

Situated Negotiations of Gendered Sexualities: Evidence From Young People in Kabba, Nigeria

by

Ekundayo B. Babatunde, Ph.D.
dayo.astar@yahoo.co.uk
Lecturer, Department of Sociology,
Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Nigeria

&

Babatunde E. Durowaiye
babtee2@yahoo.com
Lecturer, Department of Sociology
Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper is based on research that explores young people's sexuality and sexual relationships as shaped within the socio-cultural context of Nigeria, occasioned by the absence of young people's voices from the literature examining their sexualities. By considering young people's sexuality beyond biological and rational action, this study takes a social constructionist perspective to explain how dominant social norms, cultural values, beliefs and practices influence young people's sexual practices and negotiations. Specifically, through an analysis of qualitative data from 10 focus groups and 16 in-depth interviews with young women and young men, aged 16 to 25, the study illuminates the different social contexts in which the young people were sexual and gendered actors. Analysis of their narratives reveals how they were actively involved in negotiating their sexualities and sexual practices in the form of accepting, rejecting, compromising or juggling with the various norms embedded in their local context. The study concludes that socio-cultural context played an essential role in young people's sexualities and sexual practices, while limited economic resources also had an impact.

Introduction

This paper examines young people's sexualities within the social and cultural contexts of Nigeria and thus outlines how their sexual negotiations are shaped by the norms of gender-based expectations. This paper does not simply conceptualize young people as passive to the normative expectations or circumstances in their socio-cultural environment, but rather, it emphasizes the constraints that they faced in their choices as rational actors in response to social norms which vary according to a number of factors such as age (which is referred to as generational difference), economic conditions and values operating within their families and communities. This study also explores how as sexual-gendered actors, young women and men can be seen as generationally, economically, and relationally situated actors, and therefore, we use the terms 'age' and 'generation' interchangeably in an attempt to reveal how young people, by reason of their being young or of a certain age, are confronted with different levels of constraints and normative expectations within their environment. From the findings discussed here, contradictory and conflicting values influenced young people's understanding of their sexualities and the way they negotiated sexual relations, and in this mix, discourses that enabled and inhibited sexual negotiations in relation to social positioning was discovered.

Socio-Cultural Context and Young People's Sexuality

Over the last two decades, several studies have identified how different norms and cultural values have affected young people's sexual practices, particularly as regards safer sex. At a theoretical level, Giddens (1992) argues that the emergence of late modern values has eroded the traditional gendered norms and practices that were lived and experienced in the pre-modern era. From this perspective, Western societies have undergone core developmental changes in their social, cultural and economic structures within the past few decades (Beck, 1992, Giddens, 1992). Such changes have in turn, altered ideas and expectations of human sexuality as well as other aspects of personal relationships in areas such as marriage, parenthood and family life, and in patterns of interactions between sexual partners and friends. As a result, Giddens considers intimate and emoti relationships in late modern societies to be increasingly based on negotiations, which are often characterised by greater democracy and gender equality (Giddens, 1992; see also Heaphy, 2007). This analysis suggests that negotiation has become an essential part of personal life in contemporary societies as people make informed choices or decisions about their everyday lives and relationships.

Although Giddens's analysis has been criticized for overemphasizing the impact of individual agency and ignoring key structural factors such as class and gender and the influence of power and intergenerational relationships (Jamieson, 1999, Heaphy, 2007), it could be argued that Giddens's suggestions still appear to be more applicable in an individualised Western culture where people are relatively free from the bonds of traditional values and normative influences.

In the African context, it has been argued that despite the trend towards a more global youth culture, often accompanied by a shift to Western ideas and values, such as on contraceptive use and the insignificance of virginity at marriage, young people's sexualities and sexual behaviours have continued to be influenced by dominant traditional norms and values as well as by their economic circumstances (Caldwell, 2000). In this study, both young women and young men were found to be actively involved in negotiating possible choices and decisions in regard to their sexual relationships. However, their negotiations were constrained in various ways that were far from matching Giddens's (Giddens, 1992) picture of negotiated relationships. Apart from their sexualities being highly gendered and influenced by various traditional norms, the young people were also found to be constrained in exercising their agency by their generational, economic, and social situations via family and community ethos. Thus, as this study unfolds, young people's narratives confirm the social constructionist view of sexuality as discursively constructed, organized and shaped in situated ways within specific contexts.

Research Methods

The population for this study was drawn from young people that are attending school and non-schoolers (young people that are currently out of school) in Kabba, a town in Kogi State in mid-west Nigeria near Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria located in the center of Nigeria. The participants, both schoolers and non-schoolers, comprised equal numbers of females and males age 16-19 and 20-25 who were selected for both focus groups and individual interviews. The decision for this composition was taken in order to examine whether there were differences or similarities in young people's sexual practices, meanings and negotiations based on their age, sex, education, or their social status in terms of skills. Geographical location was used to select participants who were born or had spent many years in the community. It was expected that such respondents would be sufficiently familiar with the culture. Although this is not a comparative gender study of young people, it was important to establish an approximate gender balance in the sample, in order to observe the influence of socio-cultural factors on both sexes. Participants were restricted to the 16-25 age range in an attempt to ensure that they would be relatively independent and thus able to decide on their own to participate in the study. It was also expected that people in this age range would possess relatively 'rich' knowledge of the research topic, having had some experience of relationships, negotiations and the meanings or interpretations of sexual issues in relation to the various factors that the study sought to examine. Overall, The sample consisted of 66 participants for the 10 FGDs (five members for each session) and 16 one-to-one interviewees, including some who also participated in the focus groups. Following official approval from different sources and levels as well as gaining the consent of potential participants, the IDIs and focus groups were conducted at venues convenient and safe for the researchers and participants.

Major Findings: Generational and Economic Dynamics

Young people's narratives reveal them talking about themselves in different ways that were closely related; however, for analytical purposes, we discuss young people as generational and economic actors to situate the dynamics that influenced how they negotiated their sexualities.

One of the prominent themes that emerged from the narratives of the young people is that their sexualities and sexual practices were influenced by their age. The analysis of their accounts reveals the complex and subtle contexts in which young people of all ages (both female and male) negotiated their sexual practices. Starting with the younger women's accounts, the following extracts reveal different ways in which those aged 16 to 19 years generally negotiated their sexualities and sexual practice within a constraining and controlling cultural environment.

Grace: ... we're only good friends for now... sex is a no-go area for now... [May I ask why ?] Because *we're not ripe* for it yet... Besides, I'm a Christian... then, my parents mustn't know that I have a boyfriend at this early stage ... [How will they feel?] ... my dad can even decide to stop my school fees ...by the time I'm in school we can freely tell our families... [Younger schooler, aged 17]

Christiana: ...people don't really know about us... I only see him when I go to sell things... I'm not even allowed to visit a male friend ... My parents said making friends with boys will make me pregnant while in school... we see each other after prep class in school, we just go to enclosed areas, where people can't easily see us... [Younger schooler, aged 18].

Titi: ...we have agreed that we were going to *wait until we're mature enough* before thinking of sex... but it happened so fast that I got confused... He told me to meet him at his friend's place and as I got there, it was just the two of us ...and he insisted. It was hard to shout because people around might hear me.... then he pleaded with me... later I discovered that I was pregnant... [Younger non-schooler, aged 18]

Biola: He's much older than me... so I was somehow confused when he told me that if I remained a virgin for too long it might result in infertility after marriage... so I got confused... then, somehow, he lured me into [sex]... in fact, I've never told anyone about this....[Why?] Because I don't want to become subject of gossip and ridicule ... [Younger non-schooler, aged 19]

In analysing the younger women's narratives, it is useful to observe two forms of negotiation, which here is referred to as direct and indirect. At the direct level, many of the younger interviewees engaged in negotiations with their male partners to postpone sexual activity for cultural reasons. At an indirect level, it was observed that most of the young women (both older and younger ones) were engaged in constant negotiations with their parents regarding expected sexual behaviour, i.e. whether they should engage in sexual relationships, and if so, to what level of involvement.

These direct and indirect forms of negotiation were notable for the complex ways in which most of the younger women balanced the internalized norms and values in discouraging premarital sexual relationships against personal influences on them to engage in sexual activity. An interesting part of this finding is that while they did not passively accept the dominant norms that prescribed sexual abstinence for their age group, they did not explicitly reject them. Thus, most of the younger women interviewed were conducting intimate relationships outside the surveillance of their parents and members of their community. While they tended to make these adults believe that they had not yet begun sexual relationships; most of them were conducting such relationships in secret.

Using direct negotiation with their partners, the younger women often expressed their intention to delay sexual activity. As observed in most of their accounts, these younger women were usually conscious of the negative impact of premarital sex. References were made to their parents and other 'authorities' in their community as having informed them that sexual activity was hazardous to their wellbeing, due to the possibility of pregnancy and of having to drop out of school or an apprenticeship. Thus, a number of these younger women negotiated with their partners to postpone or delay sexual activity until they felt mature enough.

However, as revealed in many of their narratives, the younger women could not consistently negotiate their intention to abstain or postpone sex, due to the clandestine nature of their relationships. An interesting example of this is that Titi (her comments are forthcoming) felt unable to forcefully resist unwanted sex with her partner because she feared that to do so would lead to her already illicit relationship being exposed to the community. Other younger women, including Tayo (her comments are forthcoming), could not negotiate total abstinence with their partners due to the contradictions between the moral norm discouraging of premarital sex and the norm of constructing total abstinence so not to compromise her later reproductive capacity. Hence, one of the implications of such secret relationships was that many younger women may have endured rape or coercive sex in silence.

Meanwhile, analysis of the accounts of the older females (aged 20-25) reveals that sexuality was centred on a concern with marriage, which was prioritised in their local culture. It appears from these accounts that the interviewees tended to be conscious of growing older and of the need to secure a potential life partner to achieve their ideal, as prescribed in their local context.

Thus, compared with the accounts of the younger females, total abstinence from premarital sex was less strongly prioritised, with many viewing sexual intercourse as a means of entering into and sustaining their relationships or of demonstrating their commitment to a potential life partner. Thus, negotiations for sexual abstinence among this group were not as prevalent as with the younger women. The following are extracts from interviews with some of these older females.

Lizzy: ... we've been much closer... well, I didn't object to sleeping with him... we're both *old enough* to be married... [Does your mum allow you to visit him?] ... [Older non-schooler, aged 24].

Emma: Although I know we were not meant to be having sex until we get married, I just felt it's still okay since we're in love. After all, *I'm no longer a kid*. Then I've got contraceptive pills, so I'm not afraid of getting pregnant before we're married... [Older schooler, aged 22].

Grace: ... I'm of age now and I know better than before... [Older non-schooler, aged 23].

Ladun: ...I was ready to get along with him... then, I wish *something good* [marriage] would come of our relationship... [Older non-schooler, aged 25].

Participants in a focus group session for older female non-schoolers (aged 20-25) gave similar responses, referring to the constraints on safer sexual practice:

Labaks: ...you can't really insist on a condom at all times... like in some families they never approve of their son marrying until the potential wife is pregnant...

Oyin: ... My dad did not allow my brother to fix their wedding date until the fiancée was pregnant... My dad said some girls are not fertile and a man must be smart to avoid having them as a wife...

Such comments constitute a common explanation for the majority of females in their early twenties engaging in sexual relationships. Contrary to Giddens's (1991) argument of a shift of emphasis in relationships (including sexual ones) from a collectivistic to an individual orientation in the western context, the young African women in this study negotiated their sexual practices in a cultural setting marked by strong social ties and feelings of belonging to the family, to the community and to its traditions. Thus, the sexual narratives of the older females revolved around concerns about what their parents or community members felt or said about them. However, they appeared to be relatively independent of parental control, as some were already out of school, in skilled or unskilled work and in a position to take decisions about their own lives. They were found to have embraced some aspects of post-traditional values, such as by ignoring the norms related to the importance of virginity at marriage, seeing sex beyond reproductive purposes (reflected in Ladun's and Grace's comments) and using contraception (such as revealed by Emma) to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Interestingly, however, they accepted the norms associated with marriage as a recognised status in their culture. Thus, these older women, like their younger counterparts, engaged in *indirect* negotiations, informing their parents about their potential life partners at some point but concealing from them their involvement in sexual activity. Thus, even when some of these older females, like Emma, might have parental consent to begin a potentially lifelong relationship, they were not yet expected to engage in sexual activity. However, based on the need to show commitment or sustain their relationships for a lifetime, or for economic reasons, most of these older females consented to sex in their relationships, while keeping this secret from family and community. A major implication of this finding is that, like their younger counterparts, many of these older females acknowledged that they were not often in a position to freely negotiate their pleasure or protection.

Young Men

Analysis of the accounts of young male interviewees provides clear evidence that age and generation were also for them important factors in how sexuality and its associated meanings and practices were shaped. While male abstinence from sex before marriage was clearly not regarded as having the importance of female abstinence in this setting, the younger males (aged 16-19) narrated different circumstances that constrained their sexual activity.

Toks: We stopped meeting at home since my dad saw her and started advising me about unwanted pregnancy... Now I see her after school ... we just go to hidden areas to have some fun ... [Do you use a condom with her? Ah, that's a big question, it's really hard to buy it here, people around will look at you as if you're a criminal... I buy them outside this town... [Younger schooler, aged 18].

Austin: ...but we're in the modern age, so I still have fun ... [Younger schooler].

- Alaba: ...parents don't understand, because you're depending on them for financial support, so they get embarrassed to see you with a girl... so most times we meet in school ... [Younger schooler, aged 19].
- Deji: My dad is generally very strict with my sisters... but for us [his sons], he allows us to receive visitors including our female friends. ...but he doesn't allow us to take a female friend to our private room...[Younger non-schooler, aged 19].
- Micheal: ... the day my mum saw us together I just said she's a casual friend. [Why?] For them, it's too early to have a girlfriend... They want you to at least be a good age, like late 20s or early 30s ... Most times we meet at my friend's place... [Younger non-schooler, aged 19].
- Richard: ... I cannot buy condom because people will see me as spoilt... I get them from one of my friends who is much older and bolder... [Younger non-schooler, aged 19].

These accounts illustrate different ways in which younger men aged 16 to 19 negotiated their sexual relations and the contexts in which their sexual encounters took place. Their accounts suggest that they were not strictly constrained like the young women in terms of freedom to visit and receive visitors (including female friends) under parental guidance. However, they were often expected not to express or explore their sexuality until they were older or financially independent. Thus, similar to their female counterparts, they acknowledged the norms and gave the impression of adhering to them, whilst indirectly negotiating their sexual encounters in secret. For instance, Toks' narratives of having fun with his partner in quiet or enclosed corners of his school typically explained how some of the young men made alternative arrangements for themselves even when they appeared to be complying with the moral obligations expected of them by their parents and within their cultural setting.

Such narratives indicate the difficulties encountered by many of these younger males who might be open to safer sexual practice. Their sexual situations also pointed to the lack of an enabling environment where both partners could discuss and negotiate their sexual safety and pleasure. By contrast, the sexuality of the older males (aged 20-25) appeared less constrained and controlled in these respects. From their narratives, the older males appeared relatively free to express their sexuality and negotiate the context of their sexual activity. They were mostly found to be using direct forms of negotiation with both partners and parents, unlike the younger generation. Hence:

- Joel: I've read a lot of things abouts ex and HIV/AIDS on the internet and even on radio ... so I'm more careful... I don't live with my parents, I have my own apartment... [Older schooler, aged 22].
- Seye: Well, some people still talk about how they love to marry virgins, but for me, I see it as an old tradition... [Younger non- schooler, aged 18].
- Akin: ... my mum usually insists on some things, like I shouldn't be staying out late or not to have anything to do with some type of girls but I didn't stop... since I gained admission to university, she seems to have relaxed from scrutinizing my movements... [Older schooler, aged 24].
- Kenny: ...my parents didn't like the first girl I introduced to them... so I decided to give it a long time. In fact, they had to start persuading me before I told them about this present one... and it really worked, because they accepted without many queries... [Older non-schooler, aged 25].

The above excerpts are representative of the narratives of most of the older male interviewees and reveal the freer social context in which they negotiated their sexual relationships. It may be inferred from this that as these young men entered their twenties they tended to circumvent some of the traditional beliefs and moral norms, such as those requiring young men to be sexually abstinent and their brides to be virgins. Moreover, many of these older males were already earning an income, which appeared to empower some, like Joel to buy, possess and use condoms. Others, like Akin, found that parental control appeared to lessen once they had completed secondary school and were preparing to enter higher education. Thus, while most of the younger males reported engaging in clandestine sexual activity, the older ones disclosed their relationships to parents and family members as well as engaging in sexual activity within the comfort of their homes. Further, while some of the older males could make use of condoms and could buy them openly, a majority of the younger men lamented being unable to do so, complaining of the stress involved in buying condoms when their anonymity could not be ensured.

Interestingly, however, the older men's accounts suggest that they were still somewhat constrained and might have to use indirect negotiation to achieve their aims or protect their interest in the area of choosing a life partner. Some, like Akin, engaged in indirect negotiation with their parents on issues such as how long to stay out at night and the calibre of young women to associate with.

A wider implication of the different contexts in which the two age groups of male respondents reported engaging in sexual activity is that the younger ones were more likely to see sexual intercourse as an opportunistic activity with little regard for the feelings or safety of their female partners. This could be observed in the way most of younger women described being 'persuaded', 'lured' or forced into sex by their partners. Another implication is that generational constraints hindered young people's access particularly the younger ones to adequate knowledge on sexual issues and both young men and women negotiated often contradictory norms and peer influences.

Young People as Economic Actors

One of the themes emerging from this study of the sexuality of young Kabbarians is the significant influence of economic factors on their sexual negotiations. Most were engaged in economic or income-generating activities, or at least helped their parents to conduct family businesses such as farming and trading. Importantly, the following accounts reveal how some of these young women used various methods of negotiation with men in sexual situations.

Titi: I met him while selling goods for my mum... He's a very nice and generous man... then he seems to be interested in me... Somehow I was afraid of losing him as a good customer, so I decided to go to his place with my younger brother... Even then, he was still quite friendly and would buy things from me. Then on this particular day, I didn't go with my brother, he just came close and held me so close to himself and I was just like ah! this man is about to rape me – but I quickly threatened to scream and alert his neighbours. That was how he left me, but told me never to come to his house again... [Younger non-schooler, aged 18].

Mary: He used to be one of my customers... then we became close friends and started dating...In fact, most times he gives me money even when I didn't I ask him... Then, he asked me for sex, but I told him about my fear of getting pregnant. So I kept giving him different excuses to avoid seeing him until recently... My problem with him now is that he doesn't like to use a condom... I've decided to stop having sex with him. I just told myself that I must stop seeing him... [Older schooler, aged 24]

Justina: He comes to our restaurant to eat... then he asked me a few questions... When I told him why I'm doing the job, he promised to pay for my training for the apprenticeship and to establish my own outlet afterwards.... so even when he asked me out I didn't hesitate to agree because he's been so kind to me... the only thing I don't just like is that he's always demanding sex, even when I'm not feeling like it... [Older non-schooler, aged 24].

Banwo: ... He made promises of how he would support me financially... *When we started having sex, ... I knew it wasn't right, but I didn't resist because I was so convinced by his promises* [Younger non-schooler, aged 19]

The excerpts above provide examples of a range of sexual situations and the manner in which young women in the study actively negotiated or became passive in their sexual encounters. It could be concluded that while some of the young women thought abstractly that they did not want to have sex with particular men or at a particular time, or had the intention to negotiate the use of a condom, their economic limitations seemed to prevent them from actively negotiating their feelings and safety during sexual encounters. This finding revealed that a 'pure relationship' in Giddens' (1992) term, in which sexual and emotional equality exists, cannot be easily achieved within economically motivated relationships. Such relationships often widen the gender gap between women and men, making the above young women suppress their distaste or unhappiness about the sexual encounter while protecting male self-esteem and domination. However, it was interesting to find that some of the young women could actively reject unwanted sex, even in complex sexual situations

Mary's account illustrates a common constraint that most young women in this study faced when attempting to negotiate protected sex in their relationships. She recognized the need for protected sex, but appeared to lack the capacity to negotiate her demand for the use of a condom with the man exploiting her sexually. Her statement that she "decided to stop having sex with him" reveals how some young women find it extremely difficult to convince their partner to use a condom and how others had been enduring unprotected sex. It is interesting to note that Mary found it easier to break up the relationship instead. This finding is consistent with what has been observed among other young women in sub-Saharan Africa. In his review of several studies, Luke (2004) reports that while a number of young women in many African societies do not often negotiate protected sex, due to the transactional nature of their relationships, most of them were significantly involved in negotiating their choices in terms of disputing requests to start sexual relationship or in terminating them. As observed in the present study, some of the young women, like Titi, could decide with whom to have sex or whom to have as a partner, despite economic constraints.

Additionally, Mary recounts that her decision was first to engage in protected sex and when this appeared unrealistic, to end the relationship despite its financial benefits. These young women's accounts confirm the argument that 'there are no relations of power without resistance' (Foucault, 1978:142). The issue is to what extent resistance is effective and what its limitations are. Taking into account the narratives of many young women like Mary and Titi, one could observe that their male partners, as financial providers, assumed the position of power by demanding sex and/or deciding on condom use. Interestingly, there were considerable levels of resistance by these young women in the way they decided to avoid further contact with the men irrespective of their financial dependence on them.

However, this pattern of negotiation was uncommon among young women in this setting. A further analysis of others' accounts reveals that most of them chose to continue their relationships for various reasons. For instance, the third interviewee above, Justina, described her partner as an 'answer to her prayer' in terms of solving her financial problems. Thus, even when she felt that her partner was pestering her for sex, she found it impossible to resist him. A major implication of this pattern of financial dependence is that the young women were often subject to sexual exploitation by older men. This is also exemplified by Banwo's explanation that her customer had a 'stable business' and 'his own apartment' and had promised to assist her financially. All these aided her decision to accept his sexual proposal. In her own words, "when we started having sex, ... I knew it wasn't right, but I didn't resist because I was so convinced by his promises". This clearly explains why she could not exercise her agency to negotiate protected sex.

As for the young men, analysis of their accounts reveals that they tended to engage in the same economic activities as their fathers, such as farming and repairs. Others were self-employed as transporters or engaged in skilled or unskilled employment. Such activities appeared to enable them to meet their economic needs to a reasonable level. Thus, young men like Lanre and Deolu appeared to be more financially secure and were well positioned to negotiate their choice of partner. For instance, when an older schooler was asked if his desires were met in his relationship, he replied in the following way:

Anthony: Yeah, I'm very pleased and very satisfied because people used to say that these educated girls would never say yes to people like us who are not educated... I decided to work my way to this girl. You know that with money you can do anything... I was giving her what those boys in her school could not... and that was it... and we're still together [Male: Older non-schooler, aged 23].

Another young man gave a similar response:

John: I have two girls and I never hide it from either of them... because all women want is money. There's no time they ask me for money that I will not settle them... In fact, they compete to please me, because they want me to marry them... [Male: Older non-schooler, 25].

Two of the younger men (aged 16-19) related complementary experiences in a focus group.

Toks: Most of our women keep running after big men, and the *okada* men, because of their money...

Samuel: Exactly. A friend of mine just broke up with his girlfriend, because the girl was having an affair with an officer in the new bank... She was even bold enough to tell my friend that she's got a better person who is up to standard ...

The above accounts indicate that economic factors could be a major influence in the young men's sexual negotiations. They also reveal the extent to which some of them appeared to be conscious of their economic power as a prerequisite to negotiating their choice of partner or acquiring a dominant role in their heterosexual relationships. In addition, such notions as expressed by Anthony, John and those in the focus group indicated strongly that the existing gender practices in heterosexual relations (Holland et al., 1998) are further reinforced by economic circumstances thereby increasing the exploitation of women by men through socioeconomic power (Walby, 1990; 1995). Further, as observed in the above findings, most relationships formed on economic relations may lack the type of commitment that is required to develop an intimate relationship, based on emotional, democratic and equal negotiation (Giddens, 1992).

The narratives of a number of young women and young men indicate that access to economic resources reinforced male power and encouraged men to behave in a dominant way towards women, as well as shaping the choices of sexual partners and the negotiations of both genders. Moreover, other studies have reported that men who use their socioeconomic power to persuade young women to engage in sex often consider such relationships as transactional and in most cases do not agree to use condoms (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, Luke, 2003, Longfield et al., 2004, Nkosana et al., 2007).

Conclusion

The evidence of this study suggests that young people's sexual practices were largely influenced by different gender-based expectations and norms, by virtue of their belonging to younger or older age-groups, and of their economic status. While the young women and men did not passively adhere to or accept the norms, and values imposed on them by these different factors, they were constrained in different ways from engaging in protected sex. For instance, analysis of their responses reveals that while most participants appeared to accept the norms applied to young people in their community, such as that of premarital chastity, they found it difficult to apply these to their own real situations and practice, due to conflicting social pressures.

These findings are consistent with other studies across the world that have revealed the extent to which young people's sexuality has remained contextualized within the normalization of patriarchy, perpetuating the influence of traditional norms on sex, sexuality and the capacity to exercise sexual agency (Holland et al., 1998, Izugbara, 2004a;2004b, Jackson et al., 2004, Maxwell, 2007, Reddy and Dunnes, 2007). While the findings of this research show similarities with many studies across the world, they also reveal that we should not assume young people's sexuality as a universal phenomena.

As observed in this study, other social and institutional contexts impacted on young people's sexuality and sexual negotiations. For example, the strong social ties of young people with their families and their communal way of existence impacted their sexuality and 'sexual conduct' in how they engaged in clandestine relationships and avoided the use of condoms in order to maintain a pretence of conformity before their parents, and older adults within the wider community. It also seems that the conception of being 'young', for example within family and community are indeed problematic for young people as it constrains their sexuality in particular ways, even when they do not necessarily agree with that conception. In addition, unlike the young people in UK contexts surveyed in the WRAP (Women, Risk and AIDS Project) and MRAP (Men, Risk and AIDS Project) studies, limited economic resources play an especially crucial role in reinforcing gender inequality and traditional (dominant) male identities and sexual practices.

References

- Alan, B. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Caldwell, J. C. (2000). Rethinking the African AIDS epidemic. *Population Development Review*, 26(1):117-135.
- Connell, R. W. (2002). *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality (Vol. 1: An Introduction)*. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *The History of Sexuality. (Vol. 3)*, New York, Pantheon.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Heaphy, B. (2007). *Late Modernity and Social Change: Reconstructing Social and Personal life*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S. & Thomson, R. (1998). *The Male in the Head: Young People, Heterosexuality and Power*. London: Tufnell Press.

- Izugbara, C. O. (2004a). Notions of sex, sexuality and relationships among adolescent boys in rural South-East Nigeria. *Sex Education*, 4(1):63-79.
- Izugbara, C. O. (2004b). *Patriarchal Ideology and Discourses of Sexuality*. Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre. Retrieved on 14th December, 2013 from <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/izugbara.pdf>.
- Jackson, S. & Scott, S. (2004). Sexual antinomies in late modernity. *Sexualities*, 7(2):233-48.
- Jamieson, L. (1999). Intimacy transformed: a critical look at the pure relationship. *Sociology*, 33(3):477-494.
- Krueger, R. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- LeClerc-Madlala, S. (2003). Transactional sex and the pursuit of modernity. *Social Dynamics*, 29(2):213-233.
- Longfield, K., Glick, A., Waithaka & Berman, J. (2004). Relationships between older men and younger women: Implications for STIs/HIV in Kenya. *Studies in Family Planning*, 35:125-134.
- Luke, N. (2003). Age and economic asymmetries in the sexual relationships of adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa. *Studies in Family Planning*, 34(2):67-86.
- Maxwell, C. (2006). Understanding young women's sexual relationship experiences: The nature and role of vulnerability. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(2):141-58.
- Maxwell, C. (2007). 'Alternative' narratives of young people's heterosexual experiences in the UK. *Sexualities*, 10(5):539-558.
- Nkosana, J. & Rosenthal, D. (2007). The dynamics of intergenerational sexual relationships: The experience of schoolgirls in Botswana. *Sexual Health*, 4(3):181-187.
- Plummer, K. (1995). *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, change and social worlds*. London: Routledge.
- Reddy, S. & Dunne, M. (2007). Risking it: Young heterosexual femininities in South African context of HIV/AIDS. *Sexualities*, 10(2):159-172.

- Selikow, T. (2004). "We have our own special language." Language, sexuality and HIV / AIDS: A case study of youth in an urban township in South Africa. *African Health Sciences*, 4(2):102-108.
- Smith, D. J. (2004). Premarital sex, procreation, and HIV risk in Nigeria. *Family Planning*, 35(4):223-35.
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Walby, S. (1997). *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge.