and related sexual behaviors.

3.11 Summary

This chapter presents a description of the philosophical paradigm, research approach and research methods used to address the research questions that guided the study. The chapter also presents the sample size and sampling procedures, data generation techniques, data analysis process, trustworthiness of the study and the ethical issues that were put into consideration during the study.

This study adopted the relativist-interpretivist philosophical paradigm. The study was qualitative in nature and was thus anchored within subjectivist/relativist ontology and

constructivist/interpretivist epistemology. This paradigm assumes that in order to understand human behavior we need to delve into the meanings and perceptions they give to their own actions, situations, circumstances and events (Yin, 2014). This study sought to understand perspectives, experiences and activities of young students on the use of smartphones to create and send explicit or implicit text messages, videos and photos. The study also sought their views on the appropriate measures to be put in place to address challenges of youth sexting and promote responsible use of ICTs. The study was based on the epistemological assumption that in-depth and rich data about sexting would be contained in the perspectives and experiences of young people who engage in the activity.

The study adopted a qualitative research methods approach that used multiple case study of 65 students who were selected from five middle level colleges in Nairobi. In-depth and elaborate investigation of sexting from multiple cases provided an opportunity to seek and report multiple perspectives in relation to how students engage in the behavior. To obtain data for the study, in-depth interviews and FGDs with students who used smartphones to exchange self-made explicit or implicit messages were conducted. The data was audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding procedures. The ethical considerations that were put into perspective included seeking for relevant permission and authorizations, informed consent, disclosure and protection from harm, and confidentiality and anonymity. Besides knowledge about sexting, the selected students constituted diverse social, academic and religious backgrounds. The next chapter presents the empirical findings that were generated from the four research questions that guided this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This study aimed at analyzing the experiences and perspectives of MLC students on use of smartphones to create and send sexually explicit or implicit text messages, videos and photographs. The study further assessed participants' concerns and challenges pertaining to their sexting practices, with a view to suggesting mitigation measures. This chapter presents the empirical findings that were derived from the analysis of data that was generated from the four research questions that guided the study. The research questions were stipulated as follows: what are the perceptions of MLC students on the use of smartphones with regard to sexting activities? How does exchange of sexting messages relate to daily social activities among the selected MLC students? What are the concerns around experiences of sexting by MLC students? And what framework can the study suggest to address the perceived concerns pertaining to sexting among the MLC students in Kenya?

Analysis of participants' responses presented in this chapter was guided by the theories, literature review and research approach adopted. Data generated from the in-depth interviews and FGDs is presented in descriptive form-capturing themes, narratives, direct quotes from participants and summaries in tables. In-depth interviews which focused on participants' own sexting behaviors, experiences and activities were the main source of data. Interview data were supplemented by FGDs that yielded findings on group perspectives and activities on sexting.

Themes that were generated from triangulation of both in-depth interviews and FGDs data were used to organize and present the empirical findings. The themes were developed through the thematic coding process described in chapter three of this thesis. Direct quotes from participants that rhyme with the identified theme are provided to improve validity of the arguments, concepts and communication issues presented.

During data analysis and reporting, symbols (codes) were assigned to participants and the colleges they were selected from in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Table 4.1 contains the symbols used to refer to participants. The same symbols were used to reference the direct quotes from participants.

Table 4.1: Symbols used to refer to source of participants' quotes

Interviews with Female Participants			
F1INT	Female Participant 1	F11INT	Female Participant 11
F2INT	Female Participant 2	F12INT	Female Participant 12
F3INT	Female Participant 3	F13INT	Female Participant 13
F4INT	Female Participant 4	F14INT	Female Participant 14
F5INT	Female Participant 5	F15INT	Female Participant 15
F6INT	Female Participant 6	F16INT	Female Participant 16
F7INT	Female Participant 7	F17INT	Female Participant 17
F8INT	Female Participant 8	F18INT	Female Participant 18
F9INT	I Female Participant 9	F19INT	Female Participant 19
F10INT	Female Participant 10		
Interviews with Male Participants			
M1INT	Male Participant 1	M7INT	Male Participant 7
M2INT	Male Participant 2	M8INT	Male Participant 8
M3INT	Male Participant 3	M9INT	Male Participant 9
M4INT	Male Participant 4	M10INT	Male Participant 10
M5INT	Male Participant 5	M11INT	Male Participant 11
M6INT	Male Participant 6		
FGDs Participants			
FG01	Female participant in FGD 1	MG01	Male participant in FGD 1
FG02	Female participant in FGD 2	MG02	Male participant in FGD 2
FG03	Female participant in FGD 3	MG03	Male participant in FGD 3
FG04	Female participant in FGD 4	MG04	Male participant in FGD 4
FG05	Female participant in FGD 5	MG05	Male participant in FGD 5
FG06	Female participant in FGD 6	MG06	Male participant in FGD 6
FG07	Female participant in FGD 7		

4.2 Students' Perceptions on Contexts of Use of Smartphones during Sexting Activities

An important part of this study explored students' perceptions on use of smartphones and social applications in relation to nature of their sexting activities. Perspectives and experiences of participants on contexts of use of these digital communication technologies and tools in exchange of sexting messages mostly converged. In this regard, participants mentioned private and secluded communication, portable social connections and different interactional modes that were instituted on instant messaging and social media platforms as important technological contexts related to their sexting activities.

4.2.1   Private and Secluded Communication

Use of smartphones and social applications was perceived as a major part of daily interpersonal and group sexual and non-sexual communication by all participants. Smartphones were perceived as capable of connecting people anywhere anytime: '... *with a mobile phone, anywhere you can connect, anywhere you can talk, anywhere you can chat, anywhere you can just do everything,..' (M7INT).* Instant messaging and social networking applications that ran on their smartphones were described as crucial digital tools for communication and sharing information. Participants mostly used social media and instant messaging applications, and moderately used content sharing applications such as YouTube. Instant messaging applications participants predominantly used were WhatsApp and Messenger while Facebook and Instagram dominated in the category of frequently used social media applications. Participants' views on the use of various social media platforms is summarized in appendix VII

A number of participants revealed interesting emotional attachments they had developed with their smartphones and social applications. Some of them attributed the use of smartphones to embodiment of self-identity. Quotes such *"..really do I leave my phone out, I like to get it it's always with me"*, *"…at this time and age no, basically it is my phone and it's my life part of, it's my phone so it is like so it's just you and you alone.."*, *ok my phone is private, it is mine, i can do anything with it so i feel independent yeah*" featured in some of the in-depth interviews.

Among students who had developed intimate attachment with their smartphones was a female participant who spent most of her time exchanging text messages with friends. She implied that without mobile phone's instant messaging applications, she would feel emotionally isolated and physically disconnected from her friends:

> *most of the time I'm on my phone, you just find me with people we are sited and not even talking just texting mostly, like writing texts because i receive a lot of texts* [F8INT]

Another female participant linked use of smartphones to decreased perceptions of social and physical limitations between the sender and receiver of digital messages. She considered the use of mobile phones to exchange text messages as more convenient than face to face interaction, especially when there was a perceived psychological barrier between her and the person she intended to communicate to: '*when texting with that person, you can easily get over that tension that knowing that person when I'm texting yeah…'* (F9INT). Majority admitted that smartphones afforded them the comfort and confidence to talk about different issues and communicate ideas on several matters any time while online, *'you can use a phone anywhere in the car and in class' (F5INT).*

It was established that use of smartphones made nearly all participants feel in control of their interpersonal and group communication. They particularly liked the idea of guaranteed privacy afforded by mobile phones. Participants mentioned several ways in which use of smartphones made them exercise autonomy and freedom in their conversations. Use of security measures in form of passwords to lock applications used to send and receive messages was identified by several participants as a way of achieving protected communication, *'while taking photos, you feel independent because it is yours mobile phone and you can also put password so nobody can invade your privacy yeah'* *(F19INT).* Perceptions about the convenience of privacy afforded by smartphones when communicating with romantic partners strongly emerged. They particularly brought out the perceived autonomy and lack of fear of getting discovered by parents or older siblings when exchanging multimedia messages with romantic partners, sometimes at night, '*on WhatsApp i mostly communicate with my dude, my dude i mean my guy my boyfriend',* *(F3INT).* It is clear from perceptions of autonomy and independence that what students thought about capabilities of smartphones determined the decisions they made when creating and sending messages.

With reference to perceived autonomy and independence, most participants talked about privacy and feeling in control of their conversations as reasons they preferred to use certain social platforms during exchange of sexting messages. Participants distinctly differentiated between sexual content they created and sent to each other from the one that was downloaded from the internet and forwarded. The self-created sexually inclined messages were mostly received or sent to close and trusted friends or romantic partners.

Participants' perceptions on suitability of social applications for exchange of sexting materials are presented in appendix VIII.

In that sense, social platforms that guaranteed privacy were perceived to be safer and more convenient for exchange of self-made sexting messages. WhatsApp and Messenger were perceived to be more private and personalized compared to 'open' systems such as Facebook and Instagram. Participants expressed how WhatsApp and Messenger allowed secluded conversations to take place between the sender and receiver of the overt messages. Those in dating relationships preferred use of WhatsApp to exchange messages with partners due to the perceived privacy and lower risks of losing such messages to public audiences. Ability to engage in secluded conversations gave participants a feeling of control and privacy of intimate conversations with romantic partners. For example, a male participant reckoned that '...*in terms of private communication…. (M2INT),* it is only the sender and receiver that know the contents of conversations on WhatsApp. Another boy noted that privacy is critical in sexual communication and takes place when there is '…*a private chat between you and the other person on the other end yeah' (M6INT)*

Facebook and Instagram were also used to share controversial content, however, these social platforms were perceived to be more 'open' and riskier for exchanging self-created oriented messages. Increased risk of unconsented forwarding and consequently shaming of the person shown in the controversial image or video was largely considered a major downside of these applications. Subsequently, it was felt that Facebook and Instagram would be safe to exchange illicit content when parties used the private function, fondly referred to as 'inbox'. Sharing explicit messages through 'inbox' was perceived as safe

and private and some used this mode to make private interpersonal interactions with trusted friends and intimate partners. A female participant was confident that '*messages shared with someone inbox won't leak'* (F15INT).

It strongly emerged that ability to engage in private communication enticed students interested in dating people they met on Facebook or Instagram. Participants illustrated how the shift from public communication to private interaction could easily be instituted through inbox by students interested in expressing dating intentions to 'friends' on Facebook or Instagram, '….*inbox you…and if you are interested you can start taking exchanging more photos', (FG04)* One boy narrated how he used the 'inbox' feature to exchange messages privately with prospective girls on social media platforms:

> *you find that once you chat with girls and she comments and you reply and the conversation continues she tells you lets meet in inbox and you chat inbox the first things she does is to give you her number, then you start conversations and these conversations can lead to having a relationship with her*[MINT10]

Although most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the use of Facebook or Instagram to share explicit content, a number of them, especially boys, spent a significant amount of their time browsing through raunchy photos and videos posted by celebrities and girls they knew. It was revealed that most of these photos or videos depicted breasts or derriere in revealing or inner clothes, "*mostly they are in bikinis at the beach and at home, I have one taking a photo at home and then posting nude or seminude and post on Facebook"* (FINT15).

4.2.2 Portable Social Connections

In both interviews and FGDs, participants described how they created and maintained and/or joined existing portable social connections on instant messaging, particularly

WhatsApp and Messenger. Portable social connections were described as crucial digital connections in form of virtual groups that predominantly consisted of private (sex) chat groups and online communities. It was clear from participants that these virtual groups offered interesting opportunities for complex social interactions during interpersonal and group communication.

Participants gave almost similar responses describing how these social groups were joined or created to serve both general and specific communication functions and information needs. As such, social groups were joined or created based on entertainment, information and communication needs, "*I got around seven groups, so there is a group for fun, for studies and the rest of the things may be…..'(M5INT).* Nearly all participants described numerous portable social groups they knew existed in different social platforms and indicated they were members of multiple such groups and communities. They mostly belonged to educational, political, religious, and sex chat groups. For example, one male participant belonged to'…*more than twenty groups, yeah different groups….' (M4INT).*

The researcher noted that perceptions and opinions of friends and peers influenced the choice of social groups and participation in activities of these social groups. In that sense, participants joined or created online social groups depending on how they perceived their peer activities and information needs to be similar. Majority participated in social groups where friends in college, estate or hostels were members and as such virtual groups with former high school friends, family members and other known acquaintances were very common. In this regard, they belonged to private chat (sex) groups with close friends, who they frequently interacted with offline, , *'…… team mafisi (laughs), actually i became i member of team mafisi when i was in form two, yeah the group is old i used to*

hear my brother talking of team mafisi' (M3INT). Participants also indicated that online groups composed of friends who physically knew each other were perceived to be closely knit.

The findings revealed that these virtual connections acted as crucial channels in exchange of sexually inclined content and controversial materials. Participants described how these forums fostered online interactions and collaborations that involved exchange of controversial materials and facilitated real-time broadcasting of explicit messages. These aspects of online social group's interactions were essentially interpreted as convenient for group sexting activities. Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram were mentioned as popular social platforms with social groups and communities used to broadcast sexually inclined messages.

Communication activities of social groups with closely knit membership were perceived to be anonymous and secretive. Apparently, this false sense of security gave members the courage to share sexual materials without fear of feeling embarrassed. Moreover, this perception of false security made nearly all closed chat groups to be constituted around secretive, sensitive and private information. As such, participants in such forums easily exchanged information and experiences relating to dating, sexual interests, sexual activities and fantasies. They also observed that members constantly downloaded pornographic images and videos and sent in these groups, "*I am in* a *WhatsApp group where all the members share pornographic videos…. they download and share, but they do not share their own videos' (FG01).*

One male interview participant described how together with his close friends created a private chat group on WhatsApp to share images showing illicit activities they engaged in with their girlfriends. He claimed that his male friends did this in order to achieve recognition among peers in the group:

> …..we did not believe what others were saying since we talked much about girls, we created a group so that if you want to be popular in school you had to share a video with a lady send the video to the school group then you become popular such that when you come back to school it would much more easier to explain yourself and convince others, they would post videos/images of what they are doing with their girlfriend while they are at home [M10INT]

Gender dynamics played out in the way some participants interacted with each other in closed chat groups. Findings noted that there was prominence of girls only private chat groups compared to that of the male counterparts. Female participants who were active members of girls only private chat groups noted that such forums allowed them to express their sexual feelings, and explore and discuss feminine activities without fear of being ridiculed or perceived as "not good enough" by the boys as one female FGD attendee remarked, '*men are the problem, how can you be the problem and have the solution at the same time, they are the ones being discussed about' [FG06]*

Some of the female participants admitted to have used girls only chat groups to share normal or raunchy images received from boyfriends. The girls also used these forums to discuss boyfriends, dating, male genitals and feminine related issues, '*sometimes friends send photos of their boyfriends' (FINT3).* Girls in such groups noted that this was done to seek advice and approval from friends in the group:

mostly they talk about man, the dick[male genital] that is the only thing, you know i was added into a group, a ladies' group you know it was crazy nothing else then sent pictures and the argument was not whether he is handsome or not thing was how is it do you like it short, long, they post dicks of men they have slept with because i guess nowadays is taking nudes very few people are not taking nudes, they don't post the whole picture just the manhood [FG02]

Besides social groups with closely knit membership, findings revealed that most participants were members of multiple densely knit virtual communities especially on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram. These virtual communities comprised of strangers and online acquaintances they had not physically met. Facebook's *Kilimani mums*, *Kilimani mums and dads* and *team mafisi* on Telegram were frequently mentioned as examples of common virtual communities. One of the girls in the interviews said, 'yes, *I'm a member of kilimum mums, group Kenya, kilimani mums and dads, daily prayers, yeah [laughs]*' (F11INT).

Densely knit virtual communities were described as notorious channels for disseminating sexually explicit content. Several participants narrated how virtual communities they belonged to were adorned with videos and images depicting sexual activities, commercial pornography and prostitution, '*....a lot of those pictures, nude pictures , videos yeah you find them there' (M4INT).* Participants who were members of *team mafisi* group constantly looked at sex videos and images posted here, "*there is another group, team mafisi, yeah (laughs)....it is about posting those pornographic things'...(F11INT).*

4.2.2 Switching Interactional Modes and Capabilities

Ability to switch between group-level and user-level interactions, asynchronous and synchronous communication, and temporary user-level and permanent user-level interactions were found to be crucial communication affordances of virtual groups and

social platforms during group and interpersonal communication. Interview and FGD data revealed that these interactional capabilities fostered interactions that were particularly important with regard to exchange of sexting materials. Group-level communication involved broadcasting the sexting content to all the members of the group. With reference to explanations of participants, group-level interaction could easily shift into individual-to-individual (user-level) communication when one targeted the messages to the account (contact) of a member in the group. This way members in the same group could easily pair-up their individual accounts either temporarily or permanently in order to exchange sexually inclined messages. It was noted that user-level interactions mostly occurred among members of the group interested in dating.

Participants further revealed that user-level interactions often occurred through the private ('inbox') mode described earlier. In the following extract, a female participant explicated how group-level communication could easily switch to user-level communication when two members of a group wanted to share intimate messages or start dating:

> it might be like in a lady in the group, and you are also there both of are single you will get interested you will take my number and go to my inbox and you start chatting me ok if I'm interested we will date if I'm dating someone else i will only tell like I'm dating someone else we can't go on so we can either be friends or just end the whole chatting and go back to the group as usual [F3INT]

A number of boys confirmed to have frequently engaged in user-level interactions by sending dating requests via 'inbox' to random girls in the groups. Nearly all the female interview participants in social groups acknowledged to have received suggestive text messages from boys sent via inbox. It was clear from responses of most participants that

these kinds of temporary user- level interactions often involved exchange of racy text messages between those interested in multiple partners. Some boys and girls acknowledged to have on several occasions exchanged threads of text messages with multiple members in the groups using their private contacts, *'yeah, I'm texting with this and this girl and on the other end she is texting with another guy [laughs], we are all doing it' (M6INT)*.

Experiences of how temporary user–level interactions regenerated into permanent user-level interactions for continued conversations also readily came from a section of participants interested in dating. They elaborated how some members in the group started off with temporary exchange of text messages that later became elaborate and persistent when dating commenced. The researcher noted that permanency in individual-to-individual interactions among members in a group was also a reflection of permanent offline friendships. From responses given, prolonged user-level interactions were common among social group members who physically knew each other. These were mostly classmates or friends in school, hostel, neighborhood or estate and sometimes family members, '*yeah especially at night when I'm may be done with studies, the moment you go to Facebook messenger, Imo sometimes, especially on WhatsApp you do get a lot of messages there, different colleague chatting with you' (M5INT)*.

Importance of enacting synchronous and asynchronous conversations during group or interpersonal interactions was interpreted in light of the convenience of sharing interesting and controversial content. Analysis of responses revealed that synchronous communication was in the form of online chat sessions where members sent racy messages and got replies almost immediately. The researcher noted that synchronous

user-level communication was frequent between friends and those seeking attention of prospective partners. Asynchronous user-level or group-level interaction occurred when members of the group followed and sometimes responded to messages that were posted on the social group when they were offline, "*actually these groups are the ones that keep on passing information because you find that when you are free your friends are not free so that you can chat actually there are the ones who keep….*" (M3INT).

4.3 Social Contexts and Message Content Characteristics of Youth Sexting Activities

Participants gave detailed accounts indicating how numerous daily social interaction activities were interrelated with use of smartphones to create and share different kinds of sexually inclined messages. Experiences and perspectives of how sexting took place in different social contexts were to a limited extent specific to individuals but largely most participants gave similar descriptions of how they practiced sexting during their social interactions. Data analysis revealed that most participants spent a lot of time online and offline interacting with friends and romantic partners and therefore their sexting behaviors were connected with what they did during daily interpersonal and group social interactions. The analysis of the social contexts and nature of sexting was used to forge a description of how the behavior was interrelated with daily social activities of the selected participants. Sexting activities were related to processes of dating and romance, peer-social social conversations and interactions, and downloading and watching internet (commercial) pornography as elaborated in the subsequent sections. A summary of the daily social contexts and activities related to sexting are given in appendix IX.

4.3.1 Processes of Dating and Romance

Interviews and FGDs data revealed that the most likely daily social interactions where exchange of photos, videos and text messages of sexual nature took place pertained to processes of dating and forming romantic relationships. It was established that all participants in romantic and sexual relationships sent and received sexting content. Participants also indicated that most of the sexting messages exchanged in romantic relationships were composed and sent by the participants themselves. Sexual materials downloaded from the internet or virtual social groups were also forwarded to romantic partners. The nature of sexting messages participants created and exchanged in dating contexts were described as mostly consisting of photos and/or videos showing private parts, breasts or chests either bare or covered in clothes and text messages describing sexual and non-sexual activities. Appendix X provides a summary of the activities, nature and content characteristics of sexting messages participants in this study exchanged with each other through smartphone. Exchange of sexual messages in dating was mostly done through instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Messenger.

Some female participants described how they recorded and stored in smartphone images showing their derriere covered in pants or very tight skirts, or breasts covered in bra. Four of these girls admitted to have sent these photos to their boyfriends. One of them claimed that the boyfriend experienced sexual satisfaction when he looked at the explicit images she sent to him while she was in school:

> *yeah i share with my boyfriend sometimes I'm here in school and he is like i miss you today i did go for job I'm just in bed I'm missing you blah blah just to shut him up i just send a nude and then he is wow you have calmed me down*[F4INT]

All the participants in both interviews and FGDs concurred that exchange of self-made raunchy photos in dating relationships occurred when either partner requested to be sent such content. Several boys who were dating noted that they requested and therefore received photos of their girlfriends clad in short or revealing skirts, bras or panties, "*yeah normal and seminude ones*" and she sent to "*hear my opinions on the outfit she is wearing* (M2INT). A married female participant confessed that she severally requested and received images showing private parts of her husband, "*yeah private parts" (F2INT).* Two boys said that they were requested by their girlfriends to send images showing chest or private parts. One of them said that the girlfriend specifically wanted to see his genitals, 'ok*, my manhood, yeah such stuff yeah' (M7INT).* However, a section of participants observed that some dating partners sent the raunchy images without being requested to do so. The act of a girl sending unsolicited naked imagery (whether downloaded or self-made) to a boy was interpreted as a feeling of insecurity or as a way of getting attention of the boy if there was perception of competition for the same boy from other girls, '*to catch the attention, if you see if she is cooler than the other chic [girl] yeah'....sometimes may be the guy requests or sometimes it is the chic [girl] who just wants to send to the boyfriend, yeah" (F5INT)*.

The experiences of a number of female participants indicated that creating and sending intimate photos to boyfriends was sometimes as a result of the need to reciprocate after receiving similar content, "*(laughs) hmmm yeah sometimes I send back to him…hmm yeah (F1INT).* The aforementioned female participant received genitals photos of her boyfriend after sending hers, *"yeah he sends then you look and then hmmmmm (laughs)" (F4INT).*

However, experiences and perspectives of some participants were divergent on the boys' willingness to capture and send photos of their private parts to girlfriends. It was felt that exchange of sexting messages involved both the boyfriend and girlfriend creating and sending but sometimes girls sent but never received. Here, most male participants said they preferred forwarding downloaded explicit photos instead of self-recorded ones to express feelings about the relationships. One boy admitted that he received explicit photos of his girlfriend but declined to send images of his genitals despite being requested to do so "*she knows I cannot send to her, she knows I can ask but she knows I cannot send yeah [M11INT].*

In contrast, most girls felt that boys were more likely to send images of their private parts compared to girls. In fact, a section of the girls confirmed to have received images that showed private parts of their boyfriends, *"private parts, he only send that one thing nothing else, i have not seen anything else he sends that one only thing" (F7INT).* One girl admitted to having received '*bathroom*' images from her boyfriend. She however did not disclose whether the images showed the private parts or chest, '*he just sends something like…. hi I'm from the bathroom ' [laughs] yeah (F11INT)'.*

During interviews, it was interesting to hear some female participants confess how they desired to receive racy images from certain boys. One of the girls wished to receive photographs showing chests or genitals, "*maybe if the guy is built, I'm mostly attracted to build up guys may be because of such" (F13INT).* Another girl wished to look at photos of the genitals and chest of her former boyfriend, "*mostly the chest and maybe the private parts".* She was also willing to send her seminude photos to the boyfriend but she was

never asked to do so at least the time they dated, "*...he never asked for them so I did not send*". I could have sent him the "*... seminude nude ones, maybe in those tiny shorts, crop tops, spaghetti yeah" (F8INT).*

Responses and experiences of three female participants indicated that exchange of sexually explicit photos or text messages sometimes took place when romantic partners were far away from each other. One of them was severally requested to send images of her private parts when the boyfriend was away but she preferred sending ones that showed her bare breasts '.... ok *when he says he is far and tells me he misses me and requests for nudes I would send to him.... mostly boobs sometimes he wanted to see my private parts but i never sent him that (F1INT)'.* The other girl expressed how the distant boyfriend sometimes used text messages to communicate his feeling of being sexually stimulated and also described the intention to have sex with her, "*when we are chatting, may be when we are far, may be once in a while he just like says I miss you and I miss the whole of you so you just know like he misses sex" (F15INT).* The aforementioned married female participant said that she sometimes recorded and sent images of her private parts to her husband whenever he was away from home, "....*he goes far two weeks or one week and in that he tells me can you do this for me.... [laughs] the private parts [F2INT]*

A section of participants felt that dating older partners (transactional sexual relationships) was widespread and socially accepted among young people. Some of the girls alleged that they knew students who dated older partners, fondly known as 'sponsors' for money and gifts. A number of female participants also said that during offline and in their girls only private chat groups, they often discussed issues related to dating 'sponsors, "....*see, yeah ladies talk about sponsors in these groups"* (F4INT).

Most participants linked the 'sponsor' relationships with recording and sending sexually inclined photos and videos. Two girls and one boy narrated their experiences of how they were requested by older people to record and send raunchy photos. The boy claimed to have been asked to send images of his genitals by a 37 year old woman, "…*I have had someone 37 years requesting for my naked photo yeah…*" (M4INT). The first girl was requested to send what she perceived to be her naked images by an old man she met in a public office, *he used to request for my picture when I'm sleeping, I wondered what pictures he wanted from me.…….* (*F6INT*). The second girl admitted to having dated older men and on several occasions she sent images of her breasts and private parts to them, "…*but I send them without showing my face yeah, I hide the face, ok I show them my private* parts *and boobs yeah.* She also claimed that the older men recorded images of her naked body, "*no they only take around my waist and behind, they don't capture my face"* (F7INT).

From participants responses the researcher noted that use of social portable connections (described earlier) transformed the interaction spaces to the extent that it was extremely easy for students to form sexual relationships and express interest in dating. Students often used instant messaging to send explicit messages to people they wished to date, fondly referred to as the crush, *"yeah i want this guy to be my boyfriend, you have that crush on him, I want this guy (laughs)" [FG04].* Some of the girls expressed how naked images could be used to get attention of prospective boys, *"you can forward it [nude image] like to your crush yeah see what will happen may be will fall for you" [FG02].* Nearly all girls received explicit pictures and text messages from boys interested in dating and sometimes some of them were asked to record and send naked photos, "*yeah*

some have told me over the phone, yeah my friends…we chat and they ask whether I mind sending them my nude picture….” (F18INT). Most boys composed explicit text messages or downloaded raunchy photos from the internet and sent them to prospective girls. Two boys sent bare chest 'selfies' recorded while in the gym to several prospective girls while chatting on WhatsApp, "

> *what i would send mostly are my photos, you know i work out a lot, so at some point i had a very good physique yeah, so every girl who sees me outside then will inbox me, i would like to see you that body, those muscles so, when I go back to the gym I find myself taking those photos”* (M4INT)

It strongly emerged from participants that online communication makes young people in romantic relationships apply rules and norms that would be considered unsuitable in face-to-face interactions. It was felt that depending on one's position in the relationship, some people are vulnerable and subject to pressure or coercion to send their naked photos. This perception was demonstrated by two girls who demonstrated were pressurized by their boyfriends to record and send raunchy photographs, *"he pressurized me, he told me i was not serious if can refuse to give him my nude image…”* (F16INT

Nevertheless, most boys and girls strongly contested the view that individuals were under pressure to send naked photos. They insisted that recording and sending of explicit photos in romantic relationships was largely consensual and voluntary, *"no, they don’t coerce them the guy (boy) just asks may be persistently but won’t blackmail the girl to send them” (F9INT).* In this quote, it is clear that pestering was not considered to be a form of blackmail or coercion. Possibility of bothering a girl until she shares her raunchy images was also brought by the aforementioned boy who said that he pestered his girlfriend to send raunchy photos but she declined and therefore he had to wait for trust to build to a

level she was comfortable to send, "*i can't say about that because, mine is really i hard to press but for my case it took a little bit of time, but now she is free to send anytime yeah*" (M7INT).

In both interviews and FGDs, sharing of self-recorded naked images and videos in dating relationships was considered to be dangerous and reckless by a section of participants. The greatest perceived social risk was the likelihood of the photos or videos getting forwarded to unintended recipients or posted to public audiences on social media. This perception made most of the participants endorse composure and exchange of sexually explicit text messages instead of pictures or videos of similar nature. This is also the reason why some female participants as presented earlier sent explicit images that did not show the face.

Now that explicit text messages were perceived and appreciated as less risky, nearly all participants composed and sent them to present or prospective romantic partners, a practice that was fondly known as 'sex chatting'. To illustrate the perception of importance and currency of exchanging explicit text messages in romantic relationships, one girl exclaimed that "sex *chatting is normal in relationships and it is the in thing…."(FG01).* Another girl wondered what people in a relationship would be doing if not texting about sex, *"if in a relationship people are not texting about sex what do they talk about…..what else do they talk about" (FG07).* Most boys as well said that majority of the text conversations they had with some girls on WhatsApp involved talking about sex, '*ended sexual and…. continued sex chatting' (M6INT).*

From participants' description of their 'sex chatting' habits, the researcher noted that during the initial and later stages of dating, sexual text messages were used more frequently compared to face to face interactions. The text messages were first used to flirt and share jokes with the intention of showing interest in dating. Several boys interested in dating multiple girls elaborated how they used sex chats to flirt these girls on WhatsApp and the feeling was sexy and fun. It seemed that this sexual excitement was the major motivation for exchange of explicit text messages for some of these boys:

> "…*yeah she responds, she must flirt me so (laughs) she flirts me you flirt them in a manner that you want them [girls], hi you have a big derriere …. i won't mind to see your private parts you seem to have a nice private part…. i respond soon, yeah such, when you text her she has nice breasts, she replies really, when she replies that she has already fall into that chat" (*M1INT)

The apparent connection between exchange of sex text messages and self-recorded videos or photos was revealed by sentiments of a number of participants. Exchange of explicit text messages was said to be often accompanied by self-recorded raunchy photos for some of the participants, *'so…he sends when we are chatting after that i delete' ([F2INT)*. Participants who engaged in sex with partners said they used the explicit text messages to discuss the place and time when the sexual activity will take place, *yeah, he did at times, and i would also ask for sex, we used to plan when to meet and when sex should occur yeah" (F8INT)*. Another girl pointed out that whenever *"they were talking about sex"* with the boyfriend *"at some point he could tell her come and we have sex" (*F13INT). A boy who frequently had sex with his girlfriend said that "*... you have to ask her through chats so that if she agrees then from there you can arrange to have that fun [sex] because there is a time she is on monthly periods she is not on safe periods so that if you end up doing that there will big challenge" (M5INT)*. Sentiments from participants

who had sex with partners further indicated that before sex, explicit text message were used to express sexual preferences, expectations and fantasies. After sex, the text messages were sometimes used to send compliments, appreciation or express affection, '*like you assume he is there with you then talk about sex, assume you are having sex yeah, we talk about the previous sex we had, what I'm wearing* [F1INT].

4.3.2 Peer-Social Interactions and Conversations

Findings showed that participants used smartphones to participate in group sexting activities that involved receiving, sending, receiving and sending (two-way), showing on phone without forwarding, and recording and storing raunchy images on smartphones. Some female participants also mentioned that they posted self-recorded raunchy photos on girls' only sex chat groups. Participants gave interesting experiences and perspectives of how sexually oriented content was frequently showed or shared with close and trusted friends through individual accounts or closed chat groups. They pointed out that sex videos and images downloaded from the Internet were mostly sent to private sex chat groups especially on WhatsApp.

In both interviews and FGDs, it seemed that sexting in group settings was perceived as a way of peer association and form of peer identity. Some of the participants acknowledged that they forwarded or showed self-recorded sexting content in their phones in order to fit and get recognized in social groups of trusted and close friends. They further described how close and trusted friends showed each other videos or photos that had been recorded during sexual activity. Most of them argued that the videos or photos were shared in a bid to brag about dating certain girls or proof of sexual activity. In case the images or

videos were not available or the holder didn't want to show, sex text messages were shown as proof of sexual intercourse. One boy described how his close male friends showed each other sext text messages exchanged with certain girls as proof of having sex, *".......I asked him how many times he had slept with the girl, the boy showed the text to prove he have slept with the girl"* (M1INT).

Sharing self-generated sexting content in quest of desire to be envied by colleagues was further illustrated by sentiments of several other male participants. It also seemed that some boys were free to ask their trusted friends to show videos or images as of proof sexual activity. One boy who lived in rented rooms away from home during the time of the interview confessed to have request to be shown sex videos recorded when girlfriends visited the boys in the rooms. He exclaimed that his close friends *"just give you"* the video or images saying *"dude look at what we were doing, dude look at my girlfriend……"* (M7INT).

From experiences of majority of the participants, it seemed that social groups, especially closely knit communities, were frequently and sometimes primarily used to discuss and exchange information related to sex and sexuality. In several interviews and FGDs, it strongly came out that members in close virtual groups constantly discussed matters relating to issues of sex and dating. Experiences of multiple female participants who interacted with trusted friends on girls only private sex chat groups indicated that members in these forums collaborated to discuss and post private and sensitive content on sexuality, dating and sexual activities. They pointed out that close female friends used

these virtual networks to also freely discuss about money, secrets and often posted videos of men genitals, and sex styles.

> *...ladies discuss these things freely in their ladies groups [FG07]*
>
> *.....yeah like ladies are advised to try this sex style [FG05]*

It was clear that girls who engaged in sexual conversations with fellow girls felt free and empowered. In several interviews, female participants underscored the importance of girls only private chat groups in discussing sexual matters and sharing messages on insights about heterosexual relationships. They strongly supported the idea of girls who physically knew each other forming private chat groups to freely discuss issues related to dating, marriage and sometimes humor away from boys. Some of the female participants felt that '*men are the problem"* and therefore having forums where girls openly discussed matters about sex, marriage and feminine issues was perceived to be extremely empowering [FG06].

As presented earlier, some boys and girls acknowledged to have used their smartphones to record and store raunchy images and videos showing breasts, pants, chest and derriere for self-love and admiration. Majority were categorical that they never forwarded the self-generated pictures or videos to anyone. Two of the girls however admitted that they posted the photos in girls' only private sex chat groups to get comments from friends. Unlike boys who shared the explicit photos to brag about their sexual escapades, girls said they did it to solicit feedback about their 'looks' from friends in the chat groups. Even in instances where the naked images were not shown to each other, some girls freely discussed with close friends during offline interactions about recording and saving on phones raunchy images, *"like my friend she does but she keeps her photos, when we*

talk she tells me she takes seminude photos…. yeah she just takes them for fun" (F10INT). Similarly, it was described to be a common practice for girls to show their close and trusted friends sexual images or sexually text messages received from boyfriends, *"of course, they show the penis from the boyfriend and the girls comment whether it is the perfect size or not (laughs)" [FG05].*

It further seemed that girls were more at liberty to stretch the rules of sexing compared to their male counterparts. In another gendered dimension of sexting, four girls recounted their experiences of same gender exchange of sexually explicit content through private accounts instead of private sex chat groups. The first girl received seminude 'selfies' from her female friend showing breasts in bras, bikini and seductive dressing, *….maybe she has worn something that is not fit, something that is not good, maybe a bikini, bra or such" (F13INT).* The second girl was severally requested to assist her best friend record semi-naked photos; *yeah she wears a very short skirt or very short cloth and tells me to take her a photo [laughs] yeah…   she takes seminude images of herself but she does not share them with somebody [F16INT].* The third one received naked photos from a strange woman she described as a lesbian. The strange woman befriended the female participant on Facebook then sent her naked photos and requested to be sent similar content, *"i think she is a lesbian, she used to tell me she likes me and used to send me her nude photos but i blocked her…. [F8INT].* The fourth girl received a sex video from her female friend who she suspected was a lesbian on Facebook *"….when first i saw the video i texted her not to share such with me again on my wall and blocked her…may be she was a lesbian* [F1INT]

In some of the interviews and FGDs, it emerged that a number of the participants occasionally or frequently attended what they described as off-college parties and *nganya matatus* road trips. The fun parties were mostly hosted in hostels or rented rooms by students, especially on weekends, "*…so such, we invite our girlfriends, so I can say that everybody goes with their own idea of having fun" (M2INT).* Accounts of experiences of participants with first information further indicated that sexting and use of alcohol were rife in these two social activities. They claimed that some of the students recorded and forwarded pictures or videos of the activities taking place in order to share the fun with absent colleagues, "*…like maybe they were doing in parties and they recorded just little bit, yeah"* [M7INT]

Nganya matatus road trips, as fondly referred to by the participants, were fancy bus rides organized by the crew members to tour various attraction sites. Experiences of boys and girls who attended the fun trips indicated these buses had multiple CCTV cameras, TV screens, posters and graffiti of prominent personalities both inside and outside, and played very loud music from large speakers. From descriptions of experiences given by multiple participants, it was apparent that this form of social fun was very common with young people in colleges. At several instances, the researcher noted students spoke with a lot of amusement and enthusiasm when describing experiences of these bus trips, "*…we just go on road trips to have fun, enjoy ourselves ……"* (M2INT).

One of the female participants admitted to having attended several of these road trips which toured Masinga dam, Longonot, Nakuru and Aberdare, "*...we organize then we ask for the matatu we are given we pay then we go".* She claimed that young people abused drugs and alcohol during the trips and the intoxication made them engage in

kissing and other illicit sexual activities. The girl further indicated that people used their smartphones to record videos or pictures of the illicit activities and posted them on private sex chat groups where the people depicted in these recordings were members. She particularly claimed to have received sex videos showing sexual activities recorded in connection with two different road trips, "*ok i have recognize like two videos, they were taken after a road trip to Masinga and Aberdare" [F3INT].* Her experiences that people in these road trips engaged in illicit sexual activities and recorded the escapades were corroborated by a male participant, who as well claimed to have frequented these social events, "….*matatus going to Nyahururu but what was happening inside is just but sex"* [M1INT]

4.3.3 Downloading and Watching Internet pornography

The findings revealed that use of smartphones to download and watch commercial and professionally produced pornography from the internet was highly intertwined with creating and sending sexually inclined videos, images and text messages. Passion and enthusiasm about watching internet pornography was best reflected in the excitement, laugher and unanimity of most FGD attendees when I asked the question whether students visited pornographic websites. They hilariously responded in a manner suggesting the researcher had asked the obvious, "*(all laughs) yeah, yes (long laughter), yeah, yes"* [FG02].

There was clear indication that use of smartphones to search and download pornography from the internet was rampant and normal part of daily activity of most students. Majority of the participants during interviews passionately elaborated how together with

their colleagues used smartphones to visit pornographic websites, download, and distribute the commercial pornography, *"just to feel like seeing something naked yeah"* *[M9INT].* Sometimes they watched and showed each other pornography while in class which indicated some students' problematic preoccupation with such materials, "*passes the porn to us to see the videos, yeah the whole class looks that the videos [laughs"][F16INT].* Watching pornography was described as both an individual and group activity and occurred during offline and online interactions. Some watched pornography with colleagues at school and also alone at home, either during the day or at night, "…*sometimes i look at porn videos when I'm alone especially when I'm bored"* *[F4INT].*

Widespread circulation of pornography was achieved when the materials were sent to romantic partners or posted on closed and open social groups. Some of them also shared links of porn websites on WhatsApp, Messenger and Facebook. Closed social groups were particularly considered crucial in distribution of pornography. As presented earlier, there were several densely knit communities on various social media platforms that were described by participants as being majorly dedicated to sharing pornographic materials, "….*once they are chatting with groups they post those videos there, yeah"* [M3INT]

Through there were diverse responses to the contrary, a number of participants observed that watching internet pornography contributed to sexualisation of girls and development of unrealistic sexual behaviors especially among boys. Multiple female participants considered watching pornography to be a major reason why boys asked girls to create and send naked photographs. One girl particularly dismissed watching pornography on the

basis that it portrayed unrealistic sexual behaviors that she felt affected heterosexual relationships like marriage:

> *………you those images, you may find, in some cases, you are shown something like sex styles and such things, and may be your partner does not like that, and you want to do what you saw of those videos, you know they will be controversies"* (FG02).

The interplay between consumption of internet pornography and use of smartphones to record and send sexually inclined videos and photographs was reflected in the activities and experiences of some participants. Five girls and three boys who watched pornography also recorded raunchy images which they later sent to romantic partners. One of these girls was the married female participant (described earlier) who sent images of her genitals to the husband. She searched and watched pornography as a result of curiosity that emanated from what her colleagues said about these videos. She also watched pornography to learn about sex styles, "*yeah i do when i watch I'm like there is a porn i watched go and see sometimes i end up downloading them then i store them on my phone" (4INT)*. Experiences and activities of these participants validated the

It was clear from perceptions of some girls that sexting and watching internet pornography were associated with positive outcomes and desirable experiences. They particularly perceived sex videos as important source of information on sex skills and other positive sexual experiences. For example, a girl who was dating acknowledged to have visited pornographic sites to download videos which she watched while free in order to improve on her sexual skills. She also experimented with what she learnt from these videos whenever she had sex with her boyfriend:

well ok i just look for may be sex styles of having sex okay when you are watching porn you see this part and this part, there is this and the other person so you just look at them and then you are like which one is the best yeah, yeah i can tell if you ask me about this style and this style yeah (F4INT).

The girl described earlier as having been active in transactional sexual relationships also watched pornography to improve on her sexual skills. She wanted to learn "*sex styles*" and "*how to hold the partner*" (F7INT).

Furthermore, female participants in dating relationships perceived sex skills learnt from watching pornography as important in enhancement of dating relationships, sexual satisfaction and expression of affection. One of them said she watched pornography to improve sex skills and consequently improved the sexual relationship with her boyfriend:

mostly go to see let's say , i think I'm not perfect for my guy[boyfriend] so i go look on the site or on the ways i can make him happy and both of us can stay longer together [F3INT*]*

4.4 Youth Concerns and Challenges When Sexting and Mitigating Strategies

Participants engaged in various sexting activities that incorporated sending, receiving, receiving and sending, not-forwarding, storing sexts on phones, and posting the content in closed sex groups. Participants in both interviews and FGDs identified several concerns and challenges pertaining to the various sexting activities they were involved in.

4.4.1 Perceived Safety Concerns and Challenges

Most participants, especially girls, associated unauthorized showing or forwarding of their sexting messages sent to romantic partners or trusted colleagues with serious negative social impacts. The married participant also acknowledged that it was dangerous to share self-recorded explicit photos even in marriage, *"sharing nudes leads to loss of*

trust, so it can be dangerous even in marriage" (F2INT). Majority of them were concerned that if their sexting messages were circulated to unwanted people they would suffer loss of self-esteem, damage of reputation and peer-social relationships, bulling in school, and poor academic performance, "*you will suffer and have low self-esteem for exposing your sexual organs to other people" (FG05).* It was however apparent from the study findings that most participants were more concerned about showing or unwanted forwarding of their sexting messages to unintended recipients than other negative experiences.

Another major challenge participants mentioned was that exchange of sexually inclined text messages, photos and videos was a prelude to sexual activities and expression of sexual behaviors. All participants who exchanged explicit messages with romantic partners experienced sexual stimulation and desire to engage in sex. One of the girls' sexual desires were aroused and '*felt sexually stimulated*' when she 'sex chat' and looked at naked photos sent by her boyfriend (F8INT). Another female participant confessed that whenever she was "*alone she got stimulated"* after looking at the explicit text messages sent by the boyfriend [F12INT]. The aforementioned married female participant experienced release of sexual tension after looking at photos showing genitals of her husband, "*i feel ok and satisfied*" (F2INT). She perceived her husband to have experienced sexual satisfaction as well after looking at her genital images she sent to him. This girl interpreted exchange of their naked images to have created more affection, faithfulness and commitment in the marriage since the since the husband did not need to look for other women:

..the picture will help him to cool down because he is away for two weeks or three weeks and maybe he is faithful to me and I'm faithful to him, so when I send him my nude images he will feel i love him and he remembers me and feels he should not betray his wife because he loves her, the nude image makes him remember about me as the wife yeah.. [F2INT].

As earlier described, findings revealed that much of the sexting activities took place during peer-social interactions. It was however a serious concern for most participants that peers (friends) could not offer necessary emotional support in case someone suffered psychosocial problems as a result of unwanted forwarding of their sexting messages. It was felt that friends would mock victims of escalated sexting instead of showing companionship. One girl lamented that *"people who were your friends will no longer be your friends",* else they will be perceived to be equally bad [F10INT]. A male participant who was a head boy in one of colleges was concerned that the ability to execute his mandate as the student leader would greatly be affected in case the explicit text messages he sent to his girlfriend were leaked to other students in school, *….i told you about my position here in school, my relationship with other students will be serious affected yeah"* [M4INT].

In numerous instances, participants were concerned that parents neglected responsibilities of discussing sex related topics with their children. As a result, sexting and commercial pornography have served as important sources of information on sex and sexuality related matters. A Muslim female participant noted that young people have a great curiosity to learn about sex and gender roles but religion and parenting have ignored that fact. Therefore, sexting and internet becomes the only source of such information,

……in our [Muslim] religion you are not supposed to talk about sex with anyone else apart from your husband , the problem comes where your husband does not know much because even him he did have a chance to learn about sex (all

laughs) there you have to Google , both of you have to use Mr. Goggle , Google is there for you …….[FG05]

Majority were further concerned that during online and offline interactions colleagues rarely discussed the consequences of exchange of sexting messages, "*they don't talk about that, they don't talk about the effects (F16INT).* Some of them felt that youth were aware of the downside of sexting but decided to focus on its pleasures instead of dangers, '*…let me tell you, they know it is bad no one does a negative thing without knowing …. (M10INT).* It also emerged that some participants jokingly discussed challenges related to sexting but such discussion hardly yielded useful information. As such, students could not learn about the consequences of sexting from each other, "*when they talk about it, they don't say it in a positive way, they will just rub it off as a joke, people will just laugh at it and life goes on (M6INT).*

Majority of the participants felt that parents, older family members and adults should comfortably discuss about dangers of sexting and sex with adolescents in order to address the issues associated with these two behaviors. Nevertheless, a number of them argued that some parents were not aware their children were sexting. They added that if parents were aware of sexting activities of their children and were open to discussion, adolescents would be willing to share their experiences on the challenges and issues of the behavior. They further observed that most parents would be opposed to sexting and were likely to reprimand or punish their children over engaging in the behavior. According to them, this would subsequently reduce the chances of youth expressing the problems they faced when sexting:

...... (laughs) it depends on how your parents react to such, you may find some parents are very strict, they might beat you or will not care, it might be tricky to tell such parents. If you feel that your parent is more of a friend you can share and seek their advice [F16INT]

4.4.2 Safety practices and communicative safeguards

The research further revealed that participants employed a number of strategies in an attempt to navigate the privacy concerns and challenges they perceived to be associated with their sexting activities. The measures participants used are summarized in table 4.2. The insights that were generated on how students mitigated the perceived concerns and challenges were incorporated in the formulation of the suggested framework. The researcher noted that the measures employed by participants were perceived to be likely to prevent or reduce harms in case the sexting messages sent to romantic partners or colleagues were shown or forwarded to other people.

Table 4.2: Summary of safety measures and communicative safeguards

Category	Measures/safeguards
safety practices	-Delete recorded/received sexual images/videos after viewing -use of 'Inbox' feature/private communication -Block/mute contacts that request sexually explicit images -Show on phone without forwarding or transferring -Use of protected folders/passwords - Use of accounts with pseudonyms or fake identities.
Communicative safeguards	-Sex text messages instead of images/videos -Use of codes and slangs (indirect expressions) -Send to trusted boyfriend or girlfriend (romantic partner) only -Hide the face when recording sexual images/videos -Use of verbal safeguards e.g '*don't safe show anyone*' or *don't judge me wrongly* -Talk about being in possession of sex pictures/videos/text messages without showing/forwarding -Share/show with close and trusted friends -Post in anonymous accounts/secret accounts e.g private chat groups with close and trusted friends -failure to report to victims about seeing their explicit pictures/text messages.

Text messages sent and received in romantic relationships and peer social interactions were composed using indirect expressions and Sheng. Participants mentioned several codes and symbols that were used instead of explicit words, and this was perceived to be a communicative strategy to hide details of intimate conversations, especially when asking for naked photos, "*numbers which mean something, number and symbols, they code the message" (FG03).* The researcher noted that sex text messages written using coded language were perceived as likely to cause less harm in case they were forwarded to unwanted recipients. The perception was that only people who understood the context of the conversation and meaning of the symbols would decipher the meaning intended in such messages, *they use symbols that if you are not familiar you won't understand .... so there are some words" (FG03).* In Table 4.3, an interpretation of some of the codes and Sheng words that participants mentioned to have used to talk, compose and send sexting text messages are highlighted.

Table 4.3: Summary of codes and symbols used to compose and send explicit text messages

Words/Code	Meaning
'Nataka kuroll'	Sheng code meaning "I want to have sex with you"
Tender	*tender* is an English word used when a boy is requesting a girl to send/show her explicit images.
'kutender'	*'kutender'* is a Sheng word referring to 'leaking'/sharing someone's naked images with other people without consent
'mjoroba'	Code referring to male genitals (penis)
Ass	English word used to refer to female derriere
'punani'	Code referring to female genitals
'maziwa'	Kiswahili word for milk. Used to refer to women breasts
'bumper'	Bumper is a rear part of a car. Another code used to refer to female derriere
'ngwati'	Code used to refer to pornography
'tei'	Code used to refer to alcohol
'kae'	Code used to refer to sexual act/request someone to have sex with you
'boo'	Code used to refer to 'my lover' or 'my man or boyfriend'
'bee'	Code used to refer to 'my girl' or 'my girlfriend'
'kafry'	Code derived from English word fry. The code was used to refer to having unprotected sex.
'Nichape through pass'	Code used when a boy wished to be introduced to a certain girl by his colleague(s) who know the girl. Requesting to be connected (introduced) to a certain girl
Boot[ed] [a girl or boy]	Code used to mean to stop dating someone (boy or girl)
Dry spell	Code used to mean a prolonged period of sexual starvation or expressing sexual starvation
Fallen soldiers	Word used to describe sagged women/girls' breasts
Sessions	Words used to describe recorded videos of sexual activities

It was observed that coded sex text messages were mostly composed in Sheng. Participants described how colleagues readily used vulgar slangs drawn from Sheng to send or receive sexting text messages, and when posting such messages in private chat groups. According to one boy, Sheng words were interpreted as less obscene compared to equivalent English ones especially when composing explicit text messages to flirt prospective girls, "*….a times, you know we use sheng, sheng is not naughty….*"*[M1INT]*.

It was noted that visual and textual contents of sexting messages were perceived differently with respect to potential dangers. Effect of distributing one's naked photos and videos was considered too dangerous. This made most participants refrain from creating and sharing sexually explicit videos and photos and instead composed and sent sexual text messages to romantic partners or trusted colleagues. Most participants interpreted sex text messages as safe sexting because they did not have the face of the subject. In fact, majority indicated that they would not fear if their sext text messages were shown to unintended recipients, "*the sexual chats, ok I'm not afraid of that, sexual chatting not I'm not afraid, yeah images are worse*" *[F8INT]*.

It was clear that trust and closeness were key considerations when it came to showing or sending naked photographs to dating partners or colleagues. Majority showed or forwarded the private messages to close and trusted friends. They were optimistic of salvaging their reputation if the private messages were only shared among trusted friends. Without necessarily showing or forwarding, some held offline conversations about being in possession of private photos with very close friends. In romantic relationships, only partners perceived to be trustworthy were sent naked photos, "*ok, him being my boyfriend, he is that one friend i trust most, yeah*" *(F15INT)*. The married female

participant trusted her husband could not show or share the genital images she sent to him. She would lose trust and never forgive him if the photos were shared or shown to anyone else, *"i don't know whether my husband can do that but if he did that i can't forgive him, i can't trust him anymore"* (F2INT).

Verbal warnings like "*please do not tell anyone*", and "*don't judge me wrongly*" were used by some participants to warn close and trusted friends against disclosing about the private images sent or show to them on phones, *"yeah i saw these videos in my friend's phone and she told me not to judge her wrongly because the videos were sent to her the previous day by a boy"* (F1INT). All girls who recorded and sent images of breasts or private parts to boyfriends indicated that such photos did not show their faces. They illustrated how this precautionary measure would make it possible to exonerate themselves or deny incase the images were shown or forwarded to unwanted recipients, *"....i send him without showing my face yeah i hide the face, ok i show him my pussy[private part] and boobs yeah"* (F7INT).

Use of the 'inbox' mode (described earlier) to communicate private messages was perceived by most participants as a strategy to make sexting safe. Majority used their private accounts on WhatsApp and Messenger to exchange raunchy photos or videos directly with close friends or posted such content on closely knit social groups. Some participants also switched off accounts and social groups depending on perceived importance. Accounts that solicited for explicit photos were 'blocked' or 'muted' by some participants, especially girls, "*.......i have blocked on WhatsApp i don't like anyone telling me to give him my picture"* (F6INT).

Security applications and secured folders on smartphones were used to hide sexting messages exchanged with romantic partners. It was felt that private content exchanged with dating partners could be 'stolen' and get missed by colleagues for ulterior motives, "…..*in case of the seminude pictures that my girlfriend sends me, i have them in a locked folder…… once you ask to put the password on that folder, i don't I give it to you"* *[M2INT]*. Moreover, the majority deleted the raunchy photos or videos recorded for self-love or received from romantic partners. A girl deleted images of derriere or breasts she recorded for self-admiration immediately after viewing, *"(laughs) my behind yeah, i see them then delete" (F1INT).* This strategy was perceived to be safer than using password protected folders to conceal the private photos or videos.

In order to deal with privacy concerns of navigating presumably 'open' and risky densely knit social groups, some boys used fake names and pseudo accounts. By using fake names to hide identity, the researcher noted that the boys were confident and optimistic in the ability to manage privacy and anonymity of their online activities, especially with respect to posting controversial materials, "…*when i want to share nasty things i create another account with a different name, so that my identity is kept" (M11INT).*

4.4.3 Technology Strategies and Awareness Initiatives

The study further sought participants' perspectives on what they thought should be done to address concerns and challenges youth in Kenya experience while sexting. The findings suggested that participants had mixed feelings about interventions that could effectively address issues and concerns related to youth sexting. A section of them felt that young people perceive sexting as normal, fun and a suitable habit of killing boredom, "…..*i don't think this thing will stop, yeah it is normal, if you ask him which pic is that he*

says even your bra" (FG07). In addition, some argued that it would be difficult to prevent youth from engaging in sexting provided smartphones and internet are easily accessible to them, "….*sharing nude images/videos is habitual it is a behavior which may be hard to cure………" (FG02).*

Despite acknowledging that it would be hard to stop sexting, a number of participants observed that young people require guidance, education and effective way of keeping them busy. They felt that if the measures they suggested were deployed, sexting was likely to subside, *"….morality is very bad nowadays and therefore guidance and counseling should be used to help and educate young people" [FG06].* One of the female participants insisted that awareness campaigns should particularly sensitize young people about the negative impact of sexting. She felt that this would have a greater influence on their perception of dangers of the behavior, "*they should be told the consequences, how it can affect their life if those photos are found somewhere, i think they should be told"* (F9INT).

Majority of the participants strongly felt that exchange of sexually inclined messages was perceived to be risky because the receiver could easily show or share such content without consent or knowledge of the sender. Some of them argued that methods used by young people to engage in sexting should be devised in a way that discourages forwarding or showing the private messages. As such, they advised that mobile applications used for sexting should be developed in such a way that prevents receivers of sexting messages from distributing or forwarding such content without the consent of the sender. They argued that this would give a great deal of control over their digital content

and somehow address the issues of loss privacy, especially when exchanging self-composed sexting messages:

> ……. *something can be done, we are using phones, and these applications were brought by human beings and are computerized, so the owner of WhatsApp can restrict people from receiving and forwarding private messages….i think that one can control it..*(M9INT).
>
> *…..most of the apps should be controlled or what can be forwarded can be checked like in Facebook videos/images from the app side ….* [F13NT]

It is worth noting that designing mobile applications the way participants envisaged would not solve problems associated with sexting among Kenyan youth. Apart from the ones who were candid about possible success of interventions which promote education, guidance and moral support, the majority of the participants didn't have much information on effective ways of addressing issues and challenges of youth sexting. This study therefore recommends use of collaborative approaches to formulate strategies that promote effective adult-child communication on wide range of issues related to sex, dating and sexting, and development of youth with desirable social norms about sexting and information on use ICTs. The insights and ideas generated from participants were considered during formulation of the proposed framework. The details of the proposed framework are provided in chapter six of this thesis.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, the empirical findings that were generated from the research questions that guided this study have been presented. The study analyzed perspectives and experiences of MLC students on use of smartphones to create and share sexually inclined messages, and suggested a framework to address concerns and challenges pertaining to youth sexting in Kenyan. The insights and perspectives elicited from participants were

used to formulate the proposed framework discussed in chapter six. This chapter presents the analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data generated through in-depth interviews and FGDs relating to sexting activities among MLCs.

The findings of the study showed that students had positive perceptions about interactional capabilities afforded by smartphones to communicate, share information and exchange sexual materials. Use of smartphones was found to be influenced by activities of peers and dating partners, both online and offline. With reference to daily social activities, findings showed that exchange of raunchy messages was interrelated with processes of dating and forming romantic relationships, peer-social interactions and conversations, and watching internet pornography.

The study established that students had several concerns and challenges associated with sexting. They talked about perceived social risks relating to unwanted forwarding, inadequate information on consequences of sexting, poor youth-adult communication on sexual matters, boredom, and lack of 'safe' methods of sexting. In order to navigate perceived concerns related to unwanted forwarding, participants used a number of strategies and communicative safeguards. Among others, these included use of codes to compose explicit text messages, fake identities/accounts to navigate activities of densely knit social groups, and verbal warnings such 'don't share', 'don't judge me wrongly' when showing sex photos to close friends.

The findings revealed that students had mixed perceptions and misconceptions on suitable ways to address challenges and dangers related to youth sexting in Kenya. Some students believed that use of behavior change strategies in the form of awareness

programs, counseling, and constructive activities that would keep youth busy were likely to discourage sexting. Others preferred the invention of technological solutions that would allow youth to engage in sexting safely. They argued that mobile applications used for sexting should incorporate methods of preventing unconsented distribution of private messages.

The study further established that most students had misconceptions on the role of sexting in their lives and suitable strategies to deal with negative experiences of the behavior. Therefore, there is a need to develop interventions that counter negative perceptions, social norms and peer pressure related to sexting. Therefore, parents and children should frequently engage in bold and open discussions on matters bordering on sex, dating, sexting and dysfunctional use of digital media technologies.

Based on the findings, a framework that envisages how elements of the socialization processes should collaboratively work together to develop youth with the right norms, perceptions, knowledge and information about sexting and skills on the use of ICTs was formulated. A summary of the key findings obtained from the research questions are presented in the next chapter. The next chapter also presents the discussions of the findings and insights obtained from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents the summary and discusses the findings and insights obtained from each research question. In the discussion of findings and insights, constant reference to the theories that informed the study and literature review presented in chapter two is made. Specifically, the theories and literature review provided a means of discussing the results of this study and comparing it with the existing studies. The overall aim of the study was to analyze the experiences and perspective of MLC students on how use of smartphones interrelated with exchange of sexually inclined messages with the intention of suggesting a framework to address concerns and challenges pertained to youth sexting in Kenya. The proposed framework is discussed in the next chapter.

The research gaps that the present study sought to address were highlighted in chapters one and two. The study was guided by four research questions. A number of themes were generated from the research questions. These themes were used to organize and present the empirical findings presented in chapter four. The study was guided by the assumption that rich and detailed data about sexting are contained in the perspectives and experiences of (young) people with firsthand information. This justifies why the study utilized qualitative approach, specifically in-depth interviews and FGDs with a diverse group of MLC students who used smartphones to create and send sexting messages. Technology acceptance model and theory of planned behavior were used to guide collection and analysis of results for the study.

5.2 Summary of key findings of the study

In order to address the research questions, a qualitative study was conducted. This was a multiple case study of 65 purposively selected students who used smartphones to compose and share sexting messages. The sample was drawn from five purposively selected MLCs in Nairobi, Kenya. Data was generated using in-depth interviews and FGDs with the selected participants, guided by the stipulated research questions. The key findings obtained from analysis of data generated from the research questions that guided the study are provided in **table 5.1**

Table 5.1: Summary of Key Findings

Q1. What are the perceptions of MLC students on the use of smartphones with regard to sexting activities?

1) Finding of this study established that students had developed passionate attachments with their smartphones. It was further established that use of smartphones was greatly influenced by activities of peer-social interactions and dating partners. Perceived privacy and control afforded by smartphones were particularly considered crucial for exchange of self-composed sexually inclined messages.

2) Several interactional capabilities made smartphones to be perceived as suitable for exchange of sexting messages. These included the ability to create or join online social groups, use accounts with fake names, switch between user-level and group-level interactions, and enact synchronous and asynchronous conversations during social interactions.

3) Students joined various private sex chat groups with closely knit membership of mostly close and trusted friends, and open groups with densely knit communities of strangers and online acquaintances. These social groups were considered instrumental in the sharing of raunchy photographs and videos. Private sex chat groups were perceived to be convenient for exchanging self-created sexually inclined messages. Open groups were mostly used to view sexual content posted by members of the group.

Q2. How does exchange of sexting messages relate to everyday social activities among the selected MLC students?

1) Empirical data revealed that sexting was highly intertwined with daily social lives of the selected students. Processes of dating and romance, peer-social conversations and interactions, and watching internet pornography were the main daily online and offline social activities interrelated with sexting.

2) Findings showed that self-created sexting photos, videos and text messages were mostly shared among romantic partners. Explicit text messages were exchanged to communicate and express sexual desire, fantasies and intention to have sex with dating partners. All students who exchanged sexting messages with romantic partners experienced desire to have sex while some engaged in the sexual activity. For some of them, findings established that sharing sexting messages was done with the intention of arousing dating partners. Explicit text messages were also frequently sent to express desire to date certain girls by some male participants. Positive perceptions of sexting were mostly related to expression of love and affection towards a romantic partner. Most participants held positive attitudes

towards sexting in dating relationships.

3) In peer social interactions, sexting mostly occurred between close and trusted friends and included showing the messages on phones, forwarding, posting in private sex chat groups, and discussing about the private content without showing. Exchange of sex videos and photos was perceived as an important source of humor and fun in group settings. Two female participants posted self-recorded raunchy images in girl's only sex chat groups to receive feedback on their looks. In addition, some girls in private sex chat groups shared sexting materials in order to explore and discuss matters related to dating, sexual issues, sex, marriage, and feminine issues. They perceived discussing sexual matters freely away from boys as a way of enhancing their sexual emancipation and empowerment.

4) Findings suggested that consumption of internet pornography was to some extent connected with creating and sending sexting messages. Some participants consumed pornography and also recorded raunchy photos and videos which were sent to dating partners. Sexting and pornography were perceived to be important sources of information on sex skills and styles by some girls in dating relationships.

Q3. What are the concerns around experiences of sexting by MLC students?

1) The empirical findings established that participants were concerned about the connection of sexting with heighted sexual activities and other psychosocial problems such as damage of reputation, loss of friendship, and poor academic performance. They were more concerned with how to deal with social harms and privacy issues related to showing on phone or forwarding of their sexting

messages to unwanted recipients. Findings showed that participants employed various strategies and communicative safeguards to navigate issues related to perceived social risks and challenges of sexting. These measures included use of verbal warnings, codes and slangs to compose explicit text messages, fake names to participate in activities of densely knit groups, composing and sending sexual text messages instead of videos or photos, recording pictures without the face, storing private content in secured folders and deleting the private content immediately after viewing

1) Findings further established that most participants had mixed perceptions and misconceptions on how to effectively deal with the concerns and challenges they experienced during sexting. Most of them supported development of intervention strategies in the form of awareness, guidance and counseling programs, and constructive activities to keep youth busy. At the same time, nearly all of them perceived sexting to be fun, pleasurable and a suitable way of killing boredom and as such some preferred invention of ways that would allow the youth to engage in the activity safely.

Q4. What framework can the study suggest to address the perceived concerns pertaining to sexting among MLC students in Kenya?

1) In general, the study established that most students had valid concerns about sexting. However, the majority had misconceptions and lacked information on the proper ways to deal with the concerns and challenges they experienced while engaging in the activity. Confidence by some participants that applications could be re-invented to provide facilities to engage in safe sexting was considered a

major misconception by the researcher. The researcher argues that technological solutions would not work unless coupled with the right social norms and knowledge about sexting and use of digital technologies. In other words, we need to cultivate the right social norms, perceptions and practices among young people rather than modify the technologies.

2) Consequently, the study concluded that in order to effectively address the misconceptions and concerns associated with youth sexting, initiatives that focus on fostering communication between adolescents and parents/older people on sexting, dating and use of digital media should be formulated. These initiatives should also focus on promoting development of desirable norms and values on sexting and on use of ICTs. Formulation of such initiatives should adopt collaborative approaches that bring together the different agents of socialization processes.

3) Based on the findings, this study proposes a framework that conceptualizes and describes how agents of socialization processes should work in addressing concerns, challenges and misconceptions young people have around sexting. The framework adopts a holistic perspective and thus suggests several constructs that conceptualize and describe how different social elements should promote development of knowledge and information, positive perceptions and responsible behaviors in relation to sexting and use of digital media technologies among youth in Kenya. The suggested constructs include Education and Awareness, Media Technologies and Industry, Societal Accountability, and Guild Responsibility. The proposed framework is conceptualized as consisting of two

interacting zones; information and knowledge on one end, and actions and sustainability on the other.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings generated from each research question. In the discussion, the findings will be analyzed in light of theories, literature review, themes and insights developed from the study. Demographic characteristics such as dating status, residence, religion among others that were put into consideration during selection of participants are fused in the discussions. The key areas discussed in this chapter as developed from the research questions are*: interactional and communication capabilities of mobile based-social applications; sexting and everyday social practices of young people; negotiating issues related to perceived concerns and challenges of sexting; and proposed model for addressing concerns and challenges of youth sexting*. These areas will form the discussion sections of this chapter.

5.3.1 Interactional and communication capabilities of mobile based-social applications

Findings of the study revealed that participants had positive perceptions about ownership and use of smartphones in their everyday communication processes. It seemed that some participants had developed passionate and instinctive attachment with their smartphones. Most of them spent much time on smartphones accessing information and sharing digital messages. Use of smartphones served different functions related to entertainment, interpersonal and group communication. It was established that smartphones provided

cheap and convenient means of accessing the internet, instant messaging, and creating portable social connections. Portable social connections were important digital spaces for connecting with dating partners, friends and online acquaintances. Mobile phones were considered more convenient than face to face interactions. These observations are consistent with various scientific studies that recognize the role of mobile phones in diverse social and sexual interactions of young people (Ringrose et al, 2012; Lippman & Campbell, 2014; Ouytsel et al, 2016).

Privacy affordance by smartphones made participants feel to be in control of their communication and interactions. Perceived privacy allowed participants to assume autonomy and independence of their interpersonal and group interactions. For instance, a number of them said they communicated at night while parents and older siblings were asleep: *yeah i chat at night (F16INT).* It was brought out during literature review that mobile phones 'emancipate' young people and enable them to enact digital interactions with peers as autonomous and flexible social beings (Hasinoff, 2014). Perceptions of ability to engage in private and secluded conversations relates to perceived usefulness predicator of TAM.

Besides privacy and autonomy of interactions, participants hailed the emancipation afforded by smartphones. They described how they invoked portable social connections 'anytime anywhere' to contact peers and friends. Device portability in the context of ability to make instantaneous communication was brought out during literature review. It was argued that portability is one of the stable communicative affordances of mobile media (Bayer & Campbell, 2012; Majchrzak et al, 2013). Mobile devices are perceived to be convenient for anytime anywhere use in different communication contexts. Through

smartphones, young people can easily text, talk, take images and videos while traveling and walking at home and on campus (Schrock, 2015; Winkelman et al, 2014). In tandem with TAM, participants' feeling of independence and perceptions of being in control of their conversations and interactions can be explained as perceived usefulness.

Multimedia capabilities of smartphones afforded students in this study easy access and dissemination of visual and text messages. In addition, interactional capabilities provided by social media applications made participants institute and manage complex social interactions and portable social connections. In the literature review, it was brought out that forming associations is one of the social affordances of social media (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). Exploring how students in this study formed portable social connections with friends and online acquaintances shed light on the complexity of their social interactions, as it relates to sexting. According to TAM, the ability to connect to the internet and use social applications to easily access, share and receive photos, videos and text messages may be interpreted as perceived ease of use.

Most participants particularly paid much attention to the guaranteed privacy and control afforded by smartphone-based social media applications during exchange of sexual images and videos. They perceived Instant messaging applications such WhatsApp and Messenger as safe and private for exchange of self-generated sexting content. On the other hand, social media applications such Facebook and Instagram were perceived to be more 'open' and riskier to share private messages unless the 'inbox' mode was used to target the content to a particular contact. The confidence to engage in controlled and secluded conversations with regard to varied online activities related to receiving and

sending sexual messages reaffirms what is hypothesized as perceived behavioral control in the TPB (Walrave et al, 2014).

These findings corroborate results reported by prior scholars who have examined mediums used by young people to engage in sexting. Most of these studies indicate that youth sexting activities predominantly take place on mobile applications. For example, Ringrose et al. (2013) found that sexting took place through social applications such as Blackberry Messenger while Drouin et al. (2013) mentioned text messaging applications. Similarly, Ouytsel et al. (2016) found Snapchat and WhatsApp messaging applications as tools used by samples of adolescents in their study to engage in sexting, particularly because of the perceived "fewer risks than other digital applications" (p.16).

The ultimate digital fun of using smartphones was realized by the ability to create or join open and close virtual social groups. It was established that most participants belonged to multiple virtual groups which mainly served functions related to sharing information and videos or photos of fun and humor. Results also indicated that the social connectedness brought about by these social groups played crucial roles in maintenance of relationships with romantic partners and colleagues who were both students and non-students. Prior research has similarly associated use of mobile phones for establishment of peer connections (Ringrose et al, 2013). Perceived usefulness suggested by TAM offers a perfect framework for providing explanations on the importance of social media applications- especially the ability to send messages privately using inbox, broadcast messages to multiple recipients, and create or virtual social groups.

Results of this research further suggest that social groups served as profound channels for sharing sexting materials. Private sex chat groups which comprised of close and trusted friends who physically knew each other were used to share self-made sexual images. These closely-knit virtual communities were particularly used by some female participants to share sexually inclined materials relating to dating, sexual interests, sexual activities and experiences. Female participants also used these platforms to share images of their breasts and derriere in order to receive feedback. 'Sexualisation' of culture framework, which is thoroughly elaborated in the literature review of this study, posit that media socialize girls to seek appreciation, feedback and approval on their beauty, sexiness and other aspects of self-concept (Feona & Smith, 2014; Karaian & Meyl, 2015). In addition, results show that participants were members of densely knit virtual communities of strangers and online acquaintances, especially on Facebook and Telegram. These open groups always posted sex videos and professionally produced pornography and students interested in consumption of such content always visited these groups.

Findings of present study are consistent with studies which have illuminated the popularity of social groups and virtual communities among adolescents. These studies have reported that online communities and associations play a significant role in the digital lives of young people (Severson et al, 2014; Strassberg et al, 2014). Ndlela & Mulwo (2017) found out that college students in Kenya used several social groups on WhatsApp and Facebook to "(re)establish and maintain contacts with their former classmates, current classmates, and family members, among others" (p.6). These digital spaces provide convenient platforms for Kenyan youth to interact, share stories and

information regarding activities of their everyday experiences, and "interrogate issues represented in the mainstream media" (Ndlela & Mulwo, 2027: p. 3). Patterns of use of virtual groups by participants of this study agree with observations by Code & Zaparyniuk (2010). They observe that ubiquity of online groups and communities are predominantly due to growth, expansion and prominence of community-based social interactions. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that scientific studies conducted in Kenya and elsewhere have failed to thoroughly investigate how interactions on online social groups interplay with exchange of sexting materials.

The findings established that participants enacted different modes of interactions on social media and instant messaging applications. This in turn increased the extent of sexting and usage of the social applications to perform sexting activities. They enacted synchronous and asynchronous interactions, switched between group-level and user-level interactions, and implemented both permanent and temporarily user-level conversations. Group-level interaction was mostly enacted when participants wished to broadcast messages to multiple participants in social groups. Past studies have not analyzed how social media and instant messaging applications foster different kinds of interactional modes and the kind of identities that are projected during such interactions. In the context of TAM, positive perceptions about the ability to enact various modes of interaction and broadcast messages to multiple users should be linked to perceived usefulness predicator. These kinds of perceived usefulness make social applications to report high usage in terms of sending and receiving sexting messages (Lippmann and Campbell, 2014).

5.3.2 Sexting and everyday social practices of young people

Empirical findings of this study revealed that sexting was interrelated with different daily social activities participants were involved in. These social activities were related to practices of dating and forming romantic relationships, peer-social interactions and conversations, and consumption of internet pornography. In fact, dating status and peer activities influenced many aspects of students' sexting behaviors in this study. It was revealed that participants mostly exchanged sexual messages with romantic partners and trusted colleagues during interpersonal or group interactions that took place both online and offline. These findings are consistent with past studies that have revealed that young people use digital technologies to create and send sexting messages in consensual relationships, especially when flirting with a present partner or seeking out prospective partners (Englander, 2012; Henderson, 2011; Perkins et al, 2014).

Sexting was more prominent in dating relationships and peer-to-peer- conversations because these happened to be the main daily social-sexual interactions participants were involved in both online and offline. Similarly, past studies have majorly mentioned dating and peer-social engagements as the most probable contexts in which exchange of raunchy messages take place (Drouin et al. 2013, Walker et al. 2011; Ringrose et al., 2012). Use of mobile phones to send sexing messages in romantic relationships is succinctly captured by Walrave et al:

> *It is plausible that young people engaged in a romantic relationship encounter occasions for sexting more often. In this way, it could be that they feel more inclined to initiate sexting or to respond to their partner's request for sexting* (2014: 5)

Empirical findings of the present study revealed that in romantic relationships sexting was considered a convenient way of communicating sexual interests and expressing affection. A section of participants said that when they flirted and played with romantic partners through sexual messages, the experience was fun, self-fulfilling and somehow led to achievement of sexual satisfaction. Some girls exchanged sexual messages with romantic partners to enhance dating relationship, experience sexual satisfaction and express affection. For example, the married female participant sent images of her genitals to the husband as a way of expressing affection and maintaining the marriage. She believed that the husband would remain faithful and focused on her after looking at the images. Thus, she perceived sexting as a way of enhancing intimacy, showing affection and faithfulness towards a marriage partner. Most prior studies have mentioned dating or sexual relationships as one the major contexts in which consensual sexting occurs among young adults (Cooper et al, 2016; Van Ouytsel et al, 2016; Anastassiou, 2017)

It is worth to note that a number of studies have examined benefits of sexting in dating relationships but tend to suggest mixed results. Some of them have validated the standpoint that sexting is a healthy activity that promotes development of intimacy and maintenance of relationships (Harris, 2017). For instance, Burkett (2015) found out that sexting was used to express love and affection towards members of the opposite sex. The contrary argument is that sexting is unnecessary in enhancement or maintenance of relationships. For example, Currin et al. (2016) suggested that sexting deteriorated satisfaction in relationships.

As described in literature review, sexting tends to escalate during adolescence and young adulthood. This is the age of sexual exploration, expression and forming sexual

relationships (Eraker, 2010; Hasinoff, 2010). Further, previous research has shown that the adolescent phase is characterized by "physical, emotional and social changes" (Walrave et al, 2014, p. 5). During literature review, it was also demonstrated how sexual expression, exploration and identity formation frameworks explain why sexting escalated during adolescent stage. In these frameworks, sexting is interpreted as a normal adolescent activity, and part of identity formation, sexual exploration and expression, and maintenance of sexual relationships (Hasinoff, 2010; Suzanne, 2013; Morey, 2013).

In addition, in the literature review it was noted that proponents of 'social emancipation' and sexual agency frameworks consider sexting as a healthy form of sexual expression among adolescents who are developing into sexual being (Hasinoff, 2015; Body, 2014). Emancipation frameworks consider adolescence as a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. In this critical stage, social-sexual skills useful later in life must be developed. These skills include issues related to sex and sexuality, dating, interpersonal and group communication (Judge, 2012; Hasinoff, 2015).

On the contrary, some scholars argue that during adolescence, mental and psychological capacity is still not fully developed. Therefore, self-agency required to make independent judgment and resist external influence from peers and other elements of socialization is nonexistent (Hasinoff, 2010; Eraker 2010). As such, adolescents are more likely to engage in sensation seeking and risk-taking behaviors like sexting than their adult counterparts (Scalese et al, 2014; Pearce, 2013; Gasso et al, 2019 Galbraith & Conner, 2015).

In the context of TPB, if sexting is associated with positive outcomes related to ways of enhancing intimacy and showing affection during dating, students in romantic relationships are likely to engage in the behavior more. Furthermore, when a dating partner approves sexting as a way of maintaining the relationships or expressing love or affection, desire for sexting will increase in romantic relationships. Lippman and Campbell (2012) found that girls in romantic relationships engaged in sexting to receive male approval. Walrave et al (2014) concur that "sexting occurs primarily within the context of existing or future romantic relationships" (p.5). Therefore, if people within romantic relationships hold positive perceptions about the importance of sexting, they are likely to engage in the behavior more (Lippman & Campbell, 2012). When dating partners are a source of influence to undertake sexting, then they become "important normative referents" (Walrave et al, 2014, p. 4).

Further, as earlier pointed out, findings of this study revealed that sexting frequently took place in activities related to group and interpersonal interactions and conversation that occurred both online and offline among close and trusted colleagues. Sexting was described as a way of group association and form of peer identity. It was established that some participants used mobile phones to share sexting images and videos in order to fit or get recognized among colleagues and members of online social groups. Most participants interpreted sexting behaviors of their colleagues as driven by desire to adhere to social norms and pressure in their peer groups.

These findings are consistent with other studies that recognize the role of peers and peer groups in predicting use of mobile phones and performing sexting activities (Ringrose et al, 2012; Lippman and Campbell 2014). Young people sometimes participate in sexting

to conform to group norms, gain peer acceptance and popularity in their peer reference groups (Ringrose et al., 2012; Vandeen Abeele, Campbell, Eggermont & Roe, 2014). Burkett (2015) found that girls sometimes show or share self-made naked images with fellow girls in order to elicit feedback on their physical appearance. Boys show or share naked pictures with each other to gain peer status and recognition (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone 2013; Cooper et al., 2016).

In tandem with TPB, perceptions of peer norms and attitudes influence young people to engage in creation and distribution of sexual content and engage in other problematic sexual behaviors (Jewell and Brown, 2013; Lippman and Campbell 2012; Van Ouytse et al., 2017). Young people sometimes use smartphones to send sexting materials in order to conform to group norms and gain peer acceptance and popularity in their peer reference group (Ringrose et al., 2012; Vandeen Abeele et al, 2014).

Apart from peer pressure and perceptions on social norms, romantic partners were also found to exert influence on most students to engage in sexting. In terms of dating status, as shown in table 3.3, majority (39 out of 65) of the participants were in a dating or sexual relationship. Findings indicated that relationship status was one of the major determinants of students' engagement in sexting. In fact, almost all participants in romantic relationships confessed to having exchanged explicit content with the partner. It was as well established that nearly all participants, including those who were not in dating relationships, had positive attitudes towards exchanging sex text messages with a romantic partner. For instance, one of the female participants asked,*"what else do people in dating relationships do if not sexting chatting"*.

During literature review, it was noted that as adolescents develop into adults, they tend to drift away from parental control and form affection for peer groups and dating partners. As such, they spend more time with friends and romantic partners than parents and therefore activities and actions of these peer groups greatly influence their attitudes, norms and behaviors (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014; Jewell & Brown, 2013). In other words, as adolescents strive to be more autonomous and independent, peers and friends become more important social elements than parents and family (Walrave et al, 2014). As endorsed by TPB, adolescence sexting behaviors are to a great extent influenced by the peer norms (Ringrose et al, 2012; Temple et al, 2012).

Findings of this study further linked exchange of self-generated sexting messages with searching, download and sharing commercial online pornography. Most prior studies have not explored the intricate association of consumption of internet pornography and exchange of own sexting images and photos. Moreover, this study revealed that sexting and consumption of internet pornography were associated with sexual behaviors such as experience of sexual arousal and preoccupation with sex. It was noted that besides expressing love and affection, sex videos or photos and text messages were used to stimulate sexual partner or express interest in sexual activities. Use of smartphones to share sexual materials was perceived as a catalyst for heighted sexual activity. Most participants perceived use of smartphones as having made it easy to start relationships, and hasten the process of initiating and actualizing sexual encounter among young people.

These findings are consistent with studies which have revealed that sexting is associated with problematic sexual behaviors and negative attitudes (Ringrose et all, 2012; Lippman

and Campbell 2012; Temple et al., 2014). During literature review it was noted that adolescents who are sexually active tend to send more sexting messages than those that do not engage in sexual activities (Walrave et al, 2014; Ringrose et al, 2011).

TPB presumes that intention is a strong predictor for actual and self-reported behaviors (Ajzen, 1991, Walrave et al, 2014). Attitudes that are held by a person about a particular behavior strongly influence intentions (Ajzen, 1991). If students do not associate their sexting activities and sexual behaviors with negative outcomes, the intention and consequent recording of sexual activities will be high. Further, when students who have positive attitudes towards sexual activities and expect sexting to stimulate partners, they will increase the frequency of sexting with the intention of stimulating the partner into sexual activity.

Consumption of pornography and sexting was further perceived to be intertwined with media representation of sex and sexual ideals. Students were said to frequently consume commercial pornography and sexualized imagery of celebrities posted on Instagram and Facebook to attract attention. When young girls view sexually explicit photos or videos of celebrities, they are likely to record and post their own raunchy photographs to satisfy the perceived wider social expectations and norms regarding women's beauty, sexuality and sexiness.

In the present study, an interesting dimension was brought out by some participants who associated sexting with positive outcomes. Girls who engaged in sexual conversations with trusted female colleagues through girls only private sex chat groups discussed topics on sex, dating, sexual identity and other feminine related issues. They considered sexting

as an important source of information on sex skills and styles. Furthermore, they perceived exploring sexual matters with fellow girls away from boys as a form of sexual empowerment and emancipation.

Emancipation' framework, described earlier, conceptualizes how mobile phones 'emancipate' young people (Hasinoff, 2013). Nevertheless, scholars should critically evaluate how mobile phones 'emancipate' girls to produce and express sexiness, beauty and sexual desires in a misogynist society. The researcher of the present study argues that that creating and displaying sexual images by girls does not in any way equate to power and agency. It only reinforces the masculine construction of female sexuality, which is dangerous because men can disempower, manipulate and control girls/women by making them victims of their own sexual expression.

In addition, the present study revealed that most participants did not discuss topics related to issues on sex and sexuality at home with parents or at school with teachers. Sexuality issues in many societies in Kenya are shrouded in taboos and myths (Chege & Wanjiru, 2017). As such, the internet and peers become important sources of sex related information. A relevant challenge is that peers and the internet are likely to provide invalid or misleading information. With reference to TPB, the belief that sexting is a source of useful information about sex skills and styles, and use of such information would enhance romantic relationships is likely to make girls hold positive attitudes about sexting.

During data collection for this study, slightly more than half of participants lived away from their parents. Majority lived with relatives, friends in hostels or rented rooms and

other non-family members. Details of these are provided in table 3.3. Two male participants described how watching pornography and intimate sexual activities happened in rented rooms and hostels away from school. Another male participant (described earlier) explained how close friends expected to be shown the videos recorded when girlfriends visited the boys in rented rooms. All participants observed that their parents or caregivers neither checked what they did online nor inspected the contents of their mobile phones. Hence, their habits and pattern of using mobile phones had no parental control or restrictions. Challenges of sexual relationships and some of the activities youth perform using mobile phones require advices and parental guidance (Wallis, 2010; Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014). Young people whose parents guided them on sexual matters were less likely to have sex and also maintain fewer sexual partners (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014; Haglund & Fehring, 2010).

A critical contribution of the present study is illuminating on the likelihood of sexting to take place in transactional sexual relationships. This context and terrain of mobile mediated sexting has not been highlighted by previous studies. Numerous studies exist on transactional sexual relationships in different contexts (Robinson & Yeh, 2011; Stoebenau, Heise, Wamoyi & Bobrova, 2017; Muchomba, 2014). Nevertheless, none of these studies has taken a dimension that examines how sexting could be part of activities in transactional sexual relationships. This study therefore sheds some light on this important context of sexting. Merge of sexting and transactional sex is likely to make it difficult to address issues related with risky both sexual behaviors. Both transactional sex and sexting are associated with serious psychosocial consequences.

5.3.3 Navigating issues related to perceived concerns and challenges of sexting

Empirical findings of the current study revealed that participants were concerned about the association of sexting with a number of negative psychological impacts. They mostly mentioned damage of reputation and shaming, loss of friendships, poor academic performance and low self-esteem as possible dangers of sexting. Nevertheless, participants were apparently more concerned with unwanted showing or forwarding of their sexting messages to unauthorized recipients than other negative perceptions.

Responses of the students studied are consistent with findings of prior studies which show that forwarding or showing sexting messages without consent of the sender is considered the greatest danger of sexting (Campbell and Lippman, 2014; Cooper et al., 2016; Anastassiou, 2017; Ringrose et al., 2012). Self-produced sexting content could easily be (re)distributed without consent of the sender, a phenomenon known as "escalated sexting" (Anastassiou, 2017) or "revenge porn" (Eraker, 2010). Victims of escalated sexting are likely to suffer psychological and emotional torture, and negative self-judgment. Experiences of social sanctions and psychological problems borne by victims of sexting 'gone wrong' are explicated by several scholar (Yeung et al., 2014; Lippman and Campbell 2014; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016 ;Asatsa et al, 2017; Crawford & Goggin, 2011).

With reference to TPB, peer groups who are key reference "affects adolescents' attitudes and behaviors" (Walrave et al, 2014, p.4). As noted earlier, most sexting activities performed by participants in the current study involved more than one person, either colleagues or dating partners. If students feel that their colleagues will judge them

positively, they are likely to have positive attitudes towards sexting. On the other hand, if students feel that colleagues will judge them negatively (social shaming), let's say use derogatory labels against them, they are likely to perceive sexting as associated with negative outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). As described in the previous sections, the way adolescents engage in sexting depends on whether they have negative or positive outcomes (Temple et al, 2012; Walker et a, 2013). When sexting is associated with perceived dangers, for example public communication or unauthorized distribution of the sexting photos, students are likely to form negative attitudes about the behavior.

Another critical contribution of the present study is shedding some light on how young people negotiate issues of concern and challenges they experience during sexting. As a way of negotiating and navigating perceived concerns and challenges, participants used a number of safety strategies and communicative safeguards. It was noted that these measures were employed to primarily reduce harms in case the sexually inclined messages they shared with their romantic partners or friends were shown or forwarded to other recipients without their consent.

During processes of dating and peer-social conversations and interactions, the safety practices participants deployed incorporated deleting recorded or received sexting messages, use of 'inbox' to exchange private messages, switching off and on (mute/block) contacts they did not intend to interact with, and use of password protected folders to lock-in private content. Further, they showed without transferring to another phone raunchy content they received from romantic partners and trusted friends. While navigating and posting controversial content in open social groups with densely knit membership, participants were observed to have used accounts with fake names. Use of

pseudonyms or fake names, mostly on Facebook was motivated by the desire to preserve privacy and manage identity when sharing sexual content with strangers on densely knit virtual groups. Findings showed that 'mute' or blocking of certain contacts was a strategy to stop receiving or getting request to send self-made sexually explicit images.

It was further established that instead of recording and sending videos or photos of their naked bodies or sexual activities, most participants composed and sent sex text messages instead. When composing the sex text messages, they used symbols, codes and slangs instead of direct expressions. This was done to make the text messages harder to decipher in case they were sent to unwanted recipients. Burkett (2015) observed that young people sometimes devise their own terminologies which they use when engaging in sexting.

Use of verbal safeguards in the form of verbal warning such as 'don't show anyone' or 'don't judge me wrongly' were mentioned to be common among close friends who showed each other or exchanged explicit content. The act of showing or sharing explicit messages with trusted friends and dating partners only was interpreted as a means of protecting the private content from moving out of the 'protected circles'. It seemed that trusted friends and partners were expected to exercise responsibility of protecting the person shown in the image from perceived social shame by not forwarding or sharing the images with other people.

Findings of this study showed that recording of naked photos without the face especially among some female participants who shared such content with romantic partners was also interpreted as a way of achieving safe sexting. It was considered a way of

negotiating safe sexting in the sense that the person would deny or exonerate himself in case the raunchy videos or photos were shared with other parties.

These findings are consistent with some of the observations made by Milton et al (2019) in a study of sexting among youth in Australia. They found out that the respondents employed a number of safety measures to deal with perceived consequences. These measures included deleting content they had posted online when it was deemed to be inappropriate, avoidance of posting illicit content and protecting their identity by concealing their "real names, addresses and phone numbers" (p. 9). Generally, there is dearth of scientific literature on how young people address issues of safety concerns when exchanging sexually inclined messages.

The researcher of the present study argues that the safety strategies and communicative safeguards participants used as a way of negotiating perceived safety concerns would be ineffective in addressing negative experiences associated with youth sexting. For instance, use of verbal warnings would not prevent undesired forwarding especially when friendship disintegrates or relationships break up. Sharing explicit content with trusted colleagues or romantic partners only is not safe either for the same reasons. Trusted colleagues or dating partners could still share with other people despite the sender's verbal warning not to do so. In fact, participants were aware of the downside of this safeguard although they still used it.

Use of 'inbox' facility to engage in explicit conversations and share private content would not be considered safe either. It was noted that in all cases of conversations that occurred through 'inbox', participants did not indicate that the receiver was under

obligation to keep such conversations secretive. Talking about being in possession of naked photos or videos from someone without forwarding was not safe because such could spark off rumors among students to the extent of bringing shame to the person being discussed about. The female participants who posted images of their breasts on girls' private sex chat groups could not guaranteed that the images would never be shared outside the closed group. The images could be posted to other groups especially when the members in the private chat group part ways or the group disengages.

In other words, none of the strategies participants used to negotiate perceived concerns would be said to be tamper proof. In my view, justifications for use of such safety measures in light of challenges associated with sexting amounts to lack of proper information and knowledge. The strategies participants talked about could not address the dangers and challenges associated with sexting, especially the problem of unwanted distribution. Further, sexting is associated with engaging in dangerous sexual behaviors, which participants in this study confessed about but were not keen to note that as a serious issue. It was earlier noted that some participants were victims of the link between sexting and problematic sexual behaviors, and this was a major concern to them.

5.3.4 Proposed model to address perceived concerns and challenges of youth sexting

As described earlier, participants of the current study gave divergent opinions on the measures that should be put in place to address concerns and challenges youth experience while sexting. Findings indicated that awareness campaigns and programs designed to keep youth busy with constructive activities were considered worthwhile strategies. In addition, technological solutions, in the form of social applications with facilities that would discourage unwanted forwarding of sexting messages were suggested. Some of the

participants in support of technological solutions alleged that preventive measures would not succeed provided that young people have sophisticated smartphones and access to the internet.

The researcher of the present study however argues that developing technological solutions only could not address issues associated with youth sexting. Technological devices such as smartphones and the internet are social artifacts and therefore fostering positive norms and perceptions on how these tools should be used would be more effective than modifying their inherent functionalities. One of the effective ways to address the challenges of sexting is the use of strategies that build the capacity of the youth by equipping them with the right information, knowledge and skill on a wide range of both online and offline issues. Such initiatives should adopt holistic approaches to bring together the different agents of the socialization processes to suggest initiatives that promote development of youth with the desired knowledge and skills. Based on the findings, the study suggested a framework that advocates for concerted efforts of adults, policy makers, practitioners, researchers and others to provide youth with information and opportunities to learn about expected behaviors and use of ICTs. The details of the proposed framework are provided in the next chapter.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, a summary and discussion of the findings and insights obtained from each research question has been provided. Discussion of the findings was done in light of theories and related literature. The study was guided by four research questions.

The first research question explored perceptions of students on how smartphones were used with regard to sexting activities. The findings established that students had positive perceptions about privacy and control afforded by smartphones to communicate, share information and exchange sexually inclined messages with romantic partners and colleagues. It was established that activities of peers and dating partners influenced how smartphones were used and perceptions of their interactional capabilities. Besides, use of pseudonyms or fake identities to post controversial content, switching between user-level and group-level interactions during chatting, and ability to enact synchronous and asynchronous conversations were interpreted as important interactional characteristics of social applications in relation to sexting.

The second research question sought to understand how sexting through smartphones was intertwined with daily social activities of the selected students. The findings showed that exchange of sexting messages pertained to daily processes of dating and forming romantic relationships, peer-social interactions and conversations, and searching, downloading and exchanging online pornography. Moreover, it was established that exchange of explicit content in dating and peer social interaction was interrelated with certain sexual activities such as casual sex and experience of buildup of sexual tension, expression of sexual activities and experiences. Some of the participants perceived exchange of explicit content using smartphones in light of positive opportunities and outcomes.

The third research question sought to understand concerns participants had around daily experiences of sexting. The findings revealed that participants had valid concerns that revolved around perceptions of dangers and challenges of sexting, poor child-parent

communication on a wide range of sexual issues, need for information and support programs, invention of 'safe' sexting methods, and social risks related to unwanted forwarding of privates messages. The empirical findings further revealed that a number of safety measures and communicative safeguards were used to primarily address issues perceived as likely to come as a result of unwanted forwarding or showing of their sexting messages. It was revealed that students considered unwanted distribution of their sexting messages as the greatest danger. As such, measures employed were meant to reduce perceived harms in case their sexting messages were shown or forwarded to unintended recipients.

The last research question calls on the study to suggest a framework to address the concerns and challenges youth in MLCs experience while sexting. The study established that some students had mixed feelings and wrong ideas on the best ways to deal with their concerns surrounding sexting. Majority of them preferred programs that promote education, guidance, moral support and constructive engagement of youth. Some of the participants however preferred invention of technological solutions as ways that would allow the youth to engage in sexting safely. A section of them felt that efforts put forth to curb sexting would fail since smartphones and internet used to access and exchange sexting content are deeply integrated in the daily lives of modern youth.

Generally, the study concluded that students had misconceptions about effective ways to address issues of sexting and misuse of digital media. Consequently, a framework that conceptualizes how elements of the social environment should operate together in developing strategies that counter negative perceptions and norms about sexting and socialize youth with the right information and knowledge on use of digital media

technologies was formulated. In the next chapter, further details of the proposed framework are presented.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

OF SEXTING

6.1 Overview

This chapter presents more details about the proposed framework postulated to address concerns and challenges of sexting and instill the right information and knowledge on usage of digital media technologies. The proposed framework was postulated with insights of empirical findings obtained mostly from the fourth research question of this study. The findings of the third research question of this study also contributed to the formulation of the model. The third research question analyzed the concerns and challenges the participants had around sexting and how they navigated these issues during their sexting activities. The fourth question explored and analyzed participants' perspectives on what they thought could be done to tackle concerns and challenges of sexting among MLC students in Kenya. Analysis of their responses contributed to the formulation of the model. The literature review and theories that guided the study supplemented the details used to contextualize and construct the model.

As described in chapters four and five, the findings suggested that most participants' concern was how to address the issue of showing or forwarding to other people sexting messages they exchanged with dating partners or trusted friends. As such, some of them proposed technological solutions in the form of applications with functions that would prevent forwarding of private messages without consent of the sender. Furthermore, it was established that a number of measures and communicative safeguards were used to

navigate and address the perceived concerns and dangers associated with sexting. Besides technological solutions, the majority proposed educational and prevention initiatives that would incorporate guidance and counseling, awareness programs and constructive activities to keep the youth busy.

The findings concluded that participants demonstrated lack of adequate information on how to address issues related to sexting and dysfunctional use of smartphones. For example, participants did not realize that technology is a social artifact and therefore cultivating positive peer norms on how to use mobile applications is likely to be more effective than modifying their functionalities. Change of sexting norms such as teaching youth how to respect the privacy and security of other people would greatly address problems of unwanted forwarding and how smartphones are used to share private messages (Hasinoff, 2013).

It was further noted that the majority of the participants in this study perceived sexting to be normal, common and necessary in romantic relationships, and a suitable way of killing boredom. In addition, it was revealed that some male and female participants shared self-created explicit images with close and trusted colleagues to receive feedback and achieve recognition. Addressing issues of peer pressure, negative social norms and perceptions about sexting would greatly help discourage the behavior. As described earlier, peer pressure and perceptions of sexting norms have been found to be key determinants of sexting in a number of past studies (Ringrose et al, 2013; Cooper et al., 2016). With reference with TBP, peer norms and attitudes influence young people to engage in creation and dissemination of sexually inclined messages and use of such content in

expression of sexual behaviors and activities (Jewell & Brown, 2013; Lippman and Campbell 2012; Van Ouytse et al., 2017).

Consequently, this study proposes a framework that encourages use of collaborative approaches to develop strategies that empower youth to develop the right attitudes, social norms and behaviors about sexting, and that instill the right information, knowledge and competencies on the use of digital media technologies. The researcher of the present study concurred with participants who proposed the need to reexamine the role of media technologies and industry, as a way of addressing sexting from a wider perspective.

In tandem with TPB, increased knowledge and information about consequences associated with risky activities is likely to promote positive behavior change. For instance, adolescents with the right information about the dangers of sexting are likely to develop negative attitudes and perceptions about the activity, and consequently shun the behavior. In addition, exposure to the right information and perceptions is likely to promote healthy discussions and conversations about dangers of sexting among young people during online and offline interactions. In the next section, the building blocks (elements) of the proposed framework are presented.

6.2 Building Blocks of the Proposed Framework

The proposed model conceptualizes four constructs that critically analyze and describe how agents of socialization processes should collaboratively work together to shape youth behavior and attitudes. Each construct examines the roles of different social elements with regard to bringing up children and youth with the right information, knowledge and skills, and positive perceptions and norms. The proposed framework is

conceptualized as a holistic approach with two interacting zones; information and knowledge on one end and action and sustainability on the other. The identified elements include: Education and awareness, media technologies and industry, societal accountability, and guild responsibility. **Figure 6.1,** represents a diagram of how the suggested elements are organized and interact.

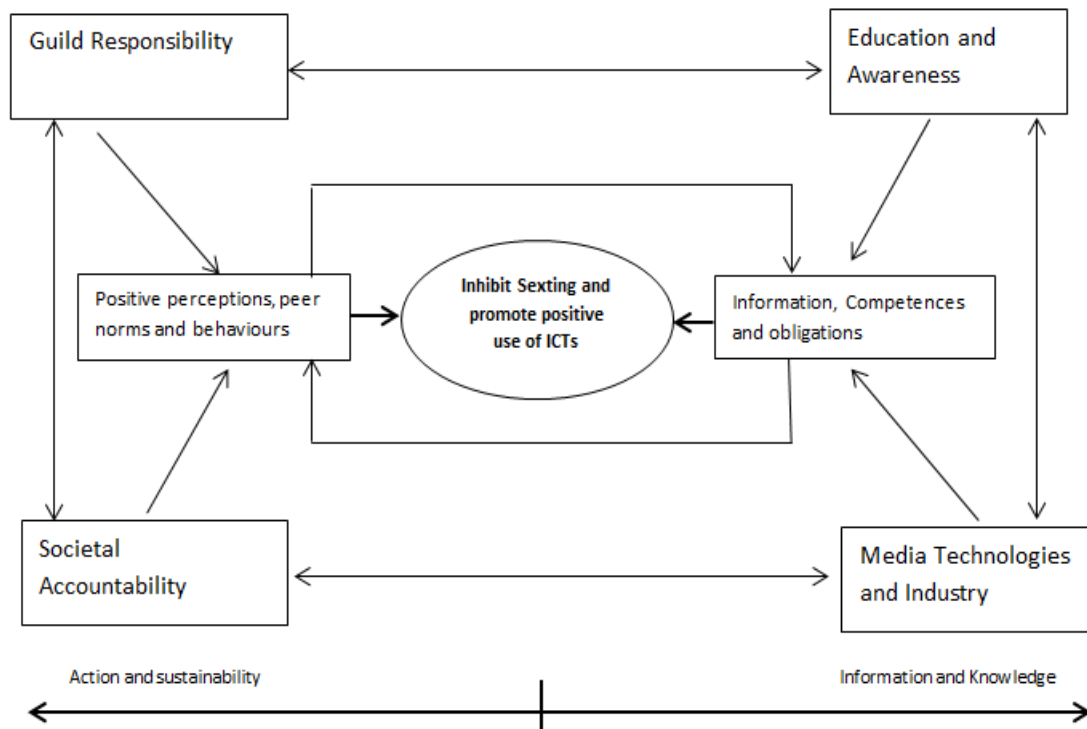**Figure 6.1: Proposed framework to mitigate sexting and promote positive digital media use (Author, 2018)**

6.2.1 Education and Awareness

The study observed that students do not have the right information about sexting and rarely discusses its consequences with peers and friends. This situation makes the young people rely on misconceptions and negative perceptions when engaging in sexting and

related risky online activities. The proposed framework recommends design of education programs and awareness campaigns that equip adolescents with desired social norms, attitudes and perceptions about sexting, and instill right information, knowledge and competencies about use of ICTs. These strategies should particularly focus on social dangers and legal ramifications of sexting, and how to deal with misconceptions youth hold about the behavior. The education and awareness programs should be developed in close consultation and regular communication with parents and other experts like teachers, policymakers and psychologists.

Literature review showed that the widely held misconceptions may encourage youth to engage in sexting in order to conform to perceived norms (Hasinoff, 2014; Eraker, 2010; Judge, 2012). In this study, it was noted in a number of instances that subjective misconceptions that sexting is normal and important in dating relationships might make college students overestimate the level and nature of sexting activities of their peers. Education campaigns and awareness programs should as well enlighten teachers, parents and policymakers on how youth perceive challenges and opportunities of sexting. The findings showed that most of the participants felt that issues of sex and sexuality are not properly taught at school and home, and therefore most young people rely on internet and peers for such information. Getting sex information from peers and internet only increases the chance of acquiring misconceptions and invalid facts.

Participants in this study observed that awareness campaigns would have a great impact on sensitizing young people about the consequences of sexting. Though the majority believed that it would be hard to eradicate sexting, a section of them felt that young people require parental guidance, counseling, education, moral support and an effective

way of keeping them busy and this way sexting would subside. In previous studies the style and role of parenting have been reemphasized (Doring, 2014; Wallis, 2011; Norman, 2017). Family and parenting behaviors such as parent-child communication have been identified as primary contexts within which young people learn skills and knowledge used later in life to navigate peer-social interactions and romantic relationships (Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014). Norman (2017) argues that "parenting behaviors and the parent-adolescent relationship may offer important insights into the process that lead to adolescent sexting (p. 19).

Literature review indicated that "perceived social norms of peers [are] the most important predictors of adolescents' intentions to engage in sexting" (Van Ouystel *et al*, 2017, p.5 ; Walrave *et al,* 2014; Walrave *et al,* 2015). In the present study, it was established that perceived harms associated with sexting are peer managed. Nevertheless, peers lack relevant skills to provide necessary support. As such, the model recommends youth to be provided with information, skills and competencies on how to support peers suffering harms as a result of sexting. Further, they should be taught how to deal with personal issues in case they became victims of escalated sexting. Prior studies have shown that when peers are involved in counseling programs it is easier for them to influence the behaviors of their colleagues (Harris *et al.*, 2010; Walrave *et al.*, 2014; Phippen, 2012).

Findings showed that a number of female participants experienced unpleasant online solicitations which they interpreted as harassment. Furthermore, though highly contested, a section of participants were concerned that some romantic partners pressurized in order to be sent naked photos. In response, the proposed model recommends that awareness about the laws and acts that touch on sexting should be increased. Young people should

particularly be educated about the legal obligations, their rights and responsibilities, and the importance of laws on child pornography and inappropriate exposures. Moreover, adolescents need training on laws and statutes on cyber safety, pornography, cyber bullying, and computer misuse. By doing so, young people might realize the importance of digital responsibility and thus stop engaging in inappropriate exposures such sexting and forwarding of sex images and videos of other people. In addition, it is important to empower youth on how to respond in case they were victims of escalated sexting. Besides, education initiatives should focus on attainment of broader skills needed for positive use of the internet and related ICTs.

Parents are considered to be fundamental stakeholders in school-based initiatives and responses (Barrense-Dias *et al.*, 2016; Norman, 2017). Therefore, the proposed model recommends that parents and caregivers be effectively trained on how to assist their children deal with misconceptions and negative consequences of sexting. In the current study it was established that parents rarely checked what participants did on their smartphones. This is disadvantageous in case parents need to guide their children on responsible digital media use. It was further noted by participants that parents rarely delved deeper into sexual matters with their children. Literature indicates that sexting is related to parenting styles, communication systems within the family or cultural value systems in the family and wider community (Hasinoff, 2012; Walker et al, 2013; Ringrose *et al.*, 2012). As such, the proposed framework emphasizes an educational system that promotes healthy and constructive dialog between parents and children (Wallis, 2011; Phippen, 2012).

Educational initiatives should clearly take care of the development contexts such as proper use of technology to empower oneself. Blocking and muting unwanted conversations was one strategy participants in this present study used to protect and empower themselves when interacting with others online. The proposed framework suggests that parents and caregivers should be equipped with skills on how to control, monitor and check ways children use internet and mobile applications. For instance, how to limit the amount of time young people use on smartphones and internet, and inspecting the contents of social accounts, and how to educate their teens on responsible media use. This study revealed that exchange of explicit content sometimes took place at night when parents and siblings were asleep. Further, parents should teach teens some norms that relate to responsible media use, for instance setting limits on the amount of time or time during the day when they should use social media. Moreover, ensuring that adolescents do not use the phones to chat at night would be a good way of discouraging sexting.

Furthermore, parents and caregivers need to be taught how to support their children in case they learnt they were sexting. They particularly need to understand how to offer guidance and moral support incase children suffers psychological torture caused by risky online activities. Nearly all of the participants of this study felt that parents were likely to reprimand them instead of offering necessary guidance and support in case they knew about their sexting activities. They would not seek guidance and consolation from parents in case they suffered psychosocial problems occasioned by their sexting activities for fear of being perceived as 'bad children'. Several researchers have argued that parents operate without the right information or little understanding about sexting and its associated harms (Wallis, 2011; Madigan *et al.*, 2018; Judge, 2013; Ringrose *et al.*, 2014; Sasson &

Mesch, 2014). This proposed model suggests the need to educate parents in order to instill the required skills and knowledge on the way they should support their children in matters related to sexting and other risky online behaviors. The proposed model envisages an educational curriculum that promotes healthy home setups so that good parent-child relationships can thrive and thus foster constant communication on wide ranges of issues.

Support and awareness that come from family members might make young people develop positive self-concept, self-esteem and confidence required to tackle the challenges of modern day life and use of mobile phones (Norman, 2017). Young people who are adequately nurtured towards positive self-concept will recognize and evaluate situations that pressurize them to share explicit pictures and use the knowledge and strategies they have to deal with such situations. On the flipside, young people who are not nurtured through the right information are likely to yield to social pressure to create and send naked pictures and subsequently suffer consequences of their irresponsible digital actions (Hasinoff, 2013; Pearce, 2013).

When education and awareness is effectively delivered, young people will understand and clearly interpret how sexting is an unacceptable behaviour and therefore strive to be responsible in their digital activities. Merely framing sexting as dangerous and unacceptable without proper information will not make youth shift mindset towards shunning the behaviour. Development of responsible behaviours may mean developing strategies and capabilities to deal with pressure, skewed norms, bullying and antisocial behaviours (Barrense-Dias, 2017; Norman, 2017). Shifting momentum towards increased

awareness, skills and positive self-awareness will ultimately make youth take responsibility for their online and offline activities (Burkett, 2015; Katherine & Twist, 2017).

Young people who are equipped with the right information are likely through their own initiative form campaign groups that advocate for the end of sexting in the contexts of blackmail and coercion. Furthermore, informed youth could teach colleagues how to live and contribute to positive social change aimed at improving relationships, peer social interactions and strengthening positive social perceptions (Walrave *et al.*, 2014).

6.2.2 Media Technologies and industry

The proposed model conceptualizes the role of media technologies and industry with regard to addressing issues of youth sexting in two-fold. Firstly, empowering parents and youth by providing systems and applications with features that control access and distribution of sexual content. Secondly, providing platforms to publish and share information and resources with the youth and other relevant stakeholders on the right skills and knowledge about sexting and desired use of ICTs. As mentioned previously, the findings of this study revealed that some participants preferred the invention of technological solutions that would allow sexting to take place safely rather than eradicating it. Specifically, they wished to have applications that incorporated functionalities that discouraged the receiver of sexting content from forwarding the messages unless authorized by the sender. Moreover, the findings showed that participants used safety measures and communicative safeguards that would reduce perceived dangers in case the intended receiver of their sexting messages shared or

showed such content to other people. It was established that these measures could not guarantee perceived safe exchange of sexting messages.

The researcher concurs with the participants that the role of media technologies and industry should be expanded with regard to extending the scope of addressing youth sexting challenges. Nevertheless, modifying functionalities of the social applications the way participants desired would neither achieve safe sexting nor help manage private digital content efficiently. As explained previously, smartphones are social artifacts and therefore developing youth with the right social norms about privacy and security of other people is likely to make them act responsibly when it comes to sexting. In other words, technological initiatives should strongly be backed up by effective educational programs that teach young people about respecting the privacy and security of other people. These two principles are usually violated whenever someone shares private content of another person without first seeking consent. The proposed model therefore posits that information and resources that seek to promote development of right social norms, perceptions and attitudes about sexting and use of ICTs should be part and parcel of technological interventions.

To achieve the first mentioned role of media technologies, the proposed framework suggests that features should be incorporated in social applications to filter or block processes that involve exchange of sexual content. The basic assumption is that in order to address youth sexting we must reexamine the functions of technological processes young people use to create and exchange explicit content. Success of these technological solutions however need changes to perceptions of social and privacy norms and industry-based incentives and business models that define how people create and share data. In

Table 6.1, a summary of the suggested video and image processing techniques (interactional functionalities) are presented.

Table 6.1: Suggested interactional functionalities

i.	Apps that prevent sharing sexually explicit photos and videos across social media and instant messaging platforms (e.g Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc).
ii.	apps that allow parents/guardians to link/access/check social media profiles to monitor youth and children online activities
iii.	apps that allow youth/parents to block certain activities/operations from performing unwanted processes on their smartphones
iv.	apps/programs that youth/parents can use to block/filter information from the internet that is considered inappropriate
v.	management systems/applications that schools/colleges/universities can use to block/filter websites/links that access pornography
vi.	apps that segregate and remove inappropriate videos/images and provide the useful content during normal web browsing
vii.	social media applications that provide admins of groups/accounts with facilities to delete/block members from posting pornographic materials
viii.	Social media applications with facilities to report accounts involved in unethical cyber activities

To achieve the second stipulated role, the proposed model considers digital media technologies as convenient channels for passing messages with the right information and prevention strategies to the youth. Literature review showed that young people are the

major users of mobile phones, internet and social media for sharing information, communication and web browsing. Therefore, behavior change related information and intervention messages could conveniently be delivered through these technologies. Cornelius & Appiah (2016) consider mobile phones interventions as "effective mode for delivering safe sex and sexual health information to youth." (p. 1). Similarly, Boulos et al (2011) believe that "harnessing the power of mobile phones in today's increasingly mobile world", would effectively foster positive development of the child (p.4). Mobile phones "offers privacy, access to personalized information and convenient, making it a valuable way to provide accurate information about sexual health to adolescents" (Steinberg et al, 2018: p.1).

Mobile technologies have the potential to deliver intervention messages aimed at curbing sexting and other problematic online behaviors among the youth. Despite the rapid increase in use of new media technologies and interactive systems such as Facebook and WhatsApp, these platforms have not been effectively used to teach youth about positive personal and social development. Multimedia systems available on smartphones that youth use to connect to the internet and share information on various social media platforms should be used to provide interactive messages (videos, images, games etc) that foster development of positive perceptions and attitudes.

One-way interaction systems such as SMS have always been used to deliver sexuality and health related information in Africa (Jamison et al, 2013). Nowadays, young people have smartphones with multimedia services, internet and access to social media. Empirical findings in this study show that students frequently use smartphones to connect to the internet, access social media platforms, and watch videos and look at images. Use

of interactive multimedia systems/messages is likely to be more effective in promoting behavior change because multimedia messages appeal to more than one sense of cognition (Grajales et al, 2014). For instance, smartphone-based social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp should be used to send multimedia messages to young people about desired use of media technologies.

As conceptualized by the proposed framework, Table 6.2 provides a summary of the information and resources that could be disseminated through digital media technologies to foster positive social norms and attitudes about sexting and other related online practices, and instill the right skills and knowledge about use of ICTs.

Table 6.2: Information and resources to promote positive behaviors

i. Online workshops/forums/conferences/presentations for teachers/parents on how to provide solutions to online problems experienced by young people e.g how to protect children from predators, bullying etc.

ii. Localized websites with curriculum materials (such as videos/films/drama/songs) complete with interactive tasks and assignments with printable certificates to teach teachers/children about cybercrime, cyber-bullying, defamation, privacy, peer/social pressure.

iii. Interactive games or systems that promote role playing in order to stimulate and promote critical thinking, creative enquiry and collaborative skills in children/youth

iv. Students could create and share content using social media such as videos/short films/dramas about consequences of sexting and bullying.

v. Use of social applications/tools with fact-sheets and URLs that clarify certain information to address misconceptions about prosocial behaviors.

vi. Information and resources on how to manage privacy settings on social media and instant messaging such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc

vii. Software apps that allow the users to search for information on professional guidance and behavior tips offered by psychologists and counselors.

viii. Social apps with sections on how to get professional help/connect with professional health workers/psychologists to deal with health and safety issues.

ix. Localized online materials with information and resources that foster forming positive values, social norms, attitudes about sexting, identity and development of safe and mutual relationships, support skills to communicate and make right decisions, take responsible on sexuality and sexual relationships.

x. Intelligent apps/tools that monitor and target messages on safety practices and programs that tailor make messages to individuals depending on internet and social media use behaviors and activities. The Intelligent systems could collect data about usage behaviors and then target information on safe practices.

xi. app/tools that give feedback on positive behavior change depending on online activities in order to promote self-confidence, efficacy and self-esteem

xii. Tools/programs with active and interactive discussions/participation/thought provoking scenarios for youth to promote peer-social cooperation on addressing challenges related to negative behaviors.

xiii. games/videos that focus on social-emotional development programs in order to develop skills such as judgment, negotiation, kindness and responsibility

6.2.3 Societal Accountability

The model suggests that society is accountable to the kind of people it brings forth. As such, society has a responsibility of bringing up responsible youth who have the right skills, information and knowledge and respect the privacy and security of other people. Literature indicates that sexting is a complex social issue which can be interpreted from multiple dimensions of social interactions. Sexting can be explored and discussed within the context of social organizations and systems. Young people who perpetuate sexting are products of several years of social-psycho development within the complex social systems. Young people are enmeshed in dense webs of people, institutions, information, influence and risk. Society prescribes roles, norms and rules that influence and shape development of children and young people (Walrave *et al.*, 2014). The larger social context, which comprises the culture and subculture where young people grow and live, prescribes general belief systems, values and expectations. The components of these subsystems incorporate the attitudes, ideologies and behaviour patterns that exert influence over the kind and nature of social interactions.

Participants of the present study maintained that the way young people engage in sexting is dependent on important factors of social-sexual socialization. They stated that rules, standards and norms set by the society influences how young people interpret their actions with reference to sexting behaviors. They mentioned the need to analyze how cultural standards, social-economic factors, gender dynamics and sexual double standards, power imbalances between boys and girls, and sexting norms influence the way young people create and share explicit content. Some of them felt that gendered

perceptions of sexting socialize girls to show naked bodies instead of focusing on how to build strong personalities and academic skills.

Concerning media's role in sexual socialization, a number of participants described how visual texts have reinforced sexting as part of youth sexual communicative and expressive culture. As previously explained, some participants argued that technological growth and proliferation of smartphones has rendered young people helpless with regard to creating and sending naked images. Findings of this study showed that sexting was intertwined with media representation of sex and sexual ideals. Participants consumed internet pornography and sexualized images of prominent celebrities on social media.

It was argued that girls are likely to record and post naked photos on public profiles to attract attention and thus satisfy the perceived wider social expectations and norms regarding women's beauty, sexuality and sexiness. Society through its agents of socialization has a responsibility to gradually and consistently challenge the prevailing social-cultural values that relates to issues of power, dating and forming relationships, sexualisation of media, and access to knowledge and information. For example, young people require information on how to respect the privacy and security of other people they relate with both online and offline.

There is need for shift of momentum on the way we teach youth about relationships, power relations, role of gender norms on relationships, sexual abuse and assault, dating and violence because all these are related to sexting. There is need for shift of attitudes and behaviours concerning bullying, perceptions about normality of sexting, positive personal behaviour and development, and harmful activities that are therefore

unacceptable like blackmail, unwanted forwarding of sexting messages, cyberbullying, harassment and more (Madigan et al, 2018; Katherine et al, 2018).

6.2.4 Guild Responsibility

The proposed framework suggests that members of the society should form joint institutions, communities, organizations and forums to research, discuss and develop initiatives meant to address issues related to sexting. Other elements of the model envisage how joint responsibility of all members of the society would be critical when it comes to dealing with negative issues and perceptions related to risky online activities. Specifically, relevant stakeholders such as parents or caregivers, teachers and academicians, media practitioners, policy and law makers, researchers and scientists need to work together to develop relevant programmes and policies, knowledge-base, and information to address sexting and irresponsible digital media use.

Scientists and academicians should strive to produce more scientific data that provide relevant information and theoretical explanations of sexting with emphasis on mitigation strategies. As earlier noted, parents and teachers should form associations that jointly develop awareness and educational programs aimed at equipping adolescents with knowledge on sex, sexuality, relationships, sexting and other digital activities.

Professional organizations and institutions (legal experts, policy makers, education representatives, civil society, youth forums, teacher associations, NGOs etc) need to collaboratively work on legal and policy frameworks, educational curriculum, and other relevant behaviour change communication initiatives. Psychologists, counselors and therapist professionals must be involved in developing guidance protocols, and online

policies that describe mechanisms of offering support to adolescents who exhibit psychosocial problems related to problematic online activities. There is also a need to develop professional guidelines and mechanisms for peer support systems and parent-child communication in order to foster positive perceptions in peer-social and family interactions.

Technology and Industry professionals such as software developers have a role in providing safe digital environments for online activities and appropriate business models that promote protection of privacy and security of users. Media professionals should participate in development and promotion of healthy online experiences and presentations. Intervention strategies developed to address sexting and dysfunctional uses of smartphones are likely to be successful when stakeholders work together. YOSWG (2009) considers prevention education programs developed through the "team approach" as most effective in "combating the problem of sexting" and related risky behaviors (p. 21).

Initiatives and policies developed from joint efforts are crucial because sexting is a complex and multifaceted social issue that should benefit from solutions suggested from diverse and inclusive viewpoints. Collaboration between relevant stakeholders is paramount in order to address wider social perceptions about sexting and other problematic use of smartphones. There is a need to address all the dimensions of the behaviour; cultural, educational, developmental, gendered, power and social hierarchies and more. This legitimately underscores the importance of joint collaboration of professionals and other relevant stakeholders.

6.3 Summary

In this chapter, more details about the proposed framework for addressing problems related to sexting and promoting desirable digital media use have been presented. In the next chapter, a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study in respect to the research questions are provided.

Literature review indicated that societal efforts put forth in response to youth sexting have not succeeded. For example, use of child pornography laws and other judicial procedures has largely proofed ineffective in most countries. Child pornography laws are considered too punitive to deal with sexting that take place in peer social interactions and dating partners among adolescents. Therefore, most scholars advocate for a shift of approach from criminalizing youth sexting to development of educational programs and awareness interventions aimed at corrective action.

There are numerous recommendations to examine teen sexting in the context of everyday socialization process. Consequently, initiatives put forth to address sexting should seek solutions in the wider social context young people live and practice the behavior. Therefore, a holistic approach that conceptualizes sexting as a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon is required. Such an approach requires analysis of how socialization elements that are critical in psycho-social development of young people should collaborate in building preventive efforts and initiatives meant to achieve desired behaviors and social norms with respect to sexting and use of mobile phones.

Based on findings of this study, a framework for addressing concerns and challenges related to sexting and dysfunctional use of ICTs among the youth was formulated. The proposed model suggests constructs that conceptualize and discuss how the agents of the socialization processes should work together in order to develop youth with the right information, knowledge and skills, and positive perceptions and norms. The proposed constructs of the framework include: Education and awareness, media technologies and industry, societal accountability, and Guild Responsibility. The model is conceptualized as a holistic approach with two interacting zones; information and knowledge on one end, and action and sustainability on the other.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Overview

The previous two chapters were dedicated to discussion of the research findings, and the proposed framework respectively. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study in respect to the research questions. A reflection of the researcher with regard to methodology adopted and experience of interviewing young students on sensitive topics (reflexivity) is presented in the last section of this chapter.

7.2 Conclusions

This study set out to investigate how students in MLCs in Nairobi, Kenya, created and sent sexually inclined messages through smartphones with the intention of formulating a framework to address the concerns and challenges pertained to the behavior. The study concluded that smartphones were deeply integrated in the social and sexual communication activities of the college students. The enhanced feeling of privacy and control while using smartphones increased the rate of exchange of sexting content. In addition, the ability to create or join online social groups, switch between user-level and group level interactions during online chatting, and enact synchronous and asynchronous conversations with one or multiple accounts also increased the rate and extent of sexting. From the findings, it can further be concluded that perceived communication characteristics (affordances) of smartphones was related to perceptions of usefulness (suitability) with regard to exchange of sexting messages.

In light of closed and open virtual groups' activities, the study concluded that peer-social interactions influenced the choice of social groups and the nature of activities that took place in these forums. Activities of peers in the social groups were instrumental in the nature of content that was circulated in the groups. Students in private chat groups composed of close friends who physically knew each other were likely to share self-made naked videos and photos compared to those in virtual groups composed of strangers and online acquaintances. This conclusion alludes to possibility of closed social networks being perceived as anonymous and therefore convenient to communicate sexual activities by the members. Further, considering perceptions of peer activities in the social groups and interpersonal interactions, the study concluded that some students participated in sexting to receive peer acceptance or conform to activities of group norms. In light of some female participants' activities in the closed groups, the study concluded that gendered perceptions influence the way girls engage in sexting activities.

A significant conclusion from this study was that sexting was deeply entrenched in the processes of dating and forming romantic relationships, peer social interactions and conversations both online and online, and watching pornography among the selected students. To a large extent, mobile mediated sexting mirrored communication practices that took place in the daily life of the young students. Dating and peer social interactions were the major communication activities students were involved in, both online and offline. It can therefore be concluded that away from home, students formed associations with peers who consequently influenced their perceptions and norms about issues related to their emerging social worlds and communication behaviors. Most participants held positive attitudes and endorsed exchange of explicit text messages in romantic

relationships. It can therefore be concluded that students were eager to form romantic relationships and use smartphones to exchange sexting messages with partners and express sexual behaviors and activities through videos and images.

Another important conclusion of this study is that students perceived sexting to be associated with both negative experiences and positive outcomes. It was concluded that sexting and use of pornography were considered to be convenient practices of exploring information on topics related to dating and romance, sex, sexuality and gender identity. It was further concluded that use of sexting content to explore and discuss sexual issues away from the boys was perceived as a way of enhancing sexual empowerment and emancipation by some girls.

The study further concludes that in dating and marriage, sexting was perceived as a convenient way of expressing love, affection, fantasies and communicating intentions to have sex. In peer social relationships, sexting was considered an important part of digital fun and a common way of killing boredom. The study also drew a conclusion that matters related to sex, sexuality and forming romantic relationships were rarely discussed at home and therefore students used sexting as an alternative to learn about such issues and somehow satisfied their curious minds.

In light of negative experiences, it was concluded that students associated sexting with several challenges, concerns and social risks. Students were more concerned about escalated sexting which they associated with damage of reputation, peer-social and dating relationships, bullying in school, self-exclusion and poor academic performance. Sexting was connected with expression of sexual activities and behaviors, however, students

ignored this association and focused on the social risks to be experienced as a result of unconsented forwarding.

A significant conclusion of the study was that students employed various measures and communicative safeguards to navigate perceived privacy issues during sexting. The measures the students employed were considered likely to reduce perceived social risks in case their sexting messages were shown or shared with other people. Nevertheless, the study concluded that the safety measures and communicative safeguards students used could not eliminate unconsented forwarding and other concerns surrounding sexting.

The study further concluded that students had different perceptions on interventions that could be put place to address the concerns and challenges they faced while sexting. Some preferred invention of technological solutions while the majority favored use of education and awareness initiatives while at the same time considered efforts to mitigate sexting improbable due to proliferation of smartphones and internet among the youth. The study as well concluded that most students had misconceptions about sexting and how it was to be dealt with. For instance, the students didn't realize that technology is a social artifact. As such, modifying functions of applications as a way of addressing sexting would be impractical unless effective education programs that teach youth the importance of respecting privacy and security of other people existed. Therefore, this study suggests a framework that conceptualizes and describes how the different social elements of youth socialization should collaborate to develop programs that foster right information and knowledge, and positive perceptions, norms and behaviors.

7.3 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings and discussions put forth about how MLC students used smartphones to create and send sexually-oriented messages and their views on how to mitigate the perceived concerns and challenges surrounding the practice, the research makes the following recommendations:

With regard to the positive perceptions observed about suitability of smartphones for private communication and exchange of sexually content, intervention researchers and communication scholars should develop behavior change programs that promote positive social norms and perceptions with regard to proper use of mobile phones. The same smartphones young people use to perpetuate sexting could be used to disseminate information and knowledge on pro-social behaviors. There is a need for system developers to provide mobile applications that gather personal details of young people involved in sexting. Such information should be used by intervention scholars to target preventive messages and awareness or formulate behavior change programs meant to enlighten youth on psychosocial consequences and responsible use of digital media.

Smartphones support multimedia messages and therefore internet and social media platforms could provide important avenues for preventive scholars to send images, videos, photos, songs and hypertext documents that promote desired behaviors among youth. In the proposed framework, the researcher conceptualizes how smartphones could be used to deliver multimedia resources and services that promote development of right skills and knowledge and foster positive norms and attitudes among young people.

The study also recommends that teachers, parents and experienced content developers should teach young people skills on how to use digital technologies for economic empowerment and employment. Promoting positive ways of using smartphones and other digital technologies is likely to discourage use of smartphones and other digital technologies to create and share explicit content. Using digital technologies meaningfully will take up free time that creates boredom that precipitates sexting among youth.

Sexting was used to explore and learn about sex, sexuality, dating and romance, and gender identity. To improve adolescents' awareness on sex, sexuality and dating, bold and open dialog between teachers, parents and young people on such matters should be encouraged. It is recommended that teachers and health professionals need to focus on development of sex education programs, policies and media awareness campaigns that assist young people to understand the social, health and psychological problems associated with irresponsible online activities and sexual behaviors.

Adolescents are at a stage of forming romance relationships and associations with likeminded peers, therefore parents and teachers can no longer consider talking about sex a taboo. Sexting is related to expression of sexual behaviors and activities and therefore if we shun discussions about sex, sexuality and dating, young people will continue to rely on internet and peers for such information. As previously mentioned, the possibly of getting invalid facts and misleading information from peers and sex websites is profound. In order to promote healthy conversations between adults and children on issues related to sexting, dating and sexuality, the study recommends formulation and implementation of awareness-raising initiatives by intervention scholars in collaboration with teachers and parents. Training parents and teachers on the importance of discussing sexting and

sexual matters with their children can be done through the media and other awareness-raising forums. Schools, seminars and other similar forums can for example organize and provide short films which parents and children could watch together. These films should stress the importance of having healthy discussions on matters related to unhealthy norms on sexting and sexual relationships in the family. The proposed framework conceptualized how healthy parent-child relationships will foster bold and open communication on a wide range of issues affecting the youth. For instance, young people would have the courage to report bullying or psychological problems they experience during sexting and other online activities to parents and seniors. The study established that students would rarely report negative online experiences and sexting activities to parents for fear of being reprimanded and labeled 'bad children'.

Academic institutions need to have curricular that teach about sex, sexting, cyber-bullying and related health issues. In these programs, there is a need for teachers to address short term and long term implications of risky online behaviors and sexting in a way that young people resonate with. The curriculum should demonstrate the link between sexting and peer pressure, cyber bullying, sexual harassment and gendered socialization. Designers of these programs should incorporate a wide range of educational resources like short films, drama, role play etc.

Teachers, school counselors and other communication scientists should focus on efforts that dispel prevailing misconceptions and harmful perceived social norms that promote sexting as normative and common in processes of dating and peer-social interactions. Walker et al (2013) also suggest creation of intervention programs that teach contrary views on normalcy of sexting within dating/sexual relationship. Lippman and Campbell

(2014) similarly support ideas and interventions that address misconceptions about sexting as being common and normative among peers and friends. Misconceptions are likely to make students overestimate sexting activities of their colleagues and thus engage in the activity more to feel accommodated in the peer groups.

The researcher recommends development of awareness programs that challenge gendered perceptions in regard to sexting and related online interactions. Effective communication strategies and media should be used by teachers, counselors and parents in empowerment of girls on how to cope with social pressure on ideals of beauty and sexiness. Girls should be taught negotiation skills and how to deal with pressure from boys. Girls also need skills on how to deal with issues related to negative perceptions about sexuality, beauty, self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth. This study found out that negative perceptions are likely to make girls create and send nude images to boys or colleagues or post on social media in an attempt to seek positive feedback or feel appreciated.

Peer counseling and training programs for students to act as resource persons to colleagues in colleges should be developed by preventive scholars. Designers of these peer counseling programs should consider incorporating private chat groups as mediums of sharing messages of intervention and awareness. Students lack relevant skills, knowledge and information required to help colleagues deal with unpleasant issues and negative experiences of sexting. As such, peer to peer discussions about dangers and challenges of sexting could not yield meaningful information. In addition, peers could not offer necessary moral support and guidance if colleagues suffered problems occasioned by sexting.

This study concluded that besides the misconceptions, most students lacked proper information and knowledge on appropriate interventions to address challenges associated with sexting and improper use of smartphones. Consequently, youth require the right information, skills and competences on how to deal with sexting and related negative online behaviors. This study suggests a model that recommends initiatives (solutions) that address sexting from a holistic perspective. The proposed model is a broad approach that conceptualizes how the different elements of the social environment should make concerted efforts to develop interventions that fosters positive norms and perceptions about sexting and right knowledge and information on digital media use. Such a holistic approach will require strong guild responsibility and linkages of teachers, parents and professional associations in development of behavior communication programs, policies and initiatives required to mold youth into responsible people.

7.4 Contributions of this study to knowledge

This study contributes to the scientific literature in Kenya on how sexting is practiced by young people using mobile phones. The study does this by drawing perspectives, eliciting experiences, and activities on nature of sexting from a diverse sample of students who engaged in this form of sexual communication. The study as well contributes to the global research literature that seeks to unravel the social contexts, experiences and activities of sexting from the perspectives and viewpoints of those who engage in the behavior.

In relation to methodology, the findings contribute to the understanding and development of knowledge of sexting from qualitative research methods, perspectives and standpoints.

Quantitative techniques which combined FGDs and in-depth interviews facilitated elaborate analysis of perspectives and activities on sexting, and how this practice is perpetuated through mobile phone-based social applications by youth in Nairobi.

This study as well makes significant contributions towards addressing some of the gaps found in empirical studies. Specifically, the study provides insights on perceptions of young people on suitability of smartphone social applications with regard to exchange of sexting messages. Furthermore, the study provides perspectives of young people on measures that should be put in place to address problems youth face while sexting. Prior studies have hardly sought the opinion of youth on how to address perceived challenges and dangers of sexting and how to and promote prosocial online behaviors. Moreover, this study provides insights on how youth navigate and address perceived concerns and dangers while using digital technologies to exchange sexting messages, an area that has been ignored by most previous scientific scholars.

It is worth to note that only a few scientific studies done elsewhere have suggested interventions and frameworks to address youth sexting and misuse of digital technologies. In literature review, it was noted that there is a contention amongst scholars and policy makers on appropriate ways to respond to sexting and other related digital activities. Some scholars suggest responses that criminalize sexting and thus favor enhancement or application of child pornography laws while others prefer use of educational and awareness program aimed at corrective action. Moreover, frameworks that propose formulation of responses aimed at achieving desirable behavior change rarely adopt a holistic approach. Consequently, this study proposes a framework that suggests constructs that conceptualize and analyze how agents of socialization processes

should collaborate together in developing programs that impart the desired skills, knowledge, and attitudes and perceptions in youth. The findings of the study further concluded that young people harbor misconceptions about sexting and its role in their peer social interactions. As such, a holistic approach that examines issues of youth sexting from a broader perspective is likely to be more effective in addressing the misconceptions and promoting positive perceptions. The researcher considers the proposed framework as one of the most significant contributions of this study.

This study made interesting observations which provide empirical evidence that does not exist in prior scientific literature. Specifically, the study discovered social contexts and motivation of sexting which have not been analyzed in prior literature. It was established that sexting could be intertwined with transactional sex, popularly known as 'sponsor' relationships. Further, the study discovered interesting online and offline peer-social interactions in which sexting takes place, also not analyzed in prior studies. These peer social interactions include off college fun parties and fun-based bus rides dubbed *nganya matatus* road trips. Further, it was established that peer social interactions on closed and open virtual groups are crucial in understanding how dissemination of controversial content takes place. Similarly, these contexts of sexting have not been investigated in existing studies.

7.6 Reflections on Experience of interviewing on sensitive topics -Reflexivity

This study was about experiences, perspectives and activities on use of smartphones to create and share sexually explicit or implicit messages by MLC students, conducted by a male PhD student. The study involved carrying out in-depth interviews and FGDs with

both male and female students on sensitive matters related to expression of sexual activities through videos and pictures. The study was entirely carried out by the male student without involvement of research assistants, with constructive guidance and supervision of the two academic supervisors (Dr. Masibo and Dr. Chebii).

Conducting the fieldwork was exciting, thought-provoking and labor intensive. It is the sensitivity nature of the topic the study dealt with that made the researcher reflect on the methodology and field experience. It is imperative for the researcher to describe the 'position' and role he played in a study that interviewed young students, including girls on sensitive issues about sexting and expression of sexual activities.

In literature review it was noted that most studies on sexting employ quantitative approaches. As such, they rarely pay attention to methodological reflections of investigating the behavior as a sensitive topic. Moreover, some scholars acknowledge that sexting is a sensitive topic but hardly describe their 'position' and strategies used to deal with the issues at hand. Sexting was considered sensitive because participants were expected to show or express emotional distress (anger, resentment, embarrassment, fear, anxiety, guilt etc) when talking about their own sexting activities and experiences. Nevertheless, during interviews participants were relaxed, laughed and willingly articulated issues they were probed about. In case the researcher noted discomfort, he would have advised them to seek professional guidance and counseling. In fact, some of them went to the extent of describing sexting activities and contexts the researcher never anticipated.

was done. In two of the colleges, one female and two male student leaders participated in in-depth interviews. This fostered positive perceptions of taking part in the study by other students.

4) To achieve effective interviews, the researcher 'enticed' participants to disclose sensitive information by first asking them general questions relating to use of smartphones, demographics, family and school. Once relaxed and engrossed in the interview mood, the researcher tactfully asked and probed on personal sexting activities and expression of sexual behaviors. This strategy of interviewing was also crucial in establishing trust and rapport. In most cases, the interviews were lengthy which indicated that trust was established and thus participants were willing to disclose personal and sensitive information. It is presumed that if participants were not willing to share sensitive data they would have left way earlier in the interviews.

The researcher was senior in age and education, therefore in order to effectively discuss sensitive issues with young students including girls, there was a need to address perceived cross-gender issues. Dempsey et al (2016) argue that fostering rapport and relationships require the researcher to address power imbalances that manifests when conducting sensitive interviews. The respondents should "feel at ease to disclose intimate and sensitive information". Therefore, a strategy that ensures "researcher-participants relationship is non-hierarchical" must be emphasized (Dempsey et al, 2016, p.7). This also promotes respect for the participants and enhances perceptions of confidence of the researcher by the research subjects (Dempsey et al, 2016). In order to address perceived

safety issues, the researcher took care of the factors that might have made participants uncomfortable to talk about sensitive issues and experiences. Table 7.2 provides a summary of the strategies used to make participants feel comfortable, empowered and unthreatened.

Table 7.2: Strategies used to make participants feel comfortable and empowered

1) Participants were given the opportunity to choose the place, time and day they felt was convenient to be interviewed or participate in the FGDs. They were given ample time to decide whether to participate in the study or not. The flexible plan gave the participants an opportunity to think over, plan and organize their school work.

2) The interviews and FGDs took place at the college premises (school environment). Convenient and secure places free from disruptions of other students were chosen. Convenient time and familiar places made participants feel comfortable, safe and at ease to disclose personal information.

3) During interviews, the researcher explained to the participants how the study intended to handle and protect privacy, identity and confidentiality of the data obtained from them.

4) The researcher strived to eliminate the perceived power differences and made the interview settings favorable for the participants. For instance, the researcher tried to demystify a PhD on the way he conducted himself, dressed, used language and approached students. Students were allowed to use English, Kiswahili or Sheng, but nearly all of them were comfortable with English.

5) Each participant's consent (by signing the consent form) was sought before participating in the study. This was done to avoid situations that would make participants feel coerced. Participants' consent was also sought before audio recording of the interview and FGD conversations.

6) To allow a degree of flexibility, participants were considerably allowed to take control of the conversations. Nevertheless, the researcher used the guides described earlier to shape the direction of the interviews and FGDs. This strategy made participants feel they were not under examination or scrutiny and the researcher was an active listener of their perspectives and experiences. In other words, this strategy was used to discourage participants from forming a perception of a 'dominating interrogator against vulnerable respondents' which could have made them feel uncomfortable when talking about their experiences.

7) Further, the researcher allowed participants to relax, laugh and ask questions anytime. The researcher found the 'relaxed' environment crucial for this kind of study. For instance, the female participant who sent images of her genitals to the husband asked questions that tried to connect the study to the researcher's personal life. At the end of the interview, she enquired whether I exchanged naked photos with my romantic partner. As described in chapter three, during interviews and FGDs, it was noted that girls had more data about sexting and this increased their number compared to that of the boys.

8) Before commencement of FGDs, the importance of respecting the views and opinions of everyone was emphasized. This was done to ensure that all the participants expressed their perspectives without being criticized, critiqued or their

opinions scrutinized. This way they felt respected to express their opinions and speak about the issues of concern without feeling intimidated. Further, participants were advised against sharing sensitive information about sexting and sexual behaviors in the FGDs. This was meant to protect their dignity and discourage feelings of shame, guilt and low self-esteem after the study.

9) Cross gender researchers are equivocal on whether gender difference affects a researcher's ability to access, recruit and build rapport with participants especially when exploring sensitive issues (Manohar et al, 2019; Salle & Harris, 2011; Redman-MacLaren et al, 2014). During the pilot, the researcher of this study noted that girls were eager and willing to discuss sexting experiences and activities. Similarly, during the main study, gender difference did not affect building rapport and relationship with the female participants. The interviews with girls were lengthy and they willingly disclosed sensitive information about dating, sexual activities, and sexting. The strategies described above made interviewing of the girls successful.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Letter of Authorization from The National Council of Science and Technology

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone:+254-20-2213471,
2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax:+254-20-318245,318249
Email:dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
when replying please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House
Uhuru Highway
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No.

Date:

NACOSTI/P/17/16600/15390

13th February, 2017

Simon Kihiu Chege
Moi University
P.O. Box 3900-30100
ELDORET.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *"Youth sexual expression on portable social connections: A study of sexting among college students,"* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Nairobi County** for the period ending **11th February, 2018.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Nairobi County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.

The County Director of Education
Nairobi County.

APPENDIX II: Letter of Permission Issued to the Researcher by one of the colleges

KIPS KENYA INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

6ᵗʰ April 2017

The Branch Manager

RE: SIMON KIHIU CHEGE PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE BRANCHES

The subject matter refers.

The above named is a PHD student at Moi University and is currently required to undertake his research project. He applied to conduct his research in our institution being one of his selected target populations among other institution.

Upon my interaction with him concerning his research topic I have no objection to allow him do the exercise between 15ᵗʰ-30ᵗʰ April 2017.

This letter is therefore to request you to allow him interact and interview our students with minimum disruption on our operations with your convenient arrangement.

Attached find copies of his letter of authorization from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and from the University.

Yours faithfully

Githii Murimi
Head of Academics
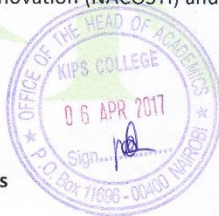
Cc. Principal

Khalsa Campus: Along Racecourse Road Opp. St. Peter Claver's Catholic Church: 0725 459796, 0722 162744
Travin Campus: Travin Building 2nd & 3rd Flr. Mfangano Street above Ukwala Supermarket: 0729 414 929/ 0733 572 835
Afya Centre Campus - Afya Centre 11th & 12th Flr. Tom Mboya Street: 0700 257 191
P.O. BOX 11696 - 00400 Nairobi. E-mail: info@kips.ac.ke. Website: www.kips.ac.ke

APPENDIX III: Individual Interview Guide

General Instructions

This is the individual interview session where I will ask you questions about how you and other students use smartphones to exchange sexually explicit or implicit videos, photos and text messages. I will not inspect your smartphone but we shall discuss how you use it to share the sexually inclined messages. Kindly refrain from mentioning your name during the interview.

General question

Tell me about yourself [ask about age, course, dating status, religion, person living with etc.]

Study questions

1. Who do you mostly communicate with via your smartphone?

   ✓ Probe: How often and why, time?

   ✓ Probe: in what ways: -videos, images, SMSs, IM/chatting,

   interpersonal/group?

2. Have you have shared/received sexually explicit message, nude or seminude

   image/video through smartphone?

   ✓ Probe: On asking/receiving/sending; source vs. destination; self-

   made/downloaded? send vs receiver?

   ✓ Probe: On nature of the messages; what the messages show

   ✓ Probe: in what ways smartphones are perceived to facilitate exchange of

   sexual messages/videos/images?

   ✓ Probe: how he/she feels after receipt of sexual images/videos/text

   messages?

✔ Probe; whether he/she discusses exchange of sexting messages with peers/friends/colleagues?

✔ Probe: whether he/she and colleagues like/dislike exchange of sexual messages?

3. Do you receive unsolicited sexual videos/images/text messages?

✔ Probe: whether recognize those depicted on videos/photos?

✔ Probe: whether he/she gets sexually stimulated/connection of sexting and sexual activities

4. Have you ever been asked to send your own nude/seminude image or video?

✔ Probe: whether he/she records images/ videos?

✔ Probe: who requested: colleague/dating/romance settings

✔ Do you take naked/semi-naked photos/videos of yourself?

✔ Probe: reasons/intention for recording such images/videos?

✔ Probe: intention-arouse, express sexual activity

5. Tell me how your peers/colleagues/ friends say they use their mobile phone to engage in sexting?

✔ Probe: about sexting in social groups?

✔ Probe: about group perceptions on sexting?

✔ Probes: friends/ colleagues involved in sharing sexual images/videos/text messages

✔ Probe: whether peers/friends discuss sexual activities related to sexting

✔ Probe: whether they discuss sharing sexting messages with colleagues?

6. How would you deal with problems that may arise if your sexually explicit text messages, videos, photos were shared/forwarded to other people?

   ✔ Probe: whether he/she or colleague is a victim of unwanted forwarding?

   ✔ Probe: on perceived dangers/challenges/concerns of sexting

   ✔ Probe: measures used to deal with perceived risks/dangers

   ✔ Probe: people from who he/she would seek help from incase was a victim?

   ✔ Probe: Who would you talk to if you experienced problems with sexting? Why?

7. How do you think we should address the challenges or dangers you and other young people face when creating and sharing sexually explicit images, videos and text messages?

   ✔ Probe: colleagues/friends in school discuss how to deal with problems related to sexting?

   ✔ Probe: perceived impediments/obstacles on addressing issues of sexting

   ✔ Probe: appropriate measures to use to deal with perceived challenges

APPENDIX IV: Focus Discussion Group Guide

General Instructions

In this Focus Group Discussion, we will discuss about how students in your college use smartphones to exchange sexually explicit or implicit videos, photos and text messages. There will be no right or wrong answers. I'm happy to listen to you on anything you share with me. During the discussion do not mention your name and that of your friends and college. In addition, avoid talking about your own sexting activities in the group, if you want to do so, use the third-person's voice [elaborate about third person's voice]

Study Questions

1. How would you say your smartphones have changed the way you interact with others in college?
   - ✓ Probe: on activities of peer-social interactions and social groups
   - ✓ Probe: on group sharing of sexual videos/photos

2. In what ways do you think mobile phones have facilitated creation and dissemination of self-made nude, seminude images/videos, sexually explicit messages?
   - ✓ Probe: ask on applications used and how they used?

3. Why do students create and share sexually explicit messages, videos and text messages?
   - ✓ Probe: perceptions of peer influence, peer norm?

4. What do you think of when you hear that students share explicit images, videos and text messages?
   - ✓ Probe: group perceptions of sexting activities
   - ✓ Probe: students/colleagues they know engage in sexting activities?

5. How common do you think exchange of sexually explicit images, videos and text messages is among students in your college?
   - ✓ Probe: why college students engage in sexting
   - ✓ Probe: whether colleagues/friends like/dislike exchange of sexual messages
   - ✓ Probe: how they know about sexting activities of other students?
   - ✓ Probe: who is usually the sender/receiver?

✔ Probe: perceptions about sexting, negative/positive?

6. Do you think there are certain social contexts that influence college students to engage in creation and exchange of sexually explicit text messages, videos and images?

✔ Probe: ask about media, relationships, celebrities?

✔ Are you in a social group that share nude, seminude, sexual messages?

✔ Probe: What do you do when they share this content?

✔ Probe: who are the members of these groups? Do you know them physically?

7. How do you think we should address the challenges students face when creating and sending explicit photos/videos and text messages?

✔ Probe: ask about perceived challenges/dangers/negative experiences?

✔ Probe: whether friends discuss consequences/challenges? How? Online or offline?

✔ Probe: who should students seek help from in case they face problems as a result of sexting?

✔ Probe: how do you think perceived challenges/dangers of sexting should be addressed?

APPENDIX V: A Copy of the Research Permit issued by NACOSTI

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. SIMON KIHIU CHEGE
of MOI UNIVERSITY, 449-216
GITHUNGURI, has been permitted to
conduct research in *Nairobi County*

on the topic: *YOUTH SEXUAL
EXPRESSION ON PORTABLE SOCIAL
CONNECTIONS:A STUDY OF SEXTING
AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS*

for the period ending:
11th February,2018

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/16600/15390
Date Of Issue : 13th February,2017
Fee Recieved :Ksh 2000

....
Applicant's
Signature

....
Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

APPENDIX VI: Participant Informed Consent Form

My name is Simon Chege, a PhD student from Moi University. I'm currently undertaking a research that seeks to understand how young students use smartphones to exchange videos, photos and text messages of sexual nature (sexting), and their experiences on challenges and dangers of this activity. You have been selected from this college to participate in the study because you are active in sexting and you are at least 18 years old. You may be requested to participate either in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) or interview. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or your college.

The interview and FGD sessions will be audiotaped and transcribed. After transcription, all the tapes will be destroyed. In the thesis and all future publications, conferences or presentations, pseudonyms will be assigned to you and your college to maintain privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the data. As such, you are not expected to write your name anywhere or mention it in the course of this research. The information obtained from you will only be used for purposes of this research. Kindly sign the space provided below if you agree to participate in the study. You may use the contact of the researcher in case of any concerns and questions regarding the research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contact Information of the Researcher:

Simon Kihiu Chege,

Moi University,

Department of Journalism and communication studies,

Phone: 0721547805/0780547805; Email: simonchege08@gmail.com.

APPENDIX VII: Participants' Justifications for Use of Various Social Media Platforms

Social Application		Uses of Application	Justification
Instant Messaging Apps	WhatsApp	-interpersonal exchange of text chats, video, audio and images messages -group exchange of text chats, video, audio and images messages	-broadcast/Group chat function -exchange of multimedia messages -affordable -voice calls -'inbox' feature
	Messenger	-interpersonal exchange of text chats, video, audio and images messages -group exchange of text chats, video, audio and images messages	-broadcast/group chat function -exchange of multimedia messages -'in box' feature
	Telegram	Group exchange of text chats, video and images messages	-broadcast/group chatting features -exchange multimedia messages -private and public chats groups (channels) *eg team mafisi*
Social Media Apps	Facebook	-Post/view/tag images, videos and text messages -search for dating partners -get news and gossip	-post images/videos -'inbox'/private communication
	Instagram	-Post/view images, videos and text messages -search dating partners	-post/view images and videos - private communication ('inbox')
	Twitter	-follow friends and celebrities	-follow people
Content sharing Apps	You tube	View/download videos/music	Affordable
	Imo	Video call	-video call features
	Viber	Video call	-video call features

Appendix VIII: Participants reasons for using certain applications to perform sexting activities

Applications students use to engage in sexting	Reasons why students used the application to perform sexting activities
WhatsApp	-Image, audio, video and text features -Group/broadcast feature -Private/inbox communication function -Ability to create/join public and private chat groups -Guaranteed privacy and control - Use of pseudo-anonymous accounts/fake identities - switching between user-level & group-level interactions -synchronous and asynchronous interpersonal and group interactions
Messenger's Messenger	-Image, audio, video and text features -Group/broadcast feature -Private/inbox communication features - Ability to create/join public and private chat groups -Privacy and control - Perceived privacy and relative anonymity - Use of pseudo-anonymous accounts/fake identities -Switching between user-level & group-level interactions - synchronous and asynchronous interpersonal and group interactions
Imo	-Video call features
Telegram	-Join channels/group features e.g team *mafisi* channel - Use of pseudo-anonymous accounts/fake identities
Facebook	-View posted raunchy images -Private communication feature ('inbox) - Use of pseudo-anonymous accounts/fake identities
Instagram	-View posted raunchy images -Private communication feature ('inbox) - Use of pseudo-anonymous accounts/fake identities

Appendix IX: Participants' Social Contexts of Sexting Practices

Social communication practice	Nature of sexting activity
Processes of dating and Romance	-Boyfriend and girlfriend sent and received sexually implicit or implicit content -Boys and girls received sex text messages from people interested in dating -Boys sent sex text messages to girls they wished to date -Boys and girls maintained sex text messages on phones as proof of dating. -One girl sent images of her genitals to older men
peer-social interactions and conversations	-close trusted friends showed each other without forwarding explicit photos or text messages received from dating partner -girls posted images of their breasts or derriere in girls only close chat groups in order to receive feedback or get admired -some girls received sex text messages when chatting with strange or know boys on WhatsApp or Messenger. --some girls discussed sex, money, dating and gender matters on girls only chat groups -some boys engaged in 'dirty' chats and gossip about sexual activities with certain girls on closed chat groups -Some boys talked with trusted friends about possession of explicit content from certain girls -some boys received self-made intercourse videos from trusted friends
Downloading and watching internet pornography	-some girls searched, downloaded and watched pornography to learn about sex skills -some girls and boys watched internet pornography for sexual stimulation -some girls shared internet pornography in girls only closed chat groups -boys and girls showed each other pornography on their phones -some boys sent pornography to girls to stimulate them or show interest in casual sex -some boys used phone to watch pornography in class

Appendix X: Nature and Content Characteristics of Sexting Messages

Form/nature	Activity	Content Characteristic
Explicit/implicit photos/videos	Sending	-some girls sent images depicting genitals or breasts to boyfriends - One girl sent images showing genitals to 'sponsors'(transactional sex) -some girls and boys sent each other professionally produced pornography -some boys sent to girlfriends or prospective girls images of bare chest or 'abs' -The married girl sent images of her genitals to her husband -Romantic partners sent each other sexually explicit text messages
	Receiving	-some boys received images depicting genitals or breasts from girlfriend -some girls received images depicting genitals from boyfriends -some girls received (unsolicited) images showing bare chest from prospective girls during text chatting -some girls received explicit text messages from boys interested in dating - some girls received images and videos showing intercourse or genitals from strangers online (strangers interesting in dating/online solicitations) -Two boys received intercourse videos from strange girls online
	Showing on phone without forwarding	-A girl showed images depicting sexual activity such kissing to boys as prove she was dating -some boys showed videos recorded while having sex to trusted close friends -some girls showed images depicting genitals of boyfriends to close trusted girls -A section of girls and boys showed each other pornography downloaded from internet
	Being asked	-A number of girls asked to send naked images to boyfriends or prospective dating partners. -One girl asked to send her explicit pictures to an old man -Two boys asked to send images of bare chest or

		genitals to prospective girls -One boy requested to send images of genitals and chest to old an woman -one boy requested to send images of his genitals to strange girls on Facebook (online solicitation) -some girls asked to send naked images to online strangers on Facebook (online solicitations)
	Recording and storing on phones	-some girls recorded and stored on phones images showing bare derriere or breasts - a girl recorded images of her female friend while dressed in pants or short tight revealing clothes -two boys recorded and stored on phone images of bare chest
	Posting/sharing on chat groups or individual accounts	-Two girls posted/shared self-made images showing bare breasts or derriere on girls only chat groups -girls posted/shared images showing genitals of male genitals on girls only sex chat groups - A section of boys and girls engaged in racy discussions ('gossip') on private chat groups -A section of boys and girls posted internet pornography on private (closed) chats groups -One girl received through a closed chat group images showing intercourse or kissing recorded during *matatu* road trips. -A boy received through a closed chat group images showing kissing recorded during bash parties by his trusted close friends -boys and girls viewed raunchy images posted in Instagram by celebrities -A section of girls and boys viewed self-made racy images posted on Instagram and WhatsApp social groups by friends. -A section of boys and girls viewed sexually explicit pictures/videos posted on open social groups such as *team mafisi* on Telegram and kilimani mums and dads on Facebook -Two boys used fake names to post sexual images and videos on open groups on Facebook
Explicit/Implicit text messages	Sending/receiving	-Nearly all boys and girls in dating relationships exchanged explicit text messages (sex chats)

		describing sexual activity, interest in sex or dating etc. -some boys sent explicit messages to (multiple) girls to express interest in dating or sex. -some girls received sex text messages boys in college or other boys interested in dating
	Storing/Showing on phone without transferring	-some boys and girls showed trusted close friends sex text messages exchanged with romantic partner. -some boys were shown by close friends sex text messages exchanged with girls as proof of dating -A number of girls received sex text messages from boys interested in dating. -The married girl exchanged sext text messages with husband especially when he was away. -some boys and girls stored on phones sex text messages exchanged with romantic partners

Appendix XI: A Sample Interview (First Male Interview)

170526_1100 Male interview [1hr 14min 59sec]

Interviewer: [opening remarks for the interview involved briefing the participant about the nature, purpose of the study]

Interviewer: tell me something about yourself?

Interviewee: I"m a student studying civil engineering diploma level and i run business and I"m 21 years

Interviewer: tell me something about your personality? Interviewee: i consider myself focused and determined Interviewer: how do you pass your fee time?

Interviewee: when I"m free i like listening to music and watching matches

Interviewer: what kind of music do you listen to? Interviewee: ok i like RnB

Interviewer: you are a Christian or Muslim?

Interviewee: I"m a Christian

Interviewer: how do you perform in school? Interviewee: ok i rate myself as above average Interviewer: where do you live and who do you live with?

Interviewee: i live near Alsops and i live alone yeah i have rented a house

Interviewer: where do you come from?

Interviewee: i come from Muranga yeah, my parents come from Muranga but for now they are outside the country both of them

Interviewer: for long have you been living alone?

Interviewee: since 2014 when i left high school and when i was in high school i used to be together with them

Interviewer: which applications do you mostly use on your smartphone?

Interviewee: mostly Facebook and WhatsApp , i like WhatsApp because it is more easier and more faster in communication it gives more ways of communicating you cannot communicate through pictures, videos, audio and the rest , Facebook i use it to know how the world is going, to get worldwide information

Interviewer: what news are you interested on Facebook? Interviewee: fashion, business and politics

Interviewer: how much time per day do you spend on these applications? Interviewee: ok i can‟t go an hour without checking on WhatsApp Interviewer: whom do you mostly communicate with via these applications? Interviewee: ok i communicate with my friends, mostly my friends Interviewer: do belong to social groups?

Interviewee: yeah of course,

Interviewer: would you please tell me more about these social groups?

Interviewee: these groups have many people and they share their views ,mostly they share what is in their minds , i have a group with members of the school, we are in a group with members we work with, and former form four high students and other couple of groups

Interviewer: what type of content do people share in these group?

Interviewee: ok all type of content, everything you can think of, like pictures, sayings, Bible verses yeah anything yeah

Interviewer: how would you say a mobile phone has changed the way you interact with other people?

Interviewee: mobile phone has made it easier as student you may not know most of the things but you know them on WhatsApp , you never knew about them , you have never

learnt about them , others your parents cannot show how they normally happen or how they are done but you can learn them there

Interviewer: what have you learn through WhatsApp ?

Interviewee: how drugs are used, some of us share what they talk with ladies yeah most of those things, videos yeah

Interviewer: what do they say on how they talk with ladies?

Interviewee: ok they give tips on how to tune girls and also send their videos on how they spent time, you get to know how to handle ladies [sp photos/videos of others provide info to some on how to handle ladies]

Interviewer: how are these videos/images?

Interviewee: some are normal, some are not normal i would consider them as private videos

Interviewer: why do you call them private videos?

Interviewee: they show them doing their things like having sex , how they went to a club and both got drunk how they were behaving yeah

Interviewer: do you know these people?

Interviewee: yeah they are people i work with some i met them here some we are in the same class

Interviewer: do they send these video to you or they are sent in groups? Interviewee: they share on the groups mostly are some are sent to me

Interviewer: have you seen friends you know send videos/images where they are nude/seminude?

Interviewee: year i have seen they mostly do that to show off, mostly it is a way of showing off

Interviewer: which group has these nude images/videos?

Interviewee: yeah it is a group for discussion, but mostly most of the content 80% is not academic discussions, it is about sex

Interviewer: who posts these images/videos?

Interviewee: mostly men it more also women but it hard to see it is rare

Interviewer: do friends share videos/images from the internet?

Interviewee: yeah they share videos from the internet, they download and tell people this is the latest yeah

Interviewer: do they share pornographic videos/images?

Interviewee: i was in a group that before i lost my first smartphone i was in a group that was international it had people from America, that is youth from everywhere and they used to share those videos and images, you could wake up in the morning and find more that 250 videos, most pornographic sex chats yeah something like that

Interviewer: who invited you into this group? Interviewee: a student friend invited me to the group

Interviewer: in this group did people you know share pornographic videos/images?

Interviewee: that international group, i never knew anyone except the guy who added me, he was a group admin and he was a student i only knew that one guy

Interviewer: are you still in that group? Interviewee: i left the group, my phone was stolen

Interviewer: do you know groups created by students where they share nude images/videos or pornography?

Interviewee: i know of a girl, ok back in high school i was in a boys boarding school so we used to share stories after long holidays , the first night when back to school after holiday was all about stories describing what boys did when on holiday , we did not believe what otheres where saying since we talked much about girls we created a group so that if you want to be popular in school you had to share a video with a lady ,send the video to the school group then you become popular such that when you come back to school it would much more easier to explain yourself and convince others , they would post vies/images of what they are doing with their girlfriend while they are at home

Interviewer: does his mean that students in high school engage in sharing nude images/videos? Interviewee: we used to do that

Interviewer: did you carry mobile phones to school? Interviewee: no,

Interviewer: did the boys post the nudes images/videos of the girls they dated?

Interviewee: yeah the guy did that in order when he comes back to school he would just ask did you see my video that i posted and the boys would say wow you are a man [may be self-esteem issues]

Interviewer what did the video"s/images show?

Interviewee: sex, kissing and doing all the rest, they also shared video when they were in clubs, for example one could share a videos and come and tell you i was in such and such club so it was easy for everyone to believe, mostly to show off, it was a way of showing off that you are more than a high school student

Interviewer: did teachers come to learn that this was happening? Interviewee: they never [probably this happened among trusted friends] Interviewer: how did you do this since you did not carry mobile phones to school?

Interviewee: when going home, we gave out our phone numbers, share our contacts and now one guy would carry all the number then goes creates a WhatsApp group and adds all the contacts , when we are at home we access the group and when we open school we share what members used to post in the groups

Interviewer: did you feel tempted to do what the other were doing?

Interviewee: everyone was now tempted to so as to become popular so that you are not looked down upon

Interviewer: does anyone monitor the way you use your mobile phone? Interviewee: do you visit pornographic websites?

Interviewer: not that really but what happens in the group that we are in school they share the links and if you open the links you find yourself there on porn sites, you watch and mostly download, keep some in the phone and some i don''t keep in my phone, I watch also the once they have sent in the groups

Interviewer: do friends you know keep pornographic videos on their phone?

Interviewee: yeah a friend of mine his phone is full of that, he is a friend of mine at work yeah a young person like me

Interviewer: do you watch these pornographic videos when you are free? Interviewee: yeah i do

Interviewer: are you then not tempted to go and look for more pornographic videos? Interviewee: yeah it normally happens

Interviewer: have you receive nude images/videos from ladies? Interviewee: yeah ladies also send but it is rare, around 95% are from men Interviewer: when do men share nude images/videos?

Interviewee: they share as mostly as way of showing off mostly the age that I"m most of them share the videos to show off

Interviewer: why do girls share such vides/images?

Interviewee: if a girl is sharing such a video she might be keeping off from her it is another way of showing that she is in demand, she has other guys that follow her, if you want the girl and she does not want you she can send the video you keep off and then you feel bad, she will send a vide engage in a sexual activity with her boyfriend [proof she is in another relationship]

Interviewer: do girls download and share with men nude images/videos?

Interviewee: to tempt you, she will tempt you she will send you such a video/images she invites you to her place

Interviewer: have you reached a nude image/video from a girl? Interviewee: yeah i was sent a video she invited me to her place Interviewer: is she a student?

Interviewee: no she was a friend of mine

Interviewer: did you go to her place?

Interviewee: yeah i went and she wanted to try whether i would go, ok she was playing with my mind when i got there she told me that she sent me the image by mistake

Interviewer: do you share/forward nude images/video with other people?

Interviewee: ok if a video is personal and the one who sent said no one should share i think it is not good to forward

Interviewer: have you received those personal videos?

Interviewee: yeah a close friend of mine sent me a vide and showed me how a girl who used to be proud in school did with this boy, he shared the video to show me that he was a man and please don‟t share the video

Interviewer: was this your close friend?

Interviewee: yeah he was a very close friend of mine

Interviewer: you mean personal videos are shared between close friends?

Interviewee: yeah they are shared among very close friends and rarely go to the public groups

Interviewer: what about the public videos you said have been shared in your groups?

Interviewee: ok what the guy might do he might wear something that you may use to identify him, he might wear his clothes but when sending the video he will interfere with the face no one will know him but if you school with him you will know it is him because to of the clothes and he can easily convince you he is the one

Interviewer: do they show the face of the lady?

Interviewee: they don‟t show the face of the lady since most of the ladies are also students and some of the we school with them here, private the videos/images sent to you personally the person will not hide the face and they also show the girl but the one they sent into the group it is very hard to show the face

Interviewer: do share /forward to others these private images that are sent to you?

Interviewee: ok no because you might not want to hurt the guy

Interviewer: do you show others without forwarding to them?

Interviewee: yeah, whoever sent the video to you might tell another person that he shared the video with men and tell that other person to come to me and see the video, if he was told to come and video the videos from my phone now i can show him but it is not transferred from my phone they mostly tell people to come and see it from my phone not to be shared

Interviewer: do you forward to other groups nude images/videos that are posted in your groups? Interviewee: those ones i forward to others

Interviewer: do you share those nude images/videos shared in groups with individuals?

Interviewee: it is very hard to share with an individual most of those videos are shared or sent to the others having an intention back in your mind so in your contact list it depends on who you are sharing the video with yeah,

Interviewer: have shared with someone in your contact list?

Interviewee: ok i may share with the close friends of mine, the friends I"m used to

Interviewer: do you forward these nude images/videos to girls?

Interviewee: ok it is rare it is very rare may be she asked for one from you not me sending to her

Interviewer: do girls ask for nude images/videos from you?

Interviewee: yeah they ask for some and go and view and some girls have sent me

Interviewer: do you know other students who also forward to others such videos and images?

Interviewee: ok unless it is a private video i think you might receive like ten times from different students yeah the same video , you have receive in like five groups and ten individuals

Interviewer: have you seen videos/images that show the face?

Interviewee: yeah the downloaded ones, it normally shows everything but you don"t know these people, the downloaded ones are mostly from Europeans

Interviewer: why do students share nude image/videos with each other?

Interviewee: ok it depends with the relationship that you have with the people that you are sharing with like now I"m in a group of family members if i get such a video i cannot post it in this family group, the people you are within the group determine whether or not you are going share nude images/videos with them, mostly it happens to age mate like the young people share among themselves

Interviewer: do you protect your phone..?

Interviewee: [interjects] ok if you know that your phone has such continent you might have a password , a pattern or us your finger prints to access your phone

Interviewer: do you take videos/images of yourself? Interviewee: not nude images, yeah i take normal images

Interviewer: do you know friends who take their nude images/videos?

Interviewee: i have seen ladies mostly ladies do that and then they share with the groups, it is a way of attracting boys

Interviewer: do you these ladies who take their nude images/videos and share in groups?

Interviewee: yeah, they show the upper part in a bra and they share it to the group then the following day all men will be after her

Interviewer: what do boy say where they see these nude images/videos?

Interviewee: those who cannot afford her talk negative of her and those who can afford her they talk positive of her, see also girls posting such nude pictures in twitter or

Instagram to see how many like she will get , once they post it is a way of showing the other people that she is beautiful , she is in demand

Interviewer: do you know these ladies who post their seminude images/videos on twitter? Interviewee: yeah some of them we school with them here, the reason of posting of such picture is to get as many likes as possible

Interviewer: do men have a way of contacting these girls?

Interviewee: some comment on the picture if you comment and the lady has positive feedback then you will go ahead and start talking

Interviewer: what does following mean?

Interviewee: following mean every time she posts a picture you will be able to see it like you are interested in her in another way yeah, on twitter you can get the person"s name on Facebook, and then you can inbox her and on Instagram is also the same, the pictures i have seen on Instagram is either half naked dressed in the inner wear or upper part is nude

Interviewer: have you receive nude images /videos from girls?

Interviewee: yeah i received demanding to send back mine Interviewer: who are these girls?

Interviewee: ok a girl like where i work you might talk to a girl one two days ok come in the morning before you open the business you and greet her this girl develops a feeling for you it is just how you socialize with the people you work with around the environment where you work now the girl might be tempted to think that you are interested in her, she might send you a videos and when you send back she will know you are interested in her but if you don"t she will keep off yeah she will not send again

Interviewer: doe she sends her own video?

Interviewee: yeah she might take a video while taking a bath yeah, she will show her breasts and her hair, it mostly the hair they want to show you that they have big hair

Interviewer: have you received this from one girl or many girls? Interviewee: many girls about six of them

Interviewer: did you shown interest to any of them?

Interviewee: yeah i showed interest to one of them, ok when she meets you she first listens to your reaction on the video if it is a positive reaction she hears the compliments before she explains herself , if you give negative feedback to her video you will hear her saying that she sent by mistake and apologies

Interviewer: are you in relationship? Interviewee: yeah of course

Interviewer: for how long have you been in relationship?

[00:39:58] almost an year probably eight months

Interviewer: in your relationship do you send each nude images/videos? Interviewee: not really, yeah but we share normal videos

Interviewer: why don"t you share nude images/videos?

qa ok it depends on the relationship, some relationship are for sex, mostly those who share , it depends also with the people like for me i cannot take my nude images/videos it is very hard becasue when you end the relationship the lady will use the video/image as your weak point yeah

Interviewer: has your girlfriend sent you her seminude/nude image/video?

Interviewee: yeah she sent once sent one, showing the whole body but she was in the inner wears she was in panty and bra

Interviewer: did you ask for the seminude images?

Interviewee: ok i had asked for it as a way of passing time and she sent me one, she did not hesitate

Interviewer: did she hide her face when taking this seminude image? Interviewee: ok the face was there since she trusted me

Interviewer: has ever asked for you nude/seminude image/video?

Interviewee: she knows i cannot send to her, she knows i can ask but she knows i cannot send yeah

Interviewer: why did you ask for her nude image?

Interviewee: ok that time it was just friendship, i wanted to show that I"m interested in her , ok if a lady is interested in you what i know there is nothing she cannot do yeah she can do everything to make you believe that she loves you yeah

Interviewer: have you seen friends in relationships receive nude images/videos from the girlfriends?

Interviewee: in fact all the friends i know receive nude images/videos from their girlfriends, you see the video/image and you get to know the person, once i saw a video of my cousin with another friend of mine she is a cousin to me and her boyfriend used to be in the same school with me, ok the boy was showing me the nude images when i went to my cousin she said she cannot do such a thing but the images were hers and i confirmed it was hers

Interviewer: what do the girls normally show the boys in the images you have seen?

Interviewee: ok some of them share video wen cooking, when bathing those kinds of things

Interviewer: have you seen images/videos where girls show their private parts?

Interviewee: ok i have seen one a friend of mine sent by a certain lady and the lady was demanding for him to go over there and she was demanding for some money , she wanted the guy as he go he goes with some money

Interviewer: did the girl show the face?

Interviewee: yeah the video had the face, mostly she was highly concentrating on the private pars, yeah

Interviewer: do men send their nudes to their girlfriends?

Interviewee: mostly from what i have seen they send mostly the upper part the chest, they rarely send their private parts

Interviewer: do you think sharing nude images/videos meant to be private is ok?

Interviewee: if i share a private video i wound want the video/images to spread allover

Interviewer: have you seen others who share private nude images/videos?

Interviewee: yeah i have seen, mostly it is a matter of revenging, may be you were in a relationship with a girl and she is taken by another man you take the video and show the guy what you used to do with the girl and you might share the video with everyone in the school to make her feel embarrassed yeah

Interviewer: does that make the boy interested in the girl stop?

Interviewee: yeah it normally stops since the guy does not want to be associated with the girl, like if you are a guy and you are shown the nude video you will stop because you don''t want to be with the left overs, it will be like showing you this is already used thing[why would the boy stop and probably he would also want the girl to the same thing, could be stigma]

Interviewer: do girls show other girls nude images of boys?

Interviewee: girls also show especially if she likes the guy, if the guy took another girl, she will go to the girl and shows the video or image and probably lie to that you are still doing it and this will make the girl to leave you

Interviewer: do you engage in sex chatting with your girlfriend? Interviewee: yeah we do

Interviewer: what do you talk about in your sexual chats?

Interviewee: ok we imagine being in the same bed, yeah imaging things that are not happening through chatting you make them happen

Interviewer: do you talk about sex?

Interviewee: that"s obvious, that is normal discussing sexual activities, we discuss experiences and sex, we discus experiences after sex, after you have done it you go and discuss it on the chats

Interviewer: when is sex chat more intense is it before sex or after sex?

Interviewee: it is after sex, because you know each other very well they don"t fear each other you can now freely talk about sex

Interviewer: do you engage in multiple chatting?

Interviewee: yeah, mostly ok you men it is happens that you might be taking lets say to six ladies at the same time , the reason is that the guy might be interested to certain ladies but he does not want to show them most of the people chat in the evening when they are free and the lady is free and you don"t want to show her that you don"t like her so you keep on chatting with while you are still chatting with others , most these are okoa jahazi, when this bounces you are felt with other one , it is very rare to find a guy having only

one girl friend especially here in school , for ladies she might have one boyfriend, you might approach a lady and she tells you I"m dating so and so

Interviewer: do boys have multiple relationships with girls in college?

Interviewee: ok for men it is very difficult to have multiple relationship within the school what he does is have one lady in this school, another in another college and another where he live

Interviewer: what would you tell a person who shares a private video/image with your and you share with others and happens to know?

Interviewee: if I"m the one who shared the video i will apologies of which I"m pretty sure the friendship will end there

Interviewer: have seen cases where one shared with others images/videos meant to be private? Interviewee: i saw a friend of mine who shared a normal video of him driving a subaru along thika road he shared the video with his friend but he never wanted the video to be shared, the friend shared the video in another group the video circulated and went to the owner of the video through another group, he felt bad because he never wanted that

Interviewer: do you think it is ok to share nude images/videos in a relationship?

Interviewee: it depends with the people who are in the relationship, like for me the one I"m dating her mother keep on looking at her phone i may not share the videos

Interviewer:] do you think it is ok to share your own nude/seminude images/videos in a relationship?

Interviewee: i don"t think it is ok, sharing a nude video is like coming to town and walk naked which is very bad , i think it is not good

Interviewer: what do you think are consequences of sharing ones nude /seminude images/videos?

Ws yeah if i shared i video and i t goes to where i work, you see i will be forced to work when I‟m feeling very embarrassed or i leave the employment

Interviewer: do students talk about the consequences of sharing ones nude images/videos? Interviewee: for some students, i think they don‟t care, as long you don‟t know him or her like now if you saw a nude picture here and you don‟t know the person you look at it and leave what they care about is if ti goes to their family members relatives and probably their friends mostly they care about family members

Interviewer: do you sue nganya matatas? Interviewee: yes i use them

Interviewer: do you like using them?

Interviewee: ok you use tem because you don‟t have an option

Interviewer: do students like these matatus?

Interviewee: ok probably i like nganya since they have music while going for long distance you won‟t be bored but when it comes to things that happen in the nganya they are not very pleasing,, ok you would not want like to board the same vehicle with your family or mother

Interviewer: what happens in inside the nganya?

Interviewee: ok you might find that, ok like back in high school when going home a nganya would come for us it was better we pay highly, i used to school in Meru and fare used to be 500, it was better we pay 1200 to come to Nairobi via nganya since the nganya used to combine two schools a boy school and a girls school, half the nganya would be girls and the other half would be boys

Interviewer: was this intentional and who did this?

Interviewee: it was intentional, mostly we used to organize, we used to borrow the phone from the school bazar we call a driver we know drives a ngunya we tell him we are prepared to pay the vehicle coming and going a back to Nairobi, you tell him to go to this girls school pick girls half the matatu and come for us for the other half

Interviewer: what happened in the vehicle as you travelled?

Interviewee: ok all sort of things, some used to have sex, some used to dance

Interviewer: you mean some had sex in the vehicle?

Interviewee: yeah they would have sex in the vehicle, i once experienced that i saw them where i sat yeah having sex, ok you got to know about those things when you were in form three and four, but in form one and form two we used to go home as instructed by our parents, if you never did those things when in form three and form four people would laugh at you consider you inexperienced

Interviewer: where were the makangas when all this was happening? Interviewee: they were there and there was nothing they could do Interviewer: why do you think young people like the nganyas?

Interviewee: young people like listening to hip hop and the nganya play these songs for them

Interviewer: what does the music videos show? Interviewee: they show people who are naked Interviewer: I understand some girls do not pay fare?

Interviewee: yeah some girls tend to know the makangas , mostly what i have seen like now i was going to Rongai i saw a nganya the driver mostly pay ladies to kupiga set now the ladies when you pass there if you see a very beautiful lady and sited next to the

window and she is alone you tend to get in and sit next to her , when the vehicle is almost full she alights [strategy sit so that men can board the vehicle and sit next to the ladies]

Interviewer: when travelling from Meru to Nairobi by nganya did you watch pornography? Interviewee: yeah used to happen, pure pornography when were came near a post station or police block the driver switches off , after you pass the road thy put it on again yeah, i remember we were going for holiday after school closed, one nyanga came and we scrambled to get inside, it had music it was showing pornography there was bhang that was being sold inside , there was drinks all sorts of drinks so i remember everybody was struggling to get inside there and when the makanga realized we all struggling to get into the vehicle he took the advantage and said we were to pay 1200 and when he realized that everyone was able to pay that he said from Meru to Nairobi you are going to pay 2000 , people paid 2000 to get into the vehicle, now i remember everyone was like i must get into this vehicle yeah

Interviewer: who sold the bhang and the drinks?

Interviewee: the makanga and the drive cam with them, there was a language that they used to talk with and the teacher never understand

Interviewer: which language?

Interviewee: ok they would say , mostly they used sheng, like they would say ngwai iko (bhang)

, tei iko (beer) , ngwati iko (ponography) , now students would say this is the matatu

Interviewer: was this happening without the teachers knowledge?

Interviewee: yeah the teachers would say these are the matatus get in , the teachers used to pity us for being overcharged , but he or she would see students say i have the 2000 i will get in , what teachers thought we liked those matatus because of the music, the teachers wondered why we paid 2000 while as they were matatus that were charging as low as 500

Interviewer: do you think this is still happening?

Interviewee: no i don"t think so , like the high school i was in i informed that when going home the parent comes for you , i don"t think these things still happen, but i think it is still happening, if you go to thika when schools have closed you will find very many students assembled together, you will see police men struggling to send them away , ok may be the students called a nyanya that operates within Nairobi and the students are at thika so let"s say the nganya was in kitengela, you see the students will be forced to wait for the nganya at thika , when the police notices a crowd of these students who have been there for a long time, they disperse them, i have seen that because even my brother is doing that as recent as January this year

Interviewer: closing remarks involved appreciating the respondent and assuring anonymity of the conversation]

Appendix XII: A sample Female Interview (The Married Female Participant)

170602_1457 [female_interview] [41 min 19 mins 19 sec]

Interviewer: [opening remarks for the interview involved briefing the participant about the nature, purpose of the study]

Interviewer: kindly tell me something about yourself?

Interviewee: I‟m a student styding purchasing and supplies management, I‟m 26 years old

Interviewer: how do you pass your free time?

Interviewee: I‟m like visit friends, cleaning at home Interviewer: how do you perform in school? Interviewee: ok I‟m average

Interviewer: are you a Christian or Muslim?

Interviewee: Christian, I‟m a strong Christian i cannot say I‟m that strong

Interviewer: where do you live and who do you live with? Interviewee: i live in Umoja with my husband I‟m married

Interviewer: which applications do you mostly use on your mobile phone?

Interviewee: mostly WhatsApp and contacts, meaning calling yeah, Facebook not much

Interviewer: why do you like WhatsApp ?

Interviewee: because it is first i like to see pictures which my friend‟s posts and yeah

Interviewer: do you belong to social groups?

Interviewee: yeah for me in the groups I‟m not the kind of person who opens all the message, sometimes i ignore some messages , I‟m the person who will see a message read it and then post something not, i sometimes i look at it and ignore ti

Interviewer: which groups do you belong to?

Interviewee: family groups, students groups in school, friends groups yeah

Interviewer: what kind of content do people share in these groups?

Interviewee: if I"m in a group and the someone posts something i don"t like I ignore i don"t like such things, people post content i don"t like for example some who is naked, or people kissing each other , yeah i don"t like such

Interviewer: have you seen pornogrphy shared in these group"s?

Interviewee: no just people kissing, the groups I"m in i don"t entertain those things if i see like those thing posted by someone ignore that group, mostly the groups I"m in people don"t post such things

Interviewer: how are the group members?

Interviewee: i can know the kind of people they are, normally there are those who are Christians but post nudes in their free time so i you can"t know whether one is a Christian or not , because some will tell they go to church but what they do shows otherwise although he says he is a Christian, yeah sometimes they post such materials

Interviewer: what about the group with friends here in school?

Interviewee: no they don"t post such in the group is purely for academics Interviewer: have you seen young people post nude/seminude images/videos? Interviewee: obviously the young girls are the ones posting nude images/videos

Interviewer: do you know these girls who are posting nude /seminude images/videos?

Interviewee: i don"t know them but i see them in groups because if you are in a group there are those people you know and some you don"t know them you know them from your friends but if i see posting these nudes i ignore before knowing the people who are doing it

Interviewer: what does ignore me?

Interviewee: i don"t look at them, yah i don"t look at them because I"m not used to doing that

Interviewer: why do you dislike liking at these images/videos?

Interviewee: i just don"t like them, because where i was brought up i was not taught such things they i can say

Interviewer: how would you say you were brought up?

Interviewee: I was brought up in a Christian family because our parents used to teach us how to be good so if i see such nude images i hate looking at them,

Interviewer: what did learn from parents that you would say has helped you avoid sharing nude/seminude images/videos?

Interviewee: like my grandmother, i can say she taught me a lot how to be a good Christian how to be a good girl and a good wife that is why i don"t like those things yeah , yeah it is my Christian background and the way i was brought u

Interviewer: do you know friends who share nude/seminude nude/seminude images/videos?

Interviewee: they are friends who want to share with me but not much, one friend is doing that, she has nude images in her phone and wish to share with me , she receives and then comes to you hey i receive something look at it , i tell i don"t like that why do you delete

Interviewer: who sends your friend this content?

Interviewee: from a group or from her friends Interviewer: how you ever looked at the continent?

Interviewee: of course i look at it but i see it not good but i promise not to look at t next time

Interviewer: what do you normally see when you look at it?

Interviewee: these are bad pictures i feel because I"m married I"m not supposed to look at those pictures, because I"m married and satisfied because when i see i don"t like it that"s why i don"t want to see them now and then, most are videos and images showing nudes, some usually naked body, half way naked yeah [suggests she is satisfied that"s is why she does not need the nude images]

Interviewer: have you seen sex videos from her? Interviewee: no mostly images

Interviewer: in your Christian groups do people share nude/seminude images/videos?

Interviewee: no they don"t, they don"t they share religious information

Interviewer: do friends here in school want to share with you?

Interviewee: yeah i don"t like i will tell you i don"t like to see those things so next you cannot show such things

Interviewer: have seen friends share these nude images/videos?

Interviewee: yeah they always, they always share with one another and send to each other"s phones

Interviewer: how would say a phone has changed the way young people interact   with one another?

Interviewee: the phone has contributed to spoiling young people, if nude images were not accessible via the phone,, most of the girls get spoilt because of downloading, girls also see others lifestyles and dressing and they want to dress like what they see, next time when she sees other nude dressing she want to do the same, those nude images teach girls bad behaviors because they want to do what they see on the photos so that they can see seen as sophisticated

Interviewer: have seen nude images/videos taken by the people themselves? Interviewee: no no the ones i have seen i downloaded

Interviewer: do you take images/videos of yourself?

Interviewee: yeah, i can take a video or image but not that bad one like here in school when i see

I‟m beautiful i take photos

Interviewer: during dating did you send each other videos/images?

Interviewee: yeah the normal videos and images we did, i also sent him my images, ok when I‟m in school he would tell me he want to see my picture when I‟m somewhere he calls me and tells me to send a picture then he could see I‟m exactly where i told him I‟m then i take my photo and send him yeah, we did not share nude images/videos [mistrust]

Interviewer: does he ask for your nude images/videos?

Interviewee: no he did not ask for nude images/videos, i told him i don‟t like such images/videos, I‟m told him i was ready to that with him but not on phone

Interviewer: what did you tell him you are ready to do?

Interviewee: (laughs) just that, i told him if he comes he can see me naked but not on phone

Interviewer: was he comfortable with your decision?

Interviewee: yes he was and never asked

Interviewer: in your marriage do you share nude images/videos?

Interviewee: (laughs) yeah now i can send if he asks me to do so if he goes out somewhere and told me to him my nudes i will do that because now she is my husband

yeah i can do it and i want him to send me his as well, yeah i can send him any part of my body

Interviewer: that means you think is Ok to share ones nude images/videos in a marriage relationship?

Interviewee: yeah it is Ok

Interviewer: why do you think it is not Ok to share ones nude images/videos when people are not married?

Interviewee: because you don know whether this person is going to end up with you in marriage because you can send him a photo then next time you see it posted somewhere because you said you don"t want to be with him, it is not secure for the people who are not married, i could not before he married me even if he promised me he could not share, today because he is my husband i can send him

Interviewer: do you to send him nude images/videos now that he is your husband? Interviewee: yeah yes yes,

Interviewer: did you send him the nude image/videos?

Interviewee: i send him once in a while but not always

Interviewer: how often do you send him these images/videos?

Interviewee: hmmm i can"t say because many times

Interviewer: does he also send you his nudes images/videos?

Interviewee: yeah

Interviewer: why does he ask for your nude images?

Interviewee: because sometimes he goes far for two weeks one week and in that during he tells me can you do this for me because i feel like something then you do because this your husband, you trust him he trusts you know he cannot do something bad for you because he is your husband yeah

Interviewer: which part of your body wants to see in a nude? Interviewee: (laughs) the private parts

Interviewer: what part doe he send to you? Interviewee: yeah private parts

Interviewer: how do you feel when you receive his nude images?

Interviewee: i feel ok and satisfied [nudes satisfies]

Interviewer: do you know other married couples how share their nude images/videos?

Interviewee: no i don"t know because that"s is my private life, in don"t know because i don"t get into other peoples private affairs

Interviewer: do you think is safe to share ones nude images/videos with a married partner?

Interviewee: it is ok because you don"t know the reason why that person has decides to ask for your nude photos, may he has come to a point where he feels like cheating on and thinks that he should get your nude images instead on looking for another woman, the picture will help him to cool down because he is away for two weeks or three weeks and may be he is faithful to you and you are faithful to him , so when send him your nude images he will feel i love him and he remembers you and feels he should not betray his wife because he loves her , the nude image makes him remember about you as the wife yeah[expression of love]

Interviewer: des he forces you to send the nude images? Interviewee: no it is my wish to send him

Interviewer: who between you asked asking the nude images?

Interviewee: could be me because he marriage you trust each other you cannot deny him the nude image and he is your husband, you cannot deny him

Interviewer: do you chat with him when he is far? Interviewee: yeah we send texts

Interviewer: do you sext chat with him when he is not around? Interviewee: yeah yes obvious

Interviewer: what do you take about in your sex chats?

Interviewee: when he is far he want to know what you have put one yeah and love issues

Interviewer: is it during sex chats that he asks for your nude images? Interviewee: yes that time and i also ask

Interviewer: do you get sexually stimulated when you sex chat with him? Interviewee: yeah obvious

Interviewer: in real life with friends who you know talk about how people share nude/seminude images/videos?

Interviewee: yeah i talk with them, they say it is ok for couples who are married because you can send your nudes to someone who has not married you may be he want the nude to advantage of you may be when you break up he with send the image to everyone so

that everybody can know you are prostitute yeah but if this person you have settled he is my husband and he cannot do anything bad about me so when you send him you have trusted him and he has trusted you as well so instead of him cheating on you at that time remember he is far from you instead of liking

for another woman if he receives your nude image if he trust you he will look at the picture and see he has a wife and at that moment he starts to remember the good things you do to her so he can"t do anything bad and he cannot share that nude image with anyone because he is your husband he cannot forward such images to others because he knows that if he does that it will destroy the family and the marriage [safe in marriage, wife or husband cannot share because they don"t want to destroy the family]

Interviewer: do you share his nude images with other people?

Interviewee: i cannot do that, he will send his nude to me , i will delete because what i wanted to see i have seen this phone sometimes is used by the kids, so he sends i look at them then delete , he sends when we are chatting after that i delete

Interviewer: does he delete the nude images as well? Interviewee: yea he also deletes

Interviewer: what would tell a person who comes to you over leaked/shared nude images/videos?

Interviewee: first of the person has learnt the lesson, she will not do something like that in future i will her not to worry because that is not the end of life, because she did not know what would happen next, because if you told her not to send she would have refused, problem she could have said you want to destroy her relationship but because she seen the consequences of what you warned her about she would not do something like that again so you encourage her and warn her not to attempt something like that again and i will tell to continue with life she should not stop there because the image has already been shared

Interviewer: has any one come to you over leaked nude images/videos? Interviewee: not, none

Interviewer: would advise the person to talk to the parent?

Interviewee: (laguhs) no i cannot, how do you involve the parent in something like that and may be she does not even know you have a boyfriend, these young girls sometimes their boyfriends hurts and because she is your friend and married, she comes to you for advice she cannot go to her mother she will come to and tell you what has happened and expect you to guide her since you are married an probably you came across the same thing , then you advise her according to the issue and if she is ready to listen she will get the advice

Interviewer: what would you do if the nude images you have sent your husband were leaked/shared?

Interviewee: my nudes?, i would feel very bad , i cannot believe it hey hey hey i will go crazy I don"t know what i can do but will go crazy God , wah it is too bad

Interviewer: if that happens who would you talk to? Interviewee: my sister my older sister

Interviewer: can you share with your mum?

Interviewee: no how, no i can"t I"m free but i cannot tell my mother, may be because of age , my mother might get stressed to the point of getting sick i would rather talk to my older sister she is young i know she has ideas of what to do yeah i can"t tell my mum oh i cant

Interviewer: do you think sharing/forwarding other peoples nude images/videos is OK? Interviewee: no it is not ok, people cannot trust, they cannot see as a good person anymore, even if you go to church everyday they will still see you as a prostitute, someone who is not reckless and does not mind about life yeah

Interviewer: do you think sending ones nude images/videos has consequences?

Interviewee: yes there are , like one day you cannot know what will happen for example you can send to someone who has bad motives the person can harm you or send the images to your father from there no one will ever respected , parents or sibling will never respect you yeah

Interviewer: would you advise someone whose nude images/videos have been shared even among friends to leave school?

Interviewee: no i cant why should she leave school, nudes is not something that can make one it is not the end of life there is still life after that there is future

Interviewer: what would you dot to a person who shares your nude images/videos?

Interviewee: i will ask him why he send my nude images, that is the first thing i would want to know, why he did that, why he sent my nude images, yeah i will leave the person i can continue with the relationship, if i see that i continue with the relationship, he if sends the images to somebody else that will be enough reason to separate if we were in a relationship

Interviewer:] what about if your husband shares the nudes images with others?

Interviewee: i don''t my husband can do that but if he did that i can''t forgive him , i can''t trust him anymore [sharing nudes leads to loss of trust, so it can be dangerous in marriage]

Interviewer: would you judge a girl and a boy the same way if both shared nude images/videos?

Interviewee: no i cant judge them the same way, not the same the lady is reckless and the should know such things are private, if you receive from a lady the man should delete immediately not keeping them you never know what will happen next

qw what characteristics can tell a lady or a man likely to share nude images/videos?'
Interviewee: it is not easy to tell, it is hard to tell

Interviewer: do visit other people''s Instagram?

Interviewee: yeah i have seen veras sidikas Instagram but i don''t like the nude images she shares, most Instagram contain nude image

Interviewer: why do you Christians share nude images/videos yet religion does not allow? Interviewee: i don know why because one may say is a Christian but the things he does are bad so i don''t know

Interviewer: what do you think can be done to prevent young people from sharing nude images/videos?

Interviewee: (laughs) so long as they have the phones hey cannot stop from sending nudes to people they love may be we do away with phones

Interviewer: what do you live media influences young people into sharing nude images/videos? Interviewee: yeah when post nudes and porn on the internet

Interviewer: do you visit pornographic websites?

Interviewee: yeah i do once in a while, sometimes you might hear people saying something and you decide to check, when i check i leave immediately, i was doing this before marriage

Interviewer: what did you check on pornographic websites?

Interviewee: because people used to say something , and they would encourage you to go and open , some people knew i don''t like pornography and they insist that i go to a certain site and open to see what is there, when i opened pornography would download , but nowadays i don''t watch

Interviewer: do you go to dating sites?

Interviewee: no i don''t

Interviewer: [closing remarks involved appreciating the respondent and assuring anonymity of the conversation]