

Intergenerational sexual relationships in urban Botswana

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ABSTRACT

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This study reports the results of a survey of 600 senior secondary schools girls (age between 18 and 22 years) in urban Botswana regarding their involvement in intergenerational relationships. The results indicate that even though not many girls (no. 54) agreed to be involved in these relationships themselves, the majority of them reported they knew girls of their age who were. Further more than one third (38.7%) reported to have had sexual advances from older men. 48 (88.9%) of those who had sex with older men also had sex with boys of their own age. The study also indicates that 27 (50%) of those who had sex with older men did not use condoms indicating that many of these relationships involve unsafe sexual practices. Many of the girls (59%) indicated that the sex was unplanned. Material gain was found to be the main motivating factor why girls involved in intergenerational sexual relationships as 85% of the girls involved in the study indicated so. Lastly it was found that the girls involved in intergenerational sexual relationships had positive perceptions regarding these relationships. It is recommended that a favourable socio-cultural environment needs to be created in order for young women to be assertive and make decisions which affect their well being

KEYWORDS: Intergenerational sex, sexual practices, heterosexual, negotiate, condoms, epidemic

Introduction

There is a growing concern in sub-Saharan Africa about sexual relations between adolescent girls and older male partners. Although sexual relationships between young women/girls and older men are not a new phenomenon globally and in the sub-Saharan region in particular, they have now become a concern because of the HIV/AIDS scourge. Intergenerational sexual relationships

have been implicated in the spread of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. While, in itself, the phenomenon of ‘sugar daddies’ does not automatically lead to HIV, the unequal power relations inherent in those sexual relationships make it difficult for young women and girls to negotiate with older men the use of condoms, thus predisposing them to HIV infection (Jewkes, Vundule et al., 2001; Kambou, Shah et al., 1998). To appreciate the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in which it is argued

that intergenerational sex plays a significant part, a brief overview of the epidemic in the world, sub-Saharan Africa, and Botswana is given

Brief overview of HIV/AIDS

In 2003 it was estimated that 46 million people in the world were infected with HIV (UNAIDS and WHO, 2003). In 2005 it was reported that 40.3 million [36.7- 45.3 million] people are living with HIV worldwide (UNAIDS and WHO, 2005). The increase in the proportion of women being affected by the epidemic continues. In 2005, 17.5 million [16.2-19.3 million] women were living with HIV globally, and that was an increase of one million more than in 2003 (UNAIDS and WHO, 2005). Most young women had acquired the virus through heterosexual intercourse (UNAIDS and WHO, 2002, 2005).

Sub-Saharan Africa

There were 1.5 million [1.3 million–1.6 million] new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa in 2013. However, the good news is that new infections are on the decline. There was a 33% drop in new HIV infections among all ages in the region between 2005 and 2013 and a 19% reduction since 2010. The number of new HIV infections is falling in every country in the region except Angola and Uganda¹ where increases were recorded UNAIDS (2014). South Africa, the country with the largest number of people living with HIV, recorded the largest decline in new infections in absolute numbers, with 98 000 fewer

new HIV infections than in 2010. Since 2010, the number of new HIV infections in Ghana decreased by 43% and by 41% in Malawi. Among young people aged 15–24 years, the number of new infections has declined by 42% since 2001 in sub-Saharan Africa and by 17% since 2010 (UNAIDS (2014)).

However, the data are still stark and worrisome. More than four out of ten new infections among women aged 15 years and over are among young women (15–24). HIV prevalence among adolescent girls aged 15–19 years is unacceptably high. In eastern and southern Africa, for example, adolescent girls in Mozambique had an HIV prevalence of 7%, which doubled to 15% by the time they were 25 years of age. In Lesotho, an HIV prevalence of 4% was recorded among adolescent girls, which increased to 24% among young women aged 20–24 years. This pattern is repeated in almost every country in eastern and southern Africa (UNAIDS (2014)). A review of more than 45 studies from throughout sub-Saharan Africa revealed that relationships between young women and older male partners were common. Relationships with large differences in age are associated with unsafe sexual behaviour, and low condom use (Idele et al, 2014).

Sub-Saharan Africa has been by far the region most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic for time (UNAIDS and WHO, 2003, 2005). In 2003, an estimated 26.6 million people were living with HIV, including the 3.2 million who became

infected during the past year. UNAIDS and WHO (2005) reported that now the region is home for 25.8 million [23.8-28.9 million] people living with HIV. The number of people living with HIV is 25,000,000. The adult HIV prevalence is 4.7% (UNAIDS, 2012). Table 1 below shows the HIV prevalence in a number of sub-Saharan countries in 2012.

Country	HIV Prevalence (%)
Southern Africa:	
South Africa	17.9
Botswana	23
Swaziland	26.5
West Africa:	
Senegal	0.5
Cameroon	4.5
Nigeria	3.1
East Africa:	
Kenya	6.1
Uganda	7.2
Tanzania	5.1

Source: UNAIDS (2012)

The design of the Study

The paper presents the results from 600 schoolgirls who were surveyed. First a brief

description of the design of the study is given, followed by the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their older partners together with their sexual practices. Then the reasons why girls engage in intergenerational sexual relationships are addressed, and the participants' perceptions of such relationships are also covered. Finally, the results are discussed.

The survey was conducted with schoolgirls in public senior secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana. The girls completed a questionnaire. All four public senior secondary schools in Gaborone were included in the study. Senior secondary schools, the last two years of a 12 year secondary school system, were used. Schoolgirls were chosen because they are more vulnerable due to the school environment, where students easily influence each other, and there is a lot of peer pressure. There is anecdotal evidence that girls compete with each other regarding the types of mobile phones they have, the type of clothes they can afford to buy and even the amount of cash they have. This has led to a demand of what is commonly referred to, among the girls, as triple C. Triple C is an acronym for Cash, Cell (local name for a mobile phone), and Clothes. This type of environment was seen as putting pressure on schoolgirls to enter into sexual relationships that could provide them with such things. Schoolgirls also experience pressure from the school community in general, for example, boys/teachers/drivers/administrators that make some sexual advances. In fact, a number of male

teachers have in the past been dismissed from their jobs because of engaging in sexual relationships with schoolgirls.

In total, 600 schoolgirls participated in the study. This large sample size was required to enable an estimate of the prevalence of intergenerational sex (which is likely to be low as indicated by some Knowledge Attitudes Practices (KAP) studies (SIAPAC-Africa, 2001; BIDPA, 2003) with adequate precision.

The survey questionnaire designed by Cleland (1998-1999) was adapted. The data collection instrument was adapted because it has been used in different countries and has been proven to be appropriate for collecting data on partner selection, sexual behaviour and risk taking among the youth. However, the researcher had to develop some new questions in order to gather some specific and relevant information for this project which were not covered by the adapted instrument. Three questions were adopted, while 12 were adapted and 30 new ones were developed by the researcher

Demographic characteristics of respondents and their older partners

The age of the respondents ranged between 18 and 22 years with an average age of 20 years. The majority 499 (83.2%) were 18 years old, 83 (13.8%) participants were 19 years old, 12 (2%) were aged 20 years while just four were aged 21 and only two were aged 22 years. The majority of

the participants 394 (65.7%) were in Form 4 (Year 11) and 206 (34.3%) were in Form 5 (Year 12).

Three-quarters (437, 72.8%) of the schoolgirls resided in Gaborone and 163 (27.2%) were from the surrounding villages. The four surrounding villages are very close (maximum of 15km) to Gaborone. The majority (431, 71.8%) of the participants lived with their immediate families (parents and other siblings) and 44 (7.3%) lived with guardians. Of those who lived with their parents, four also lived with grandparents.

The participants who were in intergenerational sexual relationships were asked about the age and marital status of their sexual partners. Partners' ages ranged from 28 to 50 years with an average age of 39 years. Over half (30, 57.9%) of the participants' partners were married, one-third (19, 36.5%) were single, and a small number were divorced or separated (1, 1.9% and 2, 3.8% respectively).

Sexual practices

In order to estimate the prevalence of intergenerational sexual relationships the participants' sexual relationship profiles were ascertained. It was made clear in the survey instructions that having a boyfriend meant an intimate relationship which may or may not involve sex. First girls were asked if they have ever had a boyfriend in their age group and data revealed that 457 (76.2%) have or have had boyfriends in their age group. Of these, 162

(35.4%) had had vaginal sexual intercourse and 293 (64.1%) had not. They were asked if they have friends/relatives who have older boyfriends. Nearly two-thirds (362, 60.3%) reported that they have friends/relatives who have older boyfriends. The participants were also asked if they had ever been approached by older men (≥ 10 years older) to have sexual relationships with them. Of the 600 girls, 232 (38.7%) indicated that they were asked by older men to have sex with them, 45 percent reported that they were not asked and 16.3 percent did not respond to the question.

In order to estimate the prevalence of intergenerational sex among the approached group they were further asked if they agreed to have sex with the older men. Of those, about one-quarter (54, 23.3%) consented to have sex and three-quarters (178, 76.7%) did not. Therefore, of 162 girls who had sex, 54 (33.3%) had sex with older men and 108 (66.7%) had sex with age mates. Of the 54 who had sex with older men, 48 (88.9%) had also had sex with age mates.

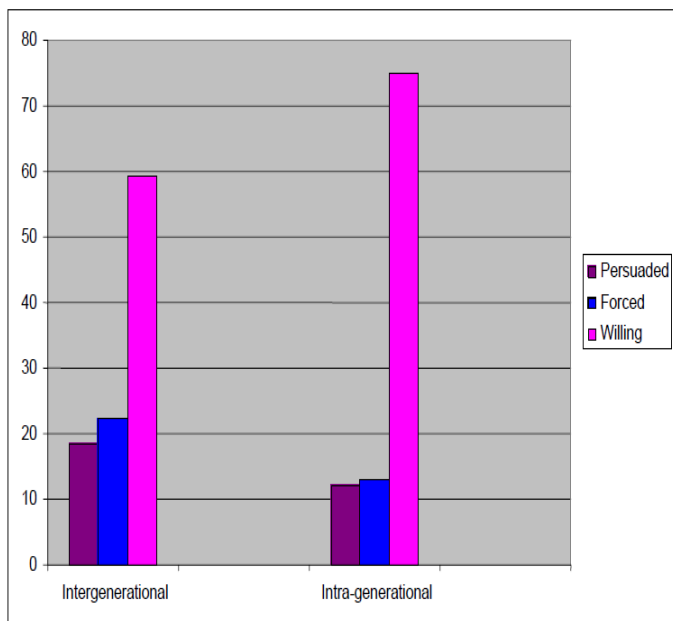
To address factors that might contribute to unsafe sex practices, the girls were asked if a condom was used during their first sexual experience with their current partner. Half (27, 50%) of the 54 girls who had sex with older men reported that a condom was used, three (5.6%) reported to have used another method and 16 (29.6%) indicated that nothing was done to prevent STIs/HIV and pregnancy. The number of the respondents who did nothing to prevent STI/HIV is worrying considering the fact that Botswana has one of the

highest HIV prevalence in the whole world (NACA, 2005). Therefore, failure to engage in protected sex in Botswana might put one in a high risk of contracting the HIV virus more especially when having sex with older men. On the other hand, of 108 girls who had sex with their age mates, 79 (73%) reported that a condom was used, 10 (9.3%) reported that another method was used and 19 (17.6%) indicated that nothing was done to prevent STI/HIV and pregnancy. The emerging pattern of high condom use during intra-generational sex might be a reflection of girls' greater ability to negotiate condom use with a boyfriend of their age group than with an older boyfriend.

Some of the activities mentioned by the girls who reported that other methods of preventing HIV and other STIs were used included: 'we tested for HIV and we were both negative (n=5)'; 'we made sure that our body fluids did not come in contact with any of us' (n=3); 'we were using different towels and not tongue kissing' (n=3) and 'we were very careful' (n=2). The above responses indicate that there is some lack of knowledge among some respondents with regard to HIV infection and prevention.

In pursuing factors that can contribute to unsafe sex, participants were asked if they would say they were persuaded, forced to have sex or they were both equally willing. Their responses are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Persuaded, forced or both equally willing to have sexual intercourse



Of the 54 girls who had sexual intercourse with older men 32 (59.3%) reported that they were willing to have sex, about one-quarter (12, 22.2%) indicated that they were forced into sex and 10 (18.5%) reported that they were persuaded to have sex. Of the 22 who were either forced or persuaded, 13 (59%) indicated that nothing was done to prevent STIs/HIV and pregnancy during their first sexual encounter. More than half (32, 59.3%) reported that sexual intercourse was unexpected, 15 (27.8%) reported that sexual activity was planned and 7 (12.9%) did not respond to this question.

Three-quarters (75%) of those who had sex with their age mates indicated that they were both equally willing to have sex, 13 percent reported that they were forced into sex and 12 percent indicated that they were persuaded. Of the 108 girls who had sex with boys in their age group, 64 (59.3%) indicated that the sexual encounter was planned and 44 (40.7%) reported that it was unexpected. Of the 19 who indicated that nothing

was done to prevent STIs/HIV and pregnancy, 12 (63%) did not plan their sexual encounters.

Unplanned sex was reported more often by girls who had sex with older men (59.3%), than girls who have sex with boys of their own age (40.7%). The pattern shown by these results is that the majority of the respondents who engaged in unprotected sex were those who did not plan for their sexual encounters and that they were either forced into having sex or persuaded into it.

The girls engaging in intergenerational sex were asked about the number of sexual partners they have in both intergenerational and intra-generational sexual relationships. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number and type of sexual partners for girls involved with older men

No of same-age boyfriend (s)	No. of older boyfriend (s)			
	1 (n=29)	2 (n=15)	3 (n=1)	≥ 4 (n=9)
0	6	3	-	-
1	8	3	-	-
2	5	2	-	-
3	7	4	1	-
≥ 4	3	3	-	9
Total	29	15	1	9

According to Table 2 there are nine girls who had no boyfriends in their age group, of whom six reported to be in a monogamous sexual relationship with older boyfriends while three had two older boyfriends. Nine girls reported to have more than four sexual partners in same-age group and four among older men. Since the survey

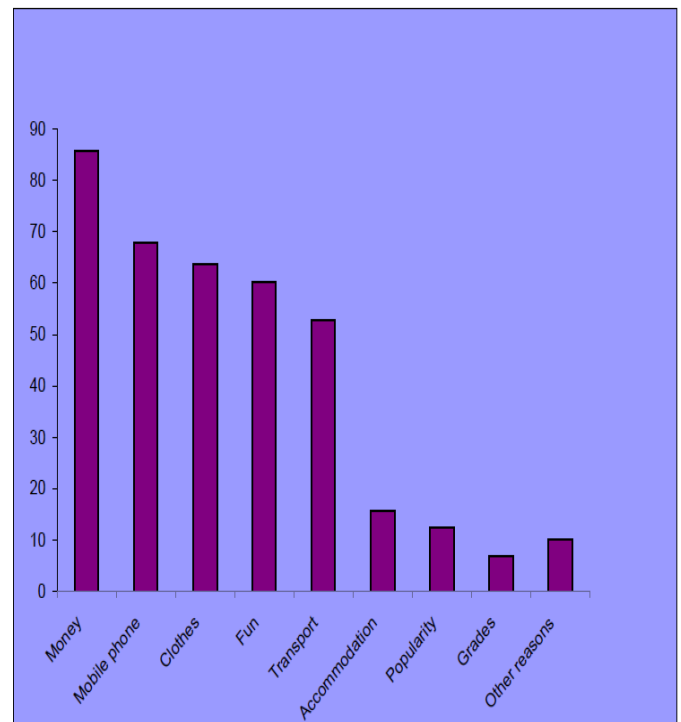
question which elicited the number of sexual partners was aimed at finding out the number of sexual partners the respondents have (How many sexual partners do you have? Number of same-age boyfriends____, Number of older boyfriends (≥ 10 yrs older) _____), it is assumed that the sexual relationships were concurrent. The results have revealed that some girls have sexual relationships across generations, as well as multiple partners within intra-generational and intergenerational circles.

Reasons for intergenerational sexual relationships

To elicit socio-economic reasons for intergenerational sexual relationships all 600 respondents were asked to choose from a pre-selected list (which was based on the reviewed literature) that included both economic (money, mobile phone, clothes) and social (fun, popularity) reasons. They were asked to choose as many categories as were applicable. They were also asked to give any other reason that was not in the list. The reasons selected by the participants are presented in a bar chart below.

Figure 4: Perceived reasons why schoolgirls enter sexual relationships with older men (≥ 10 years older)

years older)



Material gain seems to be the main motivation why girls have sexual relationships with older men. Figure 4 shows that money is the reason most commonly thought to be influencing schoolgirls to go out with older men, reported by 514 (85.7%) of the participants. This is followed by mobile phone which was mentioned by 408 (68%) of the participants and clothes (383, 63.8%). About two-thirds (361, 60.2%) stated that having fun is one of the reasons why girls enter into sexual relationships with older men. Obtaining better grades/marks was mentioned by a small number (42, 7%). The other reasons recorded by 61 (10.2%) respondents included more social reasons than economic ones such as sexual satisfaction (n=8), love (n=4), peer pressure (n=7), the desire to have a mature, responsible and experienced partner (n=8), and having status among the peers (n=5).

Perceptions of intergenerational sexual relationships

Data relating to the attitudes and perceptions towards intergenerational sexual relationships were obtained by asking all 600 participants to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Beliefs about intergenerational sexual relationships

Statements	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	
	Fr eq.	%	Fre q.	%	Fre q.	%
1). Men should always be older in sexual relationships	190	32	335	55.5	75	12.5
2). Older men (≥ 10 years older) are good boyfriends	54	9.0	475	79.2	71	11.8
3). The reason girls go out with older men (≥ 10 years older) is that they are able to provide gifts and money	509	84.8	57	9.5	34	5.7
4). There is pressure on girls to date older men who can give gifts to them	350	58.3	173	28.8	77	12.9
5). Would you consider going out with an	41	6.8	524	87.3	35	5.8

older man if you have the opportunity						
6). It is difficult to talk about safe sex (e.g. condom use)when your boyfriend is older (≥ 10 years older)	235	39.2	208	34.7	157	26.2
7). It is easier for girls to talk about safe sex, e.g condom use when they have a boyfriend of their own age group than when they have an older boyfriend (≥ 10 years older)	484	80.7	69	11.5	47	7.9
8). There is greater risk of getting STD/HIV when having sex with older men	409	68.2	149	24.8	42	7.0
9). Young girls who date older men are considered to be lucky	72	12.0	471	78.5	57	9.5
10). It is OK to have a regular boyfriend and an older one at the same time	39	6.5	525	87.5	36	6.0

More than half disagreed with the general proposition that men should always be older in sexual relationships. However, almost one-third believed that men should always be older in sexual relationships. More than three-quarters agreed that it was easier for girls to talk about safe sex with a boyfriend of their age than one who is

older and about one-third reported that it is difficult to talk about safe sex (e.g. condom use) when your boyfriend is older (≥ 10 years older). About two-thirds agreed that there was greater risk of getting STIs/HIV when having sex with older men.

More than three-quarters of the participants did not perceive older men as good boyfriends, consider young girls who date older men as lucky, or think that it is OK to have a regular boyfriend and an older one at the same time. Furthermore, most would not consider dating older men if they have an opportunity. Gifts and money were considered as motivating factors for going out with older men by more than three-quarters of the participants and more than half believe that there is pressure on girls to date older men who can give gifts to them. The results show that most of the respondents did not see intergenerational sexual relationships as a good practice. They associated it with the risk of getting HIV and other sexual transmitted infections. Further analysis was done to find out if there were statistically significant association between being in a sexual relationship with an older man and one's perceptions of such relationships. The results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: The perceptions of those in sexual relationships with older men

	n	% agree	n	% agree
1). Men should always be older in sexual relationships*	52	51.9	443	32.3
2). Older men (≥ 10 years older) are good boyfriends	52	84.6	443	90.2
3). The reason girls go out with older men (≥ 10 years older) is that they are able to provide gifts and money	52	78.8	443	85.8
4). There is pressure on girls to date older men who can give gifts to them	52	51.9	443	60.0
5). Would you consider going out with an older man if you had the opportunity**	44	43.2	435	95.7
6). It is difficult to talk about safe sex (e.g. condom use)when your boyfriend is older (≥ 10 years older)**	49	30.6	323	55.1
7). It is easier for girls to talk about safe sex, e.g condom use when they have a boyfriend of their own age group than when they have an older boyfriend (≥ 10 years older)	52	71.2	443	82.4
8). There is greater risk of getting STD/HIV when having sex with older men	51	74.5	409	72.6
9). Young girls who date older men are considered to be lucky*	52	25.0	443	11.3
10). It is OK to have a regular boyfriend	52	13.5	443	6.5

Statements	Are you currently in a sexual relationship with an older man?	
	Yes	No

and an older one at the same time				
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* p < .01; ** p < .001

Of the 10 statements in Table 4, four demonstrated significant effects. There were statistically significant association between being in a sexual relationship with an older man and believing that men should always be older in sexual relationships ($\chi^2 = 7.963$; $p < .005$) and in considering themselves lucky ($\chi^2 = 7.879$; $p < .005$). Those who were not in a relationship with an older man were more likely to think it was difficult to talk about safe sex when the sexual partner is older ($\chi^2 = 10.226$; $p < .001$) and less likely to consider such sexual relationships even if they have the opportunity ($\chi^2 = 85.459$; $p < .000$). The fact that there were statistically significant associations between being in a sexual relationship with an older man and some pertinent issues such as age difference, easy communication, being considered lucky and the likelihood of continuing in such relationships shows that the girls involved in intergenerational sexual relationships have positive perceptions and attitudes towards such relations.

Cultural beliefs

Empowerment theory (personal and interpersonal power) has been used to explain how perceptions of power among senior secondary schoolgirls in Botswana might affect their behaviour as far as negotiating safe sex practices are concerned. This

theory is considered particularly relevant in the Botswana context where women are generally expected to be submissive to men, especially when it comes to sexual relations.

In the light of this, respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements 'sexual partners should have equal influence in a relationship' and 'in 'Tswana culture, girls are often not expected to take the lead in sex'

The majority of the participants, 532 (88.7%) believe that girls should have equal influence in a relationship with men and a small number (28, 4.7%) disagreed. This is an indication that most of the girls believe in gender equality in the conduct of sexual relationships. The findings also show that almost two-thirds (385, 64.2%) of these young women agree with the statement that the Tswana culture does not expect girls to take the lead in sex. This reflects the girls' knowledge about Tswana culture that men should always take the initiative in sexual matters. However, it is clear from their responses to the question relating to gender equality that though they have this knowledge they do not necessarily believe in it themselves.

Discussion

The participants' sexual relationships' profile

More than three-quarters of the participants had boyfriends in their age group and about one-quarter had older boyfriends. The same trend was

found by BIDPA (2003) and UNDP (2005). This study has revealed the practice of multiple sexual partners both in intra-generational and intergenerational sexual relationships. Among those who reported being in current intergenerational sexual relationships, more than three-quarters also have sexual partners in their own age group. Of those, more than one-third had their first penetrative sexual experience with older men. The issue of multiple sexual partners has been identified to be one of the factors that fuels STI/HIV infections. UNDP (2000) reported the sex link of intergenerational transmission of HIV and argued that many girls in the sub-Saharan region have their first penetrative sex with older men who have had exposure to STIs including HIV. It further states that subsequent sexual involvement of these girls with the boys of their age provides the medium through which the virus moves from one generation to another.

More than one-third of the respondents of this study who had boyfriends reported that they had vaginal sexual intercourse with them. About two-thirds of the sexually active participants reported that it was their first sexual encounter. The average age of first sexual intercourse for this group was 16.5 years. Three-quarters of those who were in intra-generational sexual relationships stated that they were not forced into sex during their first sexual encounter, they were equally willing. It is interesting that many reported that the sex was unexpected and was not planned. More than half of those who were in

intergenerational sexual relationships indicated that they were willing to have sex with older men, and only a few reported that they were forced. However, about two-thirds stated that the sex with older men was not planned and was unexpected.

Condom use among intra-generational sex and intergenerational sex was reported to be high during the first sexual contact with the current or most recent partner by the participants of this study, consistent with other studies in Botswana (BIDPA, 2003; NACA, 2005; UNDP, 2005). Some sexually active participants in this study indicated that they did not use condoms during their first sexual intercourse with their current sexual partners. The number of those who had sex with older men who did not use a condom causes concern because the HIV prevalence is high in Botswana. Engaging in unprotected sex especially with older men who may have had exposure to HIV and other STIs is risky (UNDP, 2000). The sexual encounters of some of these girls were characterized by the lack of planning, persuasion and sometimes force. This study has found that there is still a lack of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS infection and prevention. This was indicated by HIV preventive measures that some participants reported using during sexual intercourse, such as 'we made sure that our body fluids did not come in contact with any of us', 'we were using different towels and not tongue kissing' and 'we were very careful'. These types of responses indicate that knowledge of how HIV

infection takes place and how it is prevented is still poor among some secondary schoolgirls.

The prevalence of intergenerational sex

Among the participants who were approached by older men, almost one-quarter consented to have sex with them. The high prevalence of intergenerational sexual relationships reported in studies conducted in other sub-Saharan African countries (Bangol and Chamo, 2004; Machel, 2001; Luke, 2003; Luke and Kurz, 2002) seems not to have been confirmed by this study. There are several possible reasons why intergenerational sex prevalence among the participants was relatively low. The first possibility is that the prevalence of intergenerational sex in Botswana is actually relatively low. The prevalence might be low because studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa on intergenerational sexual relationships have established that lack of access to education, health services, employment and a weak economy associated with poverty often forces women and girls into sexual relationships with potential economic benefits. Collins and Toure (2004) found that poverty and war, among other forms of societal crisis, forced increasing numbers of girls and young women to exchange sex for survival.

Because Botswana has a relatively strong economy with free education, free health care services, free access to land ownership by both men and women and well established social welfare systems schoolgirls in Botswana may be

less likely to engage in sexual relationships with older men as a matter of survival as do those in less fortunate sub-Saharan African countries (Nkosana, 2006). The reasons given by the participants in this study have to do with their quest for luxury goods and services such as money, mobile phone, fashionable clothes, being driven in a posh car and having fun. Bagnol and Chamo (2004:10) suggest a possible reason for the quest for luxuries by asserting that:

The introduction of consumer society through television, videos and magazines has increased young women's needs and aspirations, without educating them on how to define their priorities and find ways to satisfy these new desires independently from men and their sexuality.

The second possible reason for the relatively low levels of intergenerational sexual relationships could be the very narrow age range (between 18 and 22 years) of girls in this study. In fact a large majority of the participants were 18 year olds and only a small number were between 19 and 22 years old. It is possible that a wider age range could have produced different results. The common age range of the participants in other similar studies is 15-24 years. In Botswana, age at first sex is estimated between 11 and 15 for

primary, junior and senior secondary school students (BIDPA, 2003). Therefore including only 18 year olds and above ran the risk of missing out the high risk group. However, the researcher was compelled to sample participants who were 18 years or older because of privacy concerns about this sensitive topic and the ethics requirements that researching younger girls where the consent of parents or guardians would be needed would compromise the privacy consideration.

Moreover, senior secondary school girls constitute a select group that has demonstrated, through passing a very competitive examination, that they are disciplined and serious about school work so many may be likely to avoid behaviours that might endanger their progress. Several studies have found that adolescent academic competence, high school performance and having high ambition of becoming someone in life is associated with the delayed onset of sexual activity, frequency of sex, pregnancy and childbearing (Billy, Brewster et al., 1994; Blum, Beuhring et al., 2000; Borowsky, Hogan et al., 1997; Brewster, Cooksey et al., 1998; Manlove, 1998; Lammers, Ireland et al., 2000; Karim, Magnani et al., 2003; Raine, Jenkins et al., 1999; Resnick, Bearman et al., 1997; WHO, 2002).

There might also be a third possibility for the lower prevalence of intergenerational sexual relationships. There is a likelihood of under-reporting among the participants which reported to be common when doing research on sensitive topics (Lee, 1993; Lessler and O'Reilly, 1997;

Smith, 1992; Willis, 1997) especially when survey questions eliciting the sensitive behaviour are not open-ended. The possibility of under-reporting in this study might also come from the fact that girls who engage in intergenerational sexual relationships in Botswana are not compelled by the fact that they lack basic needs such as food, school fees, and money for health care and they might be uncomfortable to admit that they are in such relations. Moreover, most of the participants did not consider such relationships as a good practice. It was also interesting to note that nearly two-thirds reported that they have friends/relatives who are in sexual relationships with older men but less than one-quarter stated that they, themselves, were involved with older men. When asked about their friends/relatives, these girls seem to be comfortable to acknowledge that they did have friends and relatives in such relationships. It is quite possible that they may be too embarrassed to divulge that they, too, go out with older men, especially as intergenerational sexual relationships are perceived negatively. Support for this argument comes from a Kenyan study. Most of the participants in Kenya were said to be quick to point out that they have friends or know other girls who engage in sexual relationships with older men (Longfield, Glick et al., 2004).

After critically examining all the possibilities of why the prevalence of intergenerational sex is lower among these participants than that reported in studies done in other countries in sub-Saharan

Africa, it is concluded that the results are likely to reflect a true picture of prevalence among this group. The fact that this is a select group of participants who have high educational ambitions might be a contributory factor.

Reasons for intergenerational sexual relationships

Money was perceived to be a motivating factor for schoolgirls to enter into sexual relationships with older men by the girls in this study. This is similar to other studies in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. Most of the studies conducted in this region revealed that although the reasons that adolescent girls engage in sexual relationships with older men are varied, receipt of financial benefits is a major motivation. Most of the studies discovered that girls use the money for survival (buying basic needs) in case of poverty, some girls pay for their education (fees, notebooks and uniforms), and part of the money was reported to be used for 'luxuries', especially clothes (Bagnol and Chamo 2004; Collins and Toure 2004; Longfield, Glick et al. 2004; Luke 2003; Machel 2001; Manzini 2001; UNICEF/UNAIDS/WHO 2002).

In light of Botswana's more favourable conditions one would like to address the issue of why money is perceived to be so important to schoolgirls. These questions will be fully answered in the next chapter where qualitative results will be presented and discussed. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that Gaborone, as the capital city of

Botswana, is where most of the modern developments are taking place. It is also where many different kinds of entertainment take place, many electronic luxury goods and fashionable clothes are found, all of which require one to have money if one is to enjoy or acquire them. This introduction of consumer society is being fuelled by television, the internet, videos, and magazines in the capital city of Botswana, and has increased young women's needs and aspirations. This challenging environment finds young people, especially girls, with limited knowledge on how to define their priorities and find ways to satisfy these new desires independently from men and their sexuality (Bagnol and Chamo, 2004).

Nyanzi and Nyanzi-Wakholi (2004) made an observation which seems to describe the situation in Botswana when they said that in an era where modern lifestyle is measured by having a mobile phone, eating out and wearing trendy clothes, girls seem to enjoy ripping off their sugar daddies. The top five reasons for dating older men provided by the participants of this study included: money, mobile phone, clothes, fun and transport.

Since having a good time and enjoyment is foremost to these girls, it is not surprising that about two-thirds of respondents mentioned having fun as one of the reasons of intergenerational sex in Botswana, one of the few studies in this area which has brought this to light.

Perceptions of intergenerational sexual relationships

The majority of respondents do not perceive intergenerational sexual relationships as a good practice. They are aware of the possible risks associated with these relationships. The results of this study indicated that girls who are in sexual relationships with older men might be exposed to danger of engaging in unsafe sex as more than one-third agreed with the statement which says that it is difficult to talk about safe sex when your boyfriend is older, and the majority agreed that it is easier for girls to talk about safe sex with a boyfriend of their age. More than two-thirds of the participants believed that there was a greater risk of getting STIs/HIV when having sex with older men. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement which says 'older men are good boyfriends'. More than three-quarters indicated that young girls who are involved in sexual relationships with older men were not considered as lucky or fortunate. However further statistical analysis revealed that girls who engaged in intergenerational sexual relationships viewed these relationships differently. They considered themselves lucky and most did not think that it was difficult to talk about safe sex with an older sexual partner. These girls have relative positive perception of intergenerational sexual relationships.

Most of the studies on intergenerational sexual relationships conducted in sub-Saharan Africa associated such sexual relations with unsafe sexual behaviours and increased risk of HIV infection. This is primarily linked with unequal

gender relations which make young women vulnerable to coercive sex and affords them little space to negotiate the nature of sexual relations especially in terms of condom use (Rivers and Aggleton, 2001). The prevailing gender roles and relations in Botswana usually mean that young women have less control than men over sexual relations. Men usually retain control of decisions relating to sexual activity in most African societies including the frequency and use of contraception (McIlwaine and Datta, 2004). Thus unequal power relations between older men and young women may place youth at a particular sexual risk more especially in intergenerational sexual relations, because young women have very little control over sexual encounters in such contexts. The results of this study further indicated that girls believe they have more power to negotiate safe sex with boys of their own age group than with older men. This might be the influence of the typical Tswana culture in which the young are not expected to express their feelings and views freely before older people. The culture expects the young to listen to what the older person is saying and to take orders without questioning anything.

Another finding regarding participants' perceptions relates to power relations between partners. The respondents believe that sexual partners should have equal influence in a relationship. But Botswana culture socialises women not to talk about sex openly and they are expected to be submissive to men (Schapera,

1939; Schapera, 1970a; Schapera, 1970b; Schapera and Comaroff, 1991). Female sexual agency is often denied in that young women are not expected to initiate or actively participate in sex but rather to let it happen to them (Rivers and Aggleton, 1999). This means that even if the girls may hold positive and laudable views that sexual partners should have equal influence in a relationship, it might not be easy for them to practice what they believe because of cultural expectations. Amaro (1995) also asserts that the sexual behaviour of girls and women occurs in a context that socializes females to be passive sexually and in other ways. Young women's relationships do not occur in a vacuum, but in a context where norms, values and sexual practices that regard women as subordinate to men already exists (Machel, 2001).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has clearly indicated that intergenerational relationships put girls at a disadvantage because of the unequal power relations that put girls and young women at a disadvantage, since they as the less powerful partners are unable to negotiate safer sex. The power imbalance is not only due the wide age differences between girls/young women and older men but also due to cultural factors in Botswana in which women are not expected to play an active role in sexual intercourse.

It is recommended that a favourable socio-cultural environment needs to be created in order for young women to be assertive and make decisions which affect their well being. This can only be achieved through a deliberate educational campaign to educate both girls/young women and men on the rights of both men and women to decide on the kind of sexual intimate relationships they want to engage in.

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