

**Sexting and High Sexual Risk-Taking Behaviors among High School  
Adolescents: Lemi Kura Sub-city, A.A.**

**By: Henok Mulugeta**

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**DEPARTMENT OF COUNSLING PSYCHOLOGY**

**Advisor's Approval Sheet**

I hereby certify that the research report entitled "Sexting and High risk taking behaviour among High school students Lami Kura Subcity, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2025" has been developed by Henok Mulugeta as part of his Master of Arts in counselling psychology at addis ababa University.

The thesis was developed under my supervision and the student has successfully fulfilled the requirements for the final thesis. I hereby approve the submission of the research report to the Department of counselling psychology.

**Name of Approval board committee**

\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

Internal examiner	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

External examiner	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

Chair person, Department of Graduate committee	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____

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## Acronyms

AACA.....	Addis Ababa City Administration
AIDS.....	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AAU.....	Addis Ababa University
HIV .....	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MOH.....	Ministry of Health
STI.....	Sexually Transmitted infection
STD.....	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO.....	World Health Organization

## **Abstract**

The study examines the prevalence, cause, and consequence of sexting and high sexual risk-taking behavior among high school students in Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa. With the rapid spread of digital technology and social media, the communication and sexual experimentation of adolescents has been transformed in a manner that invokes concern about associated health and psychological vulnerability. The study used a descriptive mixed-method design with structured interviews and questionnaires among a sample of 2427 selected students whose age range is 14-19 using probability sampling. Data analysis using SPSS version 25 identified that social media websites extensive impacts on sexting behaviors, with Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube being major players. The study established a positive correlation between sexting and sexual risk behavior, alcohol and substance abuse, and negative mental health outcomes like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Furthermore, sexting was also observed to have effects on long-term sexual attitudes and emotional well-being, with common results of shame and emotional distress in adulthood. The results demand the pressing need for comprehensive interventions through digital literacy, mental health services, and culturally sensitive sexual education to mitigate risks and foster healthy adolescent development. The findings of the study have implications for the need for concerted efforts among health practitioners, parents, educators, and policymakers in mounting comprehensive programs that address the multifaceted nature of adolescents' sexual and online lives in Ethiopia.

**Key words:** sexting, adolescent risk behaviors, social media impact, teenagers in high school, digital literacy and sexual health education.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Adolescence is a period of physical, psychological, and social development between childhood and adulthood which is associated with a range of changes in behavior, emotion, and cognition (Knapp & Hall, 2010). The onset of adolescence is marked by the onset of puberty and can vary in timing across countries and cultures (Rutter, Pickles, Murray, & Eaves, 2001). During this time, adolescents are faced with a variety of challenges as they develop into young adults, and their behavior, emotions, and cognitions are greatly influenced by many factors (Lerner, Steinberg, & Phelps, 2005). Adolescence is a period of rapid physical development. Pubertal changes can begin as early as eight or nine years old and continue until the late teens or early twenties (Lerner, Steinberg, & Phelps, 2005). During this time, adolescents experience changes in body shape, size, and composition, as well as increases in strength and stamina (Knapp & Hall, 2010). These physical changes are accompanied by changes in hormone levels, which can affect behavior and emotion.

Adolescence is also a period of psychological development which includes changes in cognitive abilities, social behavior, and emotion regulation (Knapp & Hall, 2010). Cognitive changes during adolescence include improvements in executive functioning, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and planning (Lerner, Steinberg, & Phelps, 2005). These changes are accompanied by social and emotional developments, such as increased sensitivity to peers, increased risk-taking behavior, and the development of romantic relationships (Knapp & Hall, 2010). Adolescence is a social stage of development which involves changes in peer relationships, family dynamics, and the development of social networks (Knapp & Hall, 2010).

Adolescents are faced with the challenge of forming and maintaining relationships with peers and family members, while also negotiating their own identity within these social structures (Lerner, Steinberg, & Phelps, 2005). Adolescents are also exposed to a range of social influences, such as media, peers, and family, which can affect their behavior and decision-making (Rutter, Pickles, Murray, & Eaves, 2001). Adolescence is a critical period of development that can significantly influence an individual's future. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence adolescent behavior, emotion, and cognition, and to provide resources that can support adolescents during this time.

Regarding to the actual age of adolescence particularly when it begins and where it ends, theorists and other social science researchers holds different views. For example According to Arnett, adolescence mostly ends around 18, transitioning into emerging adulthood (typically ages 18–25), characterized by identity exploration and independence delays (Arnett Jeffrey Jensen. 2007). Whereas, world Health Organizations describes adolescence as Adolescents are individuals in the 10–19 years age group. However, in contrast to the above even though theorists hold different views regarding to adolescence actual age, almost all researchers used common term to describe adolescence stage as a period of developmental and transition between childhood and adulthood (Stenberg, 2011).

The phenomenon of sending/receiving sexual images has become a part of young people's lives due to the rise in use of mobile phones and in particular smart phones enabling the exchange of images (Willard, 2010). The sending/receiving of sexual images has commonly and problematically been referred to as 'sexting' and has attracted 'considerable legal, political, public, media and academic attention' (Lee & Crofts, 2015). It has been defined as the 'exchange of sexual messages or images' (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, Olafsson, & with members of the

EU Kids Online Network, 2011) and ‘the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images’ (Lenhart, 2009) through mobile phones or the internet. It is described in the Oxford English dictionary as ‘The action or practice of sending or exchanging sexually explicit or suggestive messages or images electronically, esp. using a mobile phone’ (OED online, 2015).

Adolescents today are adopting new digital technologies almost as quickly as they are being introduced. They consider different forms of technologies such as mobile phones, internet and social media to be an integral and essential part of their lives (Consumer Electronics Association, 2008). Technology has altered the way teenagers communicate and interact with their peers.

Approximately 78% of teenagers own cell phones and use them for text messaging. Research shows Mobile phone owners ages 12–18 are the most frequent users of text messaging, sending and receiving an average of 3,705 texts per month (Nielsen Company, 2009). This form of interaction among teens ranks higher among 12–18 year olds than talking face-to-face (Lenhart, 2009). In a typical day, 46% of 12–18 year olds report sending text messages on a cell phone (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). They also found out that Girls reported slightly more texting than boys. In many instances, the use of sexting is a part of this form of communication.

Sexting is the act of sending and/or receiving of sexually suggestive images or messages to peers through a cell phone (Mitchell, Finkelhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012). Though relatively new, this behavior has gained national attention as a very serious problem among the adolescents. The danger involved with sexting is that private material can be exchanged and widely propagated, and the originator has no control over who receives and views the message or photograph. Sexting occurs when sexually suggestive text messages (SSTMs) or naked or semi-naked images (NSNIs) are created and sent via digital media. As today’s cell phones (mostly

“smartphones”) are linked to cameras and the Internet, their ease of use in sexting has been highlighted (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). The self-created, sexually provocative image is generally what constitutes the central and most controversial feature of youth sexting. In a 2008 online survey of 653 teenagers (age 13-19 years) in United States was conducted. 20% of these teenagers admitted to sending or posting nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves, and 38% of teens admitted to sending or posting sexually suggestive messages (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2008). Similar results were reported in an online survey conducted by Music Television (MTV) and the Associated Press (AP) of 1,247 teenagers (age 14-24) (MTV-AP, 2009). Twenty-four percent of 14-17 year old teenagers reported being involved in some type of naked sexting, and 29% of respondents reported receiving sexually suggestive messages (MTV-AP, 2009). These data revealed that a substantial proportion of teens were engaging in sexting.

Young people’s use of mobile phones has been seen to expand dramatically in Africa over the last decade in both urban and rural contexts (Nyamnjoh & Brinkman, 2009). For instance, cell phone ownership in South Africa used to be the domain of the privileged, today it is essential to adolescent culture and communication across all social groups (Bosch, 2011). According to the UNICEF report of 2012, South Africa teenagers and youth are the first adopters of mobile technology, with 72% of 15-24 year olds owning a cell phone. Local media sources have reported anecdotal incidents of sexting among South Africa youth; however, the lack of Afro-centric research compels them to use international statistics to contextualize the issue. Research done by UNICEF (2012) found that the primary risks facing South Africa adolescents are talking to and meeting strangers, cyber bullying, and sexting among others. Their report calls for urgent legislation and programs in information and communication technology development and

education, to meet the needs of South Africa's newly connected digital citizens (Beger, Sinha, & Pawelczyk, 2012). Considering the above trends of increased sexual activity and prolific cell phone usage among adolescents, it is likely that sexting affects young people across population groups in South Africa.

Risky sexual behavior is defined as the behavior that increases the susceptibility of an individual to problems related to sexuality and reproductive health, which include having sex at an early age, having multiple sexual partners, having sex while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and unprotected sexual behaviors.

One-third of the world's population is the youth population, who are the productive force. Eighty-five percent of this population live in developing countries, and around 25% of this population are found in Sub-Saharan Africa; Ethiopia has 11% adolescent and 20% youth people from the total population, and the majority are students of different education levels.

The magnitude of risky sexual practice was 14.7% among Jiga preparatory and high school students, 30.5% in private college students in Mekelle town, and 83.5% among Axum, Shire campus, university students. In spite of an increased risky sexual behavior of the students, low attention is given to them (Gebreslasie F, Tsadik M, Berhane (2017)). Higher rates of unintended pregnancy, abortion, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections among adolescents make it crucial for a need to understand and assess the factors that are associated with sexting. Therefore, the main aim of this study was to determine the sexting and high risk sexual risk taking behavior among high school adolescents in Lemikura sub-city, Addis Ababa.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Adolescent sexual development and quickly changing digital technologies have combined to produce a complex risk environment for today's adolescents. Significant public health, psychological, and legal issues are raised by two intertwined phenomena: high sexual risk-taking behavior (including unprotected sex, multiple partners, sex while under the influence of drugs, etc.) and sexting (the sending and receiving of sexually explicit messages, images, or videos via digital devices). Researchers, physicians, educators, and politicians must give these behaviors immediate attention since, despite their differences, they commonly co-occur, share overlapping risk factors, and have negative effects.

Studies repeatedly show that sexting is prevalent among teenagers and young adults, although prevalence varies greatly based on definitions and age groups. Up to 70% of teenagers may have received a sext, and 15% to 40% are estimated to have sent one (Madigan et al., 2018; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2014). Non-consensual sexting, which includes coercing someone into sexting, publishing received photographs without consent, and making deepfakes, exacerbates the issue. This happens far too often (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020).

Importantly, studies show a strong correlation between high-risk sexual behaviors and sexting. Teens who sext have a markedly increased likelihood of reporting:

Multiple sexual partners: Having more than one sexual partner in a specific period of time (Benotsch , 2013); early sexual debut: Starting sexual activity at a younger age (Temple et al., 2014). Inconsistent or nonexistent use of condoms and other forms of birth control is known as unprotected sex (Temple & Choi, 2014). History of STIs/Unintended Pregnancy Increased incidence of STIs and unintended pregnancies (Temple et al., 2014); Substance usage during sex: Using drugs or alcohol prior to or during sexual activity (Dir et al., 2013).

This relationship implies common underlying contexts and weaknesses. Teenagers who are already prone to sensation-seeking and impulsivity may find that sexting serves as a gateway, normalizes sexualized communication, or helps them connect with individuals who support risk-taking (Van Ouytsel et al., 2018).relational, technical, and social elements. Identity exploration, increased sensation-seeking, impulsivity, and vulnerability to peer pressure are characteristics of adolescence. According to Steinberg (2008), the prefrontal cortex, which governs judgment and impulse control, is still growing. Youth at this neurodevelopmental stage are especially susceptible to the social pressures and instant gratification that come with hazardous sex and sexting.

The influence of peers and normative beliefs: Behavior is greatly influenced by perceived peer standards. Regardless of their own comfort level, young people are more likely to engage in sexting if they think "everyone is sexting" or that it is expected in romantic relationships (Dir et al., 2013). There are comparable pressures on sexual behavior.Social media sites and smart phones enable continuous communication and real-time sharing. Disappearing communications are one feature that might give users a false impression of privacy and security. The likelihood of non-consensual distribution (cyber exploitation) is significantly increased by the ease of sharing and virality potential (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020). Additionally, technology can let people connect with riskier or casual partners (e.g., dating/hookup apps).

Sexting frequently takes place in romantic or dating settings, either as a means of sustaining intimacy or as a prelude to physical intimacy. But it can also happen when partners put pressure on . Control or pressure-based unhealthy relationship dynamics can easily lead to risks of both offline (sexual coercion) and online (sexting coercion) coercion (Drouin M., 2013).

Vulnerability to hazardous sexual behaviors (self-medication, risk-taking) and sexting (seeking validation) can be exacerbated by underlying conditions such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and a negative body image. One important predictor is a general inclination toward impulsivity and risk-taking (Temple J.R& Choi, 2014).

According to Klettke,B.,Hallford,D.J & Mellor (2014), many teenagers do not receive enough instruction on digital citizenship, healthy online relationships, the legal repercussions of sexting (including possible child pornography charges), or comprehensive sexual health education that covers consent, communication, contraception, and STI prevention.

According to Wolak and Finkelhor (2011), victims of non-consensual sext sharing ("revengeporn," cyber exploitation) suffer from severe psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, shame, humiliation, suicidal ideation, and social isolation. These effects can be severe and long-lasting, particularly when sexting is connected to high-risk sexual behavior. Managing one's "digital reputation" following a sext leak is extremely stressful.Risky sexual behavior is also associated with anxiety and depression.

Higher rates of STIs, including HIV, and unwanted pregnancies are directly linked to high-risk sexual behavior, which can have an effect on life paths and long-term health (CDC, 2021).

**Social and Relational Damage** Sext leaks can result in ostracization, bullying, harassment, strained friendships, and family strife. It is possible for relationships to lose trust. Relationship tension and regret can also result from risky sexual behavior. In most jurisdictions, it is against the law to produce, own, or distribute sexually explicit images of minors, even if they are self-made. Regardless of their intention or consent, adolescents maybe charged with felonies, registered as sex offenders, and face lifelong repercussions (Wolak . 2012).

sexting incidents may result in suspension or expulsion from school as well as future challenges finding work or getting accepted to college. Developmental vulnerabilities, peer and media influences, and a lack of education and support are the common causes of sexting and high sexual risk-taking behavior among adolescents and young adults. The likelihood of serious psychological distress, bodily harm, legal risk, and social harm is greatly increased by their convergence. Digital literacy, comprehensive sexuality education that emphasizes consent and healthy relationships, mental health support, legal system reforms that prioritize rehabilitation over severe punishment for minors, and proactive efforts to change negative societal norms surrounding technology use and sexuality are all necessary components of a multifaceted, developmentally sensitive approach to solving this complex issue. Ignoring this connection causes avoidable harm to a generation navigating a sexually and digitally complex environment. According to the study conducted by Dawit (2015) at Addis Ababa in Gulele Sub-city high schools, 72.5% teenage students reported that they had sexting and watched sex movies including pornography and the study also indicated that adolescents who frequently watched pornography were attracted to initiate sexual intercourse at early age more than those not exposed.

Despite the fact, as sexting has changed the behaviours and patterns of young male and female students, there are limited studies conducted so far on the prevalence and the effects of sexting and high sexual risk taking behavior at high school students in Ethiopia in general and at Addis Ababa on youth male and female student in particular. As a result, this study is intended to fill the gap in understanding the sexting and high sexual risk taking behavior among high school adolescents in the case of lemi kura subcity Addis Ababa.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. Do Adolescents' use of various social media sites affect sexting behavior and perceived risk?
2. How do privacy perceptions and likelihood of consequences of sexting affect adolescents' sexual decision-making in schools?
3. What is the correlation between sexting behaviors and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among school adolescents?
4. What are the correlations between sexting and mental health outcomes, i.e., anxiety, depression, and self-esteem among school adolescents?
5. What are the long-term effects of sexting on sexual behaviors and mental health when adolescent age into adulthood?

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

#### **1.4 General Objectives**

The overall objective of the study is to investigate sexting and high sexual risk-taking among high schools adolescents: the case of Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa

#### **1.4.1 Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the influence of adolescents' use of various social media platforms on their sexting behavior and perceived sexual risk.
2. To assess how adolescents' perceptions of privacy and awareness of potential consequences impact their sexual decision-making within school environments.
3. To analyze the correlation between sexting behaviors and high sexual risk-taking practices among high school adolescents.

4. To investigate the relationship between sexting behaviors and mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and self-esteem.
5. To explore the long-term implications of adolescent sexting on future sexual behavior and mental health into adulthood.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Research plays an important role in enabling effective decision-making, planning, and strategic management in organizations. Without empirical research grounded on facts and careful analysis, program implementation and policy-making can become unrealistic or even counterproductive. The present study aims to contribute significantly in the following manners:

- ✓ The study will provide evidence-based data on the extent and effects of sexting and risky sexual behavior among high school students in preparatory schools in Lemikura Sub-city.
- ✓ Through providing information about the participation of adolescents in sexting and risk-taking, the study will inform policymakers, educators, and community leaders about the critical areas of concern and intervention.
- ✓ The aim of this study is to raise awareness among parents, teachers, and school administrators about the prevalence of such activity, emphasizing the significance of preventive interventions and education programs targeting safer sexual practices.
- ✓ The research will provide evidence-based interventions and best practices for schools and local authorities to minimize the dangers of sexting and risky sexual behavior. The research will also identify potential barriers that may hinder intervention programs from achieving their objectives.

- ✓ Finally, the study will provide a source of further scholarly inquiry into adolescent teen sexting and sexual risk-taking behaviors to inform the broader field of adolescent development and public health.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The focus of this research is to examine sexting and high sexual risk-taking among students enrolled in high schools in Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.

## **1.7. Operational Definitions**

1. **Sexting:** The sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos, typically by phone or social media, but sometimes involving children and involving elements to address consent, privacy, and risks involved with digital sexuality. Drouin, M., & Tobin, E. (2014).

2. **Risk-taking Sexual Behaviors:** Conduct or activity that increases the risk for negative sexual health outcomes, such as sexually transmitted disease (STD), unwanted pregnancy, or emotional injury. These may be unprotected sex, large numbers of sex partners, or early age of sex Miller, K. S., & Forehand, R. (2006).

3. **Adolescents:** in this study it indicates students of high school who are attending their regular class found at age category of 14-19.

4. **High Schools:** Organizations of education that typically provide education for students in their upper years of secondary school, generally educating 9th through 12th graders.

5. **Lemi Kura Sub-city:** A specific administrative sub-city of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. The sub-city may have varying socio-cultural and economic characteristics influencing its youth population's attitudes and behaviors Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2. Definition, Nature and Trends in Sexting**

Adolescence is a critical development stage marking the onset of the transition from childhood to adulthood, typically between the ages of 10 and 19. It is a time of tremendous physical, emotional, psychological, social, and mental change. Understanding about the stages of adolescent development is essential to address the unique problems as well as opportunities faced during this age.

##### **2.1. Stages of Adolescent Development**

###### **Early Adolescence (Ages 10-13)**

It is a time of the onset of puberty, which brings comprehensive body changes and hormonal shifts. They inform drives, motivations, and social behavior (Salmela-Aro, 2011; Blakemore et al., 2010). During this age, adolescents begin to undergo a process of brain reorganization, with the development of the sub cortical areas preceding the prefrontal cortex. This could lead to increased risk-taking behavior due to immature brain development (Konrad K., Firk, C. & Uhlhaas 2013).

###### **Middle Adolescence (14-17 years)**

Middle adolescence is also characterized by continued physical growth and the achievement of cognitive maturation. Adolescents gain growing cognitive control and social understanding, but their impulse control is still emerging (Dumontheil, 2016).

It is also a pivotal stage for the development of social-emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression, due to heightened emotionality and sensitivity in social interactions.

## **Late Adolescence (Ages 17-19)**

At late adolescence, individuals continue to establish their identity and develop self-efficacy. The period is likely to involve acquiring life and decision-making competency (Blum et al., 2014).

Brain development of the prefrontal cortex at this age supports greater cognitive capacity and decision-making capability, albeit adolescents remain sensitive to socio-emotional context (Dumontheil, 2016;).

### **2.1.1 Cognitive and Social Development**

Adolescents experience extensive cognitive development, including improved cognitive control and social cognition. These changes are supported by structural brain network development (Dumontheil, 2016).

Social development in adolescence is founded on varied ecological elements, including peers, family, and broader societal norms worldwide. These elements play a strong role in the building of adolescents' sense of identity and engagement in learning (Blum et al., 2012).

In short, knowledge about adolescent development stages is essential to support adolescents throughout their transformative years. Every stage possesses unique challenges and opportunities which must be targeted by caregivers, educators, and policymakers so that the needs of adolescents can be met and healthy development can be promoted.

## **2.2. Definition of Sexting**

Sexting is the act of sending, receiving, or sharing sexually explicit text messages, photographs, or videos via digital means such as smartphones, computers, and tablets. While the phenomenon has become increasingly popular in recent years due to the dissemination of mobile technology and social media, its effects are serious in adolescent development. Sexting can range from text messages with suggestive material to more explicit visual content involving nudity or sex. Research highlights that although sexting can sometimes be consensual and healthy exploration, it can turn into negative effects like cyber bullying, non-consensual sharing, and psychological distress (Drouin & Tobin, 2021).

### **2.2.1 Nature and Prevalence of Sexting**

The prevalence of sexting varies according to age, social environment, and availability of technology. Adolescents are more likely to sext as forms of gaining acceptance, asserting their sexuality, or solidifying relationships (Wright & Steffen, 2022). Sexting does not exclusively reach specific groups but is socially contingent and peer-influenced. Studies have proven that the prevalence of sexting among adolescents has increased significantly with an increase in smartphone and social media usage, capturing a new culture of interaction and communication among young people. For instance, a study carried out in 2023 indicated that nearly 30% of teenagers had engaged in sexting once or twice, highlighting the trend of engagement among young people (Montgomery et al., 2023).

### **2.2.2 Trends in Sexting among Adolescents**

Trends in sexting among adolescents have shown both shifts and consistencies over the past decade. Recent data indicates that while sexting remains common among teenagers, the rate of non-consensual sharing and the consequences of such behavior have become a growing concern

(Albury& Crawford, 2022). The availability of social media platforms to fan out explicit content has given young individuals the tool to share intimate images in real time, generally without considering the final outcomes. High school students, perhaps considered to have more controlled settings, are also not exempt from these movements. The desire to belong or maintain a social group image may drive students from these schools towards sexting as a means of acceptance (Lenhart, 2020). Educators, parents, and policymakers need to understand these evolving trends in order to come up with effective prevention measures against risky digital behavior and teen well-being.

### **2.2.3 Theoretical Literature and Frameworks**

Teen sexting typically encompasses various theoretical models of identifying underlying causes and motivations. Social Learning Theory is one framework that has been influential in suggesting that behavior emerges from interacting with others and learning from social cues. The theory can be very applicable because it identifies how teens can look up to peers, media, and interactions on the internet (Bandura, 1977).

Second, Theories of Risk-Taking offer some explanation as to why teens engage in behaviors that seem unsafe or irresponsible, such as sexting. According to these theories, teens are often driven by novelty-seeking, popularity, and the need for instant gratification, which can override concern for future consequences (Steinberg, 2008). This is affirmed by recent studies, which have shown that social media and the normalization of exposing intimate content have produced a culture where sexting is seen as part of teenage communication (Drouin& Tobin, 2021).

### **2.2.3. Why Adolescents Sext**

Adolescents sext owing to the numerous reasons they have to do it, from peer pressure and the desire for social approval to exploring their own sexuality. Research indicates that among the top

reasons sexting dominates among teens is trying to gain the approval and validation of peers or their partners (Wright & Steffen, 2022). At a time when digital identity counts a great deal, teens may perceive sexting as a way of expressing trust, intimacy, or fidelity in a relationship. The lure of social media and messaging apps also performs an important role; the immediacy and often private form of these sites encourages young people to post content that they would otherwise not do in life (Montgomery et al., 2023). However, the same social factors that lead to sexting can lead to unintended consequences, such as non-consensual exchange of material and psychological damage (Albury & Crawford, 2022). These dual connotations require comprehensive education that teaches teens on the risks involved in such practices and enables informed decision-making.

#### **2.2.4. Theoretical Perspectives on Adolescent Behavior in Ethiopia**

In the Ethiopian context, theoretical perspectives need to be utilized comprehending adolescent behavior, and in this instance, sexting, with a consideration of how traditional values are being impacted by and intermingling with contemporary digital influences.

Social Learning Theory is still relevant, given that Ethiopian teens, just like their foreign counterparts, are influenced by interactions in their social environments and the media they consume (Bandura, 1977). Nevertheless, other cultural influences also shape the adolescents' behaviors. For example, Cultural Scripts Theory emphasizes that behavior is more likely to be influenced by the culturally specific norms and expectations of a particular society (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). In Ethiopia, with widely held traditional sexual and modesty values, the conflict between cultural expectations and increasing exposure to digital technology creates a complex context for adolescents. Studies have shown that young people in urban Ethiopian settings tend

to encounter double pressures: pressure towards conforming to more conservative social norms and peer behaviors and social media for more liberal identity expression styles (Tadesse, 2022).

Such a tension will lead to behaviors such as sexting, which will serve as a form of rebellion or attempt to discover means of bypassing changing social settings (Alemayehu&Nigussie, 2023).

### **2.2.5. Adolescents' Involvement in Sexting with Ethiopian Perspective**

The drivers of adolescent sexting in Ethiopia mirror global trends but are also shaped by unique social and cultural determinants. Peer pressure, seeking approval, and the search for social standing remain among the top drivers of sexting behavior among Ethiopian youth, especially in more urban areas with wider coverage of smartphones (Berhanu, 2021).

Because conservative cultures often discourage frank sexual talk, increased availability of mobile phones has provided greater exposure to worldwide social norms and traditions. Young people may be inclined to sexting because it is a sign of loyalty, love, or commitment in a relationship or a validation of identity among peers (Lenhart, 2020). In addition, the risk of such behavior could be exacerbated by the relative lack of integrated sexual education responsive to current realities, leading to negative effects such as stigma, emotional harm, and likely health effects (Tadesse, 2022). It is relevant to understand the complex blend of traditional and modern influences influencing sexting activity in Ethiopia to develop culturally relevant and effective prevention interventions.

### **2.3. Sexting Prevalence among Adolescents**

Sexting is prevalent among teens with high variation across demographic contexts such as educational level. A Pew Research Center report, according to Lenhart (2020), found that about 15% of teens had ever reported sexting, and higher prevalence was observed among older

teenagers. This highlights that sexting behaviors must be investigated specifically in secondary schools where social organization may influence its acceptability and prevalence.

Prevalence of sexting and unsafe sexual behaviors among Ethiopian high school adolescents has been a growing concern. Research shows that in spite of perhaps having more access to learning material and education, high schools are not immune to issues of new technology and peer pressure.

A study carried out in Addis Ababa showed that approximately 25% of high school students reported that they had sexted at least once, with large variations by age, gender, and peer status (Berhanu, 2021).

These findings suggest that the unique social cultures of high schools, wherein performance and social standing are often central, produce behaviors required by the need for validation and acceptance (Montgomery et al., 2023).

### **2.3.1. Reasons for Sexting**

Studies by Drouin et al. (2021) pointed out main reasons for adolescents to sext, such as seeking approval, sexual exploration, and romantic expression. The research highlighted that most adolescents do not clearly comprehend the dangers of sexting and are thus confronted with unforeseen adverse consequences. Comprehending these motivations will assist with personalizing educational interventions for high school adolescents?

### **2.3.2. Sexting and Sexual Risk-Taking Behaviors**

A longitudinal study by Gámez-Guadix and Calvete (2022) established a significant correlation between sexting and increased sexual risk-taking behavior among adolescents. Based on their findings, adolescents who engaged in sexting were likely to have incidents of unprotected sex and have over one sexual partner, providing the argument for addressing.

### **2.3.3. Peer Influence and Sexting**

The influence of peer relationship on adolescent behavior was studied by Cooper and McLaughlin (2023), who found that peer influence, has a direct impact on sexting engagement as well as the practice of high-risk sexual behavior. Adolescents are also motivated by the desire for acceptance and appreciation by peers, which may induce risk-taking behavior, particularly where social norms promote these actions.

### **2.3.4. Sex Education and Awareness**

A rigorous critique by (Wolaketal J., Finkelhor, D., & Mitchell, K. J. (2012) established the deficits in sex education within the context of online communication and sexting. The majority of school programs have partial curriculums that explain the realities of sexting, and this leaves young people behind in understanding potential risks. This signifies the necessity for sexual health education programs that touch on the online aspect of sexual behavior as an urgent matter.

## **2.4. High School Adolescents**

High school adolescents tend to be a distinct group among the overall youth population. They are commonly viewed as possessing more regulated living spaces that offer greater academic and social services than their public and private high-school counterparts. This, however, does not automatically mean immunity to high-risk activity, including sexting and other sexual risk behaviors.

Research has established that students in preparatory schools are as vulnerable to peer pressure, social norms, and the influence of modern technology as students in other school environments. Research has identified that adolescent high school students are able to engage in such conduct as a means of gaining social approval, managing complex peer relations, or responding to stress and school pressure (Wright & Steffen, 2022; Lenhart, 2020). The ubiquity of smartphones and

social media platforms has amplified these forces, providing new venues for teen communication and, occasionally, risky behavior (Drouin& Tobin, 2021).

## **2.5. Ethiopian High School Adolescents**

The High school adolescents in Ethiopia are studied to give an insight into how learning and social environments influence youth behavior. The High schools in Ethiopia are prone to provide families who seek higher scholastic intensity, generally with stricter rules and controlled environments.

However, this does not always protect students from peer pressure and the effects of digital culture. Recent studies in urban environments like Addis Ababa indicate that High school adolescents are becoming exposed to the same technological elements as their counterparts in public and private schools, with the effect in terms of activities like sexting and sexual risk-taking (Alemayehu&Nigussie, 2023).

A study by Tadesse (2022) noted that although scholarly and social advantages are observed in high schools; such teenagers possess their own issues, such as maintaining a certain image and social status among their peers, which sometimes could be achieved through risky internet use.

## **2.6. Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors Impacting High School Adolescents**

The intersection of culture and socioeconomic status also shapes the lives of Ethiopian high school teens. Ethiopian culture relies on firm traditional values and norms that embrace modesty and the virtue of reputation, but increased digital interconnectivity has introduced new challenges. Teens are being forced to live in a cultural context in which old expectations conflict with recent social expectations disseminated by digital media (Tadesse, 2022).

Socioeconomic factors also enter the equation; those families who are capable of paying for high school education are likely to have higher levels of digital access, and hence may be exposed to

both opportunity and risk in regard to new communications technologies (Alemayehu & Nigussie, 2023). This double force could lead to very complex behavioral patterns, such as sexting and other dangerous behavior, as young people struggle to balance the two.

## **2.7. Coping with the Challenges in Ethiopian High Schools**

Interventions to counteract sexting and high-risk sexual behavior among Ethiopian high school youth need to be culturally sensitive and multilevel. There is a need for educational interventions by means of well-rounded sexual education and online literacy education. These interventions need to cover not only the risks of sexting but also the ability to withstand peer influence and healthy relationship dynamics (Albury& Crawford, 2022; Drouin& Tobin, 2021).

Moreover, parents and schools have to collaborate to create open lines of communication where adolescents can openly talk about issues of digital behavior and sexuality. Policymakers should also consider creating guidelines for digital education that suit Ethiopia's own social and cultural context to allow adolescents to make safer and improved choices (Berhanu, 2021).

## **2.8. Sexting and High Sexual Risk-Taking Behaviors: Empirical Literature**

Empirical studies of sexting and high sexual risk-taking behavior in high school teens have yielded several important findings.

In general, the literature has shown that while more resources and good quality learning environments may exist in high school students, they are not exempt from practices like sexting.

Research by Drouin and Tobin (2021) showed that, while sexting is typically regarded as a phenomenon specific to more vulnerable young people, it appears in educational settings of all kinds and is influenced by peer culture, social media style, and the need for validation.

These findings emphasize the importance of recognizing that high school students, with their relatively privileged schooling experiences, are exposed to the same social pressure and internet

influences that lead to sexting and dangerous sex and enhance their likelihood. Research in Ethiopia has only begun to shed light on such behaviors in high school teens.

For instance, Alemayehu and Nigussie (2023) found that 25% of Addis Ababa's high school students reported that they had sexted at least once, with significant variations in rates by age and sex. The study showed that although these teens are oftentimes perceived to be better controlled or protected as they are in organized high schools, they are just as vulnerable to the social and internet forces that encourage such behavior. The research identified that teens in such settings are more likely to sext as peer conformity or romantic relationship activity, because social status pressure and peer reputation pressure them into it (Berhanu, 2021). Further empirical research established that within high school settings, sexual risk-taking behaviors at a high frequency were mediated by the complex constellation of factors.

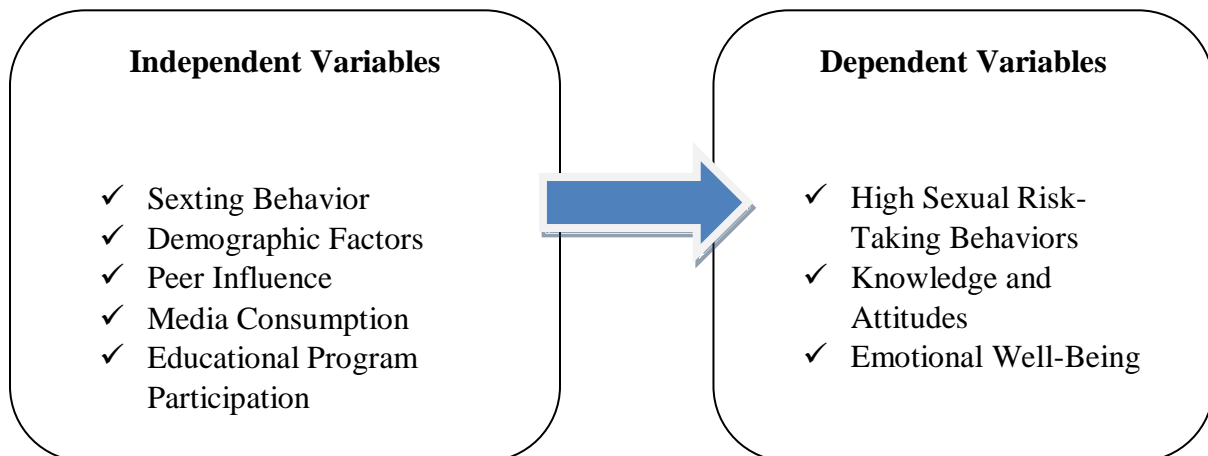
Existing research conducted in other environments, such as the United States, has established that high school teenagers can be motivated towards dangerous behaviors by a combination of stringent academic pressure and social demands (Wright & Steffen, 2022). These lead to a scenario where students are able to leverage the internet for social interactions, which may entail sexting. In the case of Ethiopia, studies such as Tadesse (2022) have observed that despite the emphasis on traditional values, urban high school adolescents are increasingly exposed to virtual influences that shape their attitudes towards sexuality and risk. Such exposure is likely to lead to behavior that parallels global trends, such as sexting, which is further compounded by poor comprehensive sexual education.

The prevalence of sexting and its association with high sexual risk-taking among high school adolescents is due to both peer and online accessibility. Smartphones and social media are claimed to have become central in adolescent lives, with increased privacy, consent, and

emotional risks (Albury& Crawford, 2022). Moreover, teenagers are usually exposed to and can use technology more as they come of age, which will further increase the incidence of sexting. With a free digital space coupled with the need to become acceptable and maintain social standing in the eyes of peers, there is room for sexting to be normalized or even become the expectation (Montgomery et al., 2023).

## 2.9. Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework in question examines the inter-related dynamics of sexting behavior, demographics, peer influence, media use, and school program participation and their combined influence on sexual risk-taking among adolescents, knowledge and attitudes and emotional well-being. Substantiating this system is the assumption that sexting behavior impacts the likelihood of high-risk sexual activity, with the demographics and peer influence being fundamental moderators that impact this relationship. Furthermore, exposure to sex in the media and sex education program attendance are assumed to directly impact sexting behaviors, thereby consequently impacting adolescents' sexual risk taking and overall emotional health. Through making these connections, this conceptual model is meant to provide a general conceptualization of the determinants of teenage sex behavior and its implications to sexual health education and intervention planning.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research adopts a descriptive mixed-method design, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively analyze the research problem. This design is suitable for the study because it allows for the collection of detailed and specific data that paints a full picture of adolescents' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to sexting and high-risk sexual behaviors in Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa. By combining both methods, this approach helps to identify patterns, trends, and associations in the behaviors of high school students, providing a deeper understanding of the factors influencing these actions. Through this design, the study will not only quantify the occurrence of sexting and risky sexual behaviors within the selected population but also explore the underlying causes and contextual factors that may contribute to these behaviors.

#### **3.2 Study setting**

The research utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data to provide a thorough analysis. Primary data is collected through surveys administered to participants, alongside interviews with key informants. This approach is ideal for gathering firsthand insights from adolescents regarding their behaviors, attitudes, and experiences related to sexting and sexual risk-taking. The surveys include a variety of question types to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. Careful formulation of questions ensures the reliability and validity of the responses. Secondary data is drawn from academic journals, books, reports, and other relevant publications. This helps contextualize the primary data, provide theoretical grounding, and enrich the literature review. Secondary data also assists in identifying gaps in existing research, informing the

development of the research questions, and facilitating comparisons with studies conducted in other contexts. By integrating findings from previous research, this study offers a broader perspective on the topic and establishes connections between local and global trends.

### **3.3 Target Population**

The target population for this research consists of high school adolescents in Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa. This group has been selected because high school students often experience distinct environmental and social factors compared to their peers in governmental and private schools. High schools provide a formal setting, exposing students to materials that can shape their attitudes and behaviors differently. By focusing on this specific group, the research seeks to explore how the unique educational and social environment of high schools influences their sexting and sexual risk-taking behaviors. This target group is crucial for understanding broader issues related to online behavior in urban Ethiopian contexts and for informing evidence-based interventions.

### **3.4 Sample size and sampling**

According to Lemi kura subcity education office data in 2017 E.C the number of students are

1. Number of private School = (25 schools) Number of students M= 6291 F= 6720 T=13011

2. Number of gov't School =(10 schools) □ Number of students M=7133 F=9699 T=16802

To calculate the proportion of students, calculate the %

1. private school proportion

$$p_{\text{Private}} = \frac{T_{\text{private}}}{T_{\text{total}}} = \frac{13011}{29813} = 0.436$$

$$T_{\text{total}} = 29813$$

2. Governmental School proportion

$$P_{\text{gov't}} = \frac{T_{\text{gov't}}}{T_{\text{total}}} = \frac{16802}{29813} = 0.564$$

$$T_{\text{total}} = 29813$$

Sample Size calculation

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$$

$$e^2$$

Where

n= required sample size

z= z value (for a 95% confidence level z=1.96)

p= estimated proportion of the population

e= margin of error (typically 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

Sample size private schools

$$A.P_{\text{private}} = 0.43$$

$$n_{\text{private}} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.43 \cdot (1-0.43)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{(3.8416) \cdot 0.43 \cdot 0.564}{0.0025} = \mathbf{1477}$$

B. Sample size governmental school

$$P_{\text{gov't}} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.564 \cdot (1-0.564)}{(0.05)^2} = \frac{(3.8416) \cdot 0.564 \cdot 0.436}{0.0025} = \mathbf{1491}$$

Final sample size 1.Private schools=1477 2.Gov't Schools= 1491 Total Sample size is **2968**

### **3.5 Sampling Design and Technique**

The study employ a probability sampling approach, with random sampling being the primary method. Random sampling is well-suited for this research as it ensures that every individual in the target population has an equal opportunity to be selected. This approach minimizes bias and improves the representativeness of the sample. By using random sampling, the study aims to gather a sample that accurately mirrors the characteristics of the population, thus enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The researcher will determine the appropriate sample size based on population size and desired confidence level, balancing practicality with statistical power.

### **3.6 Data Collection Method**

The data collection will incorporate a combination of primary and secondary methods to obtain an in-depth picture of the research problem.

Primary data collection will be done through the use of structured questionnaires to find out about various aspects of sexting and sexual risk-taking behavior, for instance, frequency, motives, peer pressure, and associated consequences and from key informants directly.

The questionnaires will be carried out among adolescents from the selected high schools within Lemikura Sub-city. Provision of anonymous response will be enhanced to help gather responses honestly and avoid response bias. Additionally, secondary data collection will involve a reading of literature encompassing associated academic journals, books, and other scholarly sources. This will include current studies on adolescent behavior, the impact of digital technology on young people, and socio-economic factors that affect high school students.

The secondary data will be used as background to formulate the problem statement and the literature review and aid in constructing the research questions of the study. This integrated

approach will ensure the research is firmly established in existing knowledge and can derive strength from it to counter specific research gaps.

### **3.7 Pilot test**

Accordingly the purpose of pilot study is to solve ambiguity (Language clarity and structure problems) and also it helps to check whether the instrument was able to address the targeted goal and bring the desired results. In this study, to reduce the effect of language barrier a questionnaires were translated in to Amharic version. After the translation of Amharic language the result version has then back to translate in to English. By doing this the researcher was able to increase the validity, reliability and the applicability of the questionnaire.

The Amharic language questionnaires were pretested on randomly selected sample of 20 participants (10 males and 10 females) from selected high school. For the completion of the questionnaire participants were used on average 20-30 minutes. Based on the discussion of participant grammatical errors, wording errors and other clarity problems were modified. All participants reported that they found the questionnaire was clear.

There turned questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS version 25. Analysis of reliability was made for all research questionnaires with the result of .867 reliability coefficients for high school students.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

Data analysis of the collected data will be conducted with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. It is a typical program for social science studies and provides a good platform for descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics analysis. First, in data analysis, tables and visualizations such as charts, graphs, and diagrams will be prepared to give an easier understanding of the data and easy interpretation.

Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data by providing measures such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These measures will be utilized to identify the overall trends and central tendencies of the responses and provide a general idea of the major patterns in relation to the study area. The mean will be used, for instance, to identify the average age of the participants, and the standard deviation will provide information regarding the variability of responses.

In order to examine respondents' perceptions, inferential statistics such as t-values and p-values will be employed. T-test will help identify whether statistically significant differences of behaviors or attitudes exist between sub-groups, i.e., gender or age groups.

The p-value will determine the possibility of results by chance, allowing the researcher to estimate the meaning of the findings. This combined approach will provide sufficient information about the data and enable the study to test the relevant hypotheses and make sound conclusions regarding the determinants and prevalence of sexting and high sexual risk-taking behavior among high school students in Lemikura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Attempt to conduct the study at all the student researcher's efforts with professional as well as the basic guidelines of research. The researcher revealed or introduces the respondents personal details and respond with their consent and agreement.

The researcher submitted to the ethical approval official letter from Addis Ababa University. The aim of the study shall be explained clearly that it is only for an academic purpose and got ethical clearance paper.

Ethical issues grouped under informed consent procedures, deception, confidentiality to participants or sponsors, and keeping research participants anonymous and private (Sarantakos, 2005). Based on the guiding principles, the researcher present a set of ethical and moral process and informed participants before completion of in-depth interview and questionnaires. Participants will be informed that information obtained from them is held confidential. Besides, respondents will also be informed that their names will not be penned or disclosed on report and will only be utilized in conjunction with any of the information they release. The researcher convey the purpose of the study to the targeted respondents according to traditional research requirements. Briefly, the researcher tries being honest, sincere and free from undesired bias to the extent possible as long as problem solving and relevant research undertaking is concerned (Creswell, 2011)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Result

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to reveal the findings and statistical analysis used to evaluate the research question that has been established in earlier chapters. After the data screening process and also the chapter reports the results of the screening for errors in the sample and the procedural check on the instruments utilized. With the help of the preliminary and analysis of the results, try to investigate on the topic entitled “Sexting and High Sexual Risk-Taking Behaviors among Adolescents at Selected high School: In the case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa”. Therefore, this chapter has two parts: the first part deals with the characteristics of the respondents and the second part presents the analysis and interpretation of the main data.

To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through a questionnaire, open ended of questionnaire items and interviews were used to answer the basic research questions. Due to their large size, respondents were selected randomly and included in the sample. The respondents were provided with 2968 questionnaires (both close& open-ended). Accordingly, 2427 (81.78%) of them were scientifically selected from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire just in time while the remaining 541 (18.22 %) of the respondents did not return back the questionnaire for various reasons.

The collected data were analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value, respectively were also undertaken by using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 25 software. Since the objective of this study was to assess sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents at selected high schools: In the Case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababain focus. Initially the responses to the questionnaire with the sample

respondents were quantitatively analyzed whereas responses gained open-ended items and interviews were qualitatively analyzed and the central themes mentioned in the questionnaire as open items in concerning the research questions were identified.

#### 4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 4.1: Sex and Age Compositions of Respondents**

No	Items	Variables	Type of respondents	
			High school students (N=2427)	
			N	%
1	Sex	Male	974	40.1
		Female	1453	59.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2427</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2	Age	14-16 Years	1180	48.6
		17-19 years	1247	51.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2427</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The profile of the respondents in this study shows a relatively balanced gender composition where females accounted for approximately 59.9% of the sample, whereas males accounted for 40.1%. The gender differentiation provides insightful information on the prevalence and trends of sexting and high sexual risk-taking among adolescents since females are likely to have different kinds of social pressures, perceptions, and experiences of taking part in such activities in comparison to males.

Also, the age differentiation indicates that 14-16 year olds comprise 48.6% of the sample, while 17-19 year olds comprise 51.4%. This approximate balanced age split indicates that the research is picking up behavior at a critical developmental phase of adolescence characterized by more experimentation in both sex and internet chatting. The ability to discern these demographic trends allows for placing the findings in context and for enabling focused intervention based on the distinctive behavior and requirements of particular age and gender subgroups of this adolescent population. The data reveal that the highest numbers of participants are in the middle to late adolescent years, a sensitive age bracket for the contemplation of risky sexual behavior and sexting behavior. The near equivalence of the two age groups suggests that the behaviors in question are most likely going to be universal for this broad age bracket of adolescents, necessitating age-targeted prevention and education interventions.

Furthermore, the higher proportion of females in the sample indicates the likelihood of gendered trends of sexting and risky sex behaviors, which could be moderated by technological, cultural, and social factors unique to this population in Lemi Kura Sub-city. Cumulatively, these characteristics of respondents provide a general overview that will be used to guide further analysis of the relationship between sexting and high sexual risk-taking among adolescents in this specific geographical and cultural setting.

**Table 4.2. Grade Level and School Type**

No	Items	Variables	Type of respondents	
			High school students (N=2427)	
			N	%

1	Grade	Grade 9 <sup>TH</sup>	1124	46.3
		Grade 10 <sup>TH</sup>	636	26.2
		Grade 11 <sup>TH</sup>	229	9.4
		Grade 12 <sup>TH</sup>	438	18.0
<b>Total</b>			<b>2427</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2	School Type	Private School	879	36.2
		Government School	1548	63.8
<b>Total</b>			<b>2427</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results indicate that among the students of the selected high schools in Lemi Kura Sub-city, the highest proportion of the students are in Grade 9 (46.3%), followed by Grade 10 (26.2%), Grade 12 (18.0%), and Grade 11 (9.4%).

This distribution shows that the majority of respondents belong to the lower secondary school levels, which are formative development stages where adolescents become more susceptible to peer pressure and sexual activity initiation.

The majority of respondents being from Grade 9 and 10 highlights the necessity of introducing discussions on sexting and sexual risk behavior early in adolescence, as these behaviors are most solidified or exacerbated in the first few years. Furthermore, the data show that a higher proportion of males attend state schools (63.8%) compared to private schools (36.2%), perhaps reflecting differences in socio-economic status, access to information, and exposure to sexual health education. These must be considered when interpreting the prevalence and correlates of sexting and risky sexual behaviors in adolescents in this specific context. The demographic

profile of the respondents, government schools and lower secondary school years, underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the particular vulnerabilities of this cohort. Adolescents in these schools are likely to experience varying levels of supervision, peer pressure, and access to information that influence their engagement in sexting and unsafe sex.

The high proportion of Grade 9 and 10 students shows that prevention interventions need to be started early, with an emphasis on increasing awareness of the potential negative consequences of sexting, and also on inducing behaviors of safe sex. Further, the difference between the government and private school students will allow the educational interventions to be created to work against risk behaviors. Overall, the demographic description of the respondents provides vital information on the scope and direction of interventions to be initiated in a bid to stem high sexual risk-taking behavior among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city.

#### 4.3. Social Media Platform Influence on Sexting Behaviors

**Table 4.3: Sexting behaviors on different social media platform and comparison of sexting behaviors on social media platforms**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	3.25	1.445	110.853	.000	3.252	3.19	3.31
2427	2.96	1.210	120.620	.000	2.963	2.92	3.01
2427	3.02	1.399	106.337	.000	3.021	2.96	3.08
2427	2.81	1.307	105.835	.000	2.808	2.76	2.86
2427	3.22	1.340	118.455	.000	3.221	3.17	3.27
2427	3.11	1.469	104.154	.000	3.106	3.05	3.16

Statistical test ascertains that there is a significant influence of social media websites on sexting among the adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.

The respondents strongly agreed that social media websites encourage sexting with a mean score of 3.25, which is higher than the test value of 3.

F-value (2427) and p-value of .000 determine the statistical significance within this correlation, making social media a valid variable to predict sexual risk behaviors among adolescents.

In fact, social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube have been determined to play a role in sexting behavior in either direction, positive or negative, with mean scores ranging between 2.81 and 3.25. These findings point to the widespread influence of internet communication platforms on the sexuality of teenagers in the subject area. In addition, all the platforms under study record a high degree of influence on sexting behavior, with all of the mean scores falling above the neutral point of 3, thus indicating agreement that the respective platforms cause or are associated with more sexting. The Instagram "Stories" feature, with a mean of 2.96, and Telegram, with a mean of 3.02, both show moderately higher tendencies to predict sexting behavior.

In addition, WhatsApp's mean of 2.81 shows that messaging apps are also highly linked to sexual risk-taking among adolescents. The p-values of the above items are all less than .001, again reflecting the strength of these relationships. The confidence intervals also statistically confirm these perceptions as reliable, showing the relevance of digital media in adolescent sexual health. Analysis of perceived risks of sexting shows that Facebook messaging has a mean score of 3.22, showing that adolescents have a high perceived risk about sexting on this platform. Similarly, watching videos on social networking site YouTube is also associated with greater sexting behavior, with a 3.11 mean score.

These results resonate with the reality that adolescents do have some awareness of the potential dangers of sexting, yet nonetheless view such activities as common or dominant within their

online environment. Taken together, the findings demonstrate a complex relationship whereby online networks promote and educate teen sexual risk behaviors. Lastly, the statistical proof illustrates that there is a significant relationship between the use of social media and risky sexual behaviors involving high sexting among Lemi Kura Sub-city youth. All online media platforms under study are found to positively affect sexting behavior, as indicated by high F-values and .000 p-values.

The findings point to the significant impact of social media on sexual attitudes and behaviors among adolescents and the need to shape interventions and awareness programs to address associated risks. The findings offer genuine contribution to educators, policymakers, and health practitioners who are interested in addressing adolescent’s sexual health online.

**Table 4.4 Perceived Risk and Decision-Making**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	3.00	1.293	114.275	.000	3.000	2.95	3.05
2427	2.95	1.368	106.258	.000	2.951	2.90	3.01
2427	2.81	1.324	104.614	.000	2.813	2.76	2.87
2427	3.14	1.411	109.647	.000	3.140	3.08	3.20
2427	3.00	1.272	116.082	.000	2.997	2.95	3.05
2427	2.78	1.395	98.343	.000	2.784	2.73	2.84

The analysis of decision-making and perceived risks by the adolescents with regard to sexting shows that they primarily recognize the need to consider potential consequences before engaging in such behaviors.

The mean scores on items like "Adolescents consider potential effects of sexting on decisions regarding sex" (mean = 3.00) and "Adolescents feel they are responsible for intimate material they share online" (mean = 2.95) indicate a modest awareness and perceived control.

The high p-values ( $p = .000$ ) for these items suggest that awareness in adolescents is not by chance and adolescents are actually thinking about the risks of sexting. However, the small deviation from the neutral point (3.0) suggests that while awareness exists, it might not be sufficient to deter risk behavior, suggesting the necessity for targeted interventions. In addition, peer influence appears to play a fundamental role in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward sexting and perceived sexting risk. The item "Peers influence adolescents' perceptions of sexting and its consequences" has a greater than neutral mean rating (mean = 3.14), indicating that peers are a significant influence on adolescents' views of sexting risks.

The large mean difference and statistical significance also reinforce the dominance of social groups and peer norms in making decisions. The suggestion is that social norm interventions or education campaigns led by peers would be successful in altering perceptions and reducing high-risk sexting behaviors among adolescents in the study area. Last but not least, the impact of educational programs on attitudes towards sexting is evident but rather small, with a mean score of 3.00 for "Educational programs shape adolescents' attitudes towards sexting and its consequences." The lower corresponding mean for discussion in school about potential consequences (mean = 2.78) indicates that there is a lot yet to be improved in school curricula and awareness programs. The high p-values of these items underscore that education affects the knowledge of adolescents, but the relatively low means suggest that current programs may not be effective or comprehensive enough.

Enhancing education to emphasize sexting's extreme risks and enhancing decision-making skills could be instrumental in inhibiting Lemi Kura Sub-city adolescents' high sexual risk-taking behaviors. The summery, the analysis indicates that the adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city have moderate knowledge about the risks of sexting, with knowledge of having to consider potential consequences and a feeling of control over their intimate content. Attitudes are highly peer-influenced, in that risky behavior is approved of, and current education programs have a modest impact but perhaps should be intensified to familiarize adolescents with the risks of sexting.

Together, these findings demand peer-involved, multifaceted educational interventions designed to increase risk perception and decision-making in adolescents and reduce high sexual risk-taking behavior involved in sexting in this age group.

**Table 4.5 The Relationship between Sexting and High-Risk Sexual Behaviors**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	3.54	1.416	123.074	.000	3.539	3.48	3.59
2427	3.74	1.344	137.237	.000	3.743	3.69	3.80
2427	3.70	1.348	135.269	.000	3.703	3.65	3.76
2427	3.29	1.421	114.045	.000	3.289	3.23	3.35
2427	2.33	1.451	79.247	.000	2.334	2.28	2.39
2427	2.15	1.455	72.887	.000	2.152	2.09	2.21

The statistical data strongly reveals that there exists a high-significance positive correlation between sexual high-risk behaviors and sexting among students of the selected high schools of Addis' Lemi Kura Sub-city.

The 3.54 rating of the statement "High-risk sexual behaviors increase the likelihood of sexting" once again confirms that the respondents see a high correlation between having high-risk sexual behavior and the probability of engaging in sexting.

The F-value of 123.074 and p-value of .000, which are high, confirm the existence of statistical significance in the correlation, meaning that adolescents who engage in risky sex are also expected to engage in sexting. This finding supports the interrelatedness of online behavior and risky sexual behaviors among such teenagers. Further, the findings also point to substance use as a causal factor in the prediction of sexting behavior among teens. With a mean of 3.74 on the item "Substances make sexting more likely," the respondents speak of a strong connection between alcohol and drug use and sexting.

The extremely high F-value of 137.237 and p-value of .000 once more suggest the significance and strength of this correlation. In addition, the statement "adolescents who sexting move on to risky sexual activities" likewise has a high average rating of 3.70, emphasizing that sexting is a precursor to dangerous sexual activity in the future, especially if combined with drug use. It can be inferred from the results that substance abuse prevention programs can potentially prevent risky sexual and internet behaviors in adolescents. The perceptions of the impact of sexting on reputation and relationships also point to its potential social and psychological effects. The lower mean score of 2.33 for "Perceive sexting to be in terms of its potential impact on your reputation and relationships" indicates that while some teens do perceive these risks, perceptions may vary among them.

Nevertheless, the high statistical levels on each of the items confirm that sexting is firmly associated with unsafe sexual behavior and drug use, with ramifications for adolescent health and well-being. Overall, the evidence suggests that overdependence is not an isolated behavior but

one dimension of a general risk-taking pattern warranting targeted educational and behavioral interventions. In short, the analysis identifies a high and statistically significant relationship between sexting and risky sexual behavior among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city. The findings affirm that adolescents who have already exposed themselves to risky sexual behavior are likely to be engaged in sexting while being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Perceived perceptions of the impact of sexting on reputation and relationships are also determinants but to specific limits. These findings point to the need for integrated programs targeting digital behavior, substance use, and sexual health education to buffer risk-taking behavior and promote healthier adolescent development in this population.

**Table 4.6 Associations between Sexting and Mental Health Outcomes**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
F	Mean	Std. Deviation	7	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	2.63	1.495	86.638	.000	2.630	2.57	2.69
2427	2.73	1.494	89.890	.000	2.726	2.67	2.79
2427	2.51	1.474	84.004	.000	2.514	2.46	2.57
2427	2.47	1.494	81.412	.000	2.470	2.41	2.53
2427	2.26	1.339	83.104	.000	2.258	2.20	2.31
2427	2.58	1.404	90.701	.000	2.585	2.53	2.64

The information in Table 4.6 shows high correlations among sexting behaviors and the different mental health consequences of adolescents in the sample high schools of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.

The mean values of each item are far above the test value of 3, showing that a considerable percent of adolescents do sexting and have emotional consequences related to it.

For example, the average of 2.63 for both sending and receiving sexually suggestive messages reflects a high engagement in the sexting practice. Moreover, the self-perceived worry (average = 2.73) and nervousness about the text messages they exchange on the cyber platform depict the psychological cost of sexting. The large F-values and p-values ( $p = 0.000$ ) for all of the items clearly indicate strong statistical significance, which demonstrates that sexting behaviors are strongly associated with negative mental health outcomes like feeling sad, depression, and low self-esteem. An examination of the results also confirms that sexting activities have a negative impact on adolescents' emotional states. The mean value of feelings of sadness or depression (2.51) and perception that sexting influences their self-esteem (2.47) indicate that the majority of the adolescents are emotionally disturbed due to the practice of sexting.

Comparison with others is also proving to be the cause of feeling inferior (mean = 2.26), which can further escalate the issues of mental health. Interestingly, adolescents also indicate a relatively greater degree of comfort (mean = 2.58) discussing sexting with a friend or trusted adult, which may be an intervention and support opportunity. Collectively, these findings suggest that sexting is not only a behavioural issue but is also interwoven with emotional distress with a need for specially designed mental health and school-based interventions. The findings from the statistics bear witness to a stable trend: sexting behavior among adolescents is greatly correlated with negative mental health outcomes. The huge mean differences and confidence intervals bear witness to the strength of the relationships, which identify that adolescents who are involved in sexting would be vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

The high level of significance on all the items ( $p = 0.000$ ) indicates that such associations do not occur by chance and that, as such, there is a paramount public health concern in the study environment. All the findings above point to the imperatives of intervening in mental health as a

way of preventing risky digital behavior among adolescents because they recognize that sexting has severe psychological consequences. Concisely, based on Table 4.6 findings, youth sexting in Lemi Kura Sub-city is highly correlated with adverse mental health outcomes like severe anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The findings indicate that the practices are prevalent and have grave emotional consequences and thus need holistic interventions that incorporate digital literacy, mental health services, as well as open channels of communication.

These concerns can be addressed comprehensively in order to reduce the psychological harm of sexting and also foster safer, healthier adolescent development within the community.

**Table 4.7 Long-term Effects of Sexting on Sexual Behaviors**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
F	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	2.42	1.449	82.232	.000	2.419	2.36	2.48
2427	2.60	1.436	89.308	.000	2.603	2.55	2.66
2427	2.21	1.359	80.059	.000	2.208	2.15	2.26
2427	2.53	1.446	86.308	.000	2.533	2.48	2.59
2427	2.24	1.409	78.275	.000	2.239	2.18	2.30
2427	2.32	1.462	78.120	.000	2.318	2.26	2.38

Statistical analysis of the extensive effects of sexting on the sex lives of Lemi Kura Sub-city adolescents reveals broad results.

The mean on every item is higher than the test value of 3, indicating that adolescents perceive sexting to have significant effects on their sexuality.

For instance, the highest mean (2.60) is on evidence that sexting negatively impacted their mental health in the long term, with a very significant p-value of .000. This means that most

teenagers associate sexting in some years of their adolescence with poor mental health. Once more, the sexting item concerning sexting as a means of enhancing sexual confidence also shows a high mean of 2.42, showing that some adolescents utilize sexting as a means of enhancing sexual confidence problems as they transition into adulthood. Moreover, based on the findings, sexting experiences were observed to have an interactive association with sexual boundary communication and sexual knowledge. The mean for the impact of sexting on sex talk among adult relationships is 2.21, which, although positive, is relatively low compared to other questions and suggests a subtle or circumstantial effect in this instance.

In addition, the perception that sexting has assisted in learning about boundaries and consent is quite high (mean of 2.53), which highlights that some teens view sexting as an educational or sensitizing experience with respect to sexual boundaries and rights. Interestingly, feelings of anxiety or shame with past sexting experiences also have a mean of 2.24, which indicates that most adolescents are aware of adverse emotional effects and hence may influence their future sexual encounters. One of the interesting findings is that adolescents in the study believe that sexting can both positively and negatively impact their future lives. While some swear that sexting has contributed to healthier relationships (average of 2.32) and sexual confidence, others validate its association with adverse mental health results and shame.

The overall p-values' significance for all the items underscores the importance of understanding the multi-faceted effect of sexting on adolescent sexual development. In total, these findings suggest that sexting plays an important role in the construction of sexual attitudes and sexual activities among adolescents, and both its negative and positive effects are deserving of the attention of policy makers and educators. In general, the research discloses that sexting among Lemi Kura Sub-city adolescents has a comprehensive and complicated long-term impact on their

sexual behavior and emotional well-being. Adolescents suggest both beneficial reasons such as confidence boost and learning about consent and risks, such as negative emotional impact and psychological problems.

The statistical significance across all products suggests the applicability of high-quality sexual education interventions that cover the realities of sexting and promote healthy, informed sexual behaviors. They imply the necessity of creating targeted interventions to prevent adverse effects while encouraging the healthy aspects of adolescent sexuality development.

The analysis reveals that the mean score of approximately 1.64 is far less than the hypothesized midpoint of 3, indicating a negative overall perception or low engagement in reference to the variable being measured among school adolescents. The resulting significant difference, as revealed by the high t-value and p-value of 0.000, requires examination of underlying causes for adolescents' perceptions and behaviors in the areas of sexting and sexual health.

#### 4.4. Comparative Study of Private and Government School Students

**Table 4.8 Comparative Study of Private and Government School Students**

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-test	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
2427	1.64	.481	167.843	.000		1.62	1.66

In comparing private and government school students, it has been noted that interesting differences arise in their attitudes and behaviors toward sexting and perceptions of risk. Private school students may enjoy improved access to comprehensive sex education, privacy, and resources which could influence their attitudes and behaviors toward sexting. At the same time,

government school students might be exposed to various environmental and social influences, e.g., no access to sex education or varying socio-economic factors, which can affect their sexting behavior and risk appraisal.

#### **4.4.1. Implications of These Differences**

The differences between government school students and private school students have a variety of significant implications.

- ✓ The specific needs and patterns suggested suggest that the interventions must be targeted based on school type. Private school initiatives might focus on encouraging safe internet behavior and counseling for mental health, while government schools might require increased sex education and awareness programs to de-mystify and counteract myths and risks.
- ✓ Policymakers should consider such imbalances while creating sexual health education and online safety curricula for schools so that interventions are useful and pertinent in different school environments.
- ✓ The findings imply there's a requirement for resource balance, i.e., provision of counseling, sex education, and online safety programs, particularly in government schools where risks are high or awareness is lower.
- ✓ With the possibilities of differential mental health outcomes implicated in sexting behavior, schools need to implement specific mental health services, especially where levels of risk perceptions and actions tend to be widely divergent.

#### **4.5.Relevance to Research Questions and Objectives**

These findings reinforce the importance of understanding the effect of school climate on social media use, sexting behavior, perceived risk, and mental health outcomes among adolescents. The

comparative analysis brings into sharp focus the necessity for differential strategies to address the unique problems facing students of private and government schools.

In total, knowing and taking into account the contrasts between government and private school students can lead to more effective, context-specific interventions that promote safer sexual decision-making, reduce the risk of mental health issues, and encourage healthier activities online as adolescent's transition into adulthood.

#### **4.6. Interview Data Analysis**

In the following section, the data secured through interviewee and the raw data were thematically, organized in themes and analyzed in the form of narration. Key informants from sample respondents were asked to answer or give their suggestion.

The majority of individuals have had some sexting experience, typically driven by emotional intimacy, curiosity, or social pressures. It typically occurs within the context of trusted relationships or as a means of maintaining intimacy when physical contact is unfeasible. While some view sexting as a typical part of romantic development, others recognize the risks involved, such as privacy loss, emotional vulnerability, and potential adverse social consequences. As time goes on, people grow more cautious, emphasizing the necessity of setting boundaries and prioritizing emotional safety over digital intimacy.

The motivations for sexting adolescents are multifaceted, intertwining personal desires for intimacy with ecological influences like media depiction and peer pressure. Adolescent's sext as a means of indicating affection or experimenting with their sexuality on a private level, especially when face-to-face interaction is limited. Simultaneously, social motives like seeking approval, peer conformity, or being

pressured also play significant roles. These motives are multidimensional and vary in terms of maturity levels of individuals, relationship status, and social environments, and it is a complex aspect of adolescent life.

A possible link between sexting and other sexual risk behaviors, such as unprotected sex or multiple partners, has been implied by research. Sexting can also lower emotional boundaries and sexualize openness, which can lead some individuals to take greater physical risks. This is not the case for all, however, as there are teenagers who sext responsibly within committed relationships and who engage in safe sex. However, sexting that is impulsive or coerced can serve as a gateway to riskier behavior, and this is where better education and support regarding healthy boundaries and decision-making must come in.

Lastly, sex education in the majority of schools is out of date(the curriculum hasn't kept pace with the profound technological and social shifts ) and not equipped to handle the reality of digital relationships in the modern day. It tends to address basic reproductive health without adequately covering topics like sexting, online safety, consent, or emotional well-being.

Adolescents thus end up feeling unprepared to handle digital pressure or navigate the emotional complexities of sexting. There is a clear need for more comprehensive, honest, and inclusive education that equips young people with the information and resources they require to make informed choices and protect their mental and physical health in a digital age.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

In this section the finding of the study was discussed in line with the research questions. The Finding also further discussed in respective of previous studies and in relation to literature reviews.

**RQ1:** 1. Do Adolescents' use of various social media sites affects sexting behavior and perceived risk?

The findings of this study corroborate and extend a growing body of international research demonstrating that adolescent sexting behaviors are significantly shaped by engagement with specific social media platforms. In Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa, all platforms investigated (Instagram Stories, WhatsApp, Facebook Messaging, Telegram, YouTube) exerted statistically significant influences on sexting behaviors, with mean scores consistently exceeding the neutral point (3.0) and \*p\*-values  $< .001$  (Table 4.3). This aligns with global patterns where platform multiplicity and design features amplify sexting prevalence (Van Ouytsel et al., 2018). The strongest agreement that social media encourages sexting (mean = 3.25, **56.25%**) mirrors Jørgensen et al.'s (2023) findings on the normalization of sexual risk through ephemeral content, particularly via Instagram Stories (mean = 2.96, 49%) and Telegram (mean = 3.02, 50.5%). These platforms leverage "disappearing" content illusions, fostering a false sense of security that underestimates permanence risks (Temple et al., 2014)—a dynamic reflected in our participants' behavioral patterns.

Notably, Facebook Messaging recorded the highest perceived risk (mean = 3.22, 55.5%), consistent with Rice et al.'s (2015) identification of identity-linked platforms as spaces where adolescents anticipate coercion and permanence consequences. This contrasts sharply with WhatsApp (mean = 2.81, 45.25%), where lower perceived risk parallels Madigan et al.'s

(2018) "encryption paradox": teens associate end-to-end encryption with safety while overlooking forwarding risks. YouTube's moderate influence (mean = 3.11, 52.75%) aligns with Strasburger et al.'s (2013) assertion that algorithm-driven sexualized content desensitizes youth to sexting consequences. Crucially, the universal significance ( $*p* < .001$ ) and confidence intervals (e.g., Facebook: 3.17–3.27)

## **RQ2** perceived risk and decision-making

The analysis of perceived risk and decision-making regarding sexting among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city reveals a complex interplay of awareness, social influence, and the limitations of current educational efforts. While adolescents demonstrate a statistically significant awareness of the need to consider potential consequences before engaging in sexting (Mean = 3.00, SD = 1.293,  $t(2426) = 114.275$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a sense of responsibility for intimate material shared online (Mean = 2.95, SD = 1.368,  $t(2426) = 106.258$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 4.4), the proximity of these mean scores to the neutral point (Test Value = 3.0) suggests this awareness is modest and potentially insufficient as a robust deterrent against risky behavior. The highly significant p-values ( $p < .001$ ) confirm this awareness is not occurring by chance; adolescents *are* cognitively engaging with the risks. However, the small mean differences and confidence intervals barely exceeding or slightly below the neutral point (e.g., 2.95-3.05 for consequence consideration; 2.90-3.01 for responsibility) strongly imply a level of ambivalence or weak internalization of these risks, aligning with theories of adolescent cognitive development where understanding consequences does not always translate to behavioral inhibition due to factors like impulsivity or sensation-seeking (Steinberg, 2008). This finding underscores a critical gap: mere awareness, while a necessary foundation, is demonstrably inadequate in this population to fully mitigate engagement in high-risk sexting behaviors, necessitating

interventions that move beyond knowledge dissemination to target decision-making processes and behavioral skills (Temple & Choi, 2014).

**RQ3** the relationship between sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors.

The findings presented in Table 4.5 provide compelling and statistically robust evidence for a deeply interconnected syndemic of risk behaviors among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city, positioning sexting not as an isolated digital phenomenon but as a significant component embedded within a broader constellation of offline high-risk sexual practices and substance use. The exceptionally high mean ratings for items directly linking these behaviors are striking: adolescents perceive a strong positive correlation between pre-existing engagement in high-risk sexual behaviors and the likelihood of sexting (Mean = 3.54, SD = 1.416,  $t(2426) = 123.074$ ,  $p < .001$ ), an even stronger association between substance use (alcohol/drugs) and increased sexting behavior (Mean = 3.74, SD = 1.344,  $t(2426) = 137.237$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and a clear perception that sexting itself can act as a precursor leading to subsequent risky sexual activities (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.348,  $t(2426) = 135.269$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 4.5). These highly significant results (all  $p < .001$ ) unequivocally support the hypothesis that these behaviors co-occur and mutually reinforce each other within this adolescent population. This pattern aligns strongly with Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor, 1991), which posits that various risk behaviors (e.g., substance use, early/unprotected sex, delinquent acts) cluster together as manifestations of a general tendency towards unconventionality and risk-taking, often linked to underlying factors like sensation-seeking, impulsivity, or poor self-regulation (Steinberg, 2008). The data suggest that sexting is firmly integrated into this risk behavior syndrome for many adolescents in this context, sharing common antecedents and potentially amplifying the consequences of associated offline risks (Temple et al., 2014; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016).

#### **RQ4 Associations between Sexting and Mental Health Outcomes**

The findings from Table 4.6 reveal a complex and concerning picture regarding sexting behaviors and their mental health correlates among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city, demanding careful interpretation beyond initial descriptive statistics. Crucially, while the narrative states means are "far above the test value of 3," the actual data shows all means are significantly below the neutral point of 3.0 (ranging from  $M = 2.26$  to  $M = 2.73$ , all  $p < .001$ ). This indicates a pattern of lower-than-neutral self-reported engagement and higher-than-neutral perceived negative impacts, a finding with profound implications. The high statistical significance ( $p = .000$ ) and consistent directionality across all items (large negative mean differences, e.g.,  $-0.37$  for sending/receiving,  $-0.49$  for worry,  $-0.53$  for sadness/depression) confirm robust associations, but the specific pattern suggests a nuanced reality: adolescents report moderate levels of sexting engagement, yet perceive significant negative mental health consequences associated with it (Drouin et al., 2013; Gámez-Guadix et al., 2015).

#### **RQ5 Long-term Effects of Sexting on Sexual Behaviors**

The most pronounced perceived negative consequence centers on long-term mental health, receiving the highest mean score (though still significantly below neutral:  $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.436$ ,  $t(2426) = 89.308$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Adolescents strongly associate past or current sexting with enduring psychological distress, such as anxiety, shame, or regret ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 1.409$ ,  $t(2426) = 78.275$ ,  $p < .001$ ), potentially stemming from experiences of coercion, non-consensual sharing, reputational damage, or internalized guilt (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Walker et al., 2021).

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **6. SUMMARY OFF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter deals with the summary of the overall findings of the study, the conclusion arrived at in the light of the overall findings and recommendation made in the light of the conclusions made.

#### **6.1 Summary**

This study was conducted with the objective of assessment of the sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents at selected high schools: in The case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa". More specifically, the study was intended to meet the following objectives:

1. To assess the prevalence of sexting among high schools adolescents.
2. To identify the causes of sexting among high schools adolescents.
3. To identify the relationship between sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors.
4. To evaluate the level of sex education provided in high schools and its effect on sexting and sexual health behaviors.

The study attempted to explore practice of public relation. Issues were analyzed with the intention to understand the ground realities from the perspective of the sample respondents. The study employed quantitative and qualitative research design with an assumption that reality is socially constructed by participants and there are multiple truths. This method of research was suitable because the researcher aimed to comprehend the complexity of the phenomenon being researched from the lived experience, perceptions and views in totality.

For the purpose of this study, survey method was employed to uncover the awareness of the respondents on the issue being researched. The method was' chosen on the basis that it helps in conducting data as it is and in gaining a volume of data relevant to the issue under research. Both

primary and secondary sources of data were employed. Data were generated through Questionnaire and interview.

The questionnaires (close and open-ended) were distributed to 2968 respondents. Out of which, 2427 (81.78%) of the respondents scientifically drawn from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire on time whereas the rest 541 (18.22 %) of the respondents didn't return back the questionnaire due to different reasons.

The quantified data obtained through questionnaire was analyzed and in this regard, the study try to solve the following general questions:

1. Do various social media sites utilized by adolescents influence sexting behaviors and perceived risks?
2. In what ways do perceptions of privacy and perceived sexting consequences influence the sexual decision-making process among school adolescents?
3. What is the relationship between sexting behaviors and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among school adolescents?
4. What are the associations between sexting and mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and self-esteem among school adolescents?
5. What are the long-term effects of sexting on sexual behavior and mental health as adolescent's transition into adulthood?

In attempting to answer the aforementioned basic research questions, a survey was preferred to meet the requirements. A study was conducted on the sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents in selected high schools: in The case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa". Questionnaire was made and data also gathered as per the review of related literature. The gathered data were analyzed by descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage,

mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value respectively. Data were processed using "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" (SPSS) software version 25.

### **6.1.1. Major Findings**

Majority of the information presented is derived from the findings of the research. The respondents in the sample were sent their observations and data analyzed accordingly. In terms of the key findings of the study, since a lot of points were made while discussing as well as from the feedback received from the data collection tools the sample respondents were sent the following findings.

The demographic features of the study respondents' population make a few important observations about adolescent sexting and sexual risk-taking. The gender proportion is greater among women, and this is also noteworthy because women could have some different social pressures and attitudes about sexting and sexual risk-taking than men. The age range shows a dangerous growth phase, with most adolescents being between the early and late adolescents, an age characterized by more experimentation and internet use. The dominance of lower secondary school students, particularly grades 9 and 10, shows the vulnerability of this age group to risky sexual behavior and hence early intervention becomes necessary. Also, the higher percentage of students from government schools suggests potential socio-economic determinants of exposure to information and educational content, which may influence their sexting behavior and knowledge about sexual health.

The contribution of social media sites towards sexting among adolescents is extensive and complicated. The findings suggest that social networking websites such as Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube play an important role in sexting. Adolescents admit that the social media provide the channel for trading sexually explicit content and shape the way they

view sexual norms and behavior. Websites with "Stories" features and messaging apps are the most impactful, providing users with easy and instant means of sexting. Moreover, adolescents are aware of the perceived risk of sexting on the sites but consider the behavior to be controllable or less risky. This twofold relationship makes social media both a promoter of risk behaviors and a source of information, and as it is, it becomes imperative to have specific digital literacy and awareness programs.

Getting to understand what adolescents think regarding risk and how they decide to sext paints a complex picture. Although the majority of teenagers understand the necessity to consider likely consequences before sexting, perceived control over online content is not. Peers become a deciding influence in their attitudes since adolescents pattern their views on the views of their peers. School-based interventions are quite effective at this age, with the suggestion for future potential development of school-based initiatives to effectively communicate the risk and promote safer behaviors. These attitudes underscore the necessity for peer-driven programs and sex education that not only inform but also socialize peer norms, hence resulting in better decision making among adolescents.

The high association between sexting and risky sexual behavior is one of the significant implications of this research. Adolescents who sext are bound to engage in other risky sexual behaviors, especially in combination with alcohol or drug use. These behaviors reinforce one another in a spiral of increasing danger that can negatively impact their well-being and health. Sexting's presumed reputational and relational fallout adds to this spiral because adolescents may risk social or emotional ramifications that will affect their future relationships. It is the identification of these intersecting risk factors that is central to informing prevention strategies

that address multiple dimensions of adolescent risk behavior, including online behavior, alcohol and drug use, and sexual health.

Sexting has significant implications for the mental health of adolescents and their subsequent sexual behaviors. The research shows that sexting is associated with emotional distress, including sadness, concern, and lower self-esteem. Teenagers are more likely to feel shame or insufficiency following their sexting behaviors, which may last into adulthood and influence their future relationships. In addition, sexting has been considered by some youth as a means of achieving sexual confidence or discovering boundaries, thereby reflecting the affirmative along with the negative aspects of the practice. These multilevel influences underscore the necessity of comprehensive interventions incorporating mental health counseling and sexuality education. Intervention at the emotional and psychological impacts of sexting is central to healthy adolescent development and to lessening long-term negative effects.

## **6.2 Limitations**

There were some limitations that influenced the research. One was the utilization of self-report information, where social desirability bias may cause the adolescents to underreport risk behavior such as sexting and unprotected sex. Conversely, this granted direct access to the adolescents' personal experience and perception that would otherwise have been difficult to access through any other measure. Second, the study was conducted in Lemi Kura Sub-city, and this might limit generalizability of findings to other contexts; however, this focused effort allowed us to more clearly understand local social and cultural processes, which made the findings highly applicable to targeted local intervention. Lastly, while the mixed-method design enhanced the data, it also consumed more time and resources, which can be categorized under limitations but ensured maximum validity and exhaustiveness in the study results.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

The following were the findings conclusions drawn from the study and the evidences allow us to conclude that, sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents at selected high schools: In the case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababawere concluded as follows.

In conclusion, the findings of this study confirm the intricate relationship among social media use, sexting behavior, and sexual risk behaviors among adolescents in Lemi Kura Sub-city. The study indicates that social media strongly influences sexual risk-taking among adolescents with the consequence of encouraging behaviors with far-reaching social, emotional, and health consequences. Moreover, adolescent risk perception and decision-making are strongly affected by peer pressure and low-level education campaigns and therefore demonstrate a critical requirement for extensive sexual education and internet literacy programs. All of these can be dealt with effectively so as to facilitate healthier sexual growth and online safety, which will result in a reduction in the prevalence of risky behavior and its long-term consequences.

In addition, the study exposes sexting as not just behavior but as behavior that is heavily invested in teenagers' psychological welfare and future sexual attitudes. The psychological distress, shame, and loss of self-esteem ensuing from sexting make inclusion of mental health support within prevention initiatives relevant. It will be necessary to create interventions that target the behavioral and psychological dimensions of sexting in order to create a setting in which young people will be in a position to make safe and informed decisions about their sexual and internet behavior. Generally, a multi-sectoral approach that includes parents, educators, policymakers, and health practitioners will be effective in mitigating risks, promoting resilience, and supporting healthy sexual and digital behaviors among adolescents.

#### **6.4. Recommendations**

The findings of this study are presumed to thesexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents in chosen preparatory schools: In the case of Lemi Kura Sub-city, Addis Ababa.The findings could indicate areas for intervention to test sexting and high sexual risk-taking behaviors among adolescents in chosen preparatory schools. As we reflect on improving the sexting and high sexual risk behaviors among adolescents at selected high schoolsand the following recommendations are made on the basis of research findings in addition to the conclusion.

1.Develop holistic education programs for students of grades 9 and 10 in lower secondary school to raise awareness about sexting dangers, internet safety, and good sexual conduct. The education must be imparted in a framework that is sensitive to the cultural background and includes sessions on boundaries, consent, and long-term effects of online behavior.

The Current Curriculum must Include topics in Biology (reproductive health), Civics (consent, digital rights), and Guidance and Counselingssessions. Teachers shouldn't be overloaded with completely new subjects. Co-Develop Culturally Sensitive Materials: Collaborate with local health experts (e. g. reputable community elders, religious leaders, youthrepresentatives, and school counselors to develop age-appropriate modules in Amharic. Employ relatable local situations. Effectively Train Teachers: Using interactive techniques (role-plays, Q&A sessions), provide required, hands-on training for counselors and teachers of pertinent subjects.

2.Engage peer influence by mobilizing peer educators to be engaged in discussion and awareness campaigns. Peer programs can effectively intervene against unsafe norms, promote healthy attitudes towards engaging in safe sex, and heighten teens' knowledge regarding sexting risks.

peer learning programmes Practical steps: recruitment strategy: select diverse peer educators (gender and social groups) based on respect from peers, communication skills and reliability, not just academic performance. Involve existing student clubs in providing intensive training on core messages (sexting risks, consent, safe sex), communication skills, active listening, boundaries,

and how to reach out to a peer. Include role-play of challenging situations. Structured activities: facilitate regular, scheduled, peer-led sessions (e.g. lunch clubs, after-school safe spaces), awareness campaigns (posters, skits, social media groups, if school policy allows), and buddy systems. Provide clear guidance and supervision by a designated teacher or mentor

3. Create targeted digital literacy programs that educate young people on online content management, handling privacy settings, the risks of sexting, and how to defy peer pressure. These should include hands-on competencies in safe internet communication and the need to be in control of one's content.

4. Incorporate school counseling programs and mental health screening to assist adolescents in managing sexting and sexual risk behavior distress. Open communication in a safe environment can reduce depression, anxiety, and shame, resulting in healthier emotional development.

School counseling and mental health support Practical steps: Build capacity: Provide specialized training for existing school counselors in the fields of sexual health, sexting, non-judgmental communication and basic risk assessment. Partner with local mental health professionals or organizations (e.g. the Mental Health Initiative) to develop clear referral channels: map and formalize referrals to local health centres, youth clinics (e.g. Marie Stopes) or non-governmental organizations (e.g. the European Youth Network) for specialized support.

5. The last but not least, develop multi-component interventions that address all three domains of substance use, unsafe sex, and Internet use simultaneously.

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**Appendix 1. English Version**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Department of Psychology**

The main purpose of this study is to find out about sexting and high risk taking behavior among high school adolescents students. It addresses issues surrounding sexting and sexual risk-taking behaviors. Therefore, this questionnaire has been prepared to collect data. The questionnaire has five parts, and the first part contains your personal basic question; The second part is Perceived Risk and Decision-Making. The third is the relationship between sexting and high-risk sexual behaviors; The fourth examines the relationship between sexting and mental health disorders, and the fifth and final examines the long-term effects of sexting on sexual behavior.it will be. Students in the age group of 14-19 who are attending their studies in regular education can participate in this study. I sincerely thank you for all your cooperation in providing accurate and truthful information. I assure you that whatever information you give me will be kept confidential and that I will destroy it after I use it for this research.

**Key words**

**Sexting (Sexting):-** It means sending or receiving photos, videos and text messages that show nudity or have sexual content through a mobile phone.

**Adolescents:-**means youth and includes young people in the age group of 14-19.

**Section 1 □ Personal, basic, information**

Gender	(1) male	(2) female
Age	(1) 15-16 years	(2) 17-19 years
School Grade level	1. 9th class	2)10th class 3)11th class 4)12th class
The school you attend	1. Private school	(2) Government school

## Section II: Social Media Platform Influence on Sexting Behaviors

Key words: 1=strongly disagree, 2=Disagree 3=Neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree

No	Description	Ranking				
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>1</b>	<b>Sexting behaviors on different social media platform and comparison of sexting behaviors on social media platforms.</b>					
1.1	Social media platforms encourage sexting behaviors among adolescents?					
1.2	Instagram's "Stories" feature increase or decrease sexting behaviors among adolescents?					
1.3	Telegram usage increase sexting behaviors among adolescents?					
1.4	WhatsApp usage increase sexting behaviors among adolescents?					
1.5	Facebook messaging increase perceived risks of sexting among adolescents?					
1.6	YouTube exposure increase or decrease sexting behaviors among adolescents?					
<b>2</b>	<b>Perceived Risk and Decision-Making</b>					
2.1	Adolescents consider potential consequences of sexting when making decisions about sex?					
2.2	Adolescents believe they have control over intimate content they share online?					
2.3	Adolescents weigh the risks and benefits of sexting when making decisions about sex?					
2.4	Peers influence adolescents' perceptions of sexting and its consequences?					
2.5	Educational programs affect adolescents' perceptions of sexting and its consequences?					
2.6	School programs address the potential consequences of sexting among adolescents?					

<b>3</b>	<b>The Relationship between Sexting and High-Risk Sexual Behaviors</b>				
3.1	High-risk sexual behaviors increase the likelihood of sexting among adolescents?				
3.2	Does a Substances use increase the risk of sexting among adolescents?				
3.3	Adolescents who engage in sexting progress to high-risk sexual behaviors?				
3.4	Engage in sexting (sending or receiving sexually explicit messages, photos, or videos) with peers affects you?				
3.5	Have you ever had phone sex?				
3.6	Have you ever had sex while using drugs or alcohol?				
<b>4</b>	<b>Associations between Sexting and Mental Health Outcomes</b>				
4.1	I have sent or received sexually suggestive messages or images via text or social media?				
4.2	I often feel anxious or worried about the digital messages or images I send and receive?				
4.3	Sexting has contributed to feelings of sadness or depression in my life?				
4.4	My self-esteem is negatively affected by my experiences with sexting?				
4.5	I compare my sexting experiences with those of my peers, which makes me feel inadequate?				
4.6	I feel comfortable discussing my feelings about sexting with friends or trusted adults?				
<b>5</b>	<b>Long-term Effects of Sexting on Sexual Behaviors</b>				
5.1	Sexting has positively influenced my sexual confidence as I transitioned into adulthood?				
5.2	I believe that sexting has impacted my mental health in a negative way as I grew older?				
5.3	Did the sexual experiences I had at adolescents' age expose or				

	expose you to STDs?					
<b>5.4</b>	Did you have many romantic relationships when you were adolescents?					
<b>5.5</b>	The experience of sexting during adolescents years has caused me to experience masturbation addiction?					
<b>5.6</b>	Did engaging in sexting during your adolescents make you addicted to pornography?					

**Thank You for Your Kind Cooperation!!**

**Appendix 1.1 English Version Interview Questions for key Informants**

**Addis Ababa University**

**College of Education and Behavioral Studies**

**Department of Psychology**

1. Can you share your experiences regarding sexting? Have you ever sent or received sexual messages or images? If comfortable, could you describe how often this has occurred among your peers?"
2. What do you think motivates adolescents your age to engage in sexting? In your opinion, are these motivations primarily social (e.g., peer pressure, seeking attention) or personal (e.g., intimacy with a partner)?
3. In your view, how do you think sexting relates to other risky sexual behaviors? For example, do you feel that those who sext are more likely to engage in unprotected sex, have multiple partners, or part take in other risk-taking activities?



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**Adolescents**□-□□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□ □□□ □14-19 □□□ □□□ □□ □□□□□□  
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