

**THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUTHS INVOLVED IN SEXTING IN THE
GREENDALE SUBURB OF HARARE**

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Abstract: *To effectively educate young people on the implications of sexting, it is important to understand sexting from a holistic picture. The study sought to investigate the lived experiences of youths on the important phenomenon understood as sexting. The research gave an ear to youths involved in sexting and in an attempt to highlight their experiences. Eight youths between the ages of 18-24, whom reside in the Greendale suburb participated in the study. The researcher used questionnaires and online ethnography to select the participants. 20 youths were randomly picked and asked about sexting and whether they would be interested to participate in the study, furthermore they were asked if they would befriend the researcher on Facebook for study purposes. Only 15 youths agreed and gave the researcher their Facebook names. The researcher followed those that had agreed to befriend her on Facebook and from their profile updates information 8 participants were selected. The thematic content analysis with the assistance of the NVivo (version10) was used to analyse the data gathered from the in-depth interviews. It was founded that sexting was prevalent amongst youths and was very influential in youths engaging in sexually risky behaviours, infidelity included. The phenomenon called sexting was found to be dangerous as it causes psychological harm in the youths whose nude pictures are shared online, and these youths had no support systems to access for help. Another finding was that girls were emotional while boys viewed sexting as a fun-filled practice. The researcher however recommended that phscho-social support systems be created in youth friendly environments for example in learning institutes since most youths spent their time there. Policies on sexting are to be formulated to protect the minors from the harm associated with sexting lastly, cybertherapy was recommended since the youths were reluctant to talk to their elders about sexting due to fear of being judged. Life skills training on sexuality issues were to be availed for youths and teachers in an attempt to protect them from risky sexual behaviours.*

Keywords: Youths, Lived experiences, Sexting, Greendale, Suburb

Research Area: Social Science

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is a rapid growth of technology worldwide and young people have become the vanguard and are at the leading edge in newly developed devices. In most Zimbabwean homes if parents have a problem with technological devices they ask their children to fix the problems for them. There is, however, a new behaviour that has emerged over the years called sexting. Sexting refers to the creation and transmission of sexually explicit materials via cell phone or any digital media such as e-mail, instant messaging and social network sites (Lounsbury et al., 2011). There are mixed feelings about this new phenomenon among youths. Broaddus and Dickson- Gomez (2013) a cited in Abraham (2015) embrace sexting platform for creating comfort and dis-inhibition regarding sexual matters and allowing youths to explore their sexuality. On the contrary, Livingstone and Helsper (2009) cited in Ringrose

et al. (2012) view the sexting behaviour as risky and dangerous to youth. International concern about sexting youths has triggered several studies involving sexting youths in a variety of settings.

2. BACKGROUND

The study background comprises the prevalence of sexting among youths around the world, the content of youth sexting and the lived experiences of youth who engage in sexting. The information which constitutes background to the study was drawn from past studies conducted in some parts of the world.

2.1 Prevalence of Sexting

International research shows that sexting is prevalent in various parts of the world. For example, a study conducted by CosmoGirl.com in 2008 revealed that 20% of American teenagers and 33% of American young adults reported engaging in this type of behavior. While an EU study involving 25 countries revealed that 12% of 11–16 year olds in the UK had seen or received sexual messages online, 2% receiving them more than once a week as compared to 15% receiving the same messages across Europe (Livingstone et al., 2011). This study further noted that girls were slightly more likely to receive online sexual messages than boys (14% vs. 10%). Participants aged 15-16 years old were more likely to receive sexual messages online than the younger age groups (20% vs. 5%), but there was little difference by social class.

2.2 Sexting Content

Sexting youths the world over send or receive sexually explicit images, verbal requests for sex acts, and unwanted physical contact. Such materials may be in form of videos, photos and broadcasts focused on girls' appearances (Boyd, 2008). Images that include naked breasts, genitals, or bottoms, nude or nearly nude images (e.g., images with youth wearing a bathing suit, posing sexily with clothes on, or focused on clothed genitals (posting nude or semi-nude photos or videos (Mhlanga et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012; Tustin, 2014; Walker, 2012). The targets of the sexting content are unsuspecting youths, friends, schoolmates, boy and girlfriends and prospective sexual partners. The images are either of themselves or other people.

2.3 Lived Experiences of Sexting

Sexting youths are susceptible to both negative and positive experiences. Research suggests that female youths are psychologically more affected by sexting than male youths. Studies conducted in various parts of the world suggest that youths experienced sexting far differently depending upon their gender; young women were pressured by young men to produce and distribute sexually explicit images of themselves, while young men were pressured by each other to source these images. In addition, research suggests that female youths suffer more harmful consequences of sexting practice than their male counterparts. A study conducted by Ringrose et al. (2012) in Australia and the United Kingdom revealed that young women were subjected to a wide range of sexual harassment activities that included pressure to send sexually explicit images, verbal requests for sex acts, and unwanted physical contact. These young women described the harassment as a daily barrage where failure to accede to requests created additional harassment and recrimination while complying created negative consequences like being labelled a slut. Similarly, a study conducted by Tustin (2014) with South African sexting youths indicated that 72% of the female youths were embarrassed and regretted some of the texts they had sent and 38% said they had formed new relationships with unknown internet users while engaging in this sexting behaviour. A study

conducted by Mhlanga et al. (2015) in Zimbabwe associated sexting with health-jeopardizing behaviors including sex with multiple partners, unprotected sex and STI's. Ringrose et al. (2012) concluded that sexting practice was coercively constructed and shaped by the gender dynamics of the peer group in which, primarily, boys harass girls, and was exacerbated by the gender norms of popular culture. This was confirmed by Walker (2012) who argued that a sexualized culture which objectifies women was responsible for normalizing gendered sexting behaviours. Due to cultural constraints, sexting female youths in the African setting rarely disclose their sexting experiences and their consequences.

It would be unrealistic to view youth sexting as wholly negative. For youths, sexting is associated with a number of benefits. McGraw (2013) notes that sexting enhances sexual gratification and long-distance intimate relationships. In fact, it is an opportunity for youths to explore their sexuality using technology, such as cell phones, SMS, picture/ video messaging, BBM, and snap chat. Other researchers indicate that sexting by adolescents was a way of discovering who they are as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood (Ringrose et al., 2012).

3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the current study was to explore the lived experiences of youths involved in sexting in a sample of Zimbabwean youths. It sought to answer the following questions: How does involvement in sexting impact youths' live experiences? What pressures, feelings and thoughts does sexting experience evoke in youths? Findings might be helpful to inform interventions for the psychosocial adaptation of youths involved in sexting and their social support system.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section includes research design, participants and setting, instruments, data collection and analysis procedures.

4.1 Research Design

The study utilised a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of youths involved in sexting. Specifically, an interpretive phenomenological approach was adopted to explore the life-world of youths involved in sexting. The authors' intention was to provide in-depth information on the sexting experiences a sample of Zimbabwean youths. This design encouraged youths to expand their responses. The approach is appropriate for studies which are designed to identify phenomena as they are perceived by the actors (Patton & Cachron, 2002).

4.2 Participants and Setting

Hanlon and Larget (2011) define a population as all the individuals or units of interest. It is generally a large collection of individuals or objects which are the main focus of a scientific query. The study participants comprised 8 youths who were drawn from the population of sexting youths who resided in Greendale suburb of Harare within the age range 16-24 years using intensity sampling (Patton, 2001). This procedure involves selecting or searching for rich or excellent examples of the phenomenon of interest. Intensity sampling allowed the researchers to select a small number of rich cases that provided in-depth information and knowledge of a phenomenon of interest.

4.3 Instruments

Research instruments are the fact-finding strategies and tools for data collection, www.campus.educadium.com. In qualitative research, fieldwork is required. The researcher physically approaches the participant, the setting, or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting (Creswell, 1994 cited in Dlamini, 2002) and interviews the participants in the research in a face to face encounter. The researcher used a combination of data collection methods. Questionnaires and Interviews and questionnaires were used. Interviews were used to those who dropped out of school. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the following respondents: school heads, councillors, and an officer in charge of adult education.

4.3 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a set of questions for gathering information from individuals. According to Sisiscalco and Auriat (2005), a questionnaire is said to be standardised when each respondent is to be exposed to the same questions and the same system of coding responses. This is so as to ensure that the differences in responses to questions can be interpreted as reflecting differences among respondents, rather than differences in the processes that produced the answers. In this study, a structured questionnaire was used as a selection tool for participants. A structured questionnaire can be described as a closed form was control or guidance is given for the answer. The questions are short, and they require the respondent to provide a yes or no response or simply ticking off an item out of a given list. The questionnaire in this study, therefore, used closed questions on the knowledge of sexting, participation in the phenomenon, willingness to participate in the study and lastly if the research could befriend the respondent on Facebook for the purposes of conducting an online ethnography.

4.4 Online Ethnography

Online ethnography is a qualitative approach to data collection in virtual communities which refers to a social network of people sharing common interests, ideas and feelings over the internet. Jones (2005: 15), as cited in www.irma-international.org, asserts that, “internet studies can describe and intervene in the life and values of the people who use the internet, and these can be best understood no matter out of temporal distance, through close observation and analysis of specific people and technologies, in specific places and times”. In this study, the researcher asked the participants if the researcher could befriend them on Facebook and for those that agreed, she followed them on Facebook and closely observed their comments. A page which allowed the participants to comment on sexting issues while their identity is hidden was also created. Individual updates on the participants’ walls were also studied by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to select a smaller sample of case study participants with whom in-depth interviews were carried out.

4.5 In-Depth Interviews

According to Abawi (2013), in-depth interviews are one-on-one encounters in which the interviewer makes use of an unstructured or semi-structured set of issues or topics to guide the discussion. The objective of the exercises is to explore and uncover deep-seated emotions, motivations, and attitudes. They are mostly applied when dealing with sensitive issues because participants are most likely to give evasive or misleading answers when questioned through a questionnaire. The in-depth interviews used in this study were on the lived experiences of youths involved in sexting in Greendale, exploring the behaviours, cognition and emotions of the sexters.

4.6 Data Collection

Participants were requested to complete a selection questionnaire so that rich cases could be identified. Thereafter prospective participants were engaged in online ethnography. From the online ethnography, 8 rich cases were identified. The 8 participants were engaged in in-depth interviews on how the sexting impacted on their lived experiences. Each interview took between 45 to 60 minutes and all interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure credibility, in-depth individual interviews were conducted to get to the core of the youth's sexting behaviour. Interview scripts were written in a booklet to allow for auditing of the research process and this helped to improve the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse and draw themes from the data. The aim was to attain a condensed and broad description of lived experiences of youths involved in sexting. This analysis process is done with the assistance of the NVivo (version10) which generated extracted and organised themes. The researchers chose the thematic approach because it is flexible, and it organizes data and summarizes the findings. It also enabled the researchers to capture recurrent issues raised by the participants. Credibility of findings was assured by giving participants the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study while neutrality was achieved by (a) creating a relaxed and friendly environment in which the participants felt free to share their lived experiences with the researchers and (b) spending enough time with each one of the participants during the in-depth interviews.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The researchers interviewed eight youths who were involved in sexting. All participants were within the 18-24 age range. Sexting youths were either staying with their parents or elder siblings. The following themes emerged from the data collected for the purpose of the study: (a) How and when did you start, (b) Emotions and Feelings associated with sexting, (c) Thoughts associated with sexting, (d) Behaviours associated with sexting, (e) Experiences associated with sexting and (f) Crimes associated with sexting.

5.2 How and When It All Began

As shown in figure 1 below, four of the participants started sexting when they were at secondary school while the other four participants started sexting when they were at college.

5.3 How and When It All Began

5.3.1 Emotions and Feelings Associated with Sexting

Under the emotions and feeling that is associated with sexting three Subthemes were derived and these are; the feelings associated with sexting, expression of emotions through sexting and the experiential pleasure or displeasure.

5.3.2 Feelings associated with the debut of sexting

Responses to feelings related to the debut of sexting are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Feelings when started sexting

As shown in Fig 3 below. Theme 2 Emotions associated with sexting comprised of four components. These included cognitive dissonance, affection, memory bliss and please. It

was found out that the debut of sexting is associated with affection, pleasure and some cognitive dissonance (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Feelings associated with the debut of sexting

5.3.3 Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is experienced when the participants felt as if it was bad yet they were deriving some pleasure out of it. This created conflicting cognitions. This cognitive dissonance resulted in some of the participants feeling bad, uncomfortable and regretful (Figure 3).

5.3.4 Pleasure from deceptive involvement

There were also reports of pleasure from deceptive involvement from male participants. It was reported that it feels good when one is not fully committed, only intended to trick girls into having sex and when it's not one's fully committed girlfriend (Figure 3).

5.3.5 Momentary bliss

For some, sexting was a source of momentary bliss, a refreshing point during a day almost like a joke. Sexting was viewed as a thing of the moment by some youths who argued that it does not last the whole day you only sext for a few minutes and that's it. Hence the feelings associated with it are in passing and not reflective of one's true feelings and engagement.

5.3.6 Affection

A key finding at this juncture is that gender powered relations saturate young people's lives.

5.3.7 Expressions of Emotions and Feelings Through Sexting

The responses to how sexting is used to express emotions and feelings are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4).

Figure 4: How sexting is used to express emotions and feelings

It was found that the expression of emotions is more serious to girls than to boys and take their sexting seriously as a mechanism to create, maintain and guard their emotional feelings with their partners and would-be partners (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: Expressions of emotions and feelings

5.3.8 Experiential pleasure and displeasure during sexting

Responses to experiential pleasure and displeasure are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11: Pleasure and displeasure

It was found that most participants derive sexual fantasy as a way of pleasure (Figure 4.13). Some men enjoy trapping and baiting girls. It was also revealed that displeasure is often a result of intrusion and cognitive dissonance.

Figure 4. 12: Experience of pleasure and displeasure during sexting

It is clear from Figure 4.13 that the pleasure is in the thoughts of having sexual intercourse with the person on the receiving end. For boys it seems to be a practice that they do know that in turn, they will experience it in real life. They use it as a baiting strategy. It

seems they are sure that the messages they send will get the girl to sleep with them. So the pleasure is in knowing that after sexting, sexual intercourse will follow. Other reported pleasure in terms of affection, these are the people that are serious about sexting and probably view it as part of their dating life. Displeasure in this case only comes when sexting is out of the relationship for example when someone whom they are not dating starts sexting with them, this was mostly reported by girls and the boys also made comments in passing that girls tend to attach after sexting and yet it's meant to be a practice that is not so serious.

The arousal that is brought about by talking about sex and thinking about it is what brings about pleasure for other youths when they are sexting with their peers or their girlfriends, this further awakens the need of having sexual intercourse in them. Continuously thinking about sex leads to masturbation and for some participants they said they experienced pleasure from masturbation that sexting could not fully satisfy. Not only boys were reporting about masturbation but also the girls. This suggests that it is a magical practice for the youths, they have feelings of being attracted to something interesting which is subject to magical influence which means that the feeling is unexplainable it is just too good to be true and involves a lot of fun.

Displeasure was reported in the form of intrusion, for boys they experienced it as satiation, a situation in which one continues receiving requests from someone he had already had sex with; and for girls intrusion was reported in the form of unsolicited texts; it was also founded that displeasure was associated with the perception of discrepancies between an expectation and the satisfaction from the practice.

5.3.9 Thoughts associated with sexting

In an attempt to uncover the thoughts associated with sexting, the researchers categorized the thoughts associated with sexting into three categories namely, general thoughts on sexting, thoughts after sexting and thoughts on whether sexting was coerced, or it was an agreement between two people involved. The research finding is outlined below accordingly.

5.3.10 Thoughts generally associated with sexting

Responses to general thoughts associated with sexting are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4. 13: General thoughts about sexting

The thoughts associated with sexting that were outlined by respondents are sexual intercourse, having fun and convincing girls to sleep with them (for boys) and lastly thoughts of proving a point to the girls that one has a big manhood.

5.3.11 Thoughts after sexting

Responses to thoughts after sexting are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4:14: Thoughts after sexting

It seemed crucial that youths think of having sexual intercourse when they will be sexting.

Sexual intercourse is the major if not only thought that comes to mind after sexting, they are made more interesting by thinking of all the things that the other person would have promised to do to you, some of which one would have not experienced in real life.

Apart from thinking about sexual intercourse just like every other youth, some would be drawn into a deep seat of memories, thinking of the mates met in the past and that done the things that were being described in the sext to her before. This is probably a risky behavior associated thought why, because if that person from the past is still in touch with you, you might end up having sexual intercourse with that person instead and when you then meet the person you were sexting with initially, you would still want to experience the same experience hence risky sexual behavior.

5.3.12 Thoughts about cohesion versus voluntary and reciprocal agreement

Responses to thoughts about cohesion and agreement are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.15: coercion vs. consensus

All participants, however, presented that sexting was done willingly and no one was forced to participate, after all, it happens when people are in different places, how could someone possibly force anyone to sext when they are miles apart?

5.3.13 Behaviours associated with sexting

This study presents how sexting affects behaviour and the sub-themes that were derived from this section are; ways in which sexting affects sexual behaviour, the emergence of sexual relationships, the sexual behaviours engaged in by the youths and culturally based sexting behaviours.

5.3.14 Ways in which sexting affects sexual behaviour

The findings show that some youths end up trying too hard to be someone they are not and some of them are going through what is called the splitting online which sees them creating an image which they are not in real life and might even fail to see the person they sext with and perform the act in real life because of the fear that they might not perform what they sexted. Masturbation seems to be a common behavior associated with sexting. Youths probably use sexting as either a form of foreplay leading into actual physical intimacy or a form of sex hence the issue of masturbation which in turn gives them a relief on their sexual tensions and is probably accompanied by an orgasm. The issue of infidelity was also brought about by Respondent 5. Similarly, Respondent 6 also explained how sexting with a person who is far away could get one into having extra partners to sleep with. However, this participant spoke of how one could end up practising lesbianism or gayism as well as how one can rape someone if their sexual gratification is not met after sexting

Being a sexual addict could be a result of sexting according to Respondent 7. He explained how he imagines having sex with respectable persons who are even older than him, for example, the pastor's wife. Sexting might give someone thoughts that they are very good in bed and they can even handle older women, it also brings about fantasies Respondent 7 also reported to have started engaging in sexual activities such as kissing, toughing and finger fucking which he never used to do before he got engaged in sexting

Responses to ways in which sexting affects sexual behaviour are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4. 16: Effects of sexting on sexual behavior

5.3.15 The emergence of sexual relationships

The kind of relationships that have been birthed by sexting is not the healthy kind of relationships as these are built in infidelity and the researchers do not think that there are grounded in love but rather they are meant to satisfy sexual gratification. Most of the youths kept on reporting that they did not think that sexting has given birth to meaningful relationships

Responses to whether setting leads to the emergence of sexual relationships are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.17).

Figure 4:17: Sexting and the emergence of sexual relationships

5.3.16 Sexting and sexual behaviour of adolescents

Respondents explained that when you see a picture of any body part you would want to do a lot of things to it and it gets you turned on as in aroused. The next thing you do is to make a plan to meet and then experience the things you would have sexted about in person. The researcher might argue that, if sexting is meant to satisfy one sexually, it would have failed in its purpose if the people involved start planning on meeting. It seems there is a link between sexting and drugs and alcohol, which could probably suggest that youths sext when they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Responses to whether sexting leads to the emergence of sexual relationships are summarized in the word tree below (Figure 4.18).

5.3.17 Culturally based sexting behaviours

To justify his sexting behaviors, participants gave a detailed explanation of the link between culture and sexting, suggesting that sexting is influenced by culture. Others, however, acknowledged that sexting was taboo and was not allowed in their Zimbabwean culture.

Fig 4.19 below gives a summary of the responses given by the participants in this regard.

5.3.18 The experiences associated with sexting

Most participants explained how they had experienced harm, risk or shame regarding their sexting experiences. The most touching of them all statements were given by Respondent 5 whose nude pictures were posted on Facebook. There is a risk of acting in any way the person in possession of your nude pictures wants even when you do not want. Sexting with someone else that you are not dating might end up destroying the relationship with the person that you truly love and or your relationship with your friends for example in Respondent 7 s case. Respondent 3 mentioned that having your parents see your nude pictures is the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone

5.3.19 Crimes associated with sexting

Half of the participants told the researcher that sexting could be considered a crime in Zimbabwe because of the following reasons; there is a law that was passed on to Revenge Porn. All participants had more than three dangers associated with sexting to talk about. The most common of the dangers was that of fear that the pictures would be leaked which in turn would tarnish one's image, embarrass them, and make them a social outcast or misfit and loss of respect in the community.

Emotional state can be disturbed, one could become depressed and ideas of committing suicide could fill their head, some even take the step and commit suicide. The

gender issue surfaced when the respondents were talking to the researcher, one respondent mentioned that if a girl 'nude picture goes viral that person will suffer shame for the rest of her life, but if it is a guy they might get away with it and even be given praise for that. Promiscuity in terms of moving from one guy to the other or having a side chick to sext with and the main chick was one on the comments raised by the respondents. A few respondents were concerned about their spiritual life, they said that sexting could destroy one's spiritual life. Cyberbullying and real-life bullying or sexual harassment were some of the dangers that were mentioned by the participants

6. DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the sexting phenomenon included; demographics, thoughts associated with sexting, emotions associated with sexting, sexual behaviours associated with sexting, experiences associated with sexting and lastly the crimes associated with sexting.

6.1 Demographic Data

The sexting phenomenon is indeed a practice common amongst the youths. This finding is supported by Lounsbury et.al (2011), who affirms that it was common for young people to have received messages with "sexual words or images" by cell phone or on the internet. Their findings reported that sexting rates were higher amongst the 18 – 24 years olds. This study yielded similar results. In the previous chapter, the data presented showed that females who participated were more than the males.

6.2 Emotions and feelings associated with sexting

The research revealed that. boys did not want to commit themselves to the people they sexted with, girls, on the other hand, presented that sexting involved being attached and attraction. There was a conflict of beliefs and behaviour which created a cognitive dissonance which supported by the Cognitive Dissonance Theory which was propounded by Leon Ferstinger in 1957. For some sexting was a momentary bliss. In the sexting unleashed study, by McGraw (2013, page 81), ".....so they're just like, 'we're going to do this right now' we are not going to care about a month from now or what is will get us into."

6.3 Thoughts associated with sexting

The thoughts that were predominant amongst the youth in this research were; thoughts about having sexual intercourse, proving a point about being attractive or being a person that is on top of their game, reminiscing of the past sexual experiences, thoughts of satisfying the sexual needs that are brought about by sexting for example masturbation, thinking of being promiscuous and lastly thoughts on whether sexting behaviours were coerced or people corresponded. To support the findings of this study is an assertion by Mhlanga et.al (2015) who posited that youths involved in sexting were at risk of HSV 2 because they were having sexual intercourse. Some participants indicated that their thoughts were on proving a point about being attractive or being the coolest person there is in the hood. These are similar findings to those of Sirianni and Vishwanath (2012) who proclaims that sexually active individuals who achieve positive rewards based on their sexual self- efficacy might also expect to achieve the same positive rewards when engaging in sexual behaviours such as creation and sharing of nude pictures or sexually suggestive messages. Different from the research done by Ringrose et. Al, this study founded that sexting was not coerced the youths would into willingly and there was an agreement between the two people involved.

6.4 Behaviours associated with sexting

One of the key findings of this research is that sexting influences the youth to engage in risky sexual behaviours. These findings can be supported by the Social Cognition Theory by Bandura (2008) which suggests that sexting behaviour is influenced by the presence of intrinsic (personal factors) and extrinsic (environmental) factors. The fact that the youth raise their concerns on how Kim Kardashian can get away with sexting and even makes large amounts of money means that they might be imitating her behaviour, because she is a celebrity she acts as a role model, hence modelling and lastly, the positive rewards that she get for sending her nude pictures could be a motivation to youth who tend to copy positively rewarded behaviour.

The current study founded that the youths that involved in sexting have sexting and outside love relationships though boys seem not to sext in love relationship as they respect their girlfriends. Similarly, a study conducted by McGraw (2013 page: 98) came up with the same results which are supported by the following information; “all of the direct participants have sexted within and outside of emotional relationships. The Theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991) also supports the findings in that the youths are sure of what they will be doing, their behaviours are intentional, they plan to sext and their main goal is to have sexual intercourse, or to birth, relationships depending on their gender.

6.5 Experiences, crime and dangers associated with sexting

This study revealed that youths involved in sexting experience some form of harm, risk or shame in their day to day lives. They feared that their nude pictures would be leaked or will be used for sexual harassment by whoever would be in the position of them. For those that had suffered the embarrassment of having their nude pictures posted on Facebook they were depressed and suffered in silence because they feared the judgement that came with being labelled as a “slut”. According to Livingstone et.al (2011), previous research has shown that children and youth who encounter one risk online are most likely to encounter other risks on line or offline, such as cyberbullying, sexual harassment or meetings with strangers.

7. CONCLUSION

The research findings revealed that sexting includes diverse practices for example sharing of nude pictures, text messages that are sexually suggestive, sexually suggestive sounds and videos of one’s naked body. Another indication brought by the research is that sexting is a common practice amongst the youth and it is prevalent and has an impact on youth’s sexual behaviours than previous research suggests. Youths generally know the dangers that are associated with sexting and have heard stories or experienced the harm, risk and shame associated with sexting but they still continue to send and receive sexually explicit content, therefore the researcher concluded that youths are becoming robust to the consequences of sexting. They are learning how to handle whatever negative consequences that come with sexting. It is included that sexting behaviours can be influenced by alcohol and drugs as some youths can only sext when they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Most sexual behaviours, therefore, are influenced by substance abuse amongst the youths. It is also concluded that culture plays a role negatively and positively in sexting behaviours amongst youths. There is also a cultural erosion in this nation and the western role models (celebrities) are being imitated by our own youths though they know that in Zimbabwe sexting is culturally not accepted. An exploration of lack of support systems for youths involved in sexting was made and the church was identified as a place where people are offered psycho social support.

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