

Gender Issues and Socialisation Process among Secondary School Pupils in the Context of Hiv and Aids-A Case of Secondary Schools in Zambia

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Abstract

Zambia is in the region of Africa reported to be the most seriously hit by the AIDS epidemic. In this country AIDS is predominantly transmitted through heterosexual contacts. The study aimed at investigating how gender issues influence the socialisation process among Secondary school pupils in the context of HIV and AIDS. Therefore, the study applied the qualitative methods to explore how gender issues influence the socialisation process among boys and girls in Secondary school setting. The central objective of the study was to explore how gender issues influence the socialisation process among Secondary school pupils in the context of HIV and AIDS in Zambia. The results indicated that sexual matters were discussed when they socialise with close friends of the same sex and peer groups. These young people do not seem to take HIV seriously basically because the factors that contribute to its spread are not addressed.

Keywords: HIV and AIDS: gender; socialisation; Secondary School pupils.

Methodology

This case study utilised qualitative methods to examine how gender issues and socialisation process merge to create situations of risk and vulnerability for young people at Secondary Schools in Zambia. Data was collected from 12 focus group discussions (eight mixed and four single sex), interviews with 20 boys and 20 girls, in addition to observation. Other interviews were with 10 male and 10 female teachers. Zambia has one of the world's most devastating HIV and AIDS epidemics. More than one in every seven adults in the country is living with HIV and life expectancy at birth has fallen to just 39 years. In 2009, nearly 83,000 adults were newly infected with HIV whereby about 200 new infections each day (CSO et al, 2008). The Demographic and Health Surveys indicate that the high rates of HIV infection mostly affect the 15 to 24-year-old age group (ZDHS 2013). The AIDS epidemic in Zambia is in major proportions relative to other nations.

The tendency to engage in sexual activities at a young age, the social, economic and environmental conditions in Zambia which restrict safe sexual behaviour and the lack of easy access to condoms imply that adolescents in Zambia are at a great risk of contracting AIDS (Mwanayanda et al, 2005). Sexual activity is high and risk perception is very low among Zambian young people. Most girls and boys still think they are at no risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. Preventing new HIV infections in young people is the only way to stop and control the epidemic and the misery it brings. The consequences of HIV and AIDS can be far-reaching for young people. Not only does HIV disease have terrible consequences for the individual, causing serious illness and eventual death, it has the potential to trigger negative social reactions.

Gender and HIV and AIDS among Secondary School pupils in Zambia

Issues of gender are scarcely central in the researches of how they influence sexual behaviour in relation to the risk of HIV infection among young people. Wienclaw (2011) defines gender as the psychological, social, cultural, and behavioural characteristics associated with being female or male.

He adds that gender is a learned characteristic based on one's gender identity and learned gender role. Thus, society interprets gender as the cultural meaning of one's sex. According to Butler, gender is not a fixed category but a fluid one, exhibited in what people do rather than what they are. If, as Butler argues (2004), gender is something that is 'done', then it is also something that can be transformed in order to promote equality. Beasley (2005) also postulates that gender refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. In this study, the account we have provided indicates the usual contemporary meanings of gender in feminist and masculinity studies but these meanings have altered over time and continue to be the subject of debate. Gender was a term that enabled a questioning of cultural presumptions, such as that males are naturally more aggressive, women are less mathematical thinkers, and so on. Yet there is considerable evidence to indicate that notions of gender do change over time.

We have used gender in this study, not because we have any particularly strong commitment to it, but simply because it is the most common term in attempting to locate the marginalised (young girls and women in the context of HIV and AIDS) at the edges of existing society, to acknowledge difference positively. Such a concern involves reversing the traditional hierarchy of social privilege by revaluing the marginal if the fight of HIV is to be won. Furthermore, Turmen (2003) explains that the difference between sex and gender is well defined. He postulates that whereas 'sex' describes a biological distinction between men and women, 'gender' is a social construct that differentiates the power, roles, responsibilities, and obligations of women from that of men in society. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles. Gender, in its broadest sense, concerns "what is meant to be male or female, and how that defines a person's opportunities, roles, responsibilities, and relationships" (Turmen, 2003).

HIV and AIDS have a special gender dimension in that it disproportionately infects women. Research in Zambia has shown that young women in their early reproductive ages are more likely to contract HIV than their male counterparts. According to Kiremire and Nkandu-Luo (1996), women aged between 15 and 24 years are four times more likely to contract HIV than their male counterparts. Most of the young people in this age range are school-going pupils and students. Those in the Secondary school are about 15 and 19 years of age. Hence, it can be inferred that the school pupils are most prone to HIV. HIV and AIDS has turned attention to how perceptions of 'what it is to be a man' in many cultures might be reconsidered so that to be 'masculine' may not just mean 'macho', powerful and strong. The idea of being strong, a true figure-head or patriarch, is linked to other facets of masculinity such as the value put upon being the sole 'bread winner' upon whom the family depends (Connell as cited in Seeley et al, 2004).

The social and economic status and cultural expectations of both girls and boys often increase the risk of HIV infection. A girl's lower status can leave her more exposed to infection while boys are at risk of infection because of their ideals of masculinity associated with risk-taking and sexual conquest. Moreover, girls and young women may willingly initiate relationships with older men to exchange sex for material benefit, especially if they are very poor. Male cultural norms can also increase the risk of men and young boys becoming infected with HIV. Social norms reinforce their lack of understanding of sexual health issues and at the same time celebrate promiscuity (Turmen, 2003). Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey (2009) report states that Zambia, which is a culturally diverse population with 5 distinct languages, 73 dialects and 72 ethnicities, is fairly typical of African societies in terms of social, political and economic gender inequity. Men are the primary sexual decision-makers and are in a position of dominance over their female counterparts, many having a mistress, using the services of a prostitute, or polygamous.

Women are expected to ask their male partners for money to feed themselves and their children, for money or gifts in exchange for sex, and for permission to work and keep the money they earn. Boys and girls are normally socialised in the same cultural setup expected to uphold these norms. The need to bring about gender equality in the fight against HIV and AIDS has been documented in Zambia. Young people become sexually active at an early age, with numerous Central Statistical Office (CSO) reports showing that about one-third of young women and one-half of young men become sexually experienced by their middle teens. This sexual activity occurs among young people between young people and adults. In both cases, the activity carries the risk of HIV infection and the possibility of HIV transmission (Kelly, 2008).

Socialisation and HIV and AIDS

Gould et al (2011) postulate that socialisation is the process through which people learn to be competent in their societies; it therefore teaches people their own society's definition of human behaviour while also transmitting the society's idea of culture. Without socialisation, there could be no societies. It is believed that socialisation is impossible without human contact. Socialisation therefore, refers to the process through which people become members of society, both by internalising shared norms and values and learning to perform social roles. The process occurs in different settings and institutions such as the family, the education system and the workplace. Giddens (2006) defines socialisation as the process whereby the child gradually becomes self-aware, a knowledgeable person, skilled in ways of the culture into which he or she is born. Socialisation entails the internalisation of norms and values one pursues. The internalisation of norms and values should consider young people's relative status and power in society that shapes their personal circumstances in return addressing the constraints that these institutionalised roles impose on individuals' behaviour. In regard to HIV and AIDS, the emphasis is on the importance of young people's social interactions and daily activities as contexts for the learning of culture.

In this study, socialisation theory was utilised to illustrate how pupils should be involved in the debates about knowledge construction and conflicting interpretations, such as the extent to which socialisation process influence the shaping and creation of gender identities. Pupils should be able to create their own interpretations of the past and present, as well as how to identify their own positions, interests, ideologies, and assumptions in the HIV and AIDS context. It is also important to note that an individual's vulnerability to HIV depends on their social position. Thus, gender issues, especially the inequality between men and women influences power structures and vulnerability to HIV. In the Zambian society there are beliefs that men are strong whereas women are weak and these are embedded in family and schools. These messages influence the decisions made by men and women, both within and outside marriages, and over sexual exchanges. As pupils socialise, their gender self-concepts, beliefs, and motives are informed and transformed by families, peers, the media, and schools. Based on a competence perspective, the discussion of outcomes of socialisation in schools is focused primarily on social outcomes rather than academic achievements.

Gender and HIV among young people

According to Kelly (2008), HIV transmission does not depend solely on sexual behaviour. As with any other infectious disease, it is also greatly influenced by the "terrain," the social and economic context within which infection occurs. Aspects of that context that are relevant to the young people's susceptibility of young people HIV infection include gender dimensions, poverty and the standards that society sets for itself. The next section discusses relevant discourses of gender.

Gender

In biosocial terms, gender is not the same as sex. Gender refers to the psychological, social, cultural, and behavioural characteristics associated with being female or male. Gender is defined by one's gender identity and learned gender role. Sex in this context, on the other hand, refers to the biological aspects of being either female or male (Wienclaw, 2011). Gender is referred to talk of persons or creatures of the masculine or feminine gender, meaning of the male or female sex. Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities (Beasley, 2005). Here, gender refers to a binary division (into two categories). Archer and Lloyd (2002) cite Freud who is interested in how we become human, in how we develop a self and he asks not what is a woman, but how is a woman made. Clearly this is very different from simply assuming, as is still usual today that one is born a woman (Archer & Lloyd, 2002). They argue that he is criticised on the basis of innate identities/roles by most feminists who are critical of aspects of his work. The feminists criticise it initially on the grounds that it is biologicistic (that is, psychoanalysis may be said to reduce social relations to effects of biology). Beasley (2005) affirms that Freud demonstrates a psycho-social basis for gender identities and hierarchy which is undermined by equating gender with anatomy. He cites an example that libido which underlies the development of the self in psychoanalysis, is presented in terms of a biological drive or force (Beasley, 2005). Feminists define gender as an effect of complex, historically variable sets of social relations in and through which heterogeneous persons are socially organized as members of one and only one of an exclusionary and (so far) unequal pair-man and woman.

They add that masculine and feminine identities are not determined by a pre-given, unchangeable biological substratum (Flax, 1993). According to Flax, the word 'pre-given' entails that one is born a woman or a man. Irvine (1994) observes that Feminist scholarship has demonstrated that gender is not biological but deeply constructed. Individuals may feel that male and female behaviour is internal and inevitable, but the ritualised differences are instead the effect of culture. Although rigid gender distinctions exist in nearly all cultures, the specific content of gender scripts varies historically and culturally. Divisions, hierarchy, and male superiority may be common gender themes, but culture's elaborate relations between men and women in very different ways. For example, although highly articulated gender roles in there in virtually all cultures, they have a particular salience in Latino culture. The oppositional elements of machismo, the exaggerated importance of being male, and marianismo, the submissive obedience of females, are symbolically encoded in cultural values and individual behaviour (Irvine, 1994). As well as being, in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, 'France's leading living social theorist', Judith Butler is, along with Michel Foucault, one of the most influential of those thinkers 'whose work succeeded modernism'. Both Butler and Beauvoir argue that gender is a way of "doing" the body. According to Salih (2004), Butler views gender as performative, as a socially compulsory 'act'. Salih claims that the former puts it that we become our genders.

The writer states argues that the body is neither static nor self-identical but something that is lived and experienced in specific contexts (Salih, 2004). For Butler (1999), gender is not something that actors do (as symbolic integrationists suggest), but is a way of thinking about the world that produces people as 'feminine' women or 'masculine' men. The 'choices' a person makes might sometimes reinforce conventional ideas about gender, but it is possible to cause 'gender trouble' – for example, by a man wearing a fluffy pale-blue jumper, or an adult woman climbing a tree or taking up boxing. Butler is saying that gender is something that comes into being by people imitating what they think is appropriate gendered behaviour and that contributes to what we believe about gender. But imitations always differ slightly so they also change how gender operates. In other words, gender is a social construction, something people have made up. If we stop believing that it is natural and realise that it is made up then we can explain how change is possible (Butler, 1999).

Gender Roles

Gender Roles are prescribed functional activities, tasks and responsibilities which are assigned as female or male by a society. They are influenced by culture, political, economic, religious, age, class and racial factors. The roles of women and men are not fixed but constantly change due to the dynamic nature of society. Girls and boys, women and men in society operate within specific gender relations which are a reflection of a particular society (Civic Education - Civic education pupil's book, 2003).

Location of the Study

Copperbelt is the second highly populated province (Census, 2010). The province boasts of a major industry in mining. Over the past eighty-five years, more and more people have been drawn to the Copperbelt province, giving up rural lifestyles to live in the cities and work in the mines. But the social structures of the provinces faced numerous problems when the mines were privatised in the late 1990s. Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) provided almost everything that held society together on the Copperbelt: jobs, hospitals, schools, housing, and a wide range of social services including HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention programmes. As a result of the privatisation and subsequent loss of jobs for many who worked in the mines, the families of the retrenched miners left the mine houses. The shifting of former miners and their families from the mine to municipal townships has been shown to spread HIV to new areas.

Results and Discussions-Gender Issues and Relationships

The FGDs and the interviews were exploratory in nature that meant to probe gender roles and issues. Three gender issues were identified during the field work. These demonstrated significant differences between boys and girls regarding gender norms, attitudes and perceptions. The study found out that boys were more likely than girls to see themselves as being more controlling and capable in several areas than girls and as being more powerful in relationships. FGD with boys, they talked about possessing greater physical strength than girls and that the power and control they have is to realise their sexual interests and desires. Giddens (2006) states that everyone today would accept the view that female identity is as much shaped by socialisation as that of males. It is believed that both nature and nurture may contribute to differences between groups of people.

As regard to gender, a wide range of factors are believed to contribute to differences, including socialisation and biology as well as differential access to opportunities and power. The study discovered that there were age-related changes in beliefs about the causes of gender differences. This was evident in what the youngest boy (14 years old) among the respondents said. He believed that gender differences is seen in what people wear, how they cut their hair, what they like to play with, and how other people react to those choices. The girls and boys alike reported that when they were in primary school they believed that gender difference is only about a biological orientation. One boy said that: *Now that I'm in Secondary school, the focus on physical differences has been overtaken by the focus on social roles and obligations. At my age, certain roles are changing because of the school environment.* These findings suggest that children may have an early bias towards viewing gender categories as predictive of essential, underlying similarities between members, but later come to acknowledge the role of the social environment in shaping how category members develop. When asked which factor between biology and socialisation they saw as more important in their explanations of gender differences, the pupils favoured socialisation. One boy said that: *Because of school, things are changing. In some homes, boys can now wash the dishes. When they take their meals, they have to wash their dishes. They have to help with the cleaning and it never used to be this way before I started school.* This implies that understanding that social environment can contribute to gender role development involves accepting the idea that certain roles are flexible and open to modification.

However, boys demonstrated a tendency to hold negative views towards girls such as that they are materialistic and likely to have many sexual partners, while girls were less likely to support these assertions and accused the boys of double players in relationships. Here, issues of power and control were a recurring theme in this study and will be dealt with in detail below. Other issues such as position and gender inequality will be dealt with in the sections to come later in the study. The study discovered that the way in which boys and girls interact is one way in which gender and power relations are constructed and reconstructed. In the single sex FGD, girls claimed that though positive changes have and continue to occur on how women and men relate, there are still major problems. In this section a critical eye is turned on power in gender relations, a theme that recurred in almost every interview and FGD. During single sex FGD, the girls reported that they were subject to more oppressive forms of power by way of pressure and coercion exerted by male partners and male teachers. A girl who was punished by a male teacher stated that: *At this school, girls are always on punishment by a certain teacher. I think that they should take him to a boys' school. We don't know why he wants to show us that he has authority.* These incidences revealed the cultural oppressive male power in their relationships.

As one girl put it that 'boys want to be in control of the relationships'. Both boys and girls admitted that in relationships, sexual intercourse is in most cases non-negotiable. A 16 year old girl spoke up and stated that: *The guy decides when, where and how to have sex. And if I don't want I just run away from the scene. Sometimes, boys and men use power to force the girls to have sex with them". And sometimes when they are drunk they don't prefer using a condom.* These findings recommend that young women's portrayal of decision making as equal and their sense of being actively involved in this, suggests that heterosexual power incorporates some agency for them (Giddens, 2006). All agreed that the boys tend to oppress them, and one girl spoke up, and said: *The boys always want to show their power to us girls. The boys think that they are powerful and important than girls. They want to be controlling always.* The respondents mostly girls highlighted that through their interactions with boys there was an exercise of power involved. The girls attributed to the way the boys think. They said that the boys think that they are better than girls. One girl indicated that: *The boy proposes a girl and he expects a girl to obey him and do things in line with his commands. Things have been like that and cannot change. It is seen as abnormal for a girl to propose a boy. If a boy proposes a girl, she has no chance to make decisions in the relationship unlike when it is the girl who proposes.*

Another girl borrowed from the religious discourse and stated that: *Boys get the power from the Bible verse (Eph 5:23) where it is taught that 'the husband is the head of his wife'. The boys use this verse in an unfair way to mistreat the girls. Instead the boys should use their power to protect and take care of us.* From the single sex FGD, one girl supported the boys' exercise of power and said that 'because they (boys) are given a lot of responsibilities so they need power to control the others'. The girl argued that: *Even though we girls want to be equal to boys, we have constrains because of the way we act and interact. It is evident that society is organised to constrain how people socialise. Nevertheless there are still chances for us to exercise some agency, or control, over our actions.*

When asked if it was acceptable for a girl to directly take the initiative by asking a boy out, some girls supported the idea but noticed. They claimed that there was still the hesitation on the girls' side for fear of being labelled as loose and bad. The perception of bad girls is that they were prostitutes and bitches. In the mixed FGD, most boys and girls indicated that they thought that it was also fine for girls to initiate a relationship and also take part in the decisions made. The girls said this with joy but the boys did not react to it. It is of interest to say that in order to understand the power inequalities in society properly, we need to examine how discursive practices serve to create and uphold particular forms of social life. If boys and men can be said to be more powerful than girls and women, then there is need to examine the discourses and representations which uphold these inequalities. The common-sense understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power is the notion that knowledge increases a person's power. Girls thought that if they are fairly educated then things could change for the better. The FGDs and interviews probe the issue of girls' empowerment further. In an interview with the female teacher in-charge of girls' affairs in school, she stated that: *For example, by gaining the knowledge offered by higher education, a girl can improve her access to good jobs, good pay and high status.*

Girls generally agreed with the above stated sentiment. During the mixed FGD, they accused some boys of preferring a traditionally shy, docile and uneducated girl who is incapable of being assertive in debating issues and challenging the boys. This highlights the struggle of abandoning some wrong conceptions of femininity and masculinity and raises questions on how girls will shift their gender positions in society. The next section presents how gender positions are manifested in the daily interactions among school boys and girls.

Positions

During a class session, it was observed that boys and girls tend to engage in a struggle to position themselves within the classroom environment and the power effects that are brought about by this positioning was witnessed. There was an exchange of words between a boy and a girl when a boy tried to take a text book from the pile of books a girl was distributing to the class. The boy tried to grab the book but the girl did not allow him to get any. Then the girl asked the teacher to tell the boy to stop. But the boy shouted at the girl telling her not to be rude to boys. She was called a useless girl because she did not obey the boy's request. The teacher threatened to punish the boy whenever he treated girls in such a manner. Other learners in the class just looked on at what was happening. In the mixed FGD, all the girls reported that society tend to rebuke those females who challenge males. This is generally a sign of male domination. The example is used to show how as individuals are constantly subject to an interplay of different discourses, each with its own structure of rights, obligations and possibilities for action, and each carrying identity and power implications. In such an analysis, the girl is straightforwardly oppressed by culture, and by its representative here, the boy. The boy is seen to seize power temporarily and to render the girl relatively powerless by his ability to draw upon the discourse of gender and to position himself and the girl within it. The boy, by his comments, temporarily locate themselves as male and the girl as female within a discourse of gender which affords them some supremacy. The teacher's call for punishment appears weak and ineffective and does not help her to resist the subject position she is being offered.

It was evident from the observation that through the boys' and girls' socialisation that the popular representation of the 'good girl' is one who answers boys in a good way without arguing or questioning things. When this was discussed in the focus group, one girl hinted that: *The task for us girls is therefore one of finding ways of resisting being positioned in personally damaging gender discourses, and how to claim positions in discourses which are beneficial.* However, the girls realised that it was not to say that such changes can be accomplished easily. They understood that to the extent that prevailing or dominant discourses are often tied to social arrangements and practices which support the status quo and maintain the positions of powerful groups such as the men or boys, then in challenging such discourses and resisting the positions they offer the girl is also implicitly challenging their associated social practices, structures and power relations. Girls can, therefore, expect to find some degree of resistance to their attempts at change. For example, the FAWWEZA stated that: *A girl may want to become more 'assertive', but behaving in an assertive manner is not consistent with dominant discourses of femininity and womanhood. So in 'becoming more assertive' a girl is implicitly taking on more than a struggle to change the nature of her social interactions within her immediate social circle.*

However, recognition of this can at least help us to anticipate, understand and counter such resistance when it occurs. This fits well with the script theory which stipulates that sexual scripts are expressive of the idea of female passivity and responsiveness on the one hand; and male assertiveness and dominance on the other (Segal in Woodward, 1997). The next section looks at the gender inequality.

Gender Inequality

Some girls in the focus group discussions stated that as girls and boys they talk and share on what they have learnt from home and school on gender. Contrary to what they learn at school, the girls complained that boys are given a lot of free time at home. A girl in an interview recollected that: *At home, I have a lot of work to do, like cooking and other house chores. As a result of this pressure, I have little time left to study.* Another girl echoed the same sentiment: *As girls, we are told to get back home in time so that we could prepare food for supper while boys would go for extra lessons. You may find that a home where there a boy and girl, a girl would perform more house chores than a boy.* In the single sex FGD, the girls demonstrated the will to bring about gender equality among their age group. They proposed that teachers should talk to their (girls) parents in order that work is balanced at home. The girls attributed their poor performance (at some incidences) to too much work at home taking up their study time. One girl thought that both boys and girls should be encouraged to exchange the routine chores between them. The boys reacted by saying that if there were girls around in the home, they should just do the work without complaining. One boy gave an example of a home where there were girls: *What about in a home where there is no girl? Boys are compelled to do all house chores.* In interview with a FAWEZA school chairperson, explained that there are policies and programmes that the Ministry of Education has put in place to eradicate gender inequality. She said that: *Traditionally, girls and women were expected to do the housework. Similarly at school most of the work concerning the cleanliness of the environment was mainly done by girls. To achieve gender balance, the trend has now changed. Both genders are now encouraged to actively participate in bringing about social development at home and at school.*

The chairperson suggested that girls and boys should socialise more in club activities. She added that: *For example, they can be given to do the same tasks in clubs whether boy or girl. This will allow the both sexes to experience the same challenges.* In a separate interview, the Guidance and Counsellor added and emphasised that: *Gender mainstreaming is the most efficient and equitable way of using existing resources for combating HIV and AIDS by focusing on the real needs of the whole population with its ultimate goal of achieving gender equality.* It was noted that most girls and boys were thinking of how one can overcome these seemingly insurmountable barriers of gender and sexual inequality. One boy wondered how the society through the socialisation process could change the cultural norms that create these damaging, even fatal, gender disparities and roles. He asked the teacher to explain how it could be done. The teacher explained that: *The first important step is to recognise, understand, and publicly discuss the ways in which the power imbalance in gender and sexuality fuels the epidemic.* When we analysed the content of the Civic education book, it was evident that there has been a definite shift in the public rhetoric on HIV and AIDS over the past years. The dominant discourse now reflects an increased acknowledgment of the role that gender plays in fuelling the epidemic (Civic education pupil's book, 2003). The findings revealed that such public discourse on sex and sexuality is still invisible among Secondary school pupils. In the mixed sex FGD, both boys and girls expressed the need to break that silence because they knew that talking openly about sex is the first step to reducing denial and bringing about acceptance of their collective vulnerability. One boy stated that: *I had a friend who contracted STIs but didn't want neither to talk about it nor go to the hospital. He had a fun way of walking and asked he would say that he had a boil on his thigh. He was discovered to be in danger when he started releasing a bad odour. He was rushed to the clinic and the nurse said that he had an STI. It was too late to cure the disease and he died.*

In addition to the boys and girls views, the book states that in contrast, public health discourse, as seen in scientific journals and forums, reflects definite progress in understanding the importance of both gender and sexuality. But because this increased understanding is fuelled in large part by the need to interpret the dynamics of the AIDS epidemic, the analysis of gender and sexuality is situated firmly within a framework of disease. Sexuality as seen through the public health prism, therefore, is still a potential determinant of ill health and little else (Civic education pupil's book, 2003). As a result, the findings revealed that safer sex is the mainstream theme within this discourse, while sexual health, pleasure, and rights remain on the margins. It is also important to note that the progress in the public health discourse on gender and sexuality is not matched by progress in action. There is a substantial gap between the talk and the walk in the society. This is partly because it is easier now to explain the why and what with regard to gender, sexuality, and HIV and AIDS, but there is less known about the how-how to address these issues in a way that has an impact on the epidemic (Civic education pupil's book, 2003).

The Civic education teacher explained that: *It must be said, however, that this relatively little information on the how is not due to a lack of innovation and trying. Although there are still no clear-cut answers and there is very little data to establish the impact of the efforts that have been tried, it is possible to look back and identify clear-cut categories of approaches—approaches that fall at different points on a continuum from damaging to empowering.* As was revealed in the findings, some boys and girls thought that peer education is the only programme that can provide them with substantial information on HIV and AIDS in Secondary schools. In the next section, an examination of more immediate relational processes that are important to socialisation is presented.

Relationships

The study discovered that three pupils in relationships had been together from the same junior secondary school. They stated that they had known, and being known by, the other person to whom they were close, emotionally engaged, and in regular contact. However, one boy commented that ‘nowadays, people claim that when they meet a person on even one occasion and chat for a while, they call that relationship. I don’t understand this’. In terms of the relationship status of the respondents, 15 girls reported that they had a boyfriend at present, whereas 10 boys reported having a girlfriend. Of those reported to be in a relationship, half the number of respondents stated that they have been together longer than a year. In all these relationships, girls’ ages tended to be young while the boys older. It was discovered most boys in Grade 11 or 12 would scramble for young girls who just report in grade 10. Jokingly, one boy passed a comment that ‘Grade 10 girls are fresh from the farm’. This supports the notion that boys generally seek out and date younger girls. The young girls may be viewed as inexperienced and may rely on the boy’s advice and control. One boy supported the notion that: *Young girls are easy to deal with. They don’t object to or reject our suggestions. It feels nice to have a girl friend of such nature. Older ones have gone through a lot and begin to despise boys of their age.*

The girls pursue older, mature and experienced boys or men. One girl explained why she liked to have an older boy friend and said that: *Older guys take good care of us. They provide us with anything we may ask from them.*

This implies that for as long as poverty is rampant among girls so is the scourge of the virus widespread. It was learnt that in recent years, the HIV and AIDS crisis in the area of study had been made worse by the additional vulnerability from the deepening of a social crisis as a result of the collapse in the quality of employment due to the privatisation of the mines on the Copper belt. Only a few respondents claimed that there was no sex involved in their relationships and that it was purely based on assisting each other with school work. In the mixed sex FGD, both boys and girls indicated that there were major concerns about the motivations of each partner in the relationship. They claimed that sexual, financial, and emotional motivations are the main attractions into a relationship at their age. They admitted that these may be also highly relevant to other age groups. One boy, a prefect, stated that: *Mostly, it is girls who expect a lot of things in a relationship. The boys only ask for sexual favours. At this school, girls want to have smart phones and always look good. They expect the boyfriend to provide all these things.*

The boys reported that there were a lot of sexual immoralities among young people. In an interview with the male school counsellor, he stated even though in the Zambian culture sexual behaviour in society is strongly reinforced, young people have practiced bad sexual behaviours. He added that gender roles provide idealised cultural patterns of sexual behaviour. Likewise, these gender roles suggest patterns of voluntary vs. involuntary sexual activity within all partnerships in the society. During the interview with the guidance and counselling teacher, aspects of heterosexual partnerships which included premarital, extramarital and other possible variations found in the community were brought out. The teacher said that: *Precisely because of such variation, attention to the range of diversity found in types of sexual partnership must be a focus for the study of gender issues and partner relations in relation to HIV and AIDS.*

During the mixed sex FGD, the respondents identified different types of relationships among school pupils, and these were put in four categories as follows: First, the respondents reported that there are relationships among school boys and girls. They revealed that this type of relationship did not last long. They made an assertion that it was merely for sex. After sex, they break up. A girl in an individual interview said that: *After the relationship ends, boys will want to make the girls angry and show off to other friends that they can move with new girls.* Girls explained the various ways in which boys express that they are hitting back on the failed relationship such as proposing a friend to the former girlfriend, teasing, etc.

This implies that without regulation boys would end up having a lot of partners and they would accept to have sex with all of them. Boys and girls identified the second type of relationship as one where girls engage with male teachers. Though, there are rare cases where boys fall in love female teachers. The respondents explained that this type of relationship is secretive and condemned by many in the community. The respondents revealed that the partners hide from the rest of the school community. It was learnt that there were various benefits to the girls. The third type of relationship was identified as that of involving desperate school girls would go out with 'sugar daddies'. The older men have money to spend on the girls. During an interview, a girl reported that they would be given 'sweet things' in form of money and cell phones. Lastly, the bus drivers have their share of the same girls. Girls who get on buses to get to school make friendships with bus drivers. This is in order to get free rides on their buses to and from school.

Sexual Relationships between boys and girls

In the mixed FGD, girls were of the view that boys should approach girls. They explained that action to take the first step by the girl shows weakness and desperation in girls. They added that it is because of cultural norms that boys should propose girls. In the single sex FGD, one girl stated that: *We girls may be shy to approach boys. We play the waiting tactic. If a girl proposes a boy, then she has to be ready for anything the boy will ask, e.g. sex, etc. In normal circumstances, girls who propose boys are seen as prostitutes.* Another girl added that: *As girls, we are understood better when we wait for boys to make the first move on them.* This highlights the manner in which boys and girls are socialised by society. Although some girls were not comfortable with the current trend of favouring boys when it comes to who should express their attraction first. The girls explained that in many cases they remain isolated from the love affairs because no boy has approached them to make a proposal. They added that this type of girls may become desperate and go out to look for partners themselves. One girl revealed that: *A lot of such girls will end up being hooked up by naughty boys, especially the experienced older men. The men are known as 'sugar daddies'. They provide much more for the girls. Those girls, who go out with them, boast to their friends about the favours and items they get from them*". The respondents contributed to the discussion on what is involved in the relationships among boys and girls. One girl talked about things that happen in relationships: *A lot of things go on in relationships, such as holding each other, hugging, kissing, having sex, etc. We use relationships as a means of finding out more things about the opposite sex.*

Sexual Relationships with teachers

An area that was sensitive to explore was sexual relations between male teachers and female pupils. Girls reported that: *Some girls may agree to have sex with teachers in return for perceived or offered benefits (e.g., high exam marks, material gifts) or reluctance to refuse men in positions of authority who are "respected" by the community. In some cases, we girls are threatened with academic failure if we refuse such relations with male teachers. These practices contribute greatly to us girls dropping out of school, unwanted pregnancies, illegal abortion and the spread of HIV.* A girl who happened to be a victim pointed out that: *The sexual exploitation of girls is very common in school and that girls fear to report the involved male teachers to the authority for fear of being failed during class tests.* In the interviews with the respondents, one of the issues clearly brought out was the problem of the destructive relationships with teachers at the same school. One of the girls interviewed stated that: *When involved with a teacher or someone older, a girl has no say in this relationship. She has no option but to do everything the male tells her to do. There is no discussion when it comes to having sex. The male makes the decision whether to use a condom or not to use. The girl has just to follow. Male teachers force girls into relationship to have sex. If the girl says no, she is given low marks in the tests, punished in class and side-lined.*

In interview with a FAWEZA chairperson, she lamented the poor role models of sexual relationships that male teachers often were. Almost half of the interviewees bemoaned the girls' lives that are messed up by getting involved with teachers. The chairperson reported an incident in which a male teacher was involved: *A teacher made one girl pregnant and this girl had to stop coming to school. When the school counsellor took up the matter to have the teacher disciplined, the guardians of the girl did not support it. Her uncle blamed the girl for flirting with the opposite sex. The girl was in grade 12 and did not sit for her final examinations.* During an interview with a female school guidance and counsellor, she said that 'when girls report to me about a male teacher proposing a relationship; the teacher is summoned to the office and counselled. If he is found wanting, he is warned or if the case is serious, he will be transferred to another school'. The counsellor admitted that the move to transfer an abusive teacher to another school does not stop the teacher from abusing girls in other places.

Sexual Relationships with ‘Sugar daddies’

In the single sex FGD, girls conceded that material gain is their sole motivation for seeking out sugar daddies. They said that: *We get gifts and money to buy food and clothes. On weekends, we are taken out to beautiful places.* Most of the girls in the mixed FGD did not challenge being labelled materialistic. One girl laughed and said that: *As long as there is abject poverty in Zambia, going out with sugar daddies will not stop.*

And when asked whether they were aware of the dangers of HIV and AIDS, one girl answered. ‘Yes, we are. But that does not bother some girls; all we want is to enjoy life and show off with nice clothes and phones to their friends’, answered another girl. She further added that: *When a sugar daddy proposes a girl, she has to be aware that that man has slept with a lot of women. As long as those sugar daddies keep on going for desperate young school girls, then HIV will continue spreading among young people.* The respondents reported that condoms were hardly considered in such sexual encounters. One girl who claimed to be a born-again Christian stated that it was a pity that many young girls engage in unprotected sexual intercourse that may have destructive consequences for them. When asked the female school counsellor to comment on this matter, she said that unintended pregnancy and birth, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV infection were among the most common risks. She added that the girls and boys saw the possibility of pregnancy as being far more likely to happen than contracting an STI or HIV. She concluded that this attitude among the young people says a lot about their perceptions of risk. This implies that the young people are more careful with pregnancy maybe because it reveals itself within a short time than the time AIDS can fully manifest itself.

Sexual Relationships with bus drivers and conductors

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, girls would seek out bus drivers in order to get free transport when going to and from school. Most pupils, who do not reside in the same township where the school is located, use private buses every morning and afternoon. Those who go in the afternoon are the most vulnerable to fall into this type of relationships. They knock off from school when it is getting dark and want to get home quickly. This means that the girls have guaranteed of free transport at all times unless otherwise. In all the relationships discussed above, it seems that sex was a must for boys and men. The study results indicated that girls and boys actually engaged in sex or thought about engaging in sex at quite an early age; for example, 3 girls in the single sex FGD reported that they were sexually active by age 13. During an individual interview, one girl disclosed that at age of 15 years when she was in her ninth grade, that she already had sex with eight boys. She claimed that as teenagers, they have strong sexual feelings and only end up by trying them.

When asked if she knew that sex could cause a lot of trouble in life. She admitted and said that ‘we know that sex brings more problems than happiness especially to us girls, but the boys sweet talk us to give in to it. In the single FGD, the other girls supported the statement by claiming that girls are often challenged by boys to show love by having sex. The girls explained that they feel that they should do everything their boyfriends ask them to do. One girl narrated that they leave it to the boy to make decisions whether to have sex. The majority think that when one loves someone, one should show this by having sex. There was a heated debate on the theme of sex in the mixed focus group discussions. The girls complained that the boys would ask for sex to express their love for the girl. The boys explained that the main purpose of a relationship was having sex. Boys demanded that all things that lovers do should take place in a relationship. If the girl did not obey the boy, then the relationship broke up.

In the mixed sex FGD, the girls challenged the boys that if they wanted to have sex then they should wait for the right time. If a boy asked for sex, a girl should say no. The boy has to respect the girl’s decision. If there is no understanding, then both should go separate ways. Girls believed that boys think that for any relationship to tick, the boy has to score points through having sex. The girls confessed that sometimes the sexual feelings are too high, but that reasoning should come in so that no one gets hurt. ‘Kissing is fine as an alternative to having sex’, one girl suggested. Another objected by saying that ‘kissing is like eating plain nshima (a local meal) without relish’. She also indicated, however, that: *If there is love in the relationship, boys will respect and understand the girls who do not like engaging in sexual activities. Nowadays, there is no respect in the relationships. Even if the boy proposed the girl, he has no power to control the relationship.* In the single sex FGD, the girls agreed that it should not be a problem for a girl to say no to the demands of a boy. They stated that if a boy is not happy, he is free to move on and leave the girl. The girls argued that it is easier to replace a boy than it is to replace their virginity once it is lost.

They said that ‘this is their only girls’ pride’. Another girl noted that: *Those boys who ask for sex are players and when the girl refuses them, it means that they are protecting themselves from the risk of HIV and AIDS. Those who engage in unprotected sex are at risk of contracting HIV. Most girls are at risk of contracting the HIV.* These statements show how girls experience things that occur in relationships reinforce existing stereotypes that paint boys as being strong and with future options, while girls as weak and more vulnerable to and at risk with HIV and AIDS. From the findings, it seemed that sex is a must in the relationships among pupils, although both girls and boys would want to avoid problems that come with it. The girls complained of often being challenged by boys to show love through sex. This might reflect the difficulty which young females often experience when they refuse sex. One girl narrated how she lost a boyfriend because she told to delay sex in their relationship. She said that he stopped seeing her as regular as he did before. And that when she tried to call him, he would give excuses of been busy with studies. ‘But one day I meet bumped into him with another girl from the same school. I just looked at them and walked away’. The discussions revealed how boys and girls perform their gender roles at the Secondary school level and how this affects their sexual relationships. The next section examines the process of socialisation and how gender impacts on the interaction of the boys and girls.

Gender messages

Data for this section was obtained from the interactions between boys and girls at break and lunch time. And also in the club activities, focus group discussions and individual interviews which were conducted with boys and girls. From the discussions held, the boys and girls mainly made themselves clear that the world is not the same as it was for their parents or grandparents, and they should not be expected to behave in the same way. They expressed the worry that people tend to believe that women and men are naturally different, that they have different bodies, different biology, and different psychology and therefore they act differently. The pointed out that the problem with this argument is that it usually suggests that how women and men live their everyday lives cannot or even should not be changed. Several gender messages came out during focus group discussions and individual interviews. Some of the messages are as follows. One boy spoke up and said what his parents would tell him:

*My father would tell me that ‘Boys don’t cry’. Boys are born to struggle, to fight. What it means is that life is not easy for us boys. This implies that only in some cases, crying is acceptable for boys. But in most cases boys are encouraged to be strong. When a boy fails to handle an emotional situation, crying is acceptable. In a case of a funeral, boys should not cry so as to encourage girls. It is clear that pupils perceive substantial differences in the gendered messages at home, at school and in the wider community. The girls are remaindered to value themselves. ‘You need to respect yourself as a girl’, are the words of elders. One girl confessed that such words mean that: *If I’m seen misbehaving in public then I’m going to be condemned more than a boy. I think that this is said in order to regulate everything girls will do in public. Mum would tell me that girls are not supposed to be found with boys at awkward times and places.**

The study suggested that parents were trying to protect their girls. They thought that the girls are a weaker sex. But the girls resisted to this way of thinking and suggested that they should be understood as being the same as boys. They explained that many concerns of their parents were mere overprotective methods. Thus, telling girls to behave like women suggests that the patriarchy discourse which sees a man as superior to a woman may prevail. The way the mothers speak reflects the structures of power in their context. This suggests that a woman ought to be subservient to a man in every possible way, a notion which seems to be countered by the school discourse of assertiveness which some girls have acquired. The club that was observed had a girl as its chairperson.

Socialisation

Chatting to one of the teachers at break time, he touched on the aspect of *ubuntu* meaning people. He explained that the African philosophy of *ubuntu* which is based on the recognition that we are only people because of other people emphasises socialisation. Within this context, socialisation is seen as the process that emphasises that a person is an integral part of a social system, a community member, because this is essential to the survival of the group. Therefore, people’s identities are formulated in relation to others. This collective existence has remained relevant in the Zambian society today. Only one of the pupils in FGDs indicated that he sees himself as a separate member of society. He said that: *I have been socialised as an individual from home. I was born alone in this world, and I can manage most things by myself.* When the teacher of civic education presented to the class the definition of socialisation, he said that:

Socialisation is a process by which we learn how to act appropriately as members of a particular society. But in most cases what is thought 'appropriate' for girls and women, as compared to boys and men, often differs. The major part of socialisation is about learning how to do gender (Civic education pupil's book, 2003:21).

In Civic Education, socialisation is discussed from a cultural perspective under the topic 'Gender Equity and Equality'. Civic Education is a compulsory subject for senior secondary school level. The Teacher added to the definition and said that: *This is a process through which females and males, girls and boys, women and men are assigned certain roles and responsibilities based on the values of a particular society. The beliefs and values enshrined in the socialisation process are passed on from one generation to another.* Socialisation agents employ a variety of means to motivate conformity to the social group. Among the agents are family, schools, media and peers.

Best (2003) postulates that socialisation can be deliberate, as when we are given instruction, by parents or teachers, in the skills people need (for example language skills) or the roles they are expected to perform. Socialisation can also be unintentional, in which events or situations have a significant effect upon the people that was never planned, although socialisation is thought to produce a degree of conformity. It should be noted that the human being is active in the socialisation process: in other words the person has agency - the ability to think of himself or herself as a separate person and to act on that assumption. The next section looks at the family as a place for primary socialisation.

The school environment

In the interview with the civic education teacher, he described a school as place that act as representation of structures found in wider society. He narrated that because of this, schools can present to a certain degree, similar structures and characteristics found in wider society. He went on and said that therefore, investigating the procedures, practices and rules within an educational institution may yield findings that reflect patterns present in the surrounding community and society. Kelly (2008) asserts that school children learn at two distinct levels: the school level, where an analytic, western, urban, middle-class approach often dominates; and the community level, where a holistic approach rooted in traditional values and beliefs may be predominant. The failure to harmonise these two levels of learning may partly explain why school-based AIDS education does not always lead to responsible, life-protecting sexual behaviour (Kelly, 2008). This might mean that schools are fundamental social institutions around which the constitution of society as a whole is imagined, contested, and transforms, and that schooling provides one of the clearest institutions for observing debates about culture, generation, gender and history.

In this study, school is discussed as a social system which has historically been charged with socialising pupils so that they internalise and adopt the standards and customs of the majority of the society they live in. Thus, the school can be understood as a social system which constitutes a subsystem of the totals society. The findings of this study revealed that there were persistent gender differences in schools based on culture beliefs. It was observed that structures that made female and male learners to be subjected to different socialisation in the school system were present. Though, to some extent disappearing. For example, from the total of 50 prefects, there were 32 boys and 18 girls. In the mixed FGD, the respondents admitted that the formal education provided tend to confine girls to dominant and household levels seen through the kind of subjects they take. For example, some girls still tend to avoid science and industrial arts subjects by preferring to take practical subjects that include Home Economics, Food and Nutrition, etc. These subjects, of course, relate to their future roles as mothers, home makers and child carers. One spoke and said that: *As girls, we need to take subjects that will help us in performing our roles in the matrimony home. A woman is judged by how she keeps her home.* This implies that the cultural constrains in place perpetuate the gender inequality in society.

Sources of sexual Information

All respondents in the FGDs agreed that one of their prime sources of information about sex, condoms, and HIV and AIDS is each other. Girls stated that they discuss with fellow friends almost everything concerning relationships. They said that they groom each before and during relationship. When asked if boys talked to each other about sex the boys were divided on giving an answer. Normally, most boys delay their longing for relationships. But one boy spoke up, saying that, 'of course you get advice from your friends if you've got a girl'. In individual interviews, half of the boys reported that they feel pressurised by their peers to have early and frequent sex with as many partners as possible.

If one is not in a relationship, friends demand that they get a friend. One boy claimed that his friends would organise for a match and expect him to take action by proposing the girl. He said that: *Some girls get too close and flirt with boys so that they can get hooked up.* The study revealed that some girls or boys form small groups with friends who think in the same way. If the group is not into having friends of the opposite sex, they would agree to maintain it in that way. But within the same groups, some will be attracted to the other camp. Group mates will do everything possible to find and force a friend who has never practised sex mate to have it. One girl lamented that:

Conclusion

The study set out to examine, among other things, gender issues such power, position and inequality and how these are perpetuated or altered through the socialisation process of young people. It also examined the awareness of the existence and seriousness of HIV and AIDS and knowledge of its transmission and prevention among those young people in Secondary school. Looked at was the participants' views on the use of constructive gender identity, HIV and AIDS information, skills and condoms as preventive measures against the spread of HIV and AIDS and the extent to which the knowledge is handled and disseminated in the school environment. Among important findings of this study are the following: gender issues are prevalent emanating from the manner in which people are socialised in society. Gender mainstreaming is inadequate insofar as the fight against HIV and AIDS is concerned although the level of awareness of its existence and its major causes is extremely high.

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