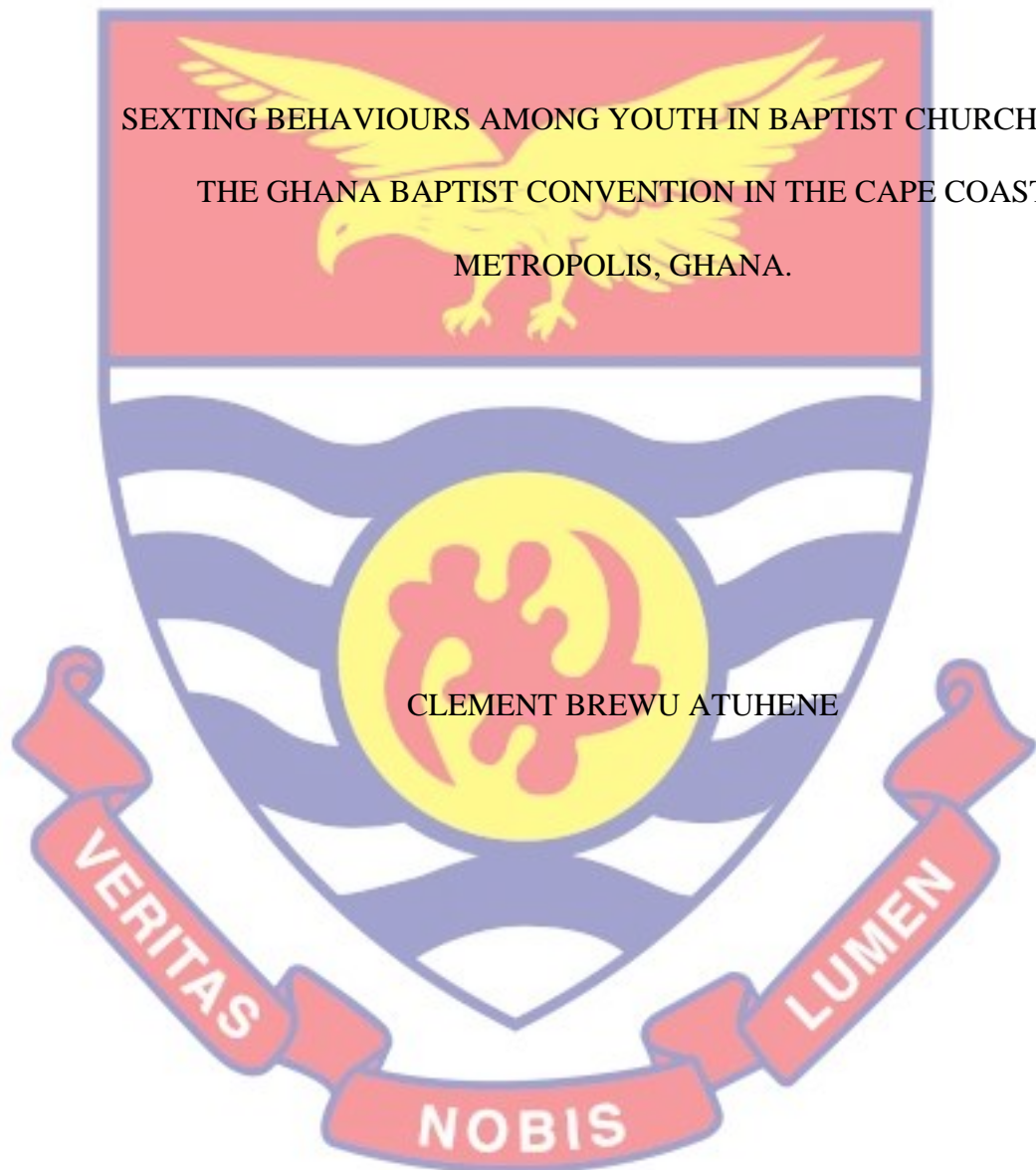
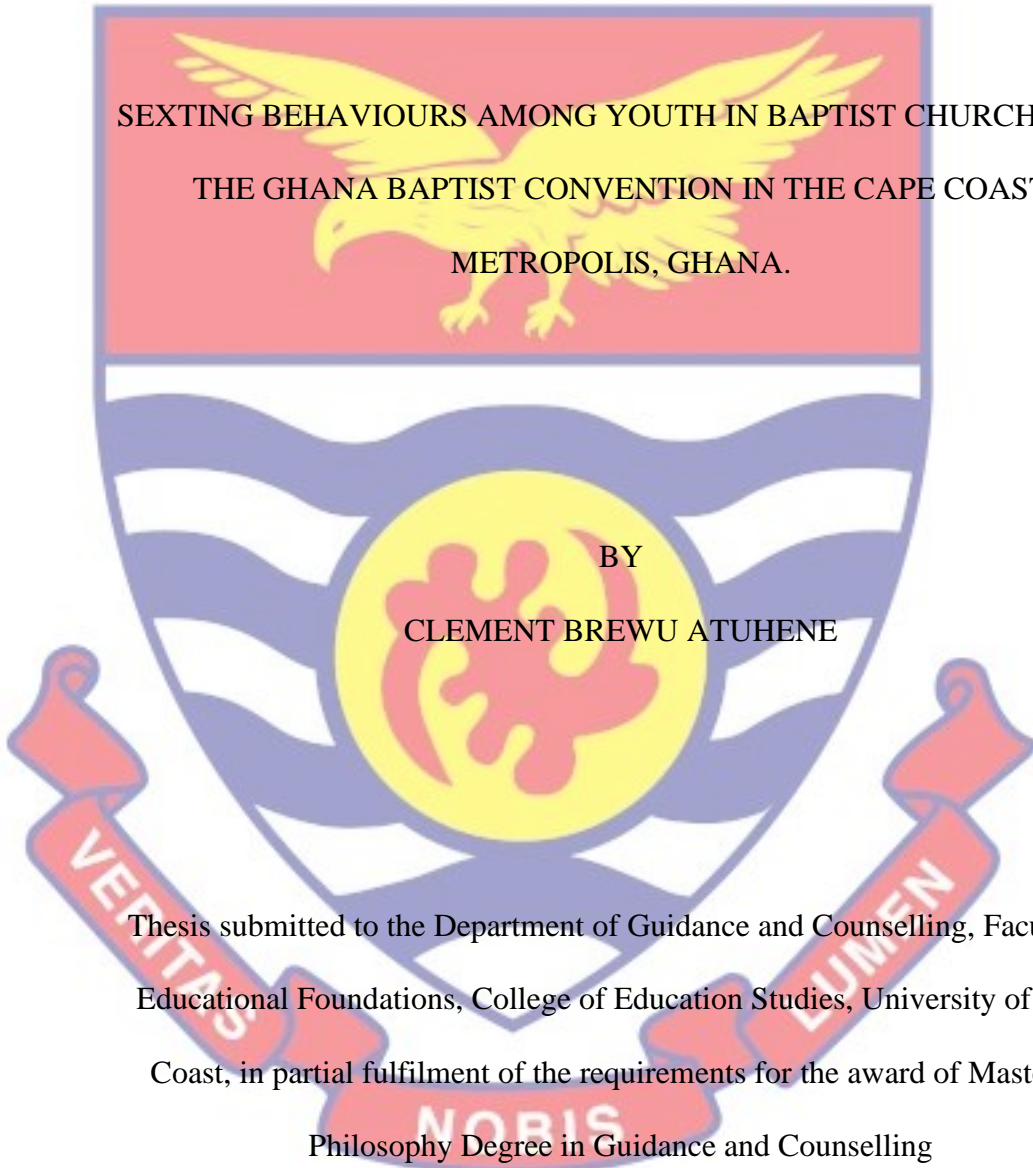


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SEXTING BEHAVIOURS AMONG YOUTH IN BAPTIST CHURCHES OF  
THE GHANA BAPTIST CONVENTION IN THE CAPE COAST  
METROPOLIS, GHANA.

BY  
CLEMENT BREWU ATUHENE

Thesis submitted to the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of  
Educational Foundations, College of Education Studies, University of Cape  
Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of  
Philosophy Degree in Guidance and Counselling

SEPTEMBER 2022

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

### Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of theses laid down in the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

Co-Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: .....

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate sexting behaviours among youths in Baptist churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention (GBC) in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design. The population under consideration comprised all youth in Baptist Churches of the GBC within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw a total of 244 youths from the four Baptist churches of GBC within the Cape Coast Metropolis. A questionnaire titled Texting Motivation Questionnaire (SMQ) was used in collecting the data for the study. Data were analysed using frequency and percentage, independent samples t-test and One-Way ANOVA. The study found that most of the respondents had received and forwarded sexually explicit messages. The major reasons given by the respondents for engaging in sexting practices included for fun, to flirt and to be accepted by friends. The study found a significant difference in sexting behaviours of the youth on the basis of gender, educational qualification and age. Also, it was found that the measures that could help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches of GBC in the Cape Coast Metropolis included church programmes, parental intervention and organising preventive counselling programmes. On the basis of the findings, it was recommended that the youth in the Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis should be educated by the leaders of Baptist Churches on the consequences of sexting and be encouraged to desist from such acts.

## KEY WORDS

**Baptist Churches in Cape Coast:** It is a group of local churches within the Cape Coast Metropolis that have registered with the Ghana Baptist Convention in the region in order to operate as authorized Churches.

**Electronic Media:** is the media that uses electricity to function. They include computers Television, radios and mobile phones.

**Pornography:** Is the printed or visual material (eg. Videos, photographs or writings) containing the “explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity intended to stimulate sexual excitement”.

**Sexting:** This refers to the “sending or receiving of sexually explicit photos, messages, and video clips by text, email, or posting them on social networking sites through cell phones and other electronic media”.

**Sexting Behaviour:** Sexting behaviour involves “receiving and/or sending sexually explicit text messages or photographs through a cell phone and the frequency of such acts”.

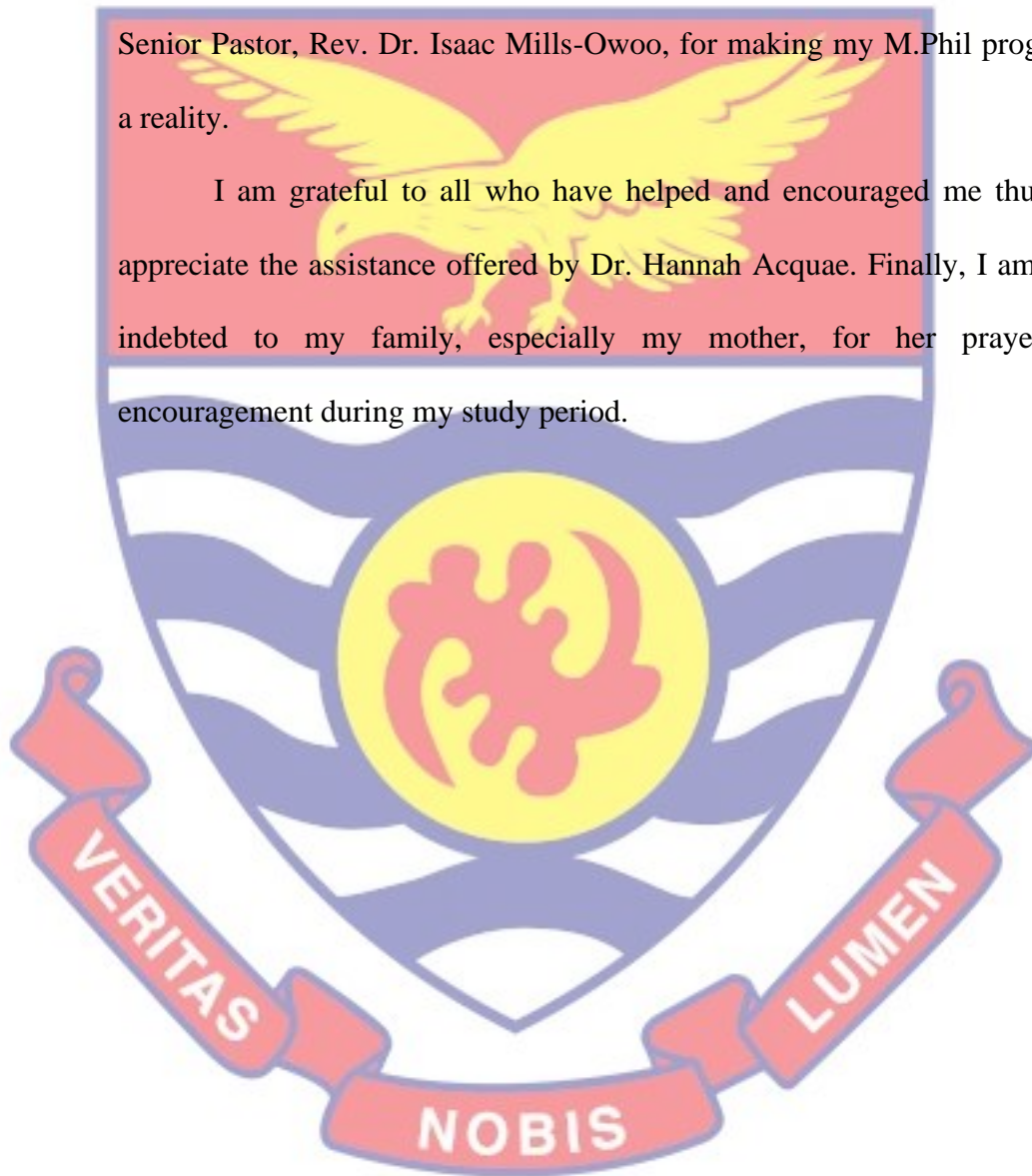
**Social Networking Sites (SNS):** “Online sites, services, or platforms, where users construct public or semi-public profiles that focus on reflecting and building social relations within those who share the same activities or interests” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This includes Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.

**Youth:** This is used to refer to individuals within the ages of 16 and 30 years.

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I am grateful to all who have helped and encouraged me thus far. I appreciate the assistance offered by Dr. Hannah Acquae. Finally, I am highly indebted to my family, especially my mother, for her prayers and encouragement during my study period.



DEDICATION

To my wife, Mrs. Anita Enyonam Atuhene and my children, Clement Kwake

Atuhene and Abena Enyonam Atuhene



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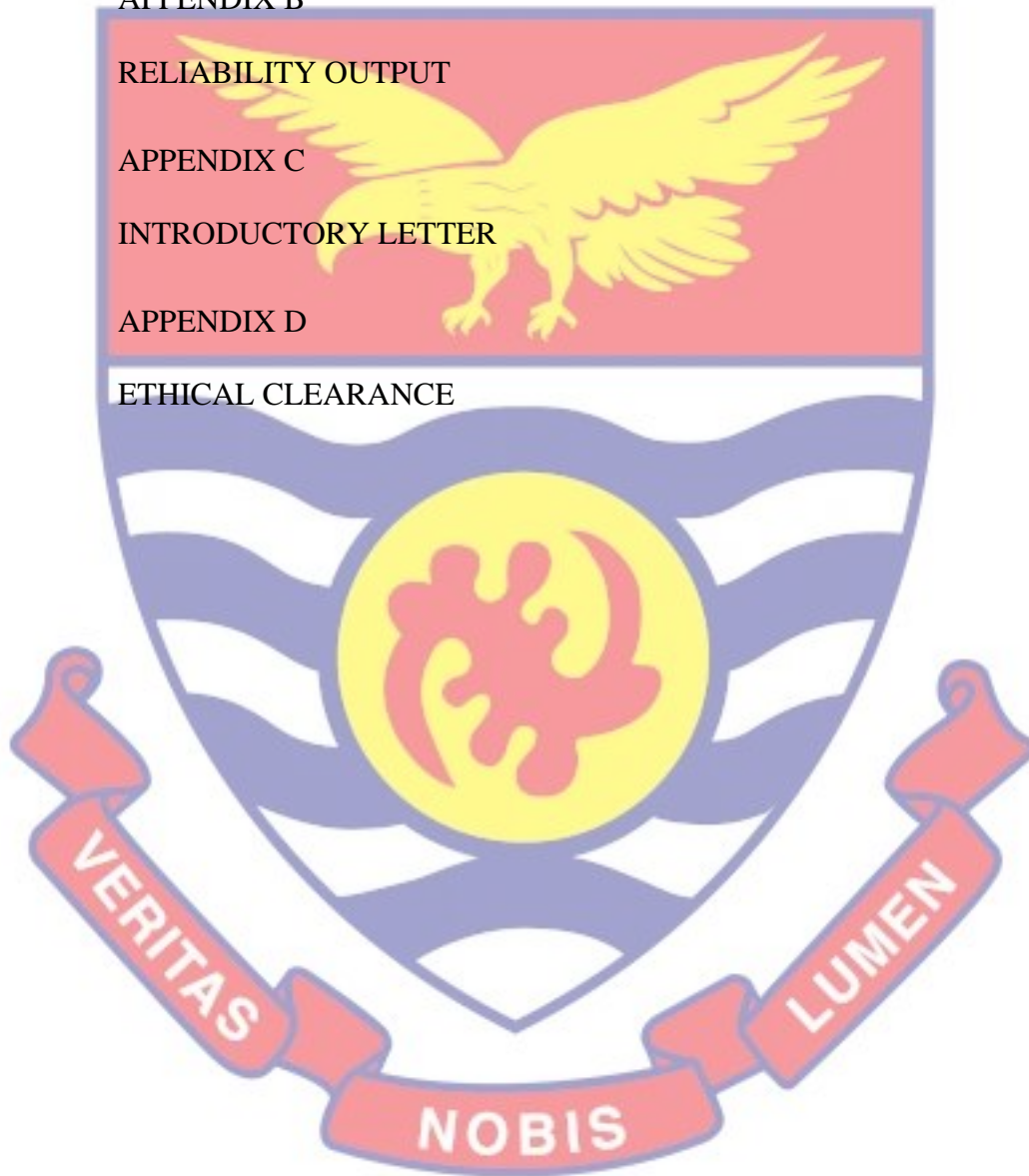


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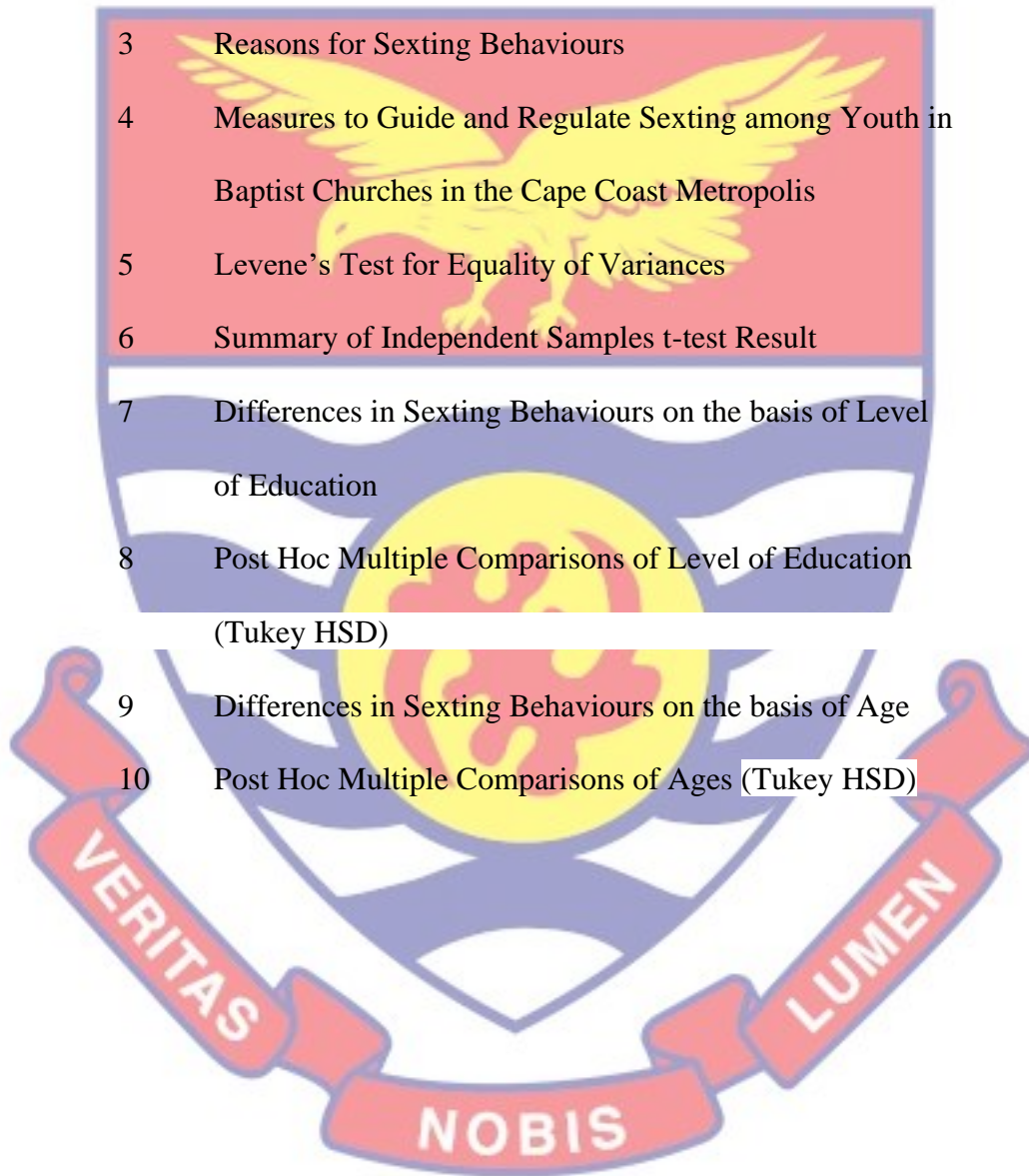
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

The phenomenon of sexting is quite novel as the word “sexting” first came into use in 2005 (Ostrager, 2010). It is clearly due to the technological development that permits the sending of photographs electronically. Sexting is currently viewed by the youth as a contactless means of flirtatious communication and socialisation. Unfortunately, this means of social communication is much more overt and can have a much lasting effect on the teenager (Ostrager, 2010).

Sexting is explained as the action of transmitting sexually explicit information or images, primarily between technological devices. Though quite novel, this dicey behaviour has garnered some amount of national scrutiny as a troubling situation in educational institutions throughout the United States (Lenhart & Madden, 2005). The risk involved with sexting is that personal and sensitive information can be forwarded and extensively disseminated into the public domain, and the original sender has no influence over how this dissemination occurs. Some studies have shown that a number of teenagers below 18 years are engaging in sexting behaviour (Stanglin, 2009).

A “partnership between Cox Communications, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Harris Interactive” investigated this online phenomenon. In the National Campaign poll, 19% of teens between 13 and 19 years who were participants in the poll reported they had shared sexually suggestive images or videos of themselves with another person via email, mobile phone or another means while 31% indicated that people sent

them explicit pictures. Also, in the “Cox study done in March 2009, 9% of teens aged 13-18 years had sent a sexually suggestive text message or email with nude or near-nude photos, 3% had shared one, and 17% had been recipients of sexually suggestive text messages or emails with nude or nearly nude photos” (Cox Communications, 2009, p. 112).

Owing to the novelty of the phenomenon of “sexting”, there is a shortfall of studies focusing on it but existing information shows a growing involvement of numbers of the youth in this precarious behaviour. Bull and Mcfarlane (2000) sampled 1,247 youths aged 14 to 24 years old. From their findings, 50% of their participants had been casualties of one form of cyber bullying or the other. About 30% of these participants had been senders or recipients of nude photos on digital platforms and devices. Alarming, 61% of the senders of nudes, be they photo or video had done so in response to pressure from other people (Bull & Mcfarlane, 2000).

Also, a survey of “over 600 high school students revealed that between 9% and 27% had been senders of sexually explicit digital images and between 24% and 65% had been recipients of sexually explicit digital images” (Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaíta, & Rullo, 2013, p. 15). It was also noted that the frequency of sexting behaviours increased as age of participants increased.

In the past decade, digital communication has gained recognition as an essential part of the relationship between couples. Even though, technology usage is common among most people, the people who mostly use technology in their communication are young people who use several digital tools such as emails, cell phones, Instant Messaging, Social Media Sites like Facebook and



video conferencing tools like Skype to communicate among themselves (Huntley, 2006).

Sexting became a commonly used word since 2009 by the New Oxford American Dictionary (Stanglin, 2009). The idea of sending and receiving pictures and messages which are purely sexual existed prior to the accepting of sexting as a word. However, what is new is the usage of mobile phones as the means of doing the sending and receiving as well as ease of doing so. Again, the nature of sexting may be related to the general view that people are using mobile phones in a manner that is not helpful. The problematic use of mobile phones has been equated to a behavioural addiction which may comprise too much usage, invasive usage and experiencing separation anxiety in the absence of the phone (Bianchi & Phillips, 2005).

In the lives of young people, sending texts has become a key part of their social lives and this has become a worry to most parents, teachers and other stakeholders of education because of the extent to which mobile phone and technological usage and is taking over the sexuality of young people (Stanglin, 2009). In the past, the media discussions and other policy meetings have centered on the usage of mobile phones among young people in the course of their sexual relationships and adventures (Bull & Mcfarlane, 2000). A large part of this concern has been directed towards “sexting” or the making, distribution and sending of pictures that may be suggesting things that may be sexual. Contemporary “technologies such as digital cameras, smart phones, and other mobile devices with combined video, photography, and audio capabilities have the creation of private sexual content facile” (Lenhart & Madden, 2005, p. 11).

It has been estimated that, the number of young people within the ages of 15-24 years make up about 19% of the Ghanaian population (CIA World Factbook, 2021). Large portions of the economic force of the Ghanaian population are young people, who are considered to be the future of the nation. Consistently, most of the working force lies in the youthful age bracket.

There has been an increase in the number of teenagers engaged in risky sexual behaviours. This has been attributed partly to the myths and misconceptions that teenagers and young people hold about sexual issues. Because of the misconceptions, most teenagers recklessly engage in sexual acts. Some of the misconceptions include that “all teens are having sex” and “you cannot get pregnant your first time having sex”, or “oral and anal sex are not really sex” (Ogbada, 2013). This is worse particularly since parents usually lack knowledge and awareness on how to discuss matters of sexual nature with their children (Pelling & White, 2009). As such, young people do engage in several risky sexual behaviours.

In Ghana, there is currently a wave of sexuality which has plagued young people and very visibly common on social media networks (Baiden, Amankwah & Owusu, 2020). In this sense, most young people are constantly sharing sexual images and messages through the internet. Also, discussions on sexuality in Ghanaian homes, schools and most importantly churches are still considered a taboo reinforced by the perception that discussing sexuality with children makes them sexually active. Also, refusal to discuss and include sex education in the Ghanaian curricula is causing children and adolescents to engage in sexual activity with no or limited information. This is not only detrimental but also harmful to their development as they are unable to build

values and morals concerning sex and their sexuality from trusted sources like parents, teachers and sometimes even healthcare practitioners.

Sex education “usually refers to the systematic attempts to promote a healthy awareness in individuals on matters that affect the sexual functioning, development, behaviour and attitudes through direct teaching” (Cronin, Heflin, & Price, 2014, p. 12). It is the means of imparting young people with the skills, knowledge and the resources to make the right choices concerning their sexuality. Sex education may be given in the formal school environment or in the non-formal home environment and it is a means of ensuring that adolescents make choices concerning their sexuality based on information that is both factual and adequate.

Sending and receiving materials of sexual nature on social media sites has gained much roots in present times making it a common occurrence among the youth in Ghana. This has been encouraged because of the abundance of social networks and applications on mobile phones. As a result, several young people record, send and receive images, messages and videos of sexual nature through applications like WhatsApp. The extent to which young people are engaging in sexting has increased over the years and has as such gained a lot of attention in the media space. In most cases, the discussions in media space focus on how young people blatantly flaunt sexual messages, pictures and videos on social media. The media and public barrage of discussions and thorough empirical studies on prevalence of sexting behaviours among the youth are therefore not out of place.

## Statement of the Problem

This sexting epidemic is spreading faster than expected and it's occurring in homes, schools, churches and the society at large. Until young people are educated on the dangers so they come to understand the risks and responsibilities of engaging in sexting, they will continue to endanger themselves. The silence adults have developed to sexual discussion does not stop the youth from becoming sexually active nor does it reverse the negative consequences of teenage sexual activity that is facing the world at large (Osaikhuwomwan & Osemwenkha, 2013).

According to Tanle, Kumi-Kyereme, Biddlecom and Awusubo-Asare (2007) sex education in Ghana is inadequate, and in about 70% of schools and churches are non-existent. Several attempts have been made by several institutions such as the Planned Parenthood Association and Marie Stopes Foundation to encourage the Government and the Ghana Education Service to incorporate comprehensive sex education into the curriculum of schools (Ahiataku, 2016). Researchers in the social sciences with interest in the influence of new digital media on popular views and practices have explored sexting as a communicative behaviour, “including its function within and outside of romantic relationships, which manifests its existence as a social issue of significance to academia as well” (Barkacs & Barkacs, 2010, p. 11).

Young people begin experimenting with risky sexual behaviour at quite early ages, which is partly due to the “mass media, peer pressure, and the lack of supervision by parents and other adults” (Cronin et al., 2014, p. 154). Only few studies have examined the notion of sexting (Brown, Keller, &

Stern, 2009, Cox, 2009; Lenhart, 2009c), and most of the studies explored only sexting behaviours.

Even though several views and ideas on the concept and issue of sexting have developed in recent years, little empirical evidence exists on issues relating to the occurrence of sexting in recent times. In Ghana, Baiden, Amankwah and Owusu (2020) found sexting to be common among high school students in Ghana. This was in relation to students. However, to date it seemed that no study had been conducted about sexting in the context of the Baptist Church in Ghana. This makes the current study important.

Everywhere we turn today, we see sexting practices which the Bible considered as Sexual immoral. This practice is not only blatant, but it is also subtle and has been around since the fall of man. Some usage of the term sexual immorality has changed throughout the years, yet how the Bible defines it has never changed.

Any sexual activity that goes against God's standard written in the Bible is considered as sexual immorality and the Bible warns us about sexual immorality in several verses, such as:

1 Corinthians 6:15-16, do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

Acts 15:29 "You must abstain ..... from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. 1 Corinthians 5:9 I wrote to you in my letter not to

associate with sexually immoral people. 1 Tim. 1:10 for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine. Romans 13:13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

Also, in the Baptist Church in the Cape Coast Area, the youth leadership has consistently made topics about sexual issues a fundamental part of their services and discussions. This is because by the observation of the youth leadership, some of their youth members are involved in the sharing and usage of sexually explicit materials. This is a cause of concern since when left to continue, there is the likelihood that most of the young people would engage in risky acts of sexual nature. As a church, sexual perversion is against Biblical principles as stated and as such paying attention to the acts of sexting is of prime importance.

Against this background, it was considered necessary to investigate the sexting behaviour among Baptist youth in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out the sexting behaviours of youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The objectives of this study were to:

1. indicate the extent to which the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in Cape Coast Metropolis engage in sexting,
2. indicate the reasons for the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in Cape Coast Metropolis to engage in sexting,

3. identify the measures available to reduce sexting among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis,
4. find out the significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender,
5. find out the significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education, and
6. find out the significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

#### **Research Questions**

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions were developed to guide the conduct of the study:

1. To what extent do the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis engage in sexting behaviours?
2. What are the reasons for the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis to engage in sexting behaviours?
3. What measures are available to reduce sexting among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

## Hypotheses

Based on the problem of the study, the following hypotheses were developed to guide the study:

$H_01$ : There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender.

$H_{A2}$ : There is a significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender.

$H_02$ : There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education.

$H_{A2}$ : There is a significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education.

$H_03$ : There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

$H_{A3}$ : There is a significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

## Significance of the Study

This study is of significance because it may contribute to gaining an all-inclusive view on sexting as a pervasive practice in the society by investigating the attitude of youth on the topic. Specifically, the results of the



study would be of significance to policy makers, counsellors, Baptist Church leaders and other researchers.

For policy makers, the results would be significant because in recent times, there have been several incidents of people sharing sexually explicit images and videos of others and been prosecuted for such acts. Therefore, the study would enlighten policy makers as to which measures can help curb the act of sexting among the youth.

Also, counsellors would benefit from the results because they would be empowered as to the reasons why the youth engage in sexting behaviour's. Through such knowledge, counsellors can provide the help suitable for young people engaging in sexting and those who are yet to engage in sexting. Further, Baptist Churches in Ghana in general may benefit immensely from the outcome of this research in identifying, guiding and assisting their youth to acquire management and prevention skills and techniques for curbing the phenomenon of youth sexting behaviour.

Finally, the findings of the study would add to the literature on sexting in Ghana. This would be of benefit to future researchers seeking to explore the phenomenon of sexting.

### **Delimitations**

The study was delimited to only youth in the Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Only youth within the ages of 18 to 30 years were used in the study. Youth who were above 30 years were not involved in the study. Also, youth within the ages of 18 to 30 but were not members of the Baptist churches in Cape Coast were not used in this study.

### Limitations of the Study

Respondents hesitated at first because of the sensitive nature of this study. Thus, there was the challenge of obtaining honest responses from the respondents. The researcher had to explain to respondents that the study was an academic work and so their respondents would not be traced to them. The results of the study can thus be deemed to be a reflection of the actual situation with the respondents.

### Operational Definition of Terms

**Baptist Churches in Cape Coast:** It is a group of local churches within the Cape Coast Metropolis that have registered with the Ghana Baptist Convention in the region in order to operate as authorized Churches.

**Electronic Media:** is the media that uses electricity to function. They include computers Television, radios and mobile phones.

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**Sexting Behaviour:** Sexting behaviour involves “receiving and/or sending sexually explicit text messages or photographs through a cell phone and the frequency of such acts”.

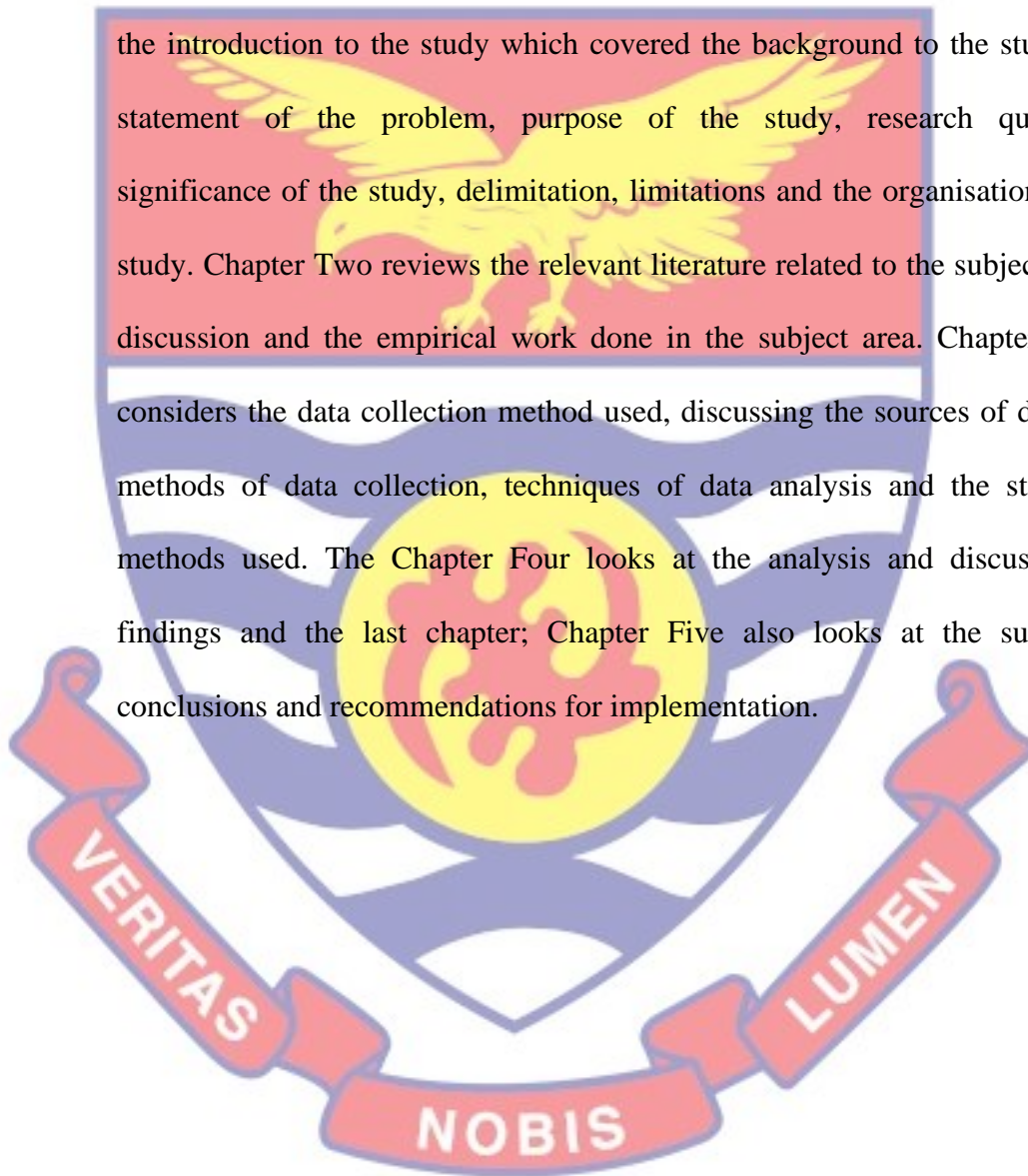
**Social Networking Sites (SNS):** “Online sites, services, or platforms, where users construct public or semi-public profiles that focus on reflecting and building social relations within those who share the same activities or

interests” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This includes Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.

**Youth:** This is used to refer to individuals within the ages of 16 and 30 years.

### **Organisation of the Study**

This research work was written to cover five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the study which covered the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations and the organisation of the study. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature related to the subject under discussion and the empirical work done in the subject area. Chapter Three considers the data collection method used, discussing the sources of data and methods of data collection, techniques of data analysis and the statistical methods used. The Chapter Four looks at the analysis and discussion of findings and the last chapter; Chapter Five also looks at the summary, conclusions and recommendations for implementation.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the review of literature on the topic of study in order to find gaps that the study intends to fill. The review of literature also provides the opportunity for gathering facts that shape the direction of the current study. Giving a general description of literature review, Crano, Brewer and Lac (2014), contended that it is the assessment, classification, evaluation and comparison of past studies on the subject under investigation, the main authorities and authors in the area, the various research questions which have been raised and the extent to which such questions have been answered or otherwise as well as existing theories and hypotheses and the general methodologies in use in investigating the subject. This means that literature review does not only review past studies concerning the topic under review, it also evaluates, captures, distinguishes and find the association among results of the various studies which are connected to the study being undertaken (Shippee et al., 2015).

Reviewing related literature is one of the most critical parts of every research. In the view of Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), literature review helps to determine the extent to which some past authors and researchers have contributed to the field and the subject of interest. They further stated that in reviewing literature, researchers strive to discover the sources pertinent to a subject being studied so as to significantly gather information which are related to the main subject of interest and are of relevance to the study. Tashakkori and Teddlie added that this rigour is derived from an effective

usage of the previous literature to support the new investigation and by that solidify the content under the subject of interest. It is therefore clear that for any quality academic writing, it must have literature review. This chapter provides the detailed accounts on literature.

This chapter specifically discusses theoretical background to the study.

The key concepts in the study are also reviewed. Finally, empirical literature relating to the study are reviewed.

### **Theoretical Review**

The relevance and the value of theory in any research work can never be overestimated. Lundvall (2010) provided three basic reasons why theory is seen to be very vital for all research. Lundvall claimed that theories provide a basis for analyzing information, provide a method or procedure of developing a field of interest and giving clarity in terms of explaining issues in the world. There is a bit of inconsistency however regarding what exactly a theory is (Harlow, 2009; Henderikus, 2010). It has been observed that differing views and conflicting expression of views constitute a major theoretical controversy with respect to theory. Harlow (2009) suggested that theories do not have a definite and universal meaning, but examining different research approaches can show that theories determine how things take place and the order of systems so that things can be understood.

Although research adds immensely to explaining the strength of a theory (Gay & Weaver, 2011), so that it can be possible gain broad knowledge about a specific issue, theories are needed to be able to carry out a specific research. It provides justifications for proposed relationships to support empirical hypotheses in research and the findings which contribute to widen

the understanding of the theories upon which those hypotheses were developed (Gay & Weaver, 2011). Theory is thus a declaration of a hypothesized association among different elements (Harlow, 2009). It also involves “a series of interrelated constructs, concepts, abstraction, definition, variables, and propositions that have been hypothesized or assumed with a systematic view of phenomena, for the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena” (Henderikus, 2010, p. 31).

This section of the study discusses the various relevant theories which underpinned the study. These theories are: the Social Cognitive Theory, the Social Exchange Theory and co-Cultural Theory.

### **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**

The Social Cognitive Theory gives explanation to the thinking patterns of individuals in relation to their specific behaviours so that it can give understanding of individuals’ behaviours (Beck & Haigh, 2014). The major areas of the Social Cognitive Theory include the interactions between cognition of individuals in terms of their learning of specific behaviours and the ways in which information is processed by the individual. The theory maintains that, “as individuals learn, they actively create cognitive structures that determine their concepts of self and the environment” (Beck & Haigh, 2014, p. 16). The combination of their self-actualization coupled with the environment that they operate in has significant influence on their behaviour. The environment as indicated here is that which sets the ground for youth or young people to engage in social activities many of which sometimes go against societal norms and values.

The relevance of the Social Cognitive Theory for the current study is based on the recognition that each young person is unique and is shaped by developmental factors (Beck & Haigh, 2014). Some of these factors include psychological and biological changes of puberty, culture and gender. There is a growing need for stakeholders to understand that the means to understanding young people is to see issues from their own perspective and developmental processes. These key developmental tasks of adolescence include intimacy, identity, autonomy and sexuality. Moreover, it must be noted that young people are also influenced by other elements such as biological, social and cognitive changes.

It is clear that biological, social and cognitive variations affect the behavioural dynamics of almost all people and especially the youth. Therefore, on the basis of the age and cultural values as well as environmental controls, youth become easily susceptible to growing changes in their environment. Some of these changes are spending all their time on social media and sexting which has recently taken centre stage in foreign cultures. Much as these foreign cultures continue to infiltrate the local Ghanaian culture with the youth being the most susceptible to engaging in sexting. This according to the Cognitive Theory is borne out of the present mental make-up of the youth which is built from environmental associations.

The Social Cognitive Theory involves the idea that to be able to understand and know why individuals think in some direction and why the individuals act the way they do, there is the need to recognize and comprehend their internal thought processes. This is connected to what cognition is. Cognition in its literal sense implies “knowing”. Put in different words, “the

phrase ‘social cognitive’ refers to the study of human mental processes and their role in thinking, feeling, and behaving” (Mazziott, Mummendey & Wright, 2011, p. 14). Considering the indulgence of the youth or young people in the act of sexting and internal thought activities of young people, the Cognitive Theory takes the position that when the thought processes of individuals are properly shaped, the individual can be assisted to adjust appropriately to any environment they find themselves in. In the view of Beck and Haigh, (2014), modifying or shaping the thoughts of individuals requires undertaking an all-inclusive training process. The expression of Beck and Haigh indicate that to solve the growing menace of sexting among the youth, it is imperative to lay down comprehensive training and developmental processes to reorient the youth on the socio-religious values of the Ghanaian community.

The information above suggests that the mental processes of an individual stems from enabling environment. For the youth and the issue of sexting, demographic information from both the youth and that of their parents, serve as an environmental platform upon which the success of the practice or otherwise of it thrives. This means that the responses of the youth when comprehensively analyzed would have determine the extent to which sexting behaviours exist among teenagers in the Cape Coast Baptist Association Churches in the Metropolis.

It must also be noted that though the proponents of Cognitive Theory “examine these functions (environment) to discover more about human learning and behaviour, they often differ with regard to the degree of emphasis since some approaches deal with detailed analyses of information-processing



skills, while others focus on mental models or cognitive growth and development” (Clayson & Larson, 2011, p. 11). The experiences of individuals comprise mental activities like awareness, reaction and perceptions. In the course of these experiences, individuals get very focused in terms of how they organise their thoughts, pay attention to critical issues and creatively engage in set activities. How individuals react to issues at high levels vary from how they react to issues at lower levels.

The social cognitive theory identifies among other things, the need for preventive mechanisms and solutions towards an act. One of such mechanism is individual self-control. The theory argues that individuals who wish to gain self-control over their actions and behaviours may greatly need social support in addition to their own existing skills. In the early years of life or during younger ages, social support is a very important element because usually individuals lack the strength and discipline needed to maintain self-control because of the various elements in the environment which exert influences on the young people (Clayson & Larson, 2011).

Commenting on the role of personal differences and how environment and social upbringing contribute to sexting, Dunlap (2013) gave an elucidation of behaviour and learning which focused on an individual’s perceptions of how things are organized. According to Dunlap, the individual is mostly involved in how to make use of the different elements from the environments in determining a course of action or behaviour.

The behavioural code of students’ right from the home to how they present themselves in school is very important if the assessment of their sex behaviour is to yield any meaningful results. These behaviours could be

accessed through information on their conduct in school and at home. Information from office disciplinary documents, referrals, suspensions, and disciplinary alternative education programmes put administrators on a pedestal of knowing how best to handle such behaviours to achieve the best behaviour expected of them. This gives a clear indication that disciplinary issues or behavioural events have a significant influence on the sexual behaviours of student (Beck & Haigh, 2014).

From the forgoing, the Social Cognitive Theory views developing the thinking ability of individual in ways that will affect their perception of the environment in which they reside (Clayson & Larson 2011). The theory however fails to discuss how the behaviour of individual helps in the achievement of any specific aim or task. This is because the behaviour of individuals and most especially disciplinarian issues can greatly affect their extent of achievement in life. This defect in the social cognitive theory has made it imperative to discuss another theory that specifically delves into behaviourism and individuals' ability to excel in their endeavours.

#### **Relevance of the theory to the study**

Social Cognitive theory was deemed to be relevant in the current study because of its emphasis on understanding why individuals think in some direction and why they act in some way. This is because of the focus of the theory on cognition. In this study, it can be inferred that by identifying the internal thoughts and reasoning of young people in engaging in sexting, proper measures can be undertaken to assist youth to behave appropriately in terms of sexting.

## Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) adopts a socio-psychological and sociological approach to explain the dynamics of interpersonal exchanges among different sets of individuals. The Social Exchange Theory is based on the assumption interpersonal relationships come about through an analysis of the costs and benefits involved as perceived by the respective individuals and through an examination or exploration of different alternatives (Cook, Cheshire, Rice & Nakagawa, 2013; Livingstone & Görzig, 2012). Also, the theory argues that relationships get better over time depending on the nature of interactions among the individuals involved (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). By extension to romantic relationships, one significant requirement is the element of reciprocity which implies that the individuals involved must exchange what each of them values so that their relationship would be influenced (Zhang & Jia, 2010).

Reciprocity in relationships is an element in social exchange theory which happens whenever the rewards received and costs incurred cancel each other out (Dir, Coskunpinar, Steiner & Cyders, 2013). Rewards in relationships are pleasant and produce satisfaction and can include elements such as showing approval, sexual satisfaction, financial benefits and providing things are desired while costs in relationships are the efforts and resources used in the relationship such as time, money, or energy invested (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013). Rewards and costs may be tangible or intangible depending on the item or element (Jaishankar, 2009).

The social exchange theory provides a good insight into how relationships grow and advance. Through an interchange of rewards and costs

in the relationship, the partners in the relationship learn to depend on each other and this strengthens their relationship and the connection between them.

In relationships, some of the common resources dispensed are “love, status, money, material goods, services, information and sex” (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Walrave, Heirman, & Hallam, 2014). However, it has been argued by

Zhang and Jia (2010) that in exchanging resources, there should not be an imbalance. This means that the resources should be within the same rank or level. For instance, giving sex in exchange for money or some approval or pleasant gift can bring equal rewards. However, Zhang and Jia indicated that there can be a challenge when resources of different levels or classes are ben exchanged. In such situations, a partner may feel that the exchange is unfair and this can affect the nature of the relationship.

Nakonezny and Denton (2008) have for instance indicated that males and females have a different view concerning the value for sex. Nakonezny and Denton argued that women mostly have the perception that sex is more rewarding for men while men do not perceive sex to be as rewarding as women think it to be. On the other hand, men have the perception that sex is less costly for women while women perceive sex to more costly than how men perceive it. The implication of the view of Nakonezny and Denton is that there is some difficulty in providing rewards that are worth exactly what have been received. Individuals in a relationship should therefore evaluate the rewards before exchanging them. This is because an individual’s perception of things which are important may not be the same as another person’s perception of important things.

The Social Exchange Theory has as its major focus the issue of reciprocating rewards and costs in the quest to explain how satisfied individuals are in relationships (Zhang & Jia, 2010). Also, since SET was based on the social learning theory, it posits that individuals need to the autonomy of choice in terms of their behaviours which can bring some intended benefits or costs (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). There are three basic assumptions which form the foundation of the SET. These are: “(1) social behaviour includes exchanges between people; (2) an individual will attempt to maximize the rewards they receive and minimize the costs they incur in an attempt to generate a net balance in one’s favour; and (3) an individual will engage in reciprocity that arises from a feeling of obligation to return rewards when they receive rewards from others” (Zhang & Jia, 2010 p. 13).

Overall, it can be seen clearly that in romantic relationships partners usually weigh the resources that are exchanged by comparing the costs incurred with the rewards gained. After the comparison, if the outcome is positive the partners will view the exchange to be beneficial while after the comparison if the outcome is negative then the partners may view the exchange to have caused a deficit. SET therefore argues strongly that individuals are likely to be part of relationships that propose possible benefits before putting in any efforts in the relationship (Warlave et al., 2014). Thus, individuals usually anticipate what they will get in relationships before they engage in the relationship. In essence, people will keep being in relationships that they view to be more rewarding. The implication of this in the study is that if the youth realize that sexting is beneficial than being costly, they are likely to engage in the act.

The SET central concepts breed equality and equity in sexting as far as modern relationships among the youth is concerned. Equality means that the individuals in a relationship have a balance in terms of the rewards gained and costs incurred. This implies that individuals in a romantic relationship will feel a sense of equality once they see that they see a balance in the costs and rewards present in the relationship. Even though both partners do not necessarily have to receive similar rewards or incur similar costs, equality will mean that the cost-benefit outcome should be similar or same for the partners (Zhang & Jia, 2010).

On the other hand, equity happens when a partner in a relationship perceives the rewards obtained to be equal in measure to the costs incurred in the relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). This means that equity is on individual basis and not the two partners comparing themselves. It is one partner conducting a balance of their rewards and costs in the relationship. Regardless, the absence of equality and equity may cause some form of dissatisfaction and thus make the relationship unstable. If this is not resolved, the relationship may end.

From the forgoing, equity can be seen as a personal assessment or evaluation of costs and rewards in a relationship. When the individual perceives the costs incurred to be more than the rewards, there is said to be inequity. Inequity may be seen in “two ways – under-benefiting inequity (perceived costs incurred outweigh the perceived rewards received) and over-benefiting inequity (perceived rewards received outweigh the perceived costs incurred)” (Nakonezny& Denton, 2008, p. 15).

The assessment of equity however usually depends on an individual's perception of his or value. This means, how an individual perceives equity may vary from how the partner perceives equity (Zhang & Jia, 2010). For instance, a man may assess the cost of giving out money to a lady in return for the reward of nude picture or video from the lady. It is likely that the said man may perceive the money to be costing him a lot while the picture or video may be perceived as low reward if he did not get exactly what he wanted. However, the lady may perceive the picture or video to have cost her a lot and view the money as not being enough reward.

#### **Relevance of the theory to the study**

Summarizing the relationship of the theory to the study at hand many observations are made: it has been observed that the exchange young people make who want to be in a relationship to either satisfy their sexual desire or curiosity tends to use a more convenient means of communication and hence choose sexting. Moreover, young people view the use of sexting as an equitable means of reaching the other partner once both understand the medium used and the cost of such communication seems reasonable to each party.

Also, it can be inferred on the basis of the theory that young people have the tendency to get involved in sexting if they deem sexting to be more rewarding than the cost involved. Many of these youth engage in this kind of behaviour sometimes because of how easy it is to have access to mobile phones and other communication technology. With the use of these technologies, there is a less possibility of meeting the other party face to face. This saves the youth from any potential embarrassment which may arise in the

face to face conversation on sexually related issues. Thus, once there is a perceived reward on the use of sexting through technology many young ones will indulge themselves in the act.

### **Co-cultural communication theory**

Co-cultural communication theory was founded on the framework of “Muted Group Theory” and “Standpoint Theory”. Muted Group Theory is actually the major foundation of the Co-Cultural Communication Theory. Muted Group Theory was propounded by Shirley and Edwin Ardener during the mid-1970s. These theorists were cultural anthropologists who on the basis of observations made on variety of cultures tried to understand how different cultures behaved. In most of their observations, the Ardener’s focused on male adults at the neglect of women, children and other minorities (Weathers & Hopson, 2015). They found from their observations that the individuals who were at the top of hierarchy in the cultures observed mostly determined how communication was done in the entire culture or society (Alberts, Nakayama & Martin, 2015). The muted group theory thus argues that the dominant group members determine a “communication system that support their perception of the world and conceptualized it as the appropriate language for the rest of society”.

Stanback and Pearce as well as Kramarae in studying communication, adopted the muted group theory as their theoretical foundation to understanding the dynamics of communication in less-dominant groups in different cultures. They indicated that for members of less-dominant groups, they could not fully express themselves in the communication structure set up by the dominant groups (Weathers, 2012). Kramarae however opined that for



individuals in less dominant groups, they could create other means of communication where they can express themselves as opposed to the system created by the dominant groups. Even though Kramarae adopted muted group theory to explain the communication systems adopted by women, she advocated that the theory can be extended to other dominant-less dominant relationships. These observations made Kramarae explain why the youth who could be classified as one social group in modern times use social media as a medium of communication within which sexting is practiced.

For this reason, authors like Weathers and Hopson (2015 p.121) have viewed “sexting as a cultural activity where young people create and maintain gender ideology through language, images, concepts, and representations”. According to Weathers and Hopson (p. 122), “hegemonic role of the mass media is to manufacture consent; in this case, the consent of women to accept the traditional gender roles that objectify women”. However, “because consent is required, hegemony can never be complete or final, therefore, media representations are open to challenge and resistance”.

It is an undeniable reality that there are occasions where individuals who are in less dominant groups resist the existing systems and begin to create or apply a different opposing system in their actions. This creates an avenue for resistance against dominant systems. Ringrose et al. (2012, p. 14) however found that there is a “culture of silence among young women, noting a strong tendency towards resignation and acceptance of the sexual double standard and sexual harassment at school where girls felt unable to actually approach teachers or parents for fear of being called a ‘snake’ or ‘snitch’ or arousing

retaliation from boys”. There is clearly a connection between young ladies’ experience of sexting and Kramarae’s theory of muted groups.

Ringrose et al. (2012) argued that the concept of being muted is not an indication that less dominant groups are totally silent. However, it is an indication of the difficulty of the possibility to express your exact feelings at the exact time you are supposed to. For various reasons such as fear of reprisal, labelling, or because of the absence of the appropriate words to address the hypocrisy, double standards and harassments, these young ladies prefer to remain silent. It has been propositioned therefore that instead of physical resistance, women have adopted the use of online media as a means to resist the silence. Some of these women use sexting as a means to share and express their views and experiences from their own perspectives.

#### **Relevance of the theory to the study**

In relation to the current study, it can be inferred that co-cultural theory explains that the adoption of sexting is as a result of the youth deciding to use one dominant form of communication which gives them the experience and exposure that they want. To reduce the occurrence of sexting therefore, young people may need to be educated on the dangers of sexting and given other options of communication which are better.

#### **Psychosexual Development Theory**

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) propounded the Psychosexual Development Theory. Freud proposed that personality development in childhood takes place during five psychosexual stages, which are the oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages (McLeod, 2019). He believed that during each stage sexual energy (libido) is expressed in different ways and

through different parts of the body. Therefore, Freud named the stages psychosexual stages because each stage represents the fixation of libido on a different area of the body.

Freud (1905) believed that life was built round tension and pleasure. Freud also believed that all tension was due to the build-up of libido (sexual energy) and that all pleasure came from its discharge. In describing human personality development as psychosexual Freud meant to convey that what develops is the way in which sexual energy of the id accumulates and is discharged as we mature biologically. Freud used the term 'sexual' in a very general way to mean all pleasurable actions and thoughts (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 2008).

Freud stressed that the first five years of life are crucial to the formation of adult personality. The id must be controlled in order to satisfy social demands; this sets up a conflict between frustrated wishes and social norms. The ego and superego develop in order to exercise this control and direct the need for gratification into socially acceptable channels. Gratification centers in different areas of the body at different stages of growth, making the conflict at each stage psychosexual (Kelland, 2020). The five stages propounded by Freud are as follows:

#### **Oral Stage (Birth to 1 year)**

In the first stage of psychosexual development, the libido is centered in a baby's mouth. During the oral stages, the baby gets much satisfaction from putting all sorts of things in its mouth to satisfy the libido, and thus its id demands (McLeod, 2019). Which at this stage in life are oral, or mouth orientated, such as sucking, biting, and breastfeeding. Freud argued that oral

stimulation could lead to an oral fixation in later life. Such individuals could be smokers, nail-biters, finger-chewers, and thumb suckers. For such people, these behaviours arouse anytime they are under stress.

### **Anal Stage (1 to 3 years)**

During the anal stage of psychosexual development the libido becomes focused on the anus, and the child derives great pleasure from defecating (McLeod, 2019). The child is now fully aware that they are a person in their own right and that their wishes can bring them into conflict with the demands of the outside world (i.e., their ego has developed). Freud believed that this type of conflict tends to come to a head in potty training, in which adults impose restrictions on when and where the child can defecate. The nature of this first conflict with authority can determine the child's future relationship with all forms of authority (Kelland, 2020).

Early or harsh potty training can lead to the child becoming an anal-retentive personality who hates mess, is obsessively tidy, punctual and respectful of authority. They can be stubborn and tight-fisted with their cash and possessions. The anal expulsive, on the other hand, underwent a liberal toilet-training regime during the anal stage. In adulthood, the anal expulsive is the person who wants to share things with you but such a person can be messy, disorganized and rebellious (Berzoff et al., 2008).

### **Phallic Stage (3 to 6 years)**

The phallic stage is the third stage of psychosexual development, spanning the ages of three to six years, wherein the infant's libido (desire) centers upon their genitalia as the erogenous zone (McLeod, 2019). The child becomes aware of anatomical sex differences, which sets in motion the

conflict between erotic attraction, resentment, rivalry, jealousy and fear which Freud called the Oedipus complex (in boys) and the Electra complex (in girls). This is resolved through the process of identification, which involves the child adopting the characteristics of the same sex parent. Oedipus Complex was derived from the Greek myth where Oedipus, a young man, kills his father and marries his mother. In the young boy, the Oedipus complex arises because the boy develops sexual (pleasurable) desires for his mother and wants to possess his mother exclusively and get rid of his father to enable him to do so.

Electra Complex on the other hand describes a situation where the girl desires the father, but realizes that she does not have a penis. This leads to the development of penis envy and the wish to be a boy. The girl resolves this by repressing her desire for her father and substituting the wish for a penis with the wish for a baby. The girl blames her mother for her 'castrated state' and this creates great tension (Kelland, 2020).

#### **Latency Stage (6 years to puberty)**

The latency stage is the fourth stage of psychosexual development, spanning the period of six years to puberty. During this stage the libido is dormant and no further psychosexual development takes place (latent means hidden) (McLeod, 2019). Freud thought that most sexual impulses are repressed during the latent stage, and sexual energy can be sublimated towards school work, hobbies, and friendships. Much of the child's energy is channeled into developing new skills and acquiring new knowledge, and play becomes largely confined to other children of the same gender (Berzoff et al., 2008).

### **Genital Stage (puberty to adult)**

The genital stage is the last stage of Freud's psychosexual theory of personality development, and begins in puberty. It is a time of adolescent sexual experimentation, the successful resolution of which is settling down in a loving one-to-one relationship with another person in our 20s (McLeod, 2019). Sexual instinct is directed to heterosexual pleasure, rather than self-pleasure like during the phallic stage. For Freud, the proper outlet of the sexual instinct in adults was through heterosexual intercourse.

Sigmund Freud believed that personality develops during early childhood. For Freud, childhood experiences shape our personalities and behavior as adults. Freud viewed development as discontinuous; he believed that each of us must pass through a series of stages during childhood, and that if we lack proper nurturance and parenting during a stage, we may become stuck, or fixated, in that stage (Kelland, 2020).

Fixation and conflict may prevent this with the consequence that sexual perversions may develop (McLeod, 2019). For example, fixation at the oral stage may result in a person gaining sexual pleasure primarily from kissing and oral sex, rather than sexual intercourse. Also, some people do not seem to be able to leave one stage and proceed on to the next. This may be due to the fact that the needs of the person may not have been fully met or over met and so the person could not move beyond the stage. Thus, either frustration (needs not met) or overindulgence (needs over met).

### **Relevance of theory to the study**

According to Zihelr and Masten (2010), young people are in a period of transition to adult life and during that period they tend to experiment with romantic relationships and active experience of sexuality. From the perspective of Freud, development of psychosexual problems would occur in an individual if the process of expressing instinctual libido is faulty. Thus, if individuals are fixated on any of the stages, their sexual behaviours are likely to be faulty. This informs the use of the theory in the current study.

### **Sexual Involvement Theory**

The Sexual Involvement Theory was propounded by Mosher (1980). The theory was based on the assumption that sexual trance is one basic criterion for high sexual involvement. In his model “Three dimensions of depth of involvement in human sexual response” sexual trance is one of three postulated dimensions essential to a maximum extent of depth of involvement which in turn is a condition for efficient sexual stimulation. The maximum extent of sexual trance leads to a state of total absorption. The other dimensions are “role enactment” and “engagement with the partner.” According to Mosher, an equilibrium between those three dimensions is a condition for a maximum extent of depth involvement and thus, for sexual satisfaction.

Mosher (1980) referred to sexual trance as “(...) an altered state of consciousness (...) representing a qualitative shift in the pattern of psychological functioning that differs from the norm of alert, waking consciousness” (p. 11). To Mosher, sexual trance is a major element of sexual involvement. Aside this, the adoption of role-play and engagement are all key

in terms of sexual involvement. Also, Mosher's sexual involvement theory posits that subjective response to pornography is a function of the match to the person's sexual script. Deep involvement in the pornographic image or fantasy requires goodness-of-fit to preferred sexual images and plans. In this regard, people may engage in viewing sexual images and materials that are in line with their own preferences. In this line of thought, Mosher (1988) argued that sharing or trading sexually explicit materials is gaining roots globally not just because of the explicitness but its ability to elicit or enhance subjective sexual arousal. Therefore, most people are subscribing to the viewership of sexually explicit materials in a way that puts them in sexual trance and gets them deeply involved with the other party sexually.

#### **Relevance of the theory in the study**

Mosher (1988) has suggested that subjective response to pornography depends on how well the depicted content matches the individual's existing, preferred sexual scripts. Individuals who do not like pornography in general, or who do not like particular kinds of content, are unlikely to seek it out in the real world. In relation to sexting, young people are being drawn much to sexting in present times because they get to see explicit images from their partners or people they actually like unlike general pornography where they may not like the people involved.



## Conceptual Framework

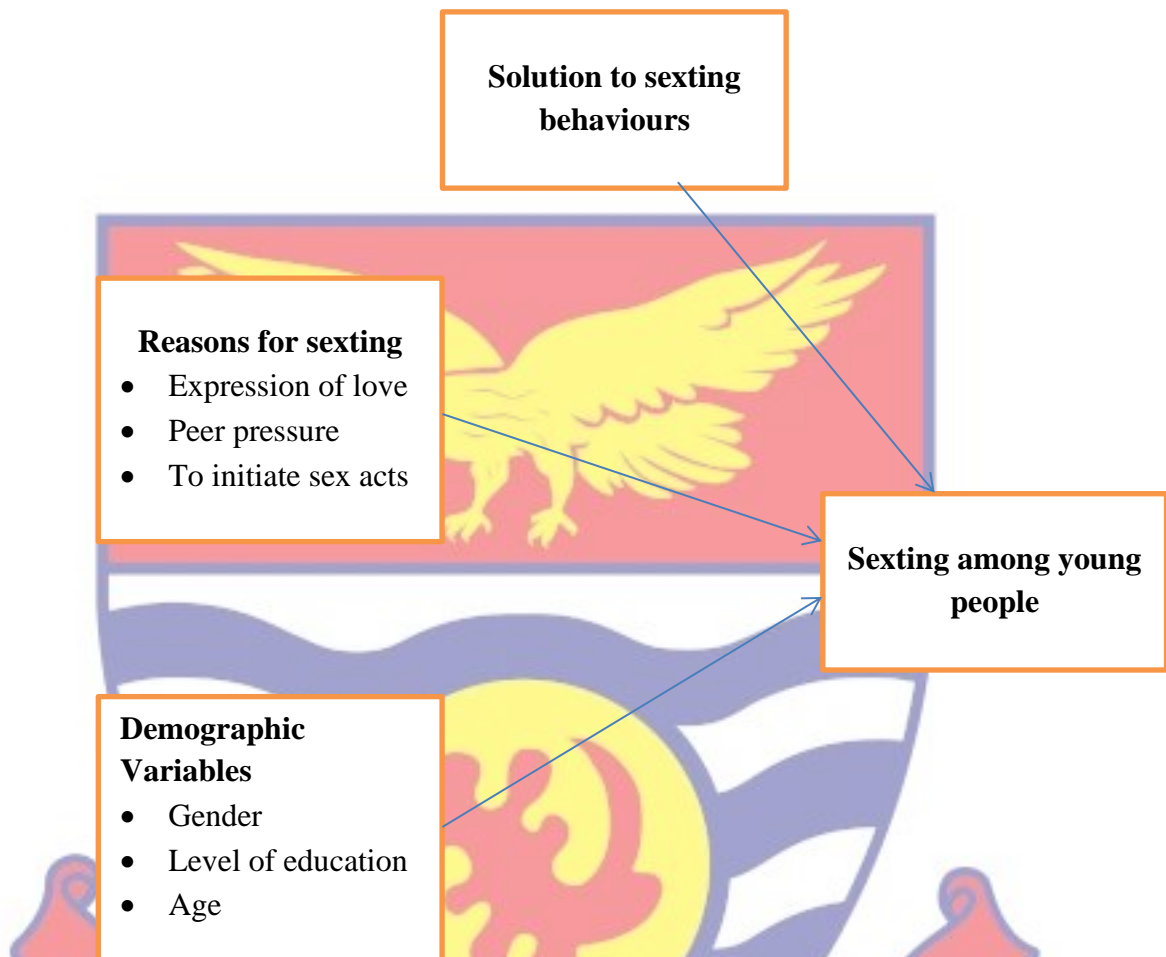


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of sexting among youth

Source: Author's Own

The conceptual framework shown Figure 1 depicts that young people may engage in sexting for varied reasons and some of these reasons may be peer influence, expression of love, or to initiate sexual acts. Also, demographic variables may be key in sexting. For example, males usually request for explicit pictures from females. Thus, gender can be a factor in engaging in sexting behaviours. Also shown in Figure 1 is the fact that some solutions can be suggested to reduce the incidence of sexting. Some of the solutions may be legal or counselling-based.

## Conceptual Review

The major concepts in the study are reviewed this section.

### Concept of Sexting

Conceptually, sexting has been seen in various forms by different authors. However, there is a common agreement and compromise among the authors that sexting includes an exchange of sexually provocative pictures or messages which may include among other things nude or seminude pictures using technological devices. The definitions of the various authors share similar elements. For instance, Lenhart (2009) posited that sexting involves young people generating and exchanging pictures which may be completely nude or semi-nude as a means of sexual conversation. Ybarra and Mitchell (2014, p.13) also viewed sexting as “sending and sharing sexual photos online, via text messaging, and in person”. Generally, the common view of sexting has been “sending or receiving sexually explicit messages, photographs and videos through cell phones, computers and other social media” (Lounsbury et al, 2011, p. 41). The pictures and messages are usually generated by one individual and sent or forwarded to several individuals. In this study, sexting is conceptualized as using mobile phones to send sexually inviting pictures and messages.

In the view of Stephey (2009), sexting depicts the action of sending indicative... and in some cases vulgar...messages or pictures through mobile phones. Even though there has not been a generally accepted definition for sexting, it widely believed that it comprises the act of sending, receiving, or forwarding pictures of sexual nature among young people, which may have dire consequences (Dake, Price, Maziarz & Ward, 2012; Lenhart, 2009;

Lounsberry, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2011; Temple, Paul, van den Berg, Le & McElhany, 2012).

The issue of sexting traces its origin from adult relation where communication is vital. Open communication among couples is vital in experiencing total satisfaction in sexual relationships (Montesi, Conner, Gordon, Fauber, Kim & Heimberg., 2013). Even though, communication is usually done through direct face-to-face contact, the use of technology in communication has been gaining some attention, particularly with the upsurge of social media networks like Facebook and Snapchat which have a lot of following among young people (Lenhart, Campbell, & Purdell, 2010). Research evidence shows that more than half of teenagers (54%) send text messages on a day-to-day basis while about 38% and 33% make phone calls or speak friends face-to-face with families and friends respectively (Lenhart et al., 2010).

The necessity for discussing sexual fantasies and imaginations verbally among couples has declined since most of such communication can happen electronically. In recent times, most young people prefer to communicate using technology especially when discussing sexual issues. This is because the use of technological means in such communication makes young people feel comfortable and in control of the conversation. People can communicate with several people at the same time while giving them the space to either fully open-up or hide some bit of truth during the conversation and at the same time give the people control over the entire conversation (Madell & Muncer, 2007). Among couples in a sexual relationship, sexting has gained an increase among young people with the prevalence rising from 31% to 67% in the past decade

(Dir, Coskunpinar, Steiner, & Cyders 2013; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Lenhart, 2009). Such increase in sexting percentage among young people is not a good sign for young people since it comes with numerous consequences majority of which are harmful.

### **Sexting and Negative Consequences**

Engaging in sexting among couples or even mere acquaintances can have several dangers for the individuals involved particularly if the picture or message is sent by mistake to the wrong person (Lohmann, 2012). Once a specific picture is sent using electronic means, the individual who sent it has no control over where the picture ends up and who else can view or share the picture and this can lead to the said picture spreading out of control and causing shame, public humiliation and to an extreme point suicidal thoughts (Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2012). In a previous survey, it was revealed that teenagers who engage in sexting had a higher likelihood of getting depressed, going through emotional disturbances and even having suicidal thoughts (Dunlap, 2013). Walker, Sancu and Temple-Smith (2011) argued in support of this that whenever a sexual image or picture goes viral, it puts the individual's whose image it is at the risk of public shame and humiliation. In the same manner, Willard (2010) argued that sexting can cause a lot of humiliation online, mocking, exploitation and general damage to their self-esteem. This mostly happens if the couple experiences a break-up. Even among those who argue against the existence of sexting among young people, there is the general acknowledgement that sexting can be dangerous for the people involved (Rochman, 2011).

The effects of sexting, the ensuing attention and reportage by the mainstream media, and the resulting societal panic have made agencies in society more concerned about the waning of morality among young people, thus making the agencies seek to adopt mechanisms to punish sexting offenders. In some states in the United States, sharing of explicit pictures of minors is classified as child pornography whether the picture was taken by the minor him or herself and attracts the same punishment as offenders of child pornography (Herman, 2010). Law enforcement officials can arrest young people who distribute self-produced nude images to friends (Taylor, 2009). Taylor indicated further that the legal outcome of facing charges of child pornography for sexting has been however viewed by some people to be extreme since once such charges are on the records of the young person, he or she may struggle to adjust properly in society in the future because they may struggle to get into colleges or even get jobs.

Several authors argue that regulations have not kept pace with teenage usage of digital devices and recent sexual standards, with some laws choosing education programmes rather than harsh punishment (Postmus, 2013) and others pushing to introduce regulations to reduce the penalties for teenage sexting (Rosner, 2012). Scholars in the field of psychiatry, psychology, pediatrics, nursing, and, to a lesser extent, communications, appear to be struggling as well as lawmakers, law enforcement, and school administrators to respond to the sexting hysteria.

Without a doubt, sexting has the potential to have significant social and emotional implications (Judge, 2012). Examples can include individuals getting shunned by friends and even being depressed. These outcomes are

frequently the result of sexual images intended for a sexual partner being forwarded or made public to some other people (Judge, 2012; Ricketts, Maloney, Marcum & Higgins, 2014; Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaíta & Rullo, 2013). Some of the people who may get hold of the shared images may be work colleagues or friends, family members and even employers. As long as these people get hold of the images or pictures, the individuals concerned may be affected.

Also, sexting can be used by teenagers as a sort of relationship currency or as a form of entertainment amongst friends or peers (Lenhart, 2009). This is because sending personal sexual images to unplanned recipients for the purpose of enjoyment or retribution can result in social and emotional implications for the individual whose images are been sent such as humiliation, shame and having a sense of being excluded from their friendship cliques (Chalfen, 2010). Sexting has been linked to mental health difficulties by some researchers, but some researchers have found no link between engaging in sexting and experiencing mental health problems like depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem (Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski & Zimmerman, 2012). Under certain circumstances (having no control after sexting or coercion from the person the individual is in relationship with), however, acknowledging mental health concerns is encouraged (Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Lenhart, 2009).

People who use online technology to find sexual companions may have a high tendency to be involved in risky sexual behaviors (Benotsch, Snipes, Martin & Bull, 2012). Such people may have sexual relations with more sexual companions, engage in sexual affairs without protection, use or abuse

drugs during their sexual affairs and be more vulnerable to sexually transmitted illnesses (Benotsch et al, 2012; Bolding, Davis, Hart, Sherr, & Elford, 2006; Bull & McFarlane, 2000). The link which exists between sexting and risky sexual behaviours, on the other hand, is ambiguous (Gordon-Messer et al., 2013). This is because the connection has only gained partial support in the literature (Gordon-Messer et al., 2013).

Further, young ladies may be coerced by the sexual companions to send sexual pictures and videos just like being pressured to have actual sexual intercourse. Young ladies' psychological well-being may be influenced by their feelings of conformity to a romantic partner's advances (Gordon-Messer et al., 2013; Temple et al., 2012). Also, aside the pressure of sexual companions, the increasing fear of their sexual pictures and videos spreading may cause women mental and emotional suffering (Lenhart, 2009). Indeed, certain social analysts argue that the non-consensual circulation of sexual photographs made by young women is another kind of power and control dominating females (Flood, 2008; Walkers et al., 2013).

For teenagers and young adults, there seems to be a relationship between sexting and sexual behavior (Rice et al., 2014; Temple et al., 2012). Since sending sexual image and pictures by itself does not offer a risk of sexually transmitted illnesses or pregnancy, many teenagers and young people may see it as a harmless way to explore their sexuality (Rice et al., 2014). Many sexters, moreover, believe that sexual exploration will not be limited to the internet and that actual sexual intercourse or affairs will be required or expected as time goes on (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and Cosmogirl, 2008; Rice et al., 2014).

## **Influence of modern technology and sexting on the youth**

Life has become more convenient in many ways due to the rapid advancement of technology. Cell phones, Internet, email, and text messaging have made it possible for us to stay in touch, communicate effectively, and access and trade information at the drop of a hat. We can mingle and share our opinions, images, and aspects of our life on social media networks. However, because of its vast reach, social media has swiftly established itself as a source of mischief. Social media can be hazardous to our children because of its wide reach, powerful effect, and long-lasting impression.

Throughout the literature, there is a vast amount of information on the advancement of technology due mainly to the internet and mobile phone applications. Young people are among the first to adopt technological devices like cell phones, internet, IM and other social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Regardless of one's geographic location, technological developments are virtually always present (Adhya, & Chandra, 2015). The youth are very susceptible to the media's positive and bad effect due to their easy access to all of these types of information (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010).

The youth spend roughly seven hours every day in front of a screen (Adhya, & Chandra, 2015). They usually spend a lot more of their time on the digital space compared to doing other things. This is due to the fact that they get easy access to the internet and technological devices both at home and at other places. Aside this, the media has taken on the role of self-directed instructor for young people, as they imitate anything they see on television, the internet, computers, or mobile phones, regardless of whether it is correct or



incorrect. Young individuals learn by observing, according to Social Learning Theory, especially when these behaviours are judged desirable (Strasburger et al, 2013).

Several means have been recognized as possible conduits for the transmission of nude, semi-nude images and sexually provocative messages.

According to research, mobile phone usage among young people in the United States has increased dramatically since 2004 (Lenhart, 2009). Since the increase in the usage of mobile phones, the amount of sext messages transmitted appears to be on the rise. According to a 2011 report by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, “26% of those surveyed had uploaded or shared nude or semi-nude images of themselves and 48% had exchanged sexually suggestive text messages on a cell phone”.

Aside mobile phones, sending of explicit photos and messages are done through the internet and social media sites. Overall, “cell phones appear to be the most common method of sending sexually suggestive text messages, which is consistent with the fact that many cell phones come equipped with cameras, video, and internet access, making the transmission of nude or semi-nude photos or sexually suggestive text messages easier and faster than ever before” (Lenhart, 2009, p. 13).

It's worth noting that the media frequently covers suicide, cyberbullying, school and parental duties, ethical, moral and legal questions and issues but the potential benefits of sexting are downplayed (Chalfen, 2010). The media's portrayal of sexting has made parents and school administrators worried (Chalfen, 2010). The capacity to save, onward sending, and/or posting the image or message on social network platforms without the

individual's approval or awareness is a serious issue recognized by media outlets. Efforts by law enforcement to reduce the amount of occurrences of individuals forwarding and/or posting sexted image or message to the public are visible, but ineffective. Several nations, like Canada and the United States, have passed legislation prohibiting the release of sexts to unplanned recipients, but this has not been enough to stop all sexting (Chalfen, 2010).

The risk of long-term negative outcomes, such as psychological discomfort and decreased academic and/or work chances, stems from parents' fears that their children may incur long-term negative outcomes as a result of publishing sexual images during their teen years (Martinez & Vandiver, 2014).

However, the usage of sexting between two consenting persons may result in benefits in the form of exploring sexuality and enhanced sexual fulfillment (Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011). As a result, having a better grasp of both the good and negative aspects of sexting can help in the course developing boundaries that encourage using sexting in beneficial ways while protecting young people from the risks connected with it.

Sexting has also been portrayed in the media as a sign of hypersexualization, with people who engage in it being associated with severe risk-taking (Martinez et al, 2014). The cultural perception of young women as sexual objects, in particular, has exacerbated the anguish associated with sexting. This belief is on the basis of the absence of knowledge of the possible benefits of sexting for women as sexual agents. Sexting raises worries about adolescent sexual health by propagating the idea that people who send sexual pictures and messages have the likelihood of being sexually active with several companions or to fall pregnant while sexting (Martinez et al., 2014).

Within the recent decade, however, there have been a reduction in teenage pregnancies and the number of actual sexual partners, the rate of sexting has climbed. Although it is possible that teens and young people who get pregnant or engage in sexual activities with several companions may also be involved in sexting, their relationships are unlikely to be causal.

### **Suggested preventive mechanisms against sexting among the youth**

The national attention on high-profile sexting instances in the US prompted a legal response to this novel sort of sexual relations among young people, disregarding other legislative and pedagogical options (Fanelli, 2009). Fanelli argued further that in the past, legal issues relating to sexting in some states in the United States have added less strict and rigorous penalties because of their aim to prevent sexting and curbing severe punishments for young offenders. The most popular reaction to sexting under child pornography laws is legislative change, which includes less harsh penalties, mostly misdemeanor charges, not including them in the sex offender lists, and juvenile restoration (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012). For instance, in Texas, the law courts give fewer charges to offenders of sexting so that they would just discourage engaging in sexting without any life-altering outcomes of any felony charges. For instance, an option in Texas is the Texas School Safety Center's Sexting Prevention Educational Programme, which requires minors charged for sexting to complete an online course in sexting (Shippee et al., 2015).

Several researchers have posited that there is the need to assign and give resources to schools so as to establish education programmes for young people and their relatives which focus on the effects of engaging in sexting, in addition to legislation reforms (Fanelli, 2009; Ostrager, 2010). As technology

becomes more accessible to youth, there is a risk that this access will result in insufficient oversight or supervision, especially for youth, to help avoid inappropriate communication with peers. Setting boundaries on the mobile phone usage of young people as well as monitoring mobile phone behaviour should be emphasized in parent education. According to a research by Lenhart

(2009, p. 112), “parental monitoring of text messages reduced the possibility of a teenager sending sexually suggestive photographs via cell phone; 28% of teenagers who said they had not sexted said their parents limited or monitored their texting use”.

Educators ought to implement thorough anti-sexting policies which cover the punitive actions for violators on each school (Ostrager, 2010). Anti-sexting regulations empower colleges to take the lead in handling and penalizing sexting-related incidents that arise in the classroom. By creating inter and multidisciplinary teams can help to determine the lines between which activities may be harmful and which ones may not be so that young people can be better prepared to deal with any issues relating to risky sexual behaviours through the provision of education and counselling (Willard, 2010).

Sexting has become a worry among teenagers as internet communication becomes more frequent (Lenhart, 2009). As a result, it is the responsibility of adults to teach children how to communicate appropriately with their peers as well as with other adults. It is critical for schools, parents, law makers and enforcers to understand the inspirations behind sexting behaviours in order to develop effective preventive methods. Therefore, youth must be well informed on the wide range of outcomes that can result from

sexting which may involve the legal, social, emotional, academic and career implications of such behaviour (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012).

According to studies (Fanelli, 2009; Ostrager, 2010), living with one's parents or guardian provides some protection against dangerous sexual behavior since one becomes more aware of oneself and is more likely to do the right thing at all times. And according to some other studies, living with at least one parent is sufficient i.e. a girl who lives with a single parent, particularly the mother, may have a higher likelihood of engaging in sex before marriage compared to a girl who lives in an intact family. A young person who lives with a single parent thus has a higher likelihood of engaging in dangerous sexual behaviours (Lenhart, 2009; Walker, Sancu & Temple-Smith, 2011).

Adolescents from religious households have lower rates of engaging in risky sexual behaviours due to a cohesive family background and affirmative social networks. Regardless of family religion, parents that monitor the behaviours, environments, friends and interactions of their children can help decrease the extent to which children engage in risky sexual behaviours. Also, participation of parents in STD and teen pregnancy prevention programmes can help to lower incidence of teen pregnancy and risks of getting infected with STDs (Rostosky, Wilcox, Laurie, Wright & Randall, 2004).

### **Empirical Review**

In discussing sexting behaviour among young people, this section undertakes a thorough empirical review of the subject. Empirical review establishes the proof of existing studies that relate to the subject matter. Specifically, this section showcases the gaps in existing literature and how

other studies have dealt with such gaps to resolve them. It also compares existing studies on the subject to lay strong foundation for further and future studies. The main reasons why empirical evidence is necessary in research is that, traditional or superstition knowledge on a particular area may be trusted for too long. Also reviewing empirical literature helps in integrating research and practice and further aid educational process or instructional science to progress (Partington, 2003). The detailed review is thus presented below.

### **Sexting among Youth and Demographic Dynamics**

In this study, prevalence is defined as the rate with sexting is reported among the youth and extent of spread among them. As it has been observed from the empirical review, the sexting phenomenon is sometimes more pronounced among males and other times among females depending on different geographical jurisdictions. More so, certain age groups are more associated with the phenomenon than others.

The majority of sexting studies have been undertaken in the United States of America (USA), with various prevalence rates reported. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2011) used a sample of 1,280 young people in a study. This was made up of 653 teens within the ages of 13 and 19 years and 627 people within the ages of 20 and 26 years. There were 49% males and 51% females among the teens while there were 51% males and 49% females among those above 20 years. From their results, sexting was shown to be common among teenagers (20%) and young adults (33%). Similarly, among a sample of 3,447 young people with the ages of 18 and 24 years in the United States, Gordon-Messer and colleagues discovered a 43 percent prevalence rate of sexting (Gordon-Messer

et al., 2012). According to the same study, 28% of the participants sent and received sexts, with 12.6 % and 2% only receiving and sending sexts, in that order. Henderson and Morgan (2011) also showed a 60 percent frequency of sexting among young adults in another online study carried out in the United States.

In a similar study carried out in the United States by Ybarra and Mitchell (2014), it was found that sexting is common among young people with mostly females engaging in sexting more than males. This finding supported that of an earlier online research undertaken in two public universities by Delevi and Weisskirch (2013). Overall, different studies in different places have found different prevalence rates in terms of sexting this can be attributed to variances in the sampled participants and the methods used in the study.

Ringrose et al. (2012) discovered that sexting is forcefully built and formed by peer group gender dynamics in which, mostly, males pester females, and it is amplified by popular culture gender roles. Ringrose et al., for example, found that young women experience a vast array of sexual pestering, including pressure to provide sexually explicit photographs, as well as spoken demands for sexual acts and unwelcome physical exchange. Furthermore, young ladies in the study of Ringrose et al. reported harassment as a daily onslaught in which refusing to comply with requests resulted in more harassment and blame, while agreeing resulted in negative consequences such as being dubbed a slut. Sexting, on the contrary, boosted young men's social prestige and allowed them to exert control over young women through ratings and the threat of disclosure. In ending, Ringrose et al. were taken aback by the

prevalence and normality of sexual harassment, noting that the practice was characterized by a culture of silence.

Yeung, Horyniak, Vella, Hellard and Lim (2014) carried out a cross-sectional study to learn more about sexting behaviors and views among young Australians. The sample comprised 1372 young people within the ages of 16

and 29 years who were selected using convenience sampling. These individuals were guests at music festival. Multivariate logistic regression was used to find lifetime sexting correlates. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 39 young individuals, attitudes toward and perceived effects of sexting were investigated. The findings revealed that 40% of survey

participants (48% of males; 36% of females) had ever sent or received a sext, most typically with a regular companion. Also, “lower education, more recreational spending, more sexual partners, inconsistent condom use with a regular partner, identifying as non-heterosexual, and risky alcohol intake”

were all found to be independent factors of sexting. The respondents in the Focus Group Discussion drew a strong difference between consensual sext creation, sending, and possession and non-consensual or coerced sext sharing.

Flirting and sexual experimentation were positive results of consensual sexting, with sexting viewed as a normalized component of sexual affairs. It was revealed also that sexting was a prevalent and accepted habit among young Australians. The findings underscored the mental distinction that exists

in the minds of young people between consensual and non-consensual sexting. However, this difference was not commonly acknowledged in sex education, the law, or the media.



Rice et al. (2014) examined “relationships exclusively among a probability sample of middle school students on sexual activity and sexual risk behaviour among early adolescents”. A probability sample of 1285 students was used for the study. The “2012 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey in Los Angeles middle schools” was also used as secondary data. The correlates of sexting behaviour, the relationships between sexting and sexual activity, and risk behaviours, were studied using logistic regressions.

Rice et al. (2014) found that 20% of students with mobile phones indicated that they had received a sext while 5% said they had sent one. Also, the participants who texted about 100 times a day, had the highest likelihood to send and receive sexts and be sexually active. In addition, participants who sent or received sexts were in a position to have been involved sexual activities compared to the students who did not send or receive sexts. Moreover, too much texting and receiving sexts were linked to the risk of having sexual intercourse without protection when compared to not being sexually active. It was concluded by Rice et al. that pediatricians may have to involve young people in discussions about sexting because it is linked to greater probability of sexually transmitted illnesses and teenage pregnancies. Thus, sexting and its hazards should be evaluated to be part of the sex education curricula in schools, particularly for adolescent classes.

Makgale and Plattner (2017) examined “sexting behaviours among Botswana undergraduate students (N = 309, 64.5 percent female; mean age = 20.3 years)” in an exploratory study. The majority of the respondents (84.8%) “had received sexts” and many (61.8%) “had sent sexts” at least once in their lives. Flirting (42.9%), having fun (24.6%), and/or initiating sexual affair

(17.8%) were the top three reasons for sending sexts. Only 36.7% of those polled were concerned about their sexts being forwarded to others, while 30.2 percent admitted to forwarding sexts to others. Sexual activity, alcohol use, and having a mother who had higher level of education were all found to be significant predictors of sending sexts. It was seen also that a rise in the incidence or occurrence of sexting was linked to a rise in the number of sexual companions and engaging in sexual affairs when drunk or using drugs among respondents who have had sexual affair probably once in their entire lives. Nonetheless, sexting behaviours were not found to be related to having sex without protection.

Del Rey, Ojeda, Casas, Mora-Merchán, and Elipe (2019) investigated “the emotional impact of sexting, as well as the effect of the desire for fame on this phenomenon” and whether it differed by gender. A total of 2,356 high school students were involved in the study. This sample was made up of about 47% girls and about 53% boys. The respondents were also within the ages of 11 and 18 years. They were selected from 12 compulsory secondary education (ESO) schools in the Southern part of Spain. Four questions were offered to participants to assess the implication of sexting. There were also scales, self-reports, and questions concerning emotional impact of sexting which involved depression, annoyance and activeness and the urge for fame. The findings revealed that, while sexting had a strong emotional impact on the respondents, it did not seem to have a harmful effect on those who engaged in it in the short-term period. Specifically, the act of sexting seemed to arouse emotions connected to being active in both males and females. These included statements like “I feel lively”, “energetic”, “satisfied”, “ready”, “determined”

and “active”. In addition, the analyses have proven the importance of the demand for popularity, particularly in connection to active emotional impact. Boys and girls had statistical models that were similar. Further, there were some gender differences in the emotional impact of secondary sexting, with females feeling more “depressed” and “annoyed”, and males being more “active”.

Sexting was far more prevalent among adults than among youths, according to Döring (2014), who compiled data from 17 studies on the topic. The frequency of engaging in sexting however grew among teenagers as they grew older. Also, Döring examined the present status of sexting research by examining all 50 sexting publications published between 2009 and 2013 in the “PsycINFO” and “PubMed” databases. The search parameters for the search covered the hazards and/or benefits or prospects connected with sexting.

Döring (2014) found that most of the studies in the databases (79%) discussed adolescent sexting as a potentially dangerous behaviour, linking it to sexual symbolization and aggression, hazardous sexual behaviours, and negative effects such as peer bullying and legal consequences by being charged under child pornography regulations. In contrast to this deviance narrative, a discussion on normality emerged in the literature, which views sexting as typical “intimate communication within romantic and sexual relationships, both among adults and adolescents exploring and evolving into adult relationships”. Döring also looked at 10 online educational campaigns' sexting risk prevention themes. Scare tactics were commonly used in such efforts, which emphasized the potential of criminal prosecution.

Sexting, sensation-seeking, and self-esteem were also explored by Scholes-Balog, Francke, and Hemphill (2016). Sexting was divided into six categories: “sending (1) sexually suggestive images or films, (2) photos or videos of lingerie, (3) naked photos or videos, (4) sexually suggestive text messages and nude photos or videos (5) Text messages proposing sex, and (6) forwarding or showing others sexts that should have been kept private”. An online survey was completed by 583 young individuals comprising 80% females with mean age of 20.72 years. Being in a relationship was the strongest predictor of sending all forms of sexts (compared to being single). Besides which, strong self-esteem was linked to a lower likelihood of sending nude pictures and videos, whereas high sensation seeking was linked to a higher likelihood of sending provocative texts and texts proposing sexual activity. Finally, strong self-esteem was linked to a lower risk of advancing or sending sexts intended to be kept secret, while high sensation seeking was linked to a higher risk. This pattern of connections suggests that there are variances in the motivations for engaging in various forms of sexting behaviours. Educators, parents, and clinicians can utilize this material to raise awareness of features that make someone with high likelihood of engaging in sexting, with the goal of preventing and educating individuals about the risks of sexting and privacy invasion.

Martinez-Prather and Vandiver (2014) also conducted a retrospective analysis of sexting attitudes and behaviors among “378 teenagers sampled among university college freshman at a midsize southern institution in the United States”. It was found in the study that about 1/3 of the participants admitted to using a cell phone to send a sexual picture of themselves to

another person during their high school days. Sexting was much more likely to be reported by those who have usually send text messages in general and the people who are not monitored in their interactions with their friends. Parental monitoring, however, had no bearing on sexting.

In “a nationally representative sample of 5593 American middle and high school students”, Patchin and Hinduja (2019) revealed that the about 13% of the students had sent or received a sexual picture, video or message while about 18.5 percent had only received sexual image or message. Approximately one-third of the participants who sent sexual pictures and/or messages had only done so once.

Madigan, Ly, Rash, and Ouysel (2018) carried out a meta-analysis by exploring the prevalence of various forms of sexting behaviours by giving consideration to demographic factors like gender, age, location and the method used in sexting. The researchers conducted digital search for the “period January 1990 to June 2016” in the databases of “MEDLINE, PsycINFO, EMBASE, and Web of Science” This yielded 1147 non-duplicate records. If the participants were under the age of 18, and the “prevalence of sexting explicit photographs, videos, or texts was reported”, the study was included. PRISMA criteria were followed for the literature review and data extraction. All relevant data was gathered by two independent reviewers. The mean prevalence rates were calculated using random-effects meta-analyses. In all, 39 studies met the final criteria for inclusion in the meta-analyses. There were 110 380 participants in the 39 studies that were considered; the average age “was 15.16 years (range: 11.9-17.0 years), and 47.2 percent of the participants were male”. Also, “sending (n = 34), receiving (n = 20), forwarding without

consent (n = 5), and having a sext forwarded without consent (n = 4) studies” were available. Sending and receiving sexts had mean prevalences of 14.8% and 27.4%, respectively. Effect sizes varied by “child age (prevalence increased with age), year of data collection (prevalence increased over time), and sexting method, according to moderator analyses (higher prevalence on mobile devices compared with computers)”. Also, “the prevalence of forwarding a sext without consent was 12% and the prevalence of having a sext forwarded without consent was 8.4%”. Finally, it is clear that the prevalence of sexting has risen in recent times and will continue to rise as youth get older. Based on the findings, it was indicated that further study on non-consensual sexting is needed.

McGraw (2013) conducted a study that highlighted the experiences of 20 young people to provide a preliminary look at the sexting epidemic. She looked into emerging subjects such as the nature of teen sexting and the interrelationships between privacy, relationships, and sexting. Participant narratives revealed two separate types of sexting, paving the way for more open-minded dialogues and societal strategies that consider both the good and adverse effects of technological or digital means of sexual contact. Overall, the discussion on juvenile sexting among participants revealed the need for further studies as well as current means of sexting teaching in schools and in society.

Albury, Crawford, Byron and Mathews (2013) presented the results of a qualitative research of young individuals’ perceptions of and responses to the laws, media conversations and instructional tools relating to sexting in Australia. The participants in the focus group discussions were aware of the

action by which individuals send nude photos, they discovered that the term sexting was perceived as an “adult or media-generated concept” that was not adequately reflected in the daily activities and experiences of young people producing and sending digital pictures. Also, young people noticed “gendered double standards being used to conversations about sexting and digital self-representation in general”. In terms of the laws regulating sexting, especially in terms of child pornography, it was found that both young and old people thought that these laws lacked clarity and as such most people lacked awareness and knowledge about sexting, putting them at risk of being charged with crimes they are not guilty of.

Further, Soriano-Ayala, Cala, and Dalouh (2020) studied the attitudes of “603 Spanish and Moroccan adolescents living in Andalusia” about sexting as a form of sexual activities online. The cluster analysis revealed three distinct profiles: sexting-philes, who see the practice as an exciting, flirty, and bold activity; sexting-phobes, who see sexting as a sign of desperate, disrespectful, and inconsistent people or attitudes; and a third ambivalent profile, who see the act of sexting as both exciting and contradictory. However, the majority of the discussion focuses on the positive aspects of this phenomenon. Sexting also featured some digital or online sexuality traits, like a lack of privacy and a disconnect between online and actual behaviour, as young people observed.

Milton, Gill, Davenport, Dowling, Burns, and Hickie (2019) sought to add to the Australian sexting literature by examining “(1) changes in the frequency of young people's sexting activities from 2012 to 2014; (2) young people's beliefs about sexting; and (3) the relationship between demographics,

mental health and well-being items, and internet use and sexting; and (4) the connection between sexting and ICT safety skills”. A total of 1400 young people within the ages of 16 and 25 years old were included in the study as representative and random samples. The findings revealed that two-way sexting and receiving sexts increased dramatically between 2012 and 2014, whereas not sexting decreased significantly and sending sexts remained unchanged. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as being a male, having a second language, and being in a relationship as well as mental health elements like suicidal ideation and behaviours and body image worries were found to be connected with the practice of sexting (sending) and risky online behaviours like cyber bullying.

Milton et al. (2019) also revealed that receiving sexts was linked to demographic characteristics like being a man who did not live with his parents or guardians) and risky online behaviours. Unlike non-sexsters, it was found that people who engaged in sexting either sending and/or receiving showed a negative connection with approving safe usage of online devices such as being cautious in using the Internet and not disclosing individual or private information.

Setty (2019) discusses the “meanings and norms” around younger males sexting habits based on data from a qualitative study. The study focused on the practices and attitudes of sexting with particular attention on males within the ages of 14 and 18 years in southeast England. Setty noted that young men were not, however, “equally able to extract value and social capital through sexting”. Setty came to two conclusions: first, it should not be considered that young males are naturally capable of gaining value through



sexting; second, while young males may stay away from sexting, gendered stereotypes and inequities about body and sexual expression still exists.

The study by Benotsch et al. (2013), just like that of Olatunde and Balogun (2017), failed to address possible solutions for sexting which was found to be very prevalent among the youth. Moreover, the use of online sample of data reduces the seriousness and quality of survey since anyone at all could fill out the questionnaire leaving out the youth who are the target. The current study however employs cross-sectional descriptive survey to find out the extent to which the youth in the church have been engaging in sexting behaviours. Thus, even though the studies may similar, the methodological approaches vary.

In Ibadan, Nigeria, Olatunde and Balogun (2017) investigated the occurrence, determinants, and related risky sexual behaviours of sexting among post-secondary school students. The researchers used questionnaire in collecting the data. The data were analyzed using the Chi square test and logistic regression. The outcome had it that 20% of respondents had sent sexts and 33.2 percent had received sexts. Also, it was shown that 54% of the respondents had “high extraversion ratings” while 46.5 percent had “moderate–severe phone use” issues. In addition, 16% of those polled “had ever had sex”, and 40% had had “numerous sexual partners”. Further, males had the likelihood of having had sex than females. Sexting was linked to a “high extraversion” score and moderate–severe “problematic phone use”. Also, sending and receiving sexual messages was linked to having sexual intercourse in the past. Overall, sexting was found to be common among post-secondary school students in Ibadan, and it was linked to being male and

having problematic phone usage. Interventions aimed at the identified vulnerable group of individuals may help to alleviate the issues that come with it in this research group.

It is evident from the foregoing that sexting was highly prevalent among young people in the study by Olatunde and Balogun (2017) in Nigeria, as seen by the data provided above. The studies, on the other hand, do not completely explain strategies to eliminate or reduce the problem among the secondary school children.

### **Reasons for Sexting**

Mobile phone usage has become more ubiquitous during the last decade, as per current literature (Benotsch, Snipes, Martin & Bull, 2013). Young individuals are often the first to adopt new technologies, such as cell phones. The majority of previous studies on sexting, which is defined as the act of sending messages and pictures which are sexually provocative and explicit, have concentrated on the legal or social implications of this behaviour.

Sexting, sexual risk, and substance use behaviour in youth were investigated by Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, and Bull (2013) in a study on the public health consequences of sexting. Young individuals (N=763) filled out online surveys about their background, mobile phone usage, sexting behaviours and abuse of drugs. The results indicated that “sexting was reported by 44% of the participants”. Also, participants “who engaged in sexting were more likely than their non-sexting counterparts to report recent substance use and high-risk sexual behaviors, such as unprotected sex and intercourse with numerous partners” while “31.8% of those who sexted said

they had sex with a new partner for the first time after sexting with that person”. After adjusting for the demographic characteristics, overall texting behaviours, and substance abuse, sexting was linked to high-risk sexual behavior in multivariate models. The study's findings revealed that sexting is strongly linked to risky sexual behaviours. Although most people share explicit or stimulating images with long-term sexual companions, some of the participants in their study faced additional sexual risks because of sexting.

From a Ghanaian viewpoint, Ahiataku (2016) claimed that many stakeholders are concerned about youth sexuality because of the potential for harmful effects. HIV/AIDS, other STIs, and unwanted pregnancies are among them. There was no empirical information about sexting behaviours among kids or the amount to which sexting influences risky sexual behaviour, according to the researcher. In order to explore the impact of sexting on risky sexual behaviours among University of Ghana students, a study was done. It looked into the incidence of sexting among University of Ghana students, the variables that lead to sexting, and the links between sexting and sexual risk-taking behaviours (Brown, Keller, & Stern, 2009). The research was conducted utilizing structured questionnaires in a cross-sectional quantitative survey. To determine the number of students to be used, a multistage cluster sampling procedure was used to select the sample. The number of students in each Hall was used as a metric of size. In the first stage, five (5) out of the 11 mixed halls were chosen at random through the lottery method. In the second stage, there was selecting room numbers for the selected halls in a systematic manner. For each Hall, sampling intervals were determined, and the ninth room was chosen. After the second stage, one student was picked at random

from each of the rooms that had been chosen. Frequencies, Chi-square, and logistic regression were utilised in the data analyses.

The majority of students used a smart phone for internet access, and girls sext more than boys, according to the report. Overall, 255 students (38%) had sent a sexually provocative message before and 463 students (69.1%) had received a sexually provocative message before. Two-way sexting was used by 237 people (51.2%). Sexting was done for a variety of reasons, including being noticed (427, 63.7%), fishing for compliments (376, 56.1%), and as a gift of sexual nature for boyfriends/girlfriends (398, 59.4%). A total of 160 people (24.9%) engaged in risky sexual behaviours. According to this multivariate study, there was no significant link between sexting and risky sexual behaviours. Females sexted more than boys, according to the survey, and around a quarter of the students engaged in dangerous sexual behaviour. Sexting, on the other hand, had no link to unsafe sexual behaviour.

From all indicators, Ahiataku's (2016) conclusions are in stark contrast to numerous other studies on sexting among teenagers. According to previous research, guys engage in sexting at a higher rate than females. However, Ahiataku's observation shows that the situation is distinct from that of the University of Ghana's students.

Amodu (2016) investigated the connection between sexting, risky sexual behaviours, and psychological well-being among Ghanaian college students. This cross-sectional survey recruited 380 undergraduate students in the Greater Accra Region using a convenient sampling technique. According to the study, sexting behaviors are favorably linked to sexual risk behaviors and adversely linked to psychological well-being. The association between

sexting behaviours and psychological well-being was partially mediated by self-control. The connection between sexting and sexual risk behaviours was entirely mediated by peer pressure. It was discovered that male college students sent and got more sexts than their female counterparts. Additionally, college students in romantic relationships sexted much more than those who were single. Severe sexters had higher likelihood than mild, moderate, and non-sexters to participate in sexual risk behaviours. Male college sexters were under far greater peer pressure to sext than female college students. The study found that eradicating or reducing the frequency of sexting in current Ghanaian culture, particularly among the youth, would need a multidisciplinary and integrative strategy.

A self-administered survey was also performed by Baiden, Amankwah, and Owusu (2020) with the focus on a randomly selected sample of high school students in Tema in Ghana. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure students' self-esteem. Sexting's prevalence and causes, as well as its impact on sexual behavior, were investigated using logistic regression. Five hundred and seventy-six pupils (53 percent girls) took part. About 24.7 percent of those polled said they had shared sext messages on their phones. Being male, being in a "serious" or "casual" relationship, and possessing a mobile phone were all predictors of sexting. Sexting was more common among pupils over the age of 16 and those with low self-esteem. Sexual activity was more common among sexters. Sexting was motivated by self-gratification and societal pressures. Students avoided sexting for several varied reasons, among which were fear of items becoming viral, religion, and the possibility of censure. Sexting was common among teenagers in this group,

and levels were comparable to those in industrialized nations. School-based interventions were required because of the potential for negative immediate and long-term dangers.

### **Demographic Variables and Sexting**

Studies on gender and sexting vary in their findings from a gender standpoint. Females have higher likelihood than guys to be involved in main sexting (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). This could be explained by the fact that most young girls may feel forced to send sext messages or initiate sexual behavior to males with whom they are sexually attracted. Ladies are more compelled to sext since most adolescent females sext as means of incentive to their boyfriends in order to obtain some special treatment or receive something from them. Unlike males, who are virtually always on the receiving end, they are usually the senders (Cooper, Quayle, Jonsson, & Svedin, 2016; Benotsch, Snipes, Martin & Bull, 2013).

According to other researchers conducted in the United States, female students may be more in a position than male students to share and receive photographs of themselves (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). Most of the students sent sexually explicit photographs to their boyfriends and to someone they have interest in dating. Only a small percentage of students reported transmitting photographs to adults. Aside these, it was shown that a friend was the most likely recipient of images, followed by a person of interest and lastly to an adult.

Other studies, on the other hand, found that males had the highest likelihood than females to engage in primary sexting (Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2012; West

et al., 2014). Other research, on the other hand, demonstrated no variations in sexting behaviour between sexes (Lenhart, 2009; Temple et al., 2012). These differences could be attributable to the researchers' different geographical regions, methodology, and definitions of sexting.

Sexting among adolescents, according to West et al. (2014), can lead to increased unsafe sexual practices, psychological suffering, and, in some circumstances, suicide. They did say, however, that sexting research in developing countries is scarce. Little was known, in particular, concerning gender variations in sexting correlates. In Cusco, Peru, West et al. carried out a study to explore the incidence of sexting and its associated among adolescent males and girls. The participants in the study were "949 high school students from Cusco, Peru". The participants were asked questions relating to their demographics, their sexting behaviours and risk/protective factors. To compare the correlates of the two variables, separate regression models were built of sexting boys and sexting girls.

According to the findings, 20% of the people in the sample admitted to sexting at least once. Sexting was reported by boys at a larger rate than girls (35.17 percent vs. 13.19 percent,  $p = 0.000$ ). Cyberbullying and parental variables were found to be significant correlates for females' sexting. Hypertexting, arguing, parental variables, and parental sexting rules were all major factors for boys. As a result, Peruvian health officials interested in lowering the consequences of sexting among young people may opt to focus on males differently than females, according to the study. Parents may be advised to create clear guidelines and expectations concerning sexting and the proper usage of mobile phones and digital devices as part of these efforts.

Looking at the study by West et al. (2013), it could be deduced that sexting is very common among the youth and more prevalent among males as compared to females.

Barrense-Dias, Berchtold, Surs, and Akre (2017) looked at the many definitions of sexting and its correlations in the literature. They discovered that sexting prevalence rates varied between 9% and 60%, depending on the criteria used. Barrense-Dias et al. (2017)'s previous work may be demographically connected to the current study. This is seen in its research into age, gender, ethnicity, sexual behaviour, romantic relationships, and hazardous behaviour. These demographic variables do, in fact, have a significant impact in sexting behaviour. However, there is a continuing dispute in the research over which group, gender, or age is more related with sexting behaviour.

### **Chapter Summary**

Multiple theories were addressed as foundations in the theoretical evaluation of literature to contextualize this investigation. The study was based on five theories: Social Cognitive Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Co-Cultural Theory, Psychosexual Theory and Sexual Involvement Theory. Concepts relating to sexting were reviewed after presenting a conceptual framework for the study. Previous studies relating to the study were also reviewed.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine sexting behaviours among youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This chapter presents the methodology used to carry out the study. It covers the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection instrument, data collection procedures and the data processing and data analysis.

#### Research Design

When researchers embark on a study, they need a blueprint that spans the gamut of broad theoretical assumptions to minute elements of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Robson 1993). The method that researchers follow in conducting research is sometimes referred to as “the building blocks of the scientific enterprise”. This study used the quantitative research approach. Within this approach, the descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study.

According to Bell (1999), descriptive survey research design principally aims at describing, observing and documenting aspects of situations as they occur naturally. This actually informed the choice of the descriptive survey. Cohen and Manion (2004) also saw descriptive survey, typically as gathering data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of the existing condition.

Creswell (2014) posited that descriptive survey is a process of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the status of the

subject of the study. The design helps the researcher to report things as they are. Through self-report measurements provided by interviews and questionnaires, a survey allows one to examine a large number of individuals. Descriptive research, according to Creswell, is to determine the current attitudes of a certain population. Descriptive surveys also explain the existing factors in a scenario and, in certain cases, the connection that exists among those variables, and they may be utilized with higher confidence for specific questions that are of particular interest and value to researchers.

Descriptive survey comes with some limitations. Cohen and Manion (2004) highlighted the following as some weaknesses of descriptive survey. First, the participants may not see the need to submit accurate and honest responses to the survey. Second, participants may be hesitant to provide responses that would make them look bad. Data inaccuracies may also occur as a result of respondents not giving answers to some of the questions.

Despite these limitations, some statistical tests can be performed to limit some of the weaknesses inherent in this kind of design. For example, validity analyses could be performed on specific items within a questionnaire to identify if responses were honestly provided. Moreover, a chi square analysis could be performed to identify if there are statistically significant differences between those who responded and those who did not respond. Finally, every quantitative research makes allowance for errors, therefore, these limitations are not enough to disregard the use of the descriptive survey approach.

## Population

Sarantakos (1997) defined population as the complete aggregate of instances that fulfill a specified set of criteria, encompassing all persons or things with the feature being studied. In this study, the target population comprised all youth in the Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention.

The accessible population which is the population that the researcher has access to and actually uses for the study was made up of all youth in the Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Specifically, there are four Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention within the Cape Coast Metropolis. The churches and their registered number of youth membership are: Adom Baptist Church (N = 23), New Life Baptist Church (N = 42), Praise Baptist Church (N = 55) and Redemption Baptist Church (N = 124). This gave a total population of 244.

## Sample and Sampling Procedure

Dunn (2001) defined a sample as a smaller unit or subset of the population of interest that shares the same features. For two reasons: expense and time, researchers seldom sample the whole population. The three primary advantages of sampling are reduced costs, faster data gathering, and the ability to ensure consistency and enhance precision and quality of the data because the data set was small (Adèr, Mellenbergh & Hand, 2008). The sample size for the study was 244. Thus, the entire registered youth members within the churches were involved in the study. Purposive sampling procedure was used for the study. This means all the 244 accessible population were purposively sampled for the study.

The purposive sampling method was deemed appropriate for this study because the concept of sexting is new in the churches and as such it was appropriate to involve all the youth members in the study. Purposive sampling which is also referred to as “judgmental”, “selective” or “subjective” sampling was used. Purposive sampling is known to be useful for smaller sample sizes.

The aim of this sampling procedure is to concentrate on a specific feature of the population of interest – sexting practices among youth in the church.

There are various merits and demerits within purposive sampling. The main advantage is that purposive sampling is beneficial in situations where researchers have to use multi-stage sampling. Purposive sampling offers a variety of options within the non-probability arena that researchers can draw upon. A major disadvantage, however, is that there can be a lot of bias from the researcher which may affect the findings of the study as a whole.

Through purposive sampling, the youth in the four branches of the Baptist church in the Cape Coast metropolis were selected. The churches are: Adom Baptist Church (N = 23), New Life Baptist Church (N = 42), Praise Baptist Church (N = 55) and Redemption Baptist Church (N = 124). This made a total number of 244.

#### **Data Collection Instrument**

A questionnaire was used in collecting data for this study. In this study, using the questionnaire was deemed more appropriate because, it provided a standardized baseline for the sexting behaviours of respondents to be ascertained and reported quantitatively. Again, to reach a large number of people, the use of questionnaire was considered appropriate. The questionnaire was adapted from the “Sexting Motivations Questionnaire (SMQ)” of Bianchi,

Morelli, Baiocco and Chirumbolo (2016). The questionnaire was adapted because the questionnaire was mainly for general adolescents and adults but the statements had to be structured to suit the church context in the current study.

The questionnaire had four sections. The first section (A) described the demographic data of the respondents while the section B sought for the level of involvement in sexting behaviours among the respondents. The section C sought for the reasons for the involvement in sexting behaviours while the section D sought to identify the measures that could help reduce sexting behaviours among youth. The section A was made up of three items, section B was made up of 12 items while section C and D were made up of seven and 10 items respectively. Overall, the questionnaire was made up of 32 items.

The scale for the questionnaire was mixed. Specifically, Section B was on scale of Yes and No while sections C and D were on a 5-point Likert scale comprising “1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Unsure, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree”. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix A. On the basis of the scale, mean scores of 3.0 and above were deemed to be high implying that respondents agreed to the statements while mean scores less than 3.0 implied that respondents disagreed to the statements.

Questionnaire as an instrument for data collection has some advantages and disadvantages. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), questionnaires have the advantage of being affordable since it is the least expensive means of data collection. Again, surveys provide anonymity and enhance the likelihood of obtaining honest replies for the researcher. Finally, data collected from

other sources, particularly unwritten sources, is more difficult to analyze and understand than data obtained via surveys.

In terms of the disadvantages of questionnaires, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003) have showed that questionnaires do not provide flexibility as in interviews and do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstandings or incorrect answers due to confusion or misinterpretation of questions. Again, if statements on questionnaire are not written well, the results of the study might not be a true reflection of the respondents' views.

The limitations did however not affect the study since the respondents were given the chance to ask questions and seek clarifications about confusing items on the questionnaire before they responded to the questionnaires. Again, the process of validation of the questionnaire ensured by the supervisor of the researcher helped ensure that the statements on the questionnaire were properly constructed. This made the use of questionnaire suitable for the study.

### **Validity**

To ensure that the questionnaire measured what it was supposed to measure, multiple standards of validity were used. I used face validity as well as content validity. Face validity is as the name designates – by looking at the items, one can tell what the items are meant to measure. On the other hand, content validity focuses on whether the content of the instrument measured the intended content. The validity of the questionnaire was established by my supervisors.

## Reliability

To ensure the items on the questionnaire were reliable, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to assess the internal consistency among the items on the questionnaire. The degree of acceptable reliability is determined by a variety of factors, including the construct being assessed, the number of questions, how test scores are used, and the reliability estimation technique employed (Myers & Avison, 2002). Researchers generally consider that reliability coefficients of .70 or higher are acceptable. In this study, a reliability coefficient of 0.841 was obtained after conducting the reliability analysis (Appendix B). This implies that the questionnaire was reliable for the study.

For the various sections of the instrument, the reliability co-efficients obtained were 0.787 for Section B, 0.853 for Section C and 0.845 for Section D. All of these show that the instrument was reliable for the study.

## Pilot Testing

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a sample of 50 youth of Baptist Church in Elmina. This sample was chosen for the pilot test because they are also a Baptist Church and have geographical proximity to the study area. After conducting the pilot test, the reliability of the instrument was ascertained. Again, some minor changes were made after the pilot testing. For instance, the earlier version of the instrument contained items seeking for information on whom the respondents were living with and where they were staying. These were taken out in the final instrument since they were deemed not to be relevant to the study. An overall reliability co-efficient of 0.841 was obtained after carrying out the pilot test.

## Data Collection Procedure

In carrying out the data collection, the researcher took an introductory letter (Appendix C) from the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the University of Cape Coast. The introductory letter was taken after obtaining ethical clearance from the College of Education Studies Review Board in the

University of Cape Coast (Appendix D). The introductory letter was taken to the leadership of the various churches to get the permission to collect data from their members. The researcher then sought for the consent of the respondents by giving them an informed consent form to fill. After obtaining the consent of the respondents, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents. In administering the questions to the respondents, the purpose of the study was explained to them and they were given the chance to ask questions and decide ultimately whether to be involved in the study or not.

The researcher administered the questions in person with help from two trained research assistants. These research assistants were colleague Guidance and Counselling students and so the researcher provided them with some brief training on the ethical issues in research that required adherence. After administering the questionnaires, completed questionnaires were taken after the respondents. Some of the respondents asked to return the questionnaires on later days. This resulted in a 71.4% return rate. Thus, out of the 244 administered questionnaires, 200 were returned. This return rate was considered acceptable in surveys (Browne, 2005). A period of three weeks was used in collecting the data.



## Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research address the right and wrong in conducting research, especially with human subjects (Cohen & Tamar, 2011). These ethical concerns were established to protect human subjects, especially as society discovered the unethical research conducted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these offenses included medical experiments conducted by Nazi doctors during World War II, as well as the Tuskegee Syphilis study on black men in Alabama, USA who had syphilis. Because of these inhumane acts, the Nuremberg Code which was established to define the parameters to conduct legal and ethical medical research (Cohen & Tamar, 2011).

Within the counselling field, counselors are guided by code of ethics which address our way of interacting with clients as well as steps to take in conducting research. Some of the principles of professional ethical behaviour include beneficence and non-maleficence (Browne, 2005). Beneficence implies working for the good of the individual and society by promoting mental health and well-being. Non-maleficence means working to avoid actions that cause harm to people. Aside these general principles, some ethical issues were addressed in this study. They include permission, informed consent, autonomy, anonymity and confidentiality.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the College of Education Studies Review Board in the University of Cape Coast. This provided permission to conduct the study. The consent of the participants was sought and they were made to voluntarily decide to be in the study. Also, the participants were made aware that they could opt out of the study at any time and that they had the freedom to respond to the questions as they please. Thus, they were not forced

to respond to the questions. Also, in ensuring anonymity, the identities of the participants were hidden. Thus, specific responses cannot be traced to specific participants. Finally, in ensuring confidentiality, the data obtained from the participants was kept safely and only used in the academic work that they were meant for.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

The study used a quantitative non-experimental survey approach. In order to effectively address the research questions, statistical analyses were used. Simple frequencies and percentages were used in addressing questions 1, 2, and 3. An independent samples t-test was used to test hypothesis 1, while a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in addressing hypotheses 2 and 3. Frequencies and percentages provide the count of responses concerning prompts to a question. In t-tests however, samples of means between two unrelated groups (males and females) are compared on the same continuous dependent variable. The one-way ANOVA was used to analyze differences among more than two independent group means in a sample.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter was concerned with the research methods of the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A sample of 244 church members was selected through purposive sampling procedure from Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Data was collected using questionnaire. The data collected was analysed descriptively and inferentially according to the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR  
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to examine sexting behaviours among the youth in the Baptist churches in the Cape Coast metropolis. This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study. The results are presented first before the discussion.

**SECTION A**

**Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age and Educational Level**

The background characteristics cover the gender, age and educational qualifications of the respondents. They are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age and Educational Qualification**

Item	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	86	43.0
Female	114	57.0
Total	200	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-22	46	23.0
23-26	46	23.0
27-30	108	54.0
Total	200	100.0

### Educational Qualification

JHS	4	2.0
SHS	78	39.0
Tertiary	118	59.0
Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2021.

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of the respondents. From Table 1, it could be observed that the number of female respondents was more than their male counterpart. This is evident by 114 females as against 86 males, representing 57.0% and 43.0% respectively. It can also be seen from Table 2 that more than half of the respondents (108, 54%) were within the ages of 27 and 30 years. Also, 46(23%) of the respondents each were aged between 18 and 22 years and 23 to 26 years.

Finally, regarding educational background, it can be seen from Table 1 that majority of the respondents (118, 59%) had tertiary level education, 78(39%) of the respondents had senior high school level while only four (2%) of the respondents had junior high level of education. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are relevant in the study because they reflect the characteristics of the general youth population in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

## SECTION B – DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Research Questions

In this section, the results of the analyses of the data for the research questions and hypotheses are presented.

#### **Research Question 1: To what extent do the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis engage in sexting behaviours?**

The first research question sought to find out the extent to which youth in the Baptist churches in the Cape Coast metropolis engage in sexting behaviours. In answering this research question, frequencies and percentages was used in analysing the data. The results are shown in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 show clearly that 74% of the respondents indicated that they worry that their sexually explicit photos could get to other people. Also, 67.5% of the respondents revealed that they worry that their sexually explicit messages could get to other people. In addition, 65% and 62.5% of the respondents indicated that they have received sexually explicit photos and messages. In spite of this, only 25.5% of the respondents indicated that it was okay to receive messages that contain sexual references. Also, only 28.5% of the participants made known that they had ever sent sexually explicit photo.

**Table 2: Extent of Sexting Behaviours of Participants**

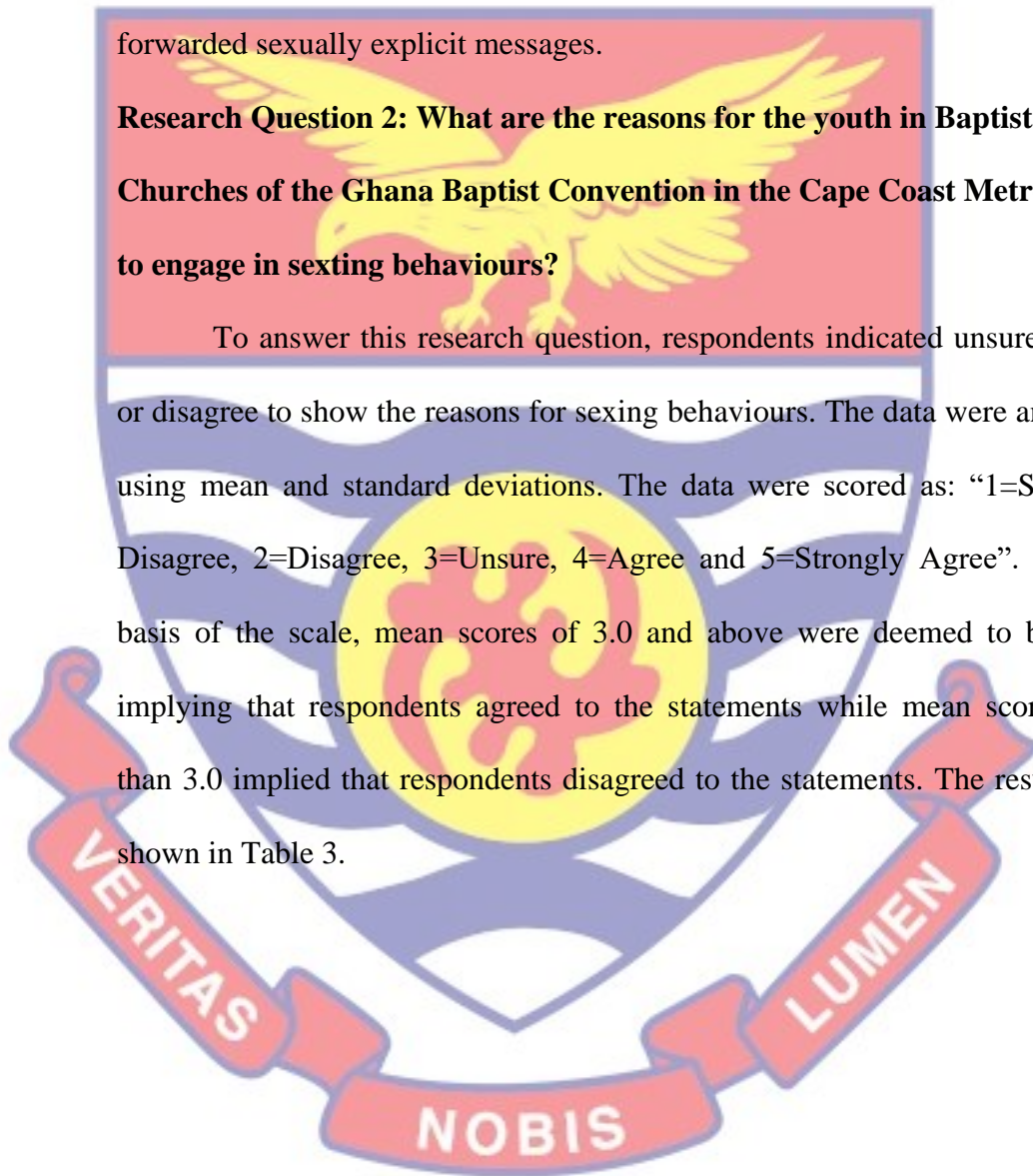
Item	Yes		Rank
	Freq.	%	
As far as you are aware, do youth in your church exchange sexually explicit photos?	56	28.0	11 <sup>th</sup>
As far as you are aware, do youth in your church exchange sexually explicit messages?	71	35.5	6 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever sent sexually explicit photo?	57	28.5	10 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever received sexually explicit photos?	130	65.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Have you ever forwarded sexually explicit photo?	59	29.5	9 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever sent sexually explicit message?	67	33.5	7 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever received sexually explicit message?	125	62.5	4 <sup>th</sup>
Have you ever forwarded sexually explicit message?	113	56.5	5 <sup>th</sup>
Do you think it is okay to receive photos that contain sexual references?	65	32.5	8 <sup>th</sup>
Do you think it is okay to receive messages that contain sexual references?	51	25.5	12 <sup>th</sup>
Do you worry that your sexually explicit photos could get to other people?	148	74.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
Do you worry that your sexually explicit messages could get to other people?	135	67.5	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Source: Field Survey 2021.

From the results in Table 2, it is evident that only few respondents send sexually explicit messages and photos. This is because most of the respondents knew it was not okay to exchange sexually explicit messages and worried that their sexually explicit photos and messages would get to other people. However, most of the respondents revealed that they had received and forwarded sexually explicit messages.

**Research Question 2: What are the reasons for the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis to engage in sexting behaviours?**

To answer this research question, respondents indicated unsure, agree or disagree to show the reasons for sexting behaviours. The data were analysed using mean and standard deviations. The data were scored as: “1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Unsure, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree”. On the basis of the scale, mean scores of 3.0 and above were deemed to be high implying that respondents agreed to the statements while mean scores less than 3.0 implied that respondents disagreed to the statements. The results are shown in Table 3.



**Table 3: Reasons for Sexting Behaviours**

Reason	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Youth engage in sexting...			
for self-expression	3.23	1.29	6 <sup>th</sup>
to feel attractive	3.20	1.15	7 <sup>th</sup>
to initiate sexual activity	3.33	1.17	3 <sup>rd</sup>
just to have fun	3.45	1.09	2 <sup>nd</sup>
to flirt	3.49	1.21	1 <sup>st</sup>
for no reason	2.57	1.17	10 <sup>th</sup>
to be accepted by friends	3.30	1.19	5 <sup>th</sup>
out of curiosity	3.10	1.11	8 <sup>th</sup>
to please sexual partner	3.31	1.10	4 <sup>th</sup>
as a safe sexual activity than actual sex	2.90	1.16	9 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field Survey 2021.

Table 3 shows the reasons given by the respondents for engaging in sexting behaviours. The main reasons given were to flirt (M=3.49, SD=1.21), to have fun (M=3.45, SD=1.09), to initiate sexual activity (M=3.33, SD=1.17), to please sexual partner (M=3.31, SD=1.10) and to be accepted by friends (M=3.30, SD=1.119). These were the top five reasons given by the respondents. This means that they were the most significant reasons in the view of the respondents. Aside these reasons, the respondents indicated that sexting was engaged in for self-expression (M=3.23, SD=1.29) and to feel attractive (M=3.20, SD=1.15).



**Research Question 3: What measures are available to reduce sexting among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis?**

This research question sought to find out the measures available to guide and regulate sexting among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The data were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in Table 4.



**Table 4: Measures to Guide and Regulate Sexting among Youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis**

Statement	Agree		Disagree		Unsure	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Laws to punish sexting offenders	90	45.0	97	48.5	13	6.5
Rehabilitation centers should be built by the church	141	70.5	47	28.5	2	1.0
Rehabilitation centers should be built by Government	122	61.0	76	38.0	2	1.0
Education on effects of sexting	161	80.5	35	17.5	4	2.0
Parents should monitor use of digital devices	164	82.0	30	15.0	6	3.0
Schools and colleges should adopt anti-sexting policies	135	67.5	61	30.5	4	2.0
Government should work with parents on prevention	139	69.5	53	26.5	8	4.0
Schools should work with parents on prevention programmes	170	85.0	25	12.5	5	2.5
Churches should work with parents on prevention	173	86.5	25	12.5	2	1.0

Source: Field Survey 2021.

Table 4 shows the measures that can be put in place to regulate sexting behaviour among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It was indicated by 86.5% of the respondents that churches and parents should work together to organize prevention programmes. Also, 85% of the

respondents agreed that schools should work with parents to organize prevention programmes on sexting for young people.

Table 4 further shows that, 82% of the respondents agreed that parents should monitor young people and their use of digital devices while 80.5% of the respondents agreed that educators should help young people understand the effects of sexting.

From the results in Table 4, it can be seen that the measures that can help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis include churches, parents and schools organising prevention programmes on sexting for young people. Other measures were parents monitoring their children and educators helping young people understand the effects of sexting.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

#### **Hypothesis 1**

$H_01$ : There is no significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender.

$H_{A1}$ : There is a significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference in sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender. The independent samples t-test was used in analysing the data at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

The Levene’s test for homogeneity of variance was carried out first to find out the homogeneity of variances. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances**

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	1.881	.172

Equal variances not assumed

Source: Field survey 2021.

From Table 5, it can be seen that the significant value of .172 is greater than .05 the significant level. This implies that equal variances can be assumed.

**Table 6: Summary of Independent Samples t-test Result**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	86	5.79	2.79	198	2.039*	.043
Female	114	4.89	3.17			

Source: Field survey 2021. \*Significant,  $p < 0.5$

The results of the independent samples t-test are shown in Table 6. It is shown in Table 6 that there was significant difference in sexting behaviours on the basis of gender [ $t(198) = 2.039, p < .05$ ]. The mean score of the males was 5.79 while the mean score of females was 4.89. Based on the results in Table 6, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there was a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender. This means that alternate hypothesis was accepted. In other words, males and females had different sexting behaviours.

**Hypothesis 2**

$H_02$ : There is no significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education.

$H_A2$ : There is a significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference in sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education. This hypothesis was tested using One-Way ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: Differences in Sexting Behaviours on the basis of Level of Education**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	71.792	2	35.896	3.975*	.020
Within Groups	1779.203	197	9.031		
Total	1850.995	199			

Source: Field survey 2021. \*Significant,  $p < 0.5$

Table 7 shows that there is a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their level of education [ $F(2, 197) = 3.975, p < .05$ ]. The probability value (p-value) of .020 is less than .05 significant level and as such the null hypothesis is rejected. The results imply that there was a difference in the

sexting behaviours of the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education. This means the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Thus, the sexting behaviours of youth with JHS, SHS and tertiary education were different.

Having found significant difference in terms of level of education, there was the need to conduct post-hoc analysis to identify the specific areas where the differences were occurring. Tukey post-hoc analysis was used. The results are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Level of Education (Tukey HSD)**

(I) Educational level	(J) Educational level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
JHS	SHS	3.46667	2.15318	.244	-1.6182	8.5515
	TERTIARY	2.36585	2.14224	.513	-2.6932	7.4249
SHS	JHS	-3.46667	2.15318	.244	-8.5515	1.6182
	TERTIARY	-1.10081*	.44028	.035	-2.1406	-.0611
TERTIARY	JHS	-2.36585	2.14224	.513	-7.4249	2.6932
	SHS	1.10081*	.44028	.035	.0611	2.1406

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Field survey 2021.

Table 8 shows clearly that there is a significant difference between the means of the youth with SHS level of education and those with tertiary level of education (p=.035). However, this is the only significant difference

observed since the other probability (p) values are insignificant. This implies that the difference observed in the ANOVA table was because of the significant difference between the mean scores of youth with SHS level of education and those with tertiary level of education. From Table 8, the tertiary group accounted for the significant difference.

**Hypothesis 3**

*H<sub>03</sub>*: There is no significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

*H<sub>A3</sub>*: There is a significant difference in sexting behaviour among the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

This hypothesis sought to find out the significant difference in sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age. This hypothesis was tested using One-Way ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Differences in Sexting Behaviours on the basis of Age**

	Sum of		Mean		
	Squares	df	Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	244.110	2	112.055	13.569*	.000
Within Groups	1626.885	197	8.258		
Total	1850.995	199			

Source: Field survey 2021. \*Significant, p<0.5

Table 9 shows that there is a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their ages [ $F(2, 197)=13.569, p<.05$ ]. The probability value (p-value) of .000 is less than .05 significant level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It can be inferred that the youth vary in their sexting behaviours on the basis of their ages. Thus, the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

A post-hoc analysis was conducted to identify the specific areas where the differences were occurring. Tukey post-hoc analysis was used. The results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10: Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Ages (Tukey HSD)**

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-22	23-26	-1.24512	.59768	.096	-2.6566	.1663
	27-30	-2.61465*	.51888	.000	-3.8400	-1.3893
23-26	18-22	1.24512	.59768	.096	-.1663	2.6566
	27-30	-1.36953*	.49229	.016	-2.5321	-.2070
27-30	18-22	2.61465*	.51888	.000	1.3893	3.8400
	23-26	1.36953*	.49229	.016	.2070	2.5321

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Field survey 2021.

Table 10 shows that there was a significant difference between the means of the youth within the ages of 18 to 22 years and those within the ages of 27 to 30 years ( $p=.000$ ). Also, there was a significant difference in the mean scores of youth within the ages of 23 to 26 years and those within the ages of



27 to 30 years. However, no significant difference was observed with the other age groups since the other probability (p) values were insignificant. This implies that the difference observed in the ANOVA table was because of the significant difference between the mean scores of youth within the ages of 18 to 22 years and those within the ages of 27 to 30 years as well as the difference in the mean scores of youth within the ages of 23 to 26 and 27 to 30 years. From Table 10, it can be seen that the 27 to 30 age group accounted for the significant difference.

## **Discussion**

### **Sexting Behaviours of Participants**

The study found that only few of the respondents sent sexually explicit messages and photos. This was because most of the respondents knew it was not okay to exchange sexually explicit messages and worried that their sexually explicit photos and messages would get to other people. However, most of the respondents revealed that they had received and forwarded sexually explicit messages before. The results generally imply that even though the youth in the Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis were not sending their own explicit messages and photos, they did however receive and forwarded explicit messages and photos. These results send the signal that the respondents were not worried about forwarding explicit photos and messages as long as they were not their own.

The results that respondents received and forwarded explicit messages and photos confirm the findings of Gordon-Messer et al. (2012) that young people in the United States mostly received and forwarded sexually suggestive and explicit messages and photos. In another U.S based online survey among

young adults, Henderson and Morgan (2011), found that most of the young people usually engaged in forwarding of sexually explicit materials using their phones. Brown, Keller and Stern (2009) also found that most students were engaged in sexting activities. Specifically, Brown et al. revealed that most students received sexually suggestive messages and photos and as much as they received, they also forwarded them. These findings coupled with the current study have shown that sexting exists mainly in the form of receiving and forwarding explicit messages and photos.

In addition, Olatunde and Balogun (2017) conducted a study to examine the prevalence, predictors, and associated sexual risk behaviours of sexting among postsecondary school young persons in Ibadan, Nigeria. The result indicated that sexting was prevalent among postsecondary school young persons in Ibadan. Benotsch, Snipes, Martin and Bull (2013) in their study on the public health implications of sexting revealed that forwarding sexually explicit messages was a common activity among young people.

Overall, it is evident that across the literature, young people admitted to receiving and forwarding sexually suggestive and explicit messages and photos. This means the young people were not actually sending their own explicit photos but that of others. For their own explicit photos, they were worried they would be exposed and shamed.

### **Participants' Reasons for Sexting Behaviours**

The study revealed from Table 3 that the major reasons for sexting behaviours among young people included sexting to flirt, to have fun, to initiate sexual activity, to please sexual partner and to be accepted by friends. These results give the indication that for most young people sexting is just a

fun activity that can be a means of getting acceptance into a group of friends. In terms of flirting, it is common that young people use sexually explicit messages to convey their sexual interests and desires to each other. Most social media applications have some graphics such as ‘emojis’ which can connote sexual interests and desires. Also, there are situations where partners may demand for sexually explicit messages and pictures. This is usually an attempt to initiate sexual activity.

The findings confirm the findings of Brown et al. (2009) that the reasons given for sexting include to get noticed, as a form of flirting and as a means to be accepted within a group. Similarly, Makgale and Plattner (2017) investigated sexting behaviours among undergraduate students in Botswana and found that the main reasons for sending sexts were to flirt, to have fun and/or to initiate sexual activity. Del Rey, Ojeda, Casas, Mora-Merchán, and Elipe (2019) also revealed that most young people engaged in sexting because of the need to gain popularity among a group. In Ghana, the study of Ahiataku (2016) revealed that the reasons given for sexting included to get noticed and as a form of sexual gift. These were confirmed in the current study. The similarity among the findings implies that generally young people engage in sexting because it makes them feel a part of a group and also as a form of engaging in sexual flirtation.

### **Measures to Reduce Sexting among Youth**

The study revealed that the measures that can help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis include churches, parents and schools organising prevention programmes on sexting for young people. Other measures were parents monitoring their

children and educators helping young people understand the effects of sexting. These measures when put in place can help ensure that sexting behaviours are reduced among church youth. This is because it appears that most people are not very aware of the depth of the effects of sexting.

The findings support the findings of Lenhart (2009) that parental monitoring of text messages decreased the likelihood that a teenager will send sexually suggestive images through a cell phone. The impact of educating young people on the effects of sexting has also been confirmed by other researchers. For instance, in the United States, there is the proposal to allocate resources for schools to implement education programmes for minors, parents, and school personnel that focus on the short and long-term psychological consequences of sexting to reduce the extent to which sexting is practiced (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Ostrager, 2010).

From the forgoing, educational programmes and monitoring can help reduce sexting behaviours. There are times when people may know that what they are doing is not good but may not know how to deal with such acts. In this sense, education and monitoring can help equip young people with the ability to stay away from sexting acts.

Further, the findings of the current study are in line with the findings of Döring (2014) that sexting prevention messages and educational campaigns can help to a large extent reduce the extent to which young people engage in sexting. Scholes-Balog, Francke and Hemphill (2016) also found that educators, parents, and clinicians can raise awareness on the risks involved in sexting so as to help prevent and reduce the extent to which young people engage in sexting. Since education is a fundamental means of achieving a

change in behaviour, it does not come as a surprise that most of the studies pointed out that educating young people can help reduce the involvement in sexting behaviours.

### **Gender Differences in the Sexting Behaviours of Participants**

The study found that there was a significant difference in sexting behaviours on the basis of gender. The mean score of the males was higher than that of females. Based on the results, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there was a difference in the sexting behaviours of the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender. In other words, males and females had different sexting behaviours. Considering the differences in the mean scores, it can be inferred that sexting behaviours among males was higher than among females. The implication is that males engaged in sexting behaviours more of the time than females.

The gender difference observed could be due to the fact that males are mostly deemed to be more daring regarding sexual issues than females. As a result, males would be more likely to receive and forward sexually explicit materials than females. Females may feel shy or embarrassed while males may feel more comfortable even among their peers to share sexually explicit materials.

The finding of this study confirms the finding of Olatunde and Balogun (2017) that sexting was predominant among post-secondary school individuals in Ibadan and was connected to being male. Thus, males engaged in the act of sexting more than females. The study of Amoadu (2016) also revealed that male college students sent and received more sext than female college students. Several other studies have also indicated that males were

been primary sexters in comparison to females (Henderson & Morgan, 2011; Gordon-Messer, Bauermeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2012). The finding was however in contradiction to other studies which have shown that females practice sexting more when compared to males (Barker, Rizzo, Hancock, Norton, & Brown, 2014; Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, & Bull, 2013; Martinez-Prather & Vandiver, 2014; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). The findings of the study are also in contrast with that of Ahiataku (2016) in Ghana, which showed that females sexted more than males.

Other studies have found no differences in sexting behaviours of students when the students are compared on the basis of their gender (Lenhart, 2009; Temple et al., 2012). The contradictions and inconsistencies among the findings of the various studies could be due to the various geographic locations and methods as well as definitions of Sexting used in the different studies. From the foregoing, it appears that the results in the literature concerning the gender difference in sexting behaviours among young people are inconsistent. This inconsistency implies that a lot more research needs to be considered on this subject.

#### **Level of Education Differences in the Sexting Behaviours of Participants**

The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their educational qualifications. The probability value (p-value) was less than .05 significant level and as such the null hypothesis is rejected. The results imply that there was a difference in the sexting behaviours of the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of educational qualification. This means that the sexting behaviours of youth with JHS, SHS

and tertiary education were different. The significant difference was attributed to the tertiary education group.

The findings regarding educational level difference is because, educational level usually correlates with some level of curiosity and exploration. Thus, the more educated students are, the more likely they are to be curious and exploratory about sexual issues. Also, individuals with high level of education are more likely to be technologically oriented than people with low level of education. This means that individuals with high level of education would probably be engaged in sexting than individuals with low level of education.

The findings of the current study support the findings of Martinez-Prather and Vandiver (2014) which showed that the level of education of young people will influence their tendency to engage in sexting behaviours. Patchin and Hinduja (2019) also found that rates of asking for, being asked for, and sharing of sexts were influenced by educational level of young people. For instance, when people enter colleges they are more likely to engage in several risky sexual behaviours such as engaging in sexting.

#### **Age Differences in the Sexting Behaviours of Participants**

Finally, the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their ages. The probability value (p-value) of .000 was less than .05 significant level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was inferred that the youth varied in their sexting behaviours on the basis of their ages. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference observed in the ANOVA was because of the significant difference between the mean scores of

youth within the ages of 18 to 22 years and those within the ages of 27 to 30 years. It was realized after the post-hoc analysis that the 27 to 30 age group significantly accounted for the differences.

Age difference was observed because as people grow older, they tend to be more adventurous. This means sexual acts which young people may not be able to do may be possible for older people. This is why the difference was mainly attributed to the individuals between the 27 to 30 years group.

The findings of the current study are in line with the findings of Barrense-Dias et al. (2017) whose investigations were on age, gender, race, sexual behaviour, romantic relationships and risky behaviours. The study found that indeed these demographic factors play major role in sexting behaviours. The import of this finding is that age as a demographic variable is of significance in the sexting behaviours of young people. Madigan, Ly, Rash and Ouytsel (2018) also revealed that engaging in sexting was a function of age. Thus, the prevalence of sexting increased as youth age. By implication, engaging in sexting behaviours differed by age.

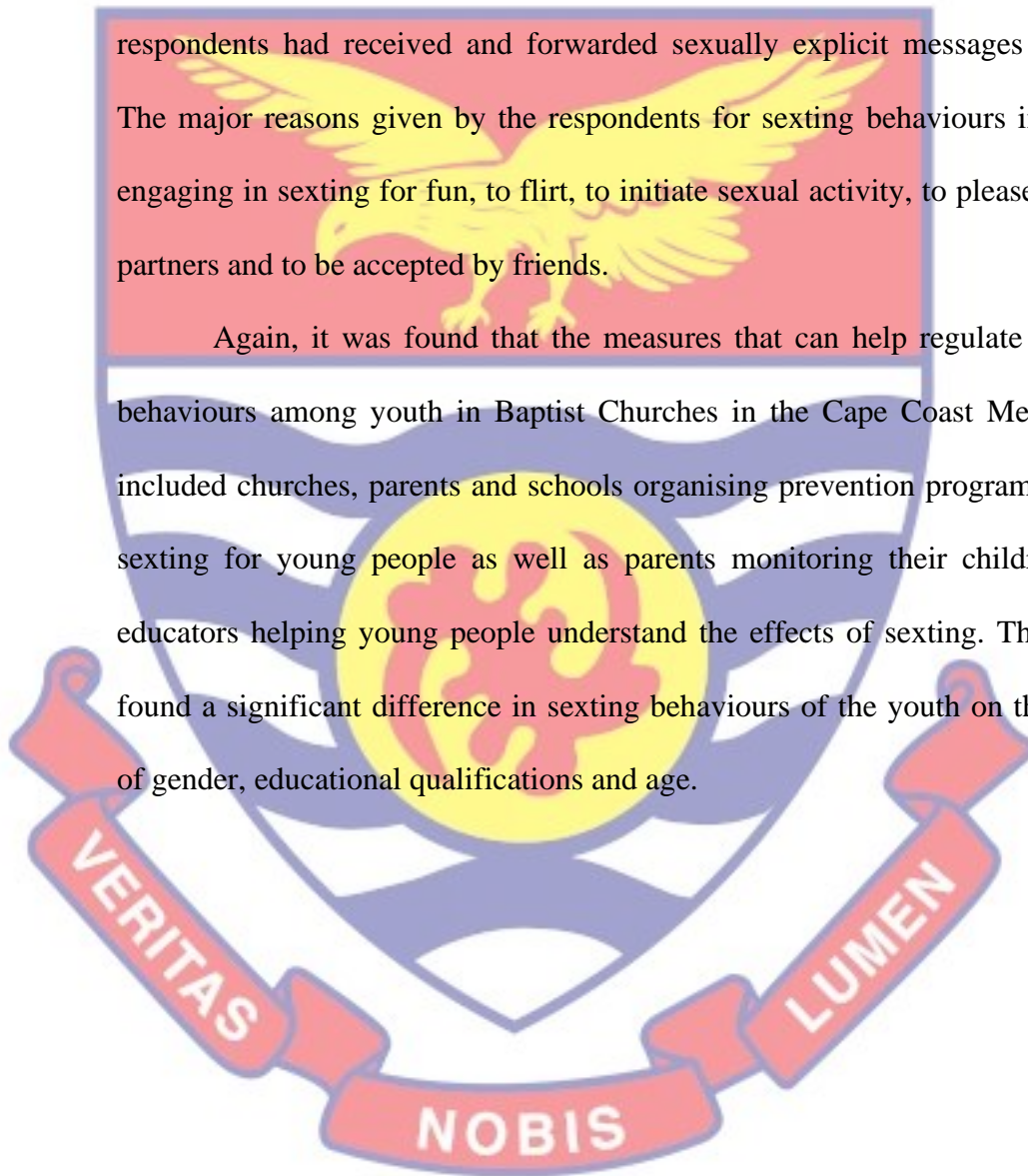
Döring (2014) also revealed after a meta-analysis on sexting prevalence (17 studies) that sexting is very common among adults compared to young people with increasing prevalence as the individuals grow older. In the same vein, Baiden, Amankwah and Owusu (2020) conducted a survey among high school students in Tema who were selected at random and revealed that students aged greater than 16years were more likely to be involved in sexting. Thus, as the students grew older, they engaged more in sexting behaviours. The implication of all these studies is that engaging in sexting behaviours was a function of age.



## Chapter Summary

This chapter dealt with the results and discussion of the study. The results were presented before the discussion. The discussion focused on how the findings of the current study related to the larger conversation in the literature. In terms of the findings, the study revealed that most of the respondents had received and forwarded sexually explicit messages before. The major reasons given by the respondents for sexting behaviours included engaging in sexting for fun, to flirt, to initiate sexual activity, to please sexual partners and to be accepted by friends.

Again, it was found that the measures that can help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis included churches, parents and schools organising prevention programmes on sexting for young people as well as parents monitoring their children and educators helping young people understand the effects of sexting. The study found a significant difference in sexting behaviours of the youth on the basis of gender, educational qualifications and age.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

This is the final chapter of the study. The chapter serves as the executive summary of the entire dissertation. The first part is captured as the summary. This section provides an overview of the study. The second section discusses the conclusions emanating from the findings under each of the specific objectives. The recommendation section reports the suggestions from the study based on the findings and the conclusions. Implications for counselling are also given in this chapter. Finally, the chapter discusses suggestions for further studies which emerged from the study.

#### **Summary**

The primary focus of the study was to examine sexting behaviours among youth in the Baptist churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Sexting is gradually becoming risky to the youth the world over. It has been observed that the growing trend of technology and the desire of young people to explore and experiment with sexual activity is increasing at an alarming rate. In view of this, the current study sought to investigate the canker of sexting from the youth in the church – Baptist churches in the Cape Coast metropolis. The study sought to answer three research questions and test three hypotheses.

#### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis engage in sexting behaviours?

2. What reasons do youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis give for engaging in sexting behaviours?
3. What measures are available to guide and regulate sexting among youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

#### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches in Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches in Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of level of education.
3. There is no significant difference in sexting behaviours among the youth in Baptist Churches in Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of age.

The study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of all youth in the Baptist Churches within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Through the help of random and purposive random sampling techniques a total sample of 244 youth was selected from all the four Baptist churches within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Questionnaire was used in collecting the data for the study. The data was analysed using frequencies and percentages, independent samples t-test and One-Way ANOVA.

## Key Findings

The study found that only few of the respondents sent sexually explicit messages and photos. This was because most of the respondents knew it was not okay to exchange sexually explicit messages and worried that their sexually explicit photos and messages would get to other people. However, most of the respondents revealed that they had received and forwarded sexually explicit messages before.

The study revealed again that the major reasons for sexting behaviours among young people included engaging in sexting to flirt, for fun, to initiate sexual activity, please sexual partners and to be accepted as friends.

In addition, the study found that the measures that can help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis include churches, parents and schools organising prevention programmes on sexting for young people. Other measures were parents monitoring their children and educators helping young people understand the effects of sexting.

Further, the study found that there was a significant difference in sexting behaviours of the youth on the basis of gender. The mean score of the males was higher than that of females. Based on the results, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their educational qualifications. The difference observed was because of the significant difference between the mean scores of youth with SHS level of education and those with tertiary level of education.

Finally, the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the sexting behaviours of youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of their ages. The post-hoc analysis showed that the difference observed in the ANOVA was because of the significant difference between the mean scores of youth within the ages of 18 to 22 years and those within the ages of 27 to 30 years.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were arrived at:

It can be concluded that few of the youth were involved in sexting in the Church; generally the youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis were not sending their own explicit messages and photos. However, they received explicit messages and photos and forwarded same. This is based on the assumption that the youth have adhere to the Biblical faith and practice and believe that it is wrong to engaged in such practice, also worry about the consequences involved if their sexually explicit messages and photos gets to others. This conclusion confirms what is common in Ghana where most young people do not have problem forwarding explicit photos and messages as long as they are not their own.

It is also concluded that the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis believe that young people engaged in sexting behaviours for flirting, fun, initiating sexual activity, pleasing partners and gaining acceptance into friendship cliques. In connection to the literature, the conclusion is understandable because sexting is used as a tool by young people to engage in sexual conversations.

In addition, it is concluded that the measures that can help regulate sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis mainly revolve around helping them to acquiring knowledge about the consequence of sexting behaviours and the skills to resist the temptation of conforming to sexting behaviours in their environments. This can be carried out by church leadership and parents to serve as a preventative approach.

Further, it is concluded that males and females differ in their sexting behaviours. From this study, it is evident that males have more sexting tendencies than females. Thus, males prefer to engage in sexual conversations using sexting. There is also a difference in the sexting behaviours of the youth in Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis on the basis of educational qualification. Mainly, youth with SHS level of education and those with tertiary level of education varied in their sexting behaviours. Since sexting requires some level of control over the English language as well as technological knowledge, it doesn't come as a surprise that setting behaviours varied on the basis of educational qualification.

Finally, it is concluded that the youth in Baptist Churches in the Cape Coast Metropolis have different sexting behaviours on the basis of their ages. Young people within the ages of 18 to 22 years and those within the ages of 27 to 30 years had varied sexting behaviours. As people grow, they tend to want to be more sexually adventurous and as such confirming the conclusion that sexting behaviours vary on the basis of age.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. The youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis should be educated by the Church leadership on the consequences of receive and forwarding explicit messages and photos even when they are not their own.
2. The youth in the Baptist Churches of the Ghana Baptist Convention in the Cape Coast Metropolis should be educated by the Church leadership on how to overcome peer influence to engage in sexting since the reasons for engaging in sexting behaviours revolved around friendships.
3. Baptist Church leaders should put in measures to incorporate sexting education in their outreach programmes for youth members, particularly those in school. This is important because almost all the respondents were students and sexting behaviours varied in terms of education.
4. Baptist Church leaders should plan sexual education programmes which should concentrate more on males since it was found that they had more sexting tendencies than females.
5. Baptist Church leaders should plan counselling programmes for people of different age groups with the focus of reducing sexting behaviours, particularly among older youth church members.
6. Government should in consultation with telecom networks regulate content that can be sent on phones. This can be done by restricting the

sending of sexually explicit materials. This can help deal with the menace of sexting among young people.

### **Implications for Counselling**

The following implications are given for counselling:

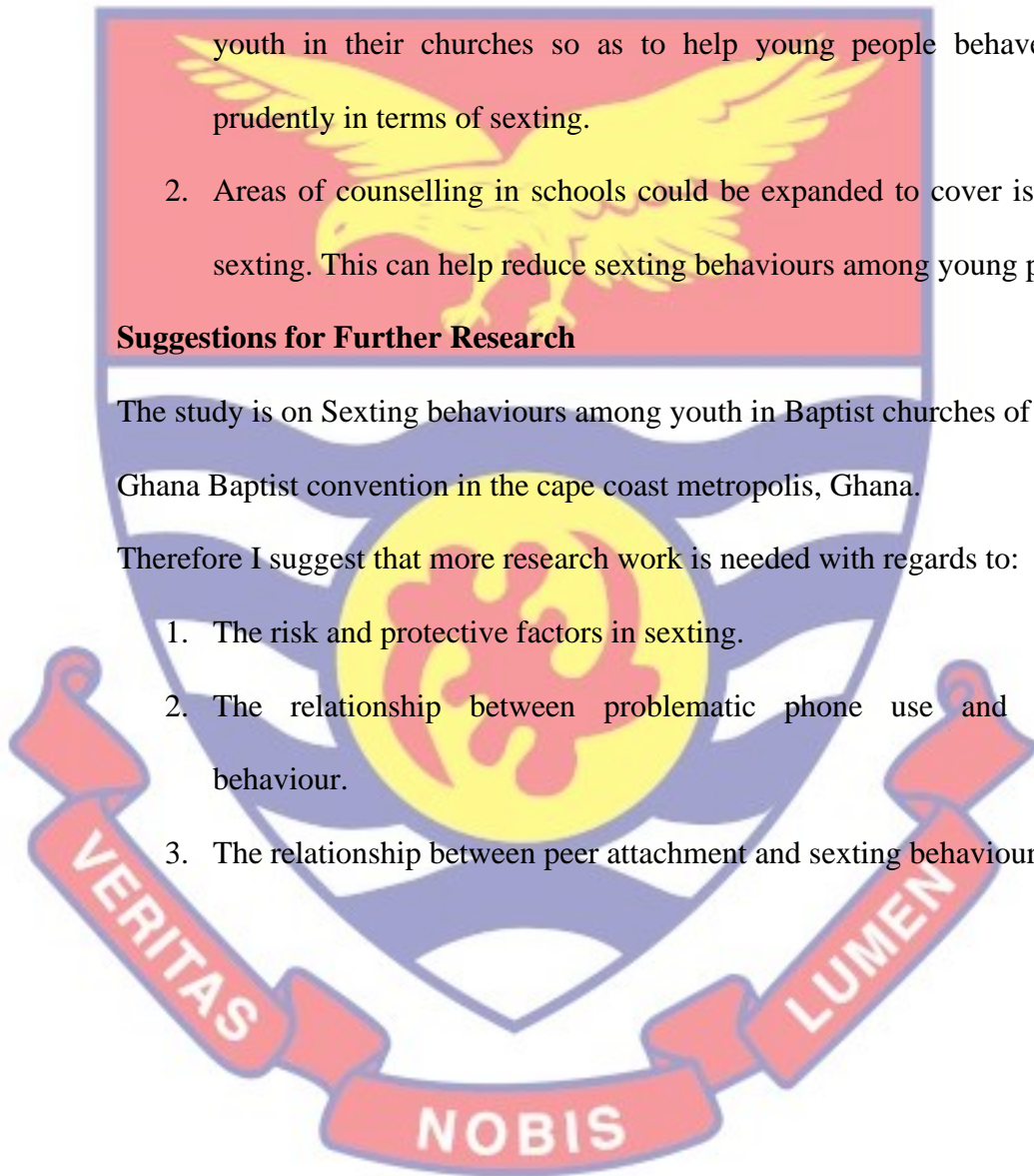
1. Church counsellors will be more proactive and focus more on the youth in their churches so as to help young people behave more prudently in terms of sexting.
2. Areas of counselling in schools could be expanded to cover issues of sexting. This can help reduce sexting behaviours among young people.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The study is on Sexting behaviours among youth in Baptist churches of the Ghana Baptist convention in the cape coast metropolis, Ghana.

Therefore I suggest that more research work is needed with regards to:

1. The risk and protective factors in sexting.
2. The relationship between problematic phone use and sexting behaviour.
3. The relationship between peer attachment and sexting behaviour.





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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

SEXTING MOTIVATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire seeks to solicit your opinion on a research study about “Sexting” among church-going youth in the Cape Coast metropolis. The findings will contribute to gaining a holistic perspective on sexting as well as provide some guidance for youth in their effort to gain knowledge and techniques to curb the negative effects of sexting behaviours.

Answers provided in this questionnaire will be treated with confidentiality and no identifying information will be requested from you. This study is also guided by relevant ethical standards of research. Your honest responses and feedback to this questionnaire will be highly appreciated. Thank you.

**SECTION A**

**Demographic Information (Please tick only one option)**

1. What is your gender? Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. Age: 18-22 [ ] 23-26 [ ] 27-30 [ ]
3. Level of education: JHS [ ] SHS [ ] Tertiary [ ]



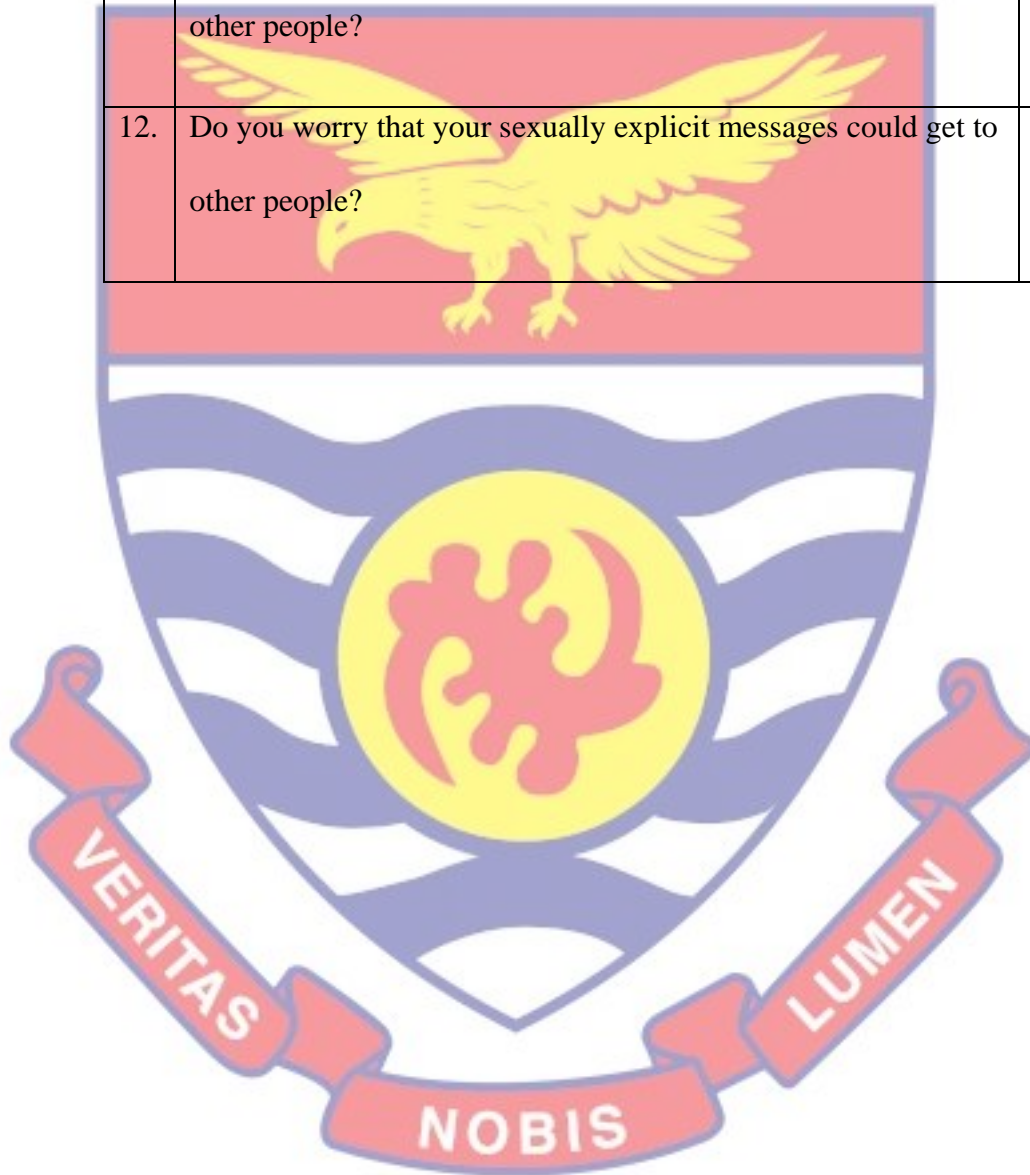
**SECTION B**

Sexting means receiving and/or sending *sexually explicit* text messages and/or photographs through a cell phone. *Sexually explicit* means displaying sexually-informed subject matter for the purpose of sexual arousal. Sexual messages could be any digital materials that portray sexual intentions.

Please indicate with (√ ) which of the following statements reflects your opinion.

No	Statement	Yes	No
1.	As far as you are aware, do youth in your church exchange sexually explicit photos?		
2.	As far as you are aware, do youth in your church exchange sexually explicit messages?		
3.	Have you ever sent sexually explicit photos?		
4.	Have you ever received sexually explicit photos?		
5.	Have you ever forward sexually explicit photos?		
6.	Have you ever sent sexually explicit messages?		
7.	Have you ever received sexually explicit messages?		
8.	Have you ever forward sexually explicit messages?		
9.	Do you think it is ok to receive photos that contain sexual references?		

No	Statement	Yes	No
10	Do you think it is ok to receive messages that contain sexual references?		
11.	Do you worry that your sexually explicit photos could get to other people?		
12.	Do you worry that your sexually explicit messages could get to other people?		



**SECTION C**

There are many reasons why people send sexually-explicit messages and photos. Please indicate with (√) which of the following statements reflects your opinion.

Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Unsure (U); Agree (A); and Strongly

Agree (SA)

No	Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
<b>Sexually-explicit materials are sent</b>						
1	... as a way to express ourselves					
2	.... to feel attractive					
3	...to initiate sexual activity					
4	...just to have fun					
5	...to flirt					
6	...I don't know why I do it					
7	...to be accepted by our friends					
8	...out of curiosity					
9	...to please sexual partner					
10	...as a safe sexual activity than actual sex					

**SECTION D**

Please indicate with (√) which of the following statements do you think could provide a solution or reduce sexting behaviours in youth.

Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree (D); Unsure (U); Agree (A); and Strongly Agree (SA)

No	Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
1.	The government should make a law against sexting to punish offenders					
2.	A rehabilitation center should be built by the church to help offenders					
3.	The government should build rehabilitation centers to help offenders					
4.	Educators should provide programs that help people understand the effects of sexting behaviours					
5.	Parents should monitor youth and their use of digital devices					
6.	Schools and colleges should adopt anti-sexting policies on campuses					
7.	Government should work with parents to do prevention programs					

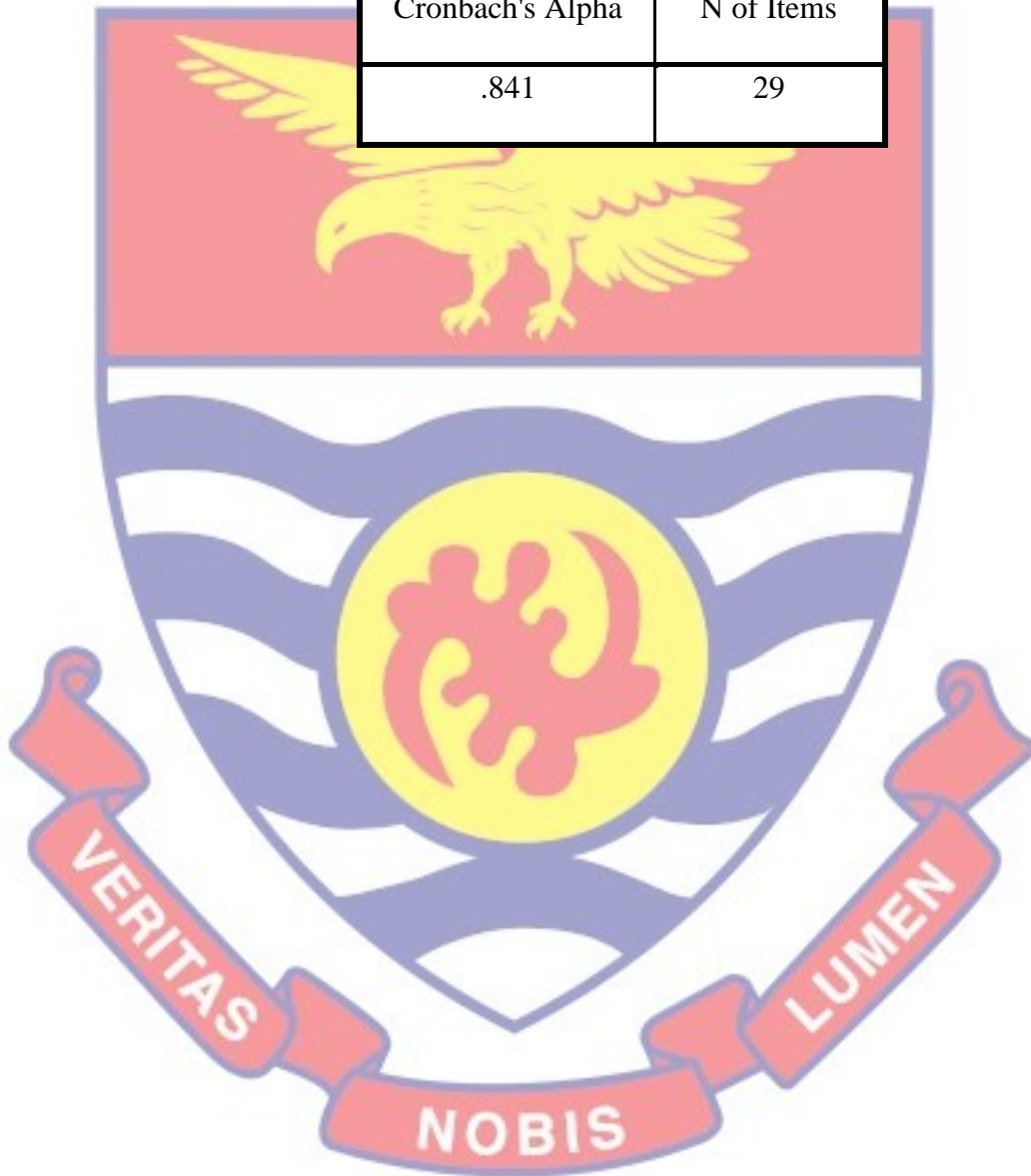
No	Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
8.	Schools and colleges should work with parents to organize prevention programs					
9.	Churches and parents should come together to find prevention programs to help the youth					
10.	Government, parents, churches, and schools should work together to find solutions to sexting behaviours in youth					



APPENDIX B  
RELIABILITY OUTPUT

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.841	29



APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS  
**DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

Telephone: 0332091854  
Email: [dgc@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:dgc@ucc.edu.gh)

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA



Our Ref: DGC/L.2/VOL.1/ 10

4<sup>th</sup> June, 2018

Your Ref:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

We introduce to you, Clement B. Atuhene a student pursuing an M.Phil Programme in Guidance and Counselling at the Department of Guidance and Counselling of the University of Cape Coast. As a requirement, he is to submit a Thesis on the topic: *"The Prevalence of Sexting Behaviour Among Church-going Youth in the Cape Coast Metropolis: Implications for Counsellors and Clergy"*. We are by this letter affirming that, the information he will obtain from your institution will be solely used for academic purposes.

We would be most grateful if you could provide him the necessary assistance.

Thank you.

Dr. Bakari Yusuf Dramanu  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE  
CAPE COAST, GHANA



Our Ref: CES-ERB/UCC.edu/V2/18-23  
Your Ref: .....

Date: May 28, 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairman, CES-ERB  
Prof. J. A. Omotosho  
[jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh)  
0243784739

Vice-Chairman, CES-ERB  
Prof. K. Edjah  
[kedjah@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:kedjah@ucc.edu.gh)  
0244742357

Secretary, CES-ERB  
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde  
[lforde@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:lforde@ucc.edu.gh)  
0244786680

The bearer, Clement B. Atuhene, Reg. No ED/GCP/16/0012 is an M.Phil. /Ph.D. student in the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He /~~She~~ wishes to undertake a research study on the topic:

Prevalence of sexting behaviour among church-going youth in the Cape Coast Metropolis

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies (CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirm that the proposal satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said research.

Thank you.  
Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde  
(Secretary, CES-ERB)