

**Youth Perceptions of Multiple Sexual Partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS: A Case Study of Students at Evelyn Hone College, Lusaka, Zambia.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Multiple sexual partnerships play a very significant role in the spread of HIV with epidemiologists suggesting that these partnerships possibly drive the epidemic. According to epidemiological evidence, a reduction of these partnerships would have a substantial impact on the epidemic. Like most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Zambia is facing a crippling HIV epidemic with prevalence in the 15-20 percent range. In light of this, this study explored youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS. The main aim of the study was to provide some insight on these partnerships with the hope that this will shed some light on why these partnerships exist and what barriers and opportunities for change exist given Zambia's high HIV prevalence. The findings of this study suggest that there are several social, cultural, economic and environmental factors that influence the existence of multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. In addition, the study also shows that while young people acknowledge the benefits of faithfulness in sexual relationships, there are several barriers that prevent the youth from being faithful.

## **Declaration**

This dissertation represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others it has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text.

The research for this dissertation was performed in the School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. Research was undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Pranitha Maharaj during the period from January 2006 to December 2006.

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chama Nshindano**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>ABC</b>	Abstinence, Be Faithful and Condom use
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ARV</b>	Anti-Retroviral Drug
<b>CBOH</b>	Central Board of Health
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistics Office
<b>GRZ</b>	Government of the Republic of Zambia
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>PEPFAR</b>	President's Emergency Plan on AIDS Relief
<b>SHARES</b>	Stop HIV/AIDS Reach Every Student
<b>STD</b>	Sexually Transmitted Disease
<b>STIs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VCT</b>	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>ZDHS</b>	Zambia Demographic and Health Survey
<b>ZSBS</b>	Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

It is often said that 'prevention is better than cure', but in cases where there is no cure it would suffice to say 'prevention is everything'. With an ever increasing number of new infections and without a cure in sight, preventing the spread of HIV is crucial. According to UNAIDS (2004) prevention is the mainstay of the response to HIV and therefore it is imperative that more effort is channelled towards up scaling prevention interventions. In order to comprehensively prevent the spread of HIV, it is essential to explore all avenues that may play a role in curbing this epidemic.

While discussions on HIV prevention are usually polarised around abstinence and condom use recent studies have emphasized the epidemiological importance of fidelity and partner reduction in the prevention of HIV (Shelton et al, 2004). It has been argued that were it not for multiple sexual partnerships HIV would probably not reach global epidemic levels (Green, 2004; Morris, 1997). Considering that most HIV infection is transmitted through sexual intercourse epidemiological evidence suggests that having multiple sexual partners drives the HIV epidemic. If people did not have multiple partners then an epidemic would not develop or if it did it would not be sustained (Green, 2004). While it is often argued that the number of sexual partners is insignificant if a person who has multiple partners uses condoms, reviews on condom use have suggested that most condom use in Africa, and everywhere else in the world is inconsistent and unfortunately inconsistent condom use does not protect against HIV infection (Hearst and Chen, 2004).

In light of the above mentioned evidence, it is essential to explore this particular avenue of thought in order to ensure that the prevention of HIV becomes more comprehensive. According Stover et al (2002) cited in UNAIDS (2002), comprehensive prevention could avert 29 million of the 45 million new infections projected to occur this decade.

## **1.1. Background of the Study**

In the two decades since the first cases of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was first recognized it has killed over 25 million people, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history. Despite recent, improved access to antiretroviral treatment and care in many regions, the AIDS epidemic claimed approximately 2.4 million lives in 2005; with more than half being children (AVERT, 2005). HIV is likely to soon become one of the top five causes of death worldwide and is now believed to cause more deaths than malaria (UNAIDS, 2005). Commonwealth countries account for over 60% of prevalent HIV infections worldwide. Approximately half of all global HIV transmissions are to people under 25 years of age (UNAIDS, 2005). HIV is drastically lowering life expectancy and reversing the major gains that have been made in child survival in some regions of Africa. According to statistics provided by the World Health Organisation (2001) on HIV/AIDS, three persons are infected globally every minute, suggesting that the sexual behaviour of people is not changing.

### *1.1.1. Global Overview of the HIV Epidemic: An Introduction*

At the end of 2005 the total number of people living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) reached its highest level: an estimated 40.3 million people are now living with HIV with approximately five million people being newly infected with the virus in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2005; WHO, 2004; AVERT, 2005). Globally, the HIV incidence rate is generally believed to have peaked in the late 1990s and from then on it has subsequently stabilized in spite of increasing incidence in a number of countries (UNAIDS, 2006). In most cases this stabilization has been attributed to changes in behaviour and prevention programmes. According to UNAIDS (2006:8) “changes in incidence along with rising AIDS mortality have caused global HIV prevalence (the proportion of people living with HIV) to level off”. Nevertheless, the numbers of people living with HIV has continued to grow. This growth has mostly been attributed to population growth and most recently to the life prolonging effects of antiretroviral therapy. This is true for all regions in the

world apart from the Caribbean, which is the second most affected region in the world, where overall HIV prevalence has shown no change in 2005 when compared with 2003 (UNAIDS, 2006).

While Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the hardest hit by the HIV epidemic, epidemics are also growing in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and in East Asia. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia the number of people living with HIV has increased by a quarter since 2003, and the number of AIDS deaths has almost doubled in the same period. While in East Asia the number of people living with HIV in 2005 increased by one fifth compared to 2003 (AVERT, 2005).

The HIV epidemic in Eastern Europe has grown significantly with the number of people living with HIV reaching an estimated 1.6 million in 2005 which is an increase of almost twentyfold in less than ten years (UNAIDS, 2005). In 2005, AIDS claimed an estimated 62 000 lives and approximately 270 000 people were newly infected with HIV. HIV transmission in Eastern Europe is mostly via unprotected sexual intercourse and injecting drug use. The majority of people living with HIV in this region are from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. According to UNAIDS (2005:45) the epidemic in Ukraine continues to grow, with more new HIV diagnoses occurring each year, while the Russian Federation has the biggest AIDS epidemic in all of Europe. The epidemics have matured to the point where they pose substantial prevention, treatment and care challenges.

The Asia and Oceania epidemics are mostly increasing in China, Papua Guinea and Vietnam, with alarming signs from other countries like Pakistan and Indonesia indicating they could also be on the verge of serious epidemics (UNAIDS, 2005; AVERT, 2005). The epidemics in Asia are mostly driven by a combination of injecting drug use and unprotected commercial sex. While national HIV infection levels in Asia are low compared to Africa, the fact that populations of many Asian nations are so large that even low national HIV prevalence means large numbers of people are living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2005). In 2005 there were approximately 8.3

million people living with HIV, two million of which were women. In addition, an estimated 520 000 lives were also claimed by AIDS in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2005; World Bank, 2006).

HIV prevalence among women has also continued to grow. Approximately 17.5 million women were living with HIV in 2005, which is one million more than in 2003 (UNAIDS, 2005; AVERT, 2005). Almost 13.5 million of these women live in Sub-Saharan Africa. This disproportionate impact of HIV has also been evident in Eastern Europe, South-East Asia and Central Asia. The increased susceptibility of women to HIV infection is largely attributed to biological reasons, especially for sexually active young women whose bodies are still developing. In addition, their susceptibility is also exacerbated by widespread inequalities which include political, social, cultural and human security factors (UNAIDS, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Evidence also suggests that sexual and other forms of abuse against women and girls increase their chances of becoming infected with HIV. Worldwide, high levels of sexual violence against women and girls have been reported. When surveyed, between one third and one half of women in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Namibia and Thailand, for example, said they had been physically and/ or sexually assaulted by their partners (WHO, 2005).

#### *1.1.2. HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa*

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face the most devastating HIV epidemic in the world. With just over 10% of the world's population, Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than 60% of all people living with HIV (AVERT, 2005). In 2005, an estimated 3.2 million people in the region became newly infected, while 2.4 million adults and children died of AIDS. Among young people aged 15-24 years, an estimated 4.6% of women and 1.7% of men were living with HIV in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2005). Generally, HIV prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa does appear to be levelling off, although at exceptionally high levels in Southern Africa. This stabilization has mostly been attributed to situations where the numbers of people with HIV approximately matches the numbers of people dying of AIDS-related illnesses (UNAIDS, 2006).

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to approximately three-quarters of all women aged 15 years and older living with HIV globally (UNAIDS, 2006). Women in this region are disproportionately affected by AIDS compared to men, which is often an expression of the highly unequal social and socioeconomic status of women and men. Women are estimated to comprise 13.2 million or 59% of adults living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa (AVERT, 2005).

Without a doubt Southern Africa continues to be the epicentre of the epidemic with approximately one in three people living with HIV globally living in this sub region. Southern Africa is home to an estimated 43% of all children under the age of 15 years living with HIV and approximately 52% of all women 15 years and older living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2006). With the exception of Angola, national infections levels in the region are extremely high and show no sign of abating. There are no signs of HIV prevalence decline in any Southern African countries except for Zimbabwe where data from national sentinel surveillance, and national and local community-based surveys show a declining trend in HIV prevalence (UNAIDS, 2006). Zimbabwe's national adult prevalence is currently estimated at 20.1% compared to 22.1% in 2003. Elsewhere, including extremely high prevalence countries like Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland, high infection levels have persisted (AVERT, 2005; UNAIDS, 2006).

### *1.1.3. HIV/AIDS in Zambia*

Like most of the countries in Southern Africa, the HIV epidemic in Zambia does not appear to be relenting. Ever since Zambia's first reported AIDS diagnosis in 1984, there has been a rapid rise in HIV prevalence. In 1993, surveys of pregnant women found that infection rates were 27% in urban areas and 13-14% in rural areas (AVERT, 2005). By the end of 2003, it is estimated that 16.5% of people aged 15-49 years old were living with HIV, of which 57% were women (UNAIDS/WHO, 2003). In Zambia young women aged 15-19 are six times more likely to be HIV positive than males of the same age (AVERT, 2005). There are also distinct differences in the age pattern of HIV infection between women and men (ZDHS, 2001-2002:237). Infection rates among women are higher than those of men until age 35-39, after

which infection rates among men overtake and pass those of women. The peak infection age groups are 30-34 years for women and 35-39 for men.

Zambia's current adult prevalence is estimated at 17.0%, with large geographical variations (UNAIDS, 2006). HIV infection levels among pregnant women range from under 10% in some rural areas to as high as 30% in some urban areas. According to the National HIV/AIDS Council of Zambia, HIV prevalence is usually clustered along major transport routes- including Kabwe, Livingstone and Ndola (UNAIDS, 2005:19).

HIV in Zambia is not primarily a disease for the most underprivileged (as is the case places like the USA and Western Europe); infections rates are very high among wealthier people and the better educated (AVERT, 2005). Though it is important to note that it is the poor who are least able to protect themselves from HIV or to effectively cope with the impact of AIDS. In support of this, Kelly (2002:9) suggests that "HIV/AIDS is not a disease of the poor, but being poor facilitates the transmission of HIV and its more rapid development into full-blown AIDS". HIV prevalence is highest in urban areas even though just fewer than 40% of the population live in these areas. Among pregnant women, the highest HIV rates have been recorded in Lusaka the capital of Zambia (home to 10% of the population); the industrial towns Kabwe and Ndola; Western Province's capital, Mongu; and the cross border trading centres Chipata and Livingstone (AVERT, 2005).

In the 1990s there was a significant fall in HIV prevalence among young Zambian women, especially pregnant women aged 15-19 years that were surveyed in Lusaka. Prevalence among this group was found to have halved from 28.4% in 1993 to 14.8% in 1998 (AVERT, 2005). The same period saw the general decline in prevalence among young women in urban areas, and on a small scale among teenage women in rural areas. The falling prevalence levels have been associated with a drop in new infections, which are possibly a result of behavioural change. This decline in prevalence among young women has not necessary had a significant impact on Zambia's national prevalence level meaning that the annual number of new infections

is roughly equal to the number of deaths. According to AVERT (2005) the falling HIV prevalence among young people may well indicate lower incidence of infection, but a more general decline in prevalence would not necessarily be a good sign. In actual fact, in a situation where more people receive antiretroviral treatment, and there is no significant drop in the number of new infections, then fewer people will die of AIDS each year and prevalence may rise.

The majority of HIV transmission in Zambia is as a result of unprotected heterosexual intercourse, with very few cases of homosexual and intravenous-drug-injecting transmissions (AVERT, 2005; ZDHS, 2000-2001). There are various factors that can increase the risk of HIV transmission during unprotected sex among these is the presence of sexual transmitted infections (STIs) which are very common in Zambia (ZDHS, 2000-2001; ZSBS, 2005). In addition, certain intravaginal practices like 'dry sex' which are common practices in most areas in Zambia may also increase the risk of HIV transmission. Given the extremely low transmission rate that is associated with heterosexual intercourse, the HIV epidemic driven by heterosexual transmission can only be sustained by a high level of high-risk sexual relations such as multiple sexual partners, relations with commercial sex workers or the as previously mentioned the presence of other cofactors like ulcerating STIs (Halperin and Epstein, 2004). According to Caldwell et al (1999), in areas where homosexual and intravenous-drug-injecting activities are relatively low, then the risk of an HIV epidemic depends on the extent or type of heterosexual networking.

#### *1.1.4. HIV/AIDS among the Youth*

While young people<sup>1</sup> aged 15-24 years do not necessarily have the highest HIV prevalence in the world, they continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of exposure to HIV infection worldwide (WHO, 2004). According to UNAIDS (2002), of the 28 million people living with HIV worldwide, approximately one third

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'youth' or 'young people' refers to an age group that is a combination of two age groups: those aged 15-19 who are classified as adolescents and those aged 20-24 who are classified as young adults.

are between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In 2003, the youth accounted for two-thirds of newly infected individuals in developing countries; of the estimated 22 million people who had died of AIDS as of 1999, half became infected as 15 to 24 year olds; over 60% of the youth living with HIV live in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2004a; 1999; 2004b).

Among young people aged 15-24 years, an estimated 4.6% of women and 1.7% of men were living with HIV in 2005 (UNAIDS, 2005). The rate of new infection is also higher among young women than young men, which is usually attributed to various factors such as greater biological susceptibility, gender inequalities, socio-cultural norms, lack of financial security, forced and early marriage, sexual abuse and trafficking of young women (UNAIDS, 2005). Though it is important to note that in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and much of Latin America young men are more likely to be infected than young women. This is because in these regions it is injecting drug users and men who have sex with men that are particularly at risk.

The current youth generation has never known a world without AIDS and as a group they are especially vulnerable to contracting and transmitting the disease. According to Kelly (2002:3), “since new HIV infections are occurring at very high rates among young people, it follows that young people may form a special highly infectious group, with enhanced potential to spread the disease among themselves and to others, without their being aware that they might be doing so.” There are several factors that place the youth at the core of HIV vulnerability including lack of HIV information, education and services; the gambles many must take in order to survive; and the risks that accompany adolescent experimentation and curiosity (UNAIDS, 2004).

Early sexual debut has also been identified as a major factor that increases youth vulnerability. According to UNAIDS (2004) the majority of young people become sexually active in their teens, and this is in most cases before their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Early sexual debut has been linked to factors like “...increasing urbanization, poverty, exposure to conflicting ideas about sexual values and behaviour, and the breakdown of traditional sexuality and reproduction information channels” (UNAIDS, 2004:8).

WHO (2000) states that young people who have early sexual debut are likely to have sex with more partners. In addition, they are not likely to use condoms as is reflected in a study in Kisumu, Kenya, where 25% of sexually active young boys and 33% of young girls said they had not used a condom during their first and subsequent sexual encounters (Glynn et al, 2001 cited in UNAIDS, 2004). Studies conducted in Argentina, Korea and Peru also reported erratic condom use with regular and non-regular sexual partners (WHO, 2000).

Another factor that increases youth vulnerability to HIV infection is the youth's sense of invulnerability, the so called "it won't happen to me" syndrome. The youth perception of risk is not usually consistent with HIV prevalence in their country. Most young people do not think they are at risk of contracting HIV even though they might be living in a country that is facing an ever growing HIV epidemic. In Cameroon, Kenya and Zambia, for example, only about half of young women and men who have heard of HIV/AIDS felt that they are at risk, even though prevalence is high in all three countries (Bankole et al, 2004:11). This sense of invulnerability is also evident among the youth in Haiti which outside of Africa has the highest HIV prevalence in the world. According to UNICEF (2000), in Haiti 63% of sexually active girls, aged 15-19, believe that they are not at risk of contracting HIV.

#### *1.1.5. HIV among the Zambian youth*

Statistics on the Zambian youth clearly shows that this is a group that is vulnerable to HIV infection. Approximately one in six urban youth aged 15 to 19 is HIV positive (ZSS, 1999). According to the ZSBS (1998), by the age of 15, 37 percent of boys and 27 percent of girls have had sex and this increases to 62 percent and 59 percent, respectively, in the 15-19 age group. By the age of 19, only 16 percent of the Zambian youth report that they have never had sex. Among the sexually active, never-married youth, 24 percent of boys and 13 percent of girls reported that they had more than partner in the past year (ZSBS, 1998). Overall, 42 percent of all infections in Zambia are among the youth aged 15 to 24 years (ZDHS, 2000-2001).

Though these statistics paint a dire picture for the fight against the HIV epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa the fight has to go on and with no cure in sight the best option remains to intensify prevention efforts. While HIV has reached epidemic levels, there are still millions of people who are not infected and therefore it is essential to continue to strengthen prevention interventions.

#### *1.1.6. Multiple Sexual Partnerships and HIV*

Havanon et al (1993) cited in Lawoyin (2000:6) described sexual networking as the practice of having sexual relations with two or more partners either sequential or concurrently and within a specified time period: concurrent refers to two or more sexual relationships overlapping in time; and sequential refers to two or more nonoverlapping relationships (Kelley et al, 2003). According to Manhart et al (2002:133) “multiple sexual partners is a factor that has long been associated with increased risk for transmission of sexual transmitted disease (STD) and HIV at the individual and population levels, yet the term is broad and can be interpreted as either serial monogamy or concurrency (more than one partner at a time)”.

While both types of relationship patterns are associated with high levels of HIV transmission, Shelton et al (2004) states that the most crucial determinant of the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is the rate of change of partners especially concurrent partners. In support of this, a study conducted by Kelley et al (2003) in the United States of America (U.S.A) found that people who were in concurrent relationships were more likely to report an STI than those in sequential relationships. According to Epstein (2004) previous studies have shown that individuals with concurrent sexual relationships are more likely to transmit infection than others and therefore they may represent core transmitters. The Centre for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California supports this stating that core group members in a sexual network have high levels of risky behaviour and they therefore contribute a disproportionate share of HIV infection and they can fuel sustained transmission (UCSF, 2005). If an individual has a sexual partner who practices concurrency then their risk of acquiring an STI is increased and it may present an

added risk by linking individuals in varying degrees to larger sexual networks. In Zambia, like most of the countries in Southern Africa, the tendency to have multiple sexual partners is common to the whole population including the youth (AVERT, 2005). Given the pivotal role that increased monogamy and partner reduction can play in turning the epidemic around, there is need to have contextual insight on multiple sexual partnerships. A contextual approach to HIV/AIDS prevention is essential as it allows for more adequate interventions to be put in place especially in light of increasing global HIV/AIDS infections. It is for this reason that this study will provide insight into multiple sexual partnerships among the youth in Zambia.

## **1.2. General Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to provide some insight into youth's perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS i.e. why do they exist; and what barriers and opportunities for change exist given the high HIV prevalence in Zambia.

The specific aims of the study are

- To investigate youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS
- To establish the types of multiple sexual partnerships that exist among the youth
- To investigate the barriers and opportunities for changing sexual behaviour, particularly, multiple sexual partnerships

## **1.3. Conceptual Framework**

Most HIV related research is usually based on cognitive theories and models of health behaviour. Examples include the theory of reasoned action, the health belief model and the AIDS risk reduction model. These theories are often referred to as 'social-cognitive' within the health psychology literature and mainly focus on factors within the triad of behaviour, personal factors, interpersonal factors and processes.

According to these theories one's behaviour is seen to be primarily a function of beliefs and subjective evaluations.

“The key cognitions and evaluations addressed by these theories include: vulnerability to the health risk; perceived severity of the health outcome; likelihood that changed behaviour will protect against the risk; confidence in changing one's behaviour; perceived emotional and social consequences of health-related behaviours; and perceptions about social norms. These variables may influence behaviour itself or the intention to behave in a certain manner” (Eaton et al, 2002:2).

Generally, these theories have been very useful and valid particularly within the western contexts in which they were designed. But it has been argued that these theories cannot be applied in all circumstances (Eaton et al, 2002:2). But recent studies have suggested that these theories and models do not provide an adequate framework for bringing about behaviour change particularly when applied to the contexts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (Airhihenbuwa et al, 1999; Melkote et al, 2000). There are several problems associated with these theories and models. Firstly, they lack consideration of variety of political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts that exist in these regions. Secondly, they focus on the individual rather than the social context within which the individual exists. Thirdly, they disregard the influence of context variables such as culture and gender relationships. And finally, they assume that decisions about HIV prevention are based on rational, volitional thinking with no regard to more true-to-life emotional responses in engaging in sexual behaviour (Airhihenbuwa et al (1999) cited in Parker, 2004:1).

In light of these problems, it is thought that emphasis should be put on the importance of context when addressing health behaviour. There are several factors that influence sexual interactions ranging from emotional, psychological to physiological, all of which may readily overwhelm rational choice-making (Parker, 2004:2). It is on this emphasis of context that this research project was constructed. As with all risk behaviour, there are several socioeconomic, cultural and environmental contexts that surround the existence of multiple sexual partnerships. This research will be based on

Ewart's social action theory which is derived from the social learning theory; this theory is a multilevel model that incorporates social network and environmental influence factors with intrapersonal mechanisms to explain HIV precautionary health behaviour.

Within this theoretical framework the existence of multiple sexual partnerships interacts with various social, economical and environment factors and this in turn influences youth sexual behaviour. Recent studies (Kelly, 2000; Kelly and Parker, 2000; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002) have started to conceptualise high risk youth sexuality in Africa differently, it is seen more as environmental, social and cultural problem that usually and effectively dis-enables youth from transforming safe-sex knowledge into functional, health-promoting, safer-sex behaviour.

This theory provides a framework for examining the cognitive processes, social transactions, and environmental contexts and moderators that promote or impede HIV risk reduction. According to Mantell (1997), settings and social networks can influence risk reduction indirectly by influencing generative capabilities, i.e. a person's ability to take action, appraisal of their personal goals, problem-solving abilities, and consequences of self-protective activity (outcome expectancies). Unlike the individual-level cognitive-oriented models, the social action theory does not assume that individuals make rational decisions before acting. This theory will be applied in order to understand the influences on multiple sexual partnerships among the youth with the aim of gaining contextual insight on this particular high risk sexual behaviour.

#### **1.4. Organisation of the Dissertation**

In order to begin to understand the context in which these multiple sexual partnerships exist, this research focused on exploring the Zambian youth's perceptions of these partnerships. The remainder of the dissertation will take the following structure: Chapter two will provide a review of literature that is significant to this study. Three issues will be discussed: multiple sexual partnerships and HIV prevention specifically; and risky sexual behaviour more generally. Chapter Three

will describe the methodology undertaken for this study. It will explain how the study was conducted and the reasons for conducting it in this way. Chapter four and five will provide a presentation of the findings of the study and a discussion of the findings respectively. Chapter six will conclude the paper. It will provide a summary of the keys issues brought forth in this study and offer recommendations for future research.

# Chapter Two

## Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

Multiple sexual partnerships are possibly at the core of the HIV epidemic, particularly for Southern Africa, with epidemiological evidence suggesting that the reduction of these partnerships would have a significant impact on the epidemic (Shelton et al 2004; Green, 2004; Garnett and Johnson, 1997). The aim of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature that is significant to this study. The chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section will present a general discussion on HIV prevention and the debates surrounding it and more specifically, a discussion on multiple sexual partnerships and the role that they play in the spread of HIV infection will be presented. The second section will discuss multiple sexual partnerships among the youth.

### 2.2. HIV prevention

The prevention of HIV is mostly governed by three key behavioural changes: abstaining from sexual activity, mutual monogamy/partner reduction, and condom use. The strategy that has managed to include all three changes comprehensively is the ABC strategy. According to UNAIDS (2004), the 'A' stands for abstinence or delaying first sex; the 'B' stands for being safer by being faithful to one partner or by reducing the number of sexual partners; while the 'C' stands for correct and consistent use of condoms for sexually active young people, couples in which one partner is HIV-positive, sex workers and their clients, and anyone engaging in sexual activity with partners who may have been at risk of HIV exposure.

The popularity of the ABC strategy has mostly been attributed to the fact that it had a very significant impact in Uganda (Singh et al, 2003; Stoneburner et al, 2002; Shelton et al, 2004). While there is no evidence that the term ABC was actually used in

Uganda's campaigns, there is evidence to show that they did incorporate some elements of abstinence, be faithful and using condoms (UNAIDS, 2004). Uganda has been hailed by policymakers around the world as a role model in the fight against HIV, because it was able to reduce the HIV infection rates during the 1980s and early 1990s. While the HIV epidemic continues to be a challenge for the country, it was able to maintain reduced infection rates through the late 1990s. These declines have recently been attributed to an increase in sexual abstinence; however large increases were also noted in both monogamy and condom use which also made a significant contribution to the reduced risk for HIV infection (Singh et al, 2003). While there is great political debate about the extent to which each of these behavioural changes actually influenced the decline in Uganda's HIV rates, there is no doubt that the country's strategy involved the components of the ABC, hence there has been a call for other countries to implement this strategy in their prevention programmes.

Although the ABC strategy is being increasingly promoted as the key strategy for HIV prevention, recent studies (Shelton et al, 2004; USAID, 2004; Bessinger et al, 2004) state that while abstinence and condom use have found persuasive advocates, the 'B' prong for being faithful has not. According to Shelton et al (2004:891), "while most of the often polarized discussion surrounding HIV prevention has focused on promoting abstinence or use of condoms, partner reduction has been the neglected middle child of the ABC approach." The importance of the 'be faithful' component of the ABC seems to have been lost in the battle of abstinence versus condom use. This battle has been intensifying ever since the Bush administration introduced the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) initiative in December 2002, which is an advocate for abstinence until marriage for young people and hence it has clashed with programmes that advocate for condom use (AVERT, 2005).

While all those involved in the battle base their arguments on the ABC approach in Uganda, they often overlook the fact that the strategy used in Uganda did not have emphasis on the one particular aspect of the ABC strategy. Neither 'A' nor 'B' nor 'C' on its own is able to provide a solution to reduce the risk of HIV infection that is realistic for everyone (Shelton et al, 2004).

Having a prevention strategy that does not comprehensively include all three behaviour changes is likely to have grave consequences. While the promotion of abstinence until marriage in countries with high HIV infections as a result of sexual transmission may allow those that are abstaining to avoid infection, there is no guarantee that this will continue once they get married. This is because marriage does not provide protection from infection. In most cases, many married people are unsure of the HIV status of their partners, and for those who choose to be faithful in their marriage; there is no certainty that their partner is maintaining the same commitment (Kanabus and Noble, 2005).

According to Maharaj and Cleland (2006) several studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa show that there are high levels of HIV infection in relationships that are stable and long-term. In support of this, Kelly (2002) states that African delegates at an International AIDS Conference held in Durban in 2000 thought that the most risky behaviour an African woman could engage in was to get married. In light of this, there is need to address the plight of those who may wish to abstain but cannot because it may not be a realistic option for them. This is particularly true for millions of women and girls who are in abusive relationships, or have been forced into transactional relationships for economic reasons (Meekers and Calves, 1997; Hallman, 2005; Luke and Kurz, 2002; Kaufman and Stavous, 2002; Abdool Karim et al, 1994). In such cases, it is essential to have a prevention strategy that is comprehensive to ensure that those that are not abstaining have alternative prevention method. In addition, abstinence only programmes may act as protection from HIV infection for a limited period only which emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive strategy. This is because once a person becomes sexually active their chances of contracting HIV increase significantly.

On the other end of the spectrum are programmes that strongly promote the use of condoms. While the use of condoms is fundamental in reducing the risk of HIV infection there are several dangers in the promotion of condoms only. For starters, the use of condoms can only protect against HIV infection if used correctly and consistently. But unfortunately, studies have shown that most condom use is

inconsistent (Green, 2004; Hearst and Chen, 2004). In support of this Shelton et al (2004:892) states that “even though prospective studies have shown that condoms reduce risk by about 80-90% when used correctly, in real life they are often used incorrectly and inconsistently”.

Another argument that has been put forward against condom only programmes which have led to heated debates is that the promotion of condoms is likely to ‘backfire’ in the sense that it may result in ‘disinhibition’ (Green, 2004). ‘Disinhibition’ is basically a phenomenon where people feel safer than they ought to when using condoms, and therefore engage in higher risk sexual behaviour than they would if they were not using condoms at all. This phenomenon is also referred to as risk compensation (Kanabus and Noble, 2005). But this argument is highly debatable especially if one looks at the findings from the study conducted by Caldwell et al (1999) in Nigeria which found that the men who engaged in risky sexual relations usually felt as though they were driven by an uncontrollable urge, which in most cases was stimulated by alcohol. In light of this, to say that the promotion of condoms may cause people to engage in riskier sexual activity than they otherwise would seem quite unsubstantiated. But if the phenomenon of ‘disinhibition’ does indeed exist, then it would prove to be a major challenge especially if one considers the fact that most condom use is inconsistent. People who engage in risky behaviour like having multiple partners because of ‘disinhibition’ and do not use condoms consistently are likely to play a major role in the spread of HIV.

In order to curb this behaviour among people using condoms there is a need for comprehensiveness in prevention strategies in the sense that there should be an equally strong message about mutual monogamy and partner reduction as a way of reducing the risk of HIV infection. While in the case of those who choose to abstain it is imperative that they are encouraged to continue using this method of risk avoidance, but it is also important to ensure that there is a prevention method that is available to them once they stop abstaining.

### **2.3. Multiple Sexual Partnerships and HIV Infection**

While it is important to note that prevention programmes that are focusing on selected components of the ABC are possibly undermining the effectiveness of the strategy, it has to be realised that this lack of comprehensive implementation is leading to the neglect of a component that is of fundamental importance in the prevention of HIV (Shelton et al, 2004; Wilson, 2004). Unprotected sex with a large number of sexual partners increases the risk of contracting HIV with the risk being greater in the context of a generalised epidemic (HSRC, 2005). Evidence of the pivotal role that partner reduction plays in HIV prevention can be found in the cases of the reduction of the level of HIV infections in Thailand and Uganda. In Thailand the ‘100% condom strategy has been sited as the key element in the decline of the country’s HIV epidemic but it is important to note that this intervention was also accompanied by a twofold decline between 1990 and 1993 in the numbers of those who reported engaging in commercial and other casual sex. This clearly indicates that the partner reduction may have played a role in the reduction of HIV infections in Thailand (USAID, 2004).

In Zambia, there seems to have been a decline in HIV prevalence in the 1990s (Slaymaker and Buckner, 2004; Fylkesnes et al, 2000; Ndubani et al, 2003). There was a significant decline in the number of sexually active men reporting three or more partners during the mid-1990s (USAID, 2004). Most of the change was seen among youth aged 15- 24 years and in urban areas. There was also a large decline in the percentages of single women reporting multiple sexual partners from the mid to the late 1990s (Ndubani et al, 2003; USAID, 2004). These changes were among younger and older women and among both rural and urban residents. These changes were attributed to the grassroots involvement of faith-based organisations and other community based organisations (USAID, 2004).

As for Uganda, in the face of the persuasive ‘zero grazing’ national campaign that was aimed at encouraging people to stick to regular partners, there was a significant drop in reported multiple partners. According to the findings of the Global

Programmes on AIDS surveys, the proportion of men with one or more casual partners in the previous year fell from 35% in 1939 to 15% in 1995, and the proportion of women from 16% to 6% (Stoneburner and Low-Beer, 2004). Another noteworthy reduction was that the proportion of men reporting three or more non-regular partners fell from 15% to 3% (Shelton et al, 2004). While it is difficult to establish a direct link between the 'zero-grazing' campaign and the associated fall in the incidence of HIV, it is highly likely that it played a role given that lower numbers of people with multiple partners means lower chances of HIV transmission (Green, 2004).

As previously mentioned, according to recent studies were it not for multiple sexual partnerships HIV would probably not reach global epidemic levels (Green, 2004; Morris, 1997). If people did not have multiple sexual partners then an epidemic would not develop or if it did, it would not be sustained. For example, if an infected person does not, on average, infect more than one other person, then an epidemic cannot be sustained (Green, 2004; Morris, 1997). This has been attributed to the fact that HIV viral load and therefore infectiousness is particularly high during the early stage of infection, and so this is likely to lead to heightened transmission by partner change among infected people. In addition, the transmission of HIV is also facilitated by the presence of other STDs and therefore the increased risk of these infections from multiple partners further magnifies the spread of HIV (Shelton et al, 2004). According to Epstein (2004:4), 'concurrency links sexually active people up in a giant network, not only to one another but also to the partners of their partners' partners – and to the partners of those partners, and so on – via a web of sexual relationships that can extend across huge regions. If one member contracts HIV, then everyone else in the web may, too.'

Concurrency is particularly common in Africa relative to Asia and western countries, and this could possibly explain why Africa has the worst HIV epidemic (Halperin and Epstein, 2004). In Asia and western countries heterosexual people tend to practice 'serial monogamy' which is to some extent less of a public-health danger than concurrency because it traps the virus in a single relationship for months or years

(Epstein, 2004). According to Caldwell (2000), Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest levels of polygamy in the world. In the study conducted in Nigeria it was found that almost half of all wives were in polygamous marriages. Having multiple concurrent sexual partners was the norm with over half of the men and more than one-quarter of the women identified relationships with ten or more persons. There is a general belief among men and women that men are biologically programmed to need more than one woman (Orubuloye et al, 1997, Bankole et al, 2002). But having multiple sexual partners is not restricted to married people; in fact multiple non-marital partners are much more common among those men and women who are not married. In Malawi, a seven village study found that approximately 65% of sexually active adults were linked in one sexual network (SADC/UN/WHO et al, 2006).

Concurrency is also evident in Zambia where according to the 2005 Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey (ZSBS), in 2003, 45.0% of males indicated that it was 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' that their partner had another partner and in 2005 this percentage increased modestly to 49.5%. Among the females, 47.2% believed their partner had another partner in 2003 and this percentage increased to 57.3% in 2005.

Concurrency in Africa was also evident in the study of sexual networks in Uganda, Thailand and the USA that was conducted by Morris (2002) cited in Halperin and Epstein, (2004). The study found that Ugandan men reported fewer lifetime sexual partners than Thai men, but while the Thai men mainly had one-off encounters with prostitutes, the Ugandan men's relationships tended to be of much longer duration. Considering that the per-act probability of heterosexual HIV transmission is quite low on average, the much higher number of cumulative sexual acts made the likelihood of transmission much higher in Ugandan relationships than in those in Thailand or the USA. While the Ugandan women in the study reported fewer concurrent relationships than the men, the few multiple partnerships that some of them had still managed to help maintain the extensive interlocking sexual networks which facilitate the generalised spread of HIV (Halperin and Epstein, 2004).

Because most Africans do not have exorbitant numbers of sexual partners, they may not fully realise how dangerous concurrency is, especially in regions of high HIV prevalence. In Southern Africa, even if a person only has two lifetime partners it is important to acknowledge just how risky that one extra partner is particularly in a situation where the relationships are long-term and overlapping (Halperin and Epstein, 2004). In support of this, Manhart et al (2002) state that the importance of concurrency to transmission dynamics is increased by the observation that if there is a high prevalence of concurrent partnerships in the sexually active population then this will ensure that infection persists even among low-risk groups. Concurrency also makes it difficult to achieve consistent condom use. This is because condom use is typically very low in marriage and other long-term, stable partnerships (SADC/UN/WHO et al, 2006). A study by Longfield et al (2001) among youth in several African countries found that condom use was low, especially with trusted partners. While condoms were used at the beginning of most relationships, the respondents described how youth usually abandoned condom use after the feeling that they 'know' their partners well. Discontinuing condom use was seen as an indication of advancement in relationships to more serious levels, especially there was greater consideration of marriage. According to Longfield et al (2001:30) some young people usually feel assured that their partners are HIV negative when they get tested or show no signs or symptoms of infection over time. In support of this Kelly and Parker (2000) cited in Eaton et al (2002) states that the act of leaving condoms behind usually symbolises a new level of commitment within a relationship. This is usually with the assumption that loving or long-term relationships necessarily involve less risk, even though the partner's HIV status is unknown.

While the tendency to have multiple sexual partners is common to most of the Southern African population, it is particularly heightened among the youth. A survey conducted by Human Sciences Research Council (2005) on South African National HIV prevalence, HIV incidence, behaviour and Communication found that the youth reported more multiple sexual partnerships than other age groups. In support of this Santelli et al (1998) state that previous research shows that young people are more

likely than adults to report having had multiple sexual partners in the recent past. It has also been established that young men are more likely than young women to have multiple sexual partners, in addition evidence from several countries has also shown that young men are also much more likely to have multiple sexual partners than older men – even than those in their late twenties (UNAIDS, 2001). In countries highly affected by HIV like Zambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Uganda and Swaziland, studies have shown that young men in their late teens and early twenties are particularly likely to have multiple partners than older men (UNAIDS, 2001).

There are several reasons which might explain why this behaviour is particularly heightened among the youth: the majority of the youth in Southern Africa live in poverty and a recent study by Hallman (2005) found a positive relationship between economic disadvantage and a variety of unsafe sexual behaviours and experiences which included having multiple sexual partnerships. According to Kiragu (2001) cited in Kelly (2002) for some young people worldwide the immediate conditions of daily life are so adverse that they outweigh concerns about contracting HIV. This is particularly true for the youth in Zambia – the country is one of the poorest and least developed in the world and is currently facing an overwhelming HIV epidemic (AVERT, 2005). According to a presentation by a Zambian youth activist at the International AIDS Conference in Durban in July 2000:

“Regarding youth life styles, nearly 70 percent of youth (16-20 years) are out of school, 70-75 percent of the youth are unemployed, 80 percent live in high density compounds and are poor, and there is virtually no ‘healthy’ recreation or entertainment available. Youth live for the moment. They experiment, explore, and seek immediate gratification. They want to make money now and for girls’ sex is a means of making money. Boys want girls to flock around them, to look appealing to girls, and they want sex.... Regarding the aspirations of the youth in Zambia, many say they have nothing to look forward to and no hope for the future. Education is no guarantee of a good job, money, or a secure future ... Youth in Zambia does not feel at risk for HIV infection. Unplanned pregnancies are much more worrisome to girls than STDs or HIV, claiming that they could not live with the embarrassment of

becoming pregnant, but if they had an STD or HIV no one would know. By and large, youth view STDs as treatable, but, without a positive attitude towards the future, they do not worry about the lack of treatability of HIV” (Hachonda et al, 2000 cited in Kelly, 2002: 10).

In addition, the youth are at a stage in life which is usually a time of sexual discovery and experimentation and therefore are more likely to engage in high risk sexual behaviour (Kelly, 2002). In addition, the heavy influence of peers also causes the youth to engage in risky sexual practices. A study in Kenya found that male adolescents whose friends were sexually active were found to be seven times more likely to be sexually active themselves (Kiragu, 2001 cited in Kelly, 2002). The tendency of the youth to engage in risky sexual behaviour, particularly multiple sexual partnerships, makes them a very vulnerable group for HIV infection.

Many have seen this as an opportunity to explore the socio-cultural context in which this high risk youth sexual behaviour is acted out. Studies on adolescent risk-taking behaviour in Sub-Saharan Africa (Zabin and Kiragu, 1998, cited in Leclerc-Madlala, 2002) have found several factors that have been identified as unique features in African sexuality and which influence the high rates of HIV infections: female sexual submissiveness, entrenched convictions of male dominance, high levels of sexual violence, social acceptance of the ‘sugar daddy’ phenomenon, and the fear of HIV/AIDS leading men to seek relations with a pool of increasingly younger women and girls.

While there have been very few studies aimed at conceptualizing multiple sexual partnerships specifically, there is literature that attempts to bring forth several social, cultural and economic factors that surround these partnerships. Socio-cultural norms such as manliness that is defined by the number of women a man is able to attract and maintain have been well documented by many (Hunter, 2002; Bankole et al, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). The traditional culture of polygamy in most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa is another factor that has provided insight into multiple sexual partnerships (Bankole et al, 2002). While traditional polygamy is on the decline,

multiple sexual partnerships for men have continued in the form of informal polygamy or the practice of having one legitimate wife and numerous 'outside' wives or girlfriends (Luke and Kurz, 2002). According to Kelly (2002:9) "lenient social, cultural and economic arrangements in society allow men a great deal of sexual licence, and many cultures encourage or even demand high-risk sexual behaviour from boys and young men". Young men and boys who respond to these cultural norms usually put themselves at high risk of HIV infection.

Economic factors have also been identified as having an influence on multiple sexual partnerships, particularly for women in Sub-Saharan Africa. Due to the high levels of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa a lot of young unmarried women conceptualise sexuality as a resource that they are able to exploit for material or economic advantage. Sex can be used to trade for basic needs such as food, school fees or to acquire expensive fashion accessories such as perfumes, clothes, etc (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). In order to maximise on these economic benefits, most young women have resorted to engaging in multiple sexual partnerships with different men who are able to meet their economic needs (Hallman, 2005; Luke and Kurz, 2002; Kaufman and Stavous, 2002).

The youth are clearly particularly vulnerable in the context of HIV and therefore focusing on the youth is essential. Even though the youth do not have the highest prevalence, most new HIV infections occur during the period of adolescence (WHO, 2002; UNAIDS, 2004a). An example can be given of South Africa where it is estimated that over 60% of HIV infections occur before the age of 25 (Abt Associates, 2001 cited in Leclerc-Madlala, 2002:2). Therefore, efforts which are targeted at this group can have a significant impact on HIV prevalence levels. In addition, according to Bankole et al (2004:5) focusing on the youth is important as it presents "...a window of opportunity for introducing policies, educational programs and reproductive health services that could change the course of the HIV epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa."

### *2.3.1. Multiple Sexual Partnerships among Young Men*

According to UNAIDS (2001), the global AIDS epidemic is driven by many factors. These include risk behaviours like sex with more than one partner and without a condom, and social conditions such as poverty. But one of the strongest determinants of how quickly the epidemic spreads is the sexual behaviour and attitudes of men. In most cases, men (not women) have a lot of power in sexual relationships; they are usually the ones that determine when and how often to have sex (Varga, 1997). Men also play a major role in determining whether or not condoms will be used in sexual relationships (Varga, 1997; Kaufman and Stravous, 2004). Most studies have found that women's limited power and emotional and financial dependence on men present significant obstacles to sexual decision-making (Varga, 1997; Pivnick, 1993; Worth, 1989; Sobo, 1995). In addition, it is generally men who have multiple sexual partners and therefore are more likely to transmit HIV to their partners (Varga, 1997; HSRC, 2005; PANOS, 2001). In the Zambian context, traditionally men play a dominant role in most sexual relationships while women are expected to be submissive (AVERT, 2005). A woman is usually taught to be obedient to her husband and that it is wrong to refuse to have sex with him.

The sexual behaviour of young men is usually influenced by several aspects of their environment, for example, the traditional culture of polygamy in most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, which was originally an expression of wealth for older men, has to some extent provided a rationale for young men, regardless of how poor they maybe, to have more than one sexual partner (Bankole et al, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). According to Orubuloye et al (1994) cited in Meekers and Calves (1997) in a traditional context, having many wives and fathering many children was regarded as a sign of success and virility. For most young men, having large numbers of sexual partners is perceived as a way of showing manliness and in most cases as boys grow up they are often under pressure to have sex which is usually seen as a formal expression of their entry in adult status (UNAIDS, 2001). According to Eaton et al (2002: 13) for young men the pressure that they are faced with is mainly linked to proving manliness and therefore having many sexual partners is able to win a young

man status and admiration from his peers. In support of this, a South African study by Varga (1997) states that for young men having multiple sexual partners is a 'yardstick' which is used to measure masculinity, intelligence and success among one's peers. Strategies that one used to gain multiple sexual partners are regarded as proof of male intelligence, cunning and wit.

According to a study by Varga (1997) the socio-cultural and conceptual value of having multiple partners was evident in the Zulu terms that young men used to describe sexual experience. The term *isoka* was used to describe a man with many partners and the term to describe a man having only one partner or none. To be called an *isoka* was seen as a great compliment, while to be called an *isishimane* was considered an insult (Varga, 1997). This study shows that being an '*isoka*' was considered to be a natural, admirable and traditional part of African manhood. For most young men, their sexual behaviour is related to their perception of 'manhood' or what they think constitute the behaviour of a 'real man' (Ndubani et al, 2003).

The sexual behaviour of young men is also influenced by the belief that it is a man's nature to want many partners and therefore monogamy goes against the essence of being a man (Eaton et al, 2002). According to Macphail and Campbell (2001) the notion that masculinity implies having unprotected sex with numerous partners is particularly well developed in Southern Africa. Hallman (2005) states that masculine discourses often place a high value on multiple sexual partners and in most African countries a male having multiple sexual partners is accepted by both genders. In addition, Lawoyin's (2000) study on sexual networking in Nigeria found that the majority of men thought it was impossible for a healthy man to abstain from sex for extended periods. They said that a man had an uncontrollable sexual urge that had to be satisfied if he was to remain healthy. A study by Meyer-Weitz et al (1998) also shows that men hold an all-encompassing belief that sexual desire is a natural force that people should not attempt to control. These studies clearly show that for some men both monogamy and abstinence were undesirable (Eaton et al, 2002; Lawoyin, 2000, Orubuloye et al, 1994).

It has also been established that in most countries the sexual debut of men is usually at an earlier age than women and there is a tendency for them to marry at a much later age. According to Harrison et al (2005) age at first sex is an important indicator of sexual risk, as it usually signals the onset of risk of infection. This basically means that men are sexually active but unmarried for quite a long time and this is usually the phase in their lives that they tend to have multiple partners. In support of this, Bankole et al (2004) make the point that, the period between when men initially become sexually active to the time that they first marry, is usually a time of aggravated health risk especially if it is lengthy and involves multiple partners with poor or no protection against STIs and unplanned pregnancy. An example can be given of men in Kenya, Gabon and Guinea, who usually have a 9-10 year period between first sex and first marriage (Bankole et al, 2004).

According to Ndubani et al (2003) early sexual debut has implications for both present and future sexual behaviour; in most cases men who engage in sexual intercourse at an earlier age are more likely to report extra-marital sexual relationships than those who initiated sexual activity at a later stage. Early sexual initiation and multiple premarital partners usually establish a particular pattern of sexual behaviour that is likely to persist into later sexual life. Santelli et al (1998) also state that the number of lifetime sexual partners among youth is strongly linked to the length of time since first sexual intercourse.

According to UNAIDS (2001), several surveys have shown that there are huge differences between the numbers of sexual partners among young men and young women. But it is important to keep in mind the fact that statistics are unlikely to give very accurate results because there is a general tendency by men to over-report and women to under-report their numbers of sexual partners, due to the social expectations that are associated with each group.

### *2.3.2. Multiple Sexual Partnerships among Young Women*

While young women generally have less sexual partners than young men, in epidemics where the primary mode of HIV transmission is heterosexual intercourse they are the worst affected (UNAIDS, 2004). As previously mentioned, the proportion of women living with HIV who are over the age of 15 is higher in Sub-Saharan Africa (where transmission is largely heterosexual) than in other regions. While the higher biological vulnerability of girls and women to HIV infection is an explanation for the large numbers of young women infected with HIV, there are other factors that further increase their vulnerability. Factors such as gender power imbalances, patterns of sexual networking, and age mixing make young women very vulnerable to HIV infection (UNAIDS, 2004).

Almost 45 quantitative studies in Sub-Saharan Africa on age differences between girls 15 to 19 years old and their sexual partners show that on average women have male partners that are six or more years older (UNAIDS, 2004). These older partners are commonly referred to as 'sugar-daddies' and they tend to have had a large number of sexual partners mainly because they are relatively old and also because their wealth allows them to attract many girlfriends. These characteristics tend to increase the risk of HIV infection for the young women who engage in relationships with these men (Meekers and Calves, 1997; Kaufman and Stavous, 2002). In most cases, girls who are in cross-generational relationships have limited power to resist pressures to agree to unsafe sexual practices. Luke and Kurz (2002:4) state that because most young women have limited negotiating power with respect to sexual and reproductive matters, their sexual relationships with older men are usually imbalanced with the men having most of the power. In Zambia, these relationships with older men have resulted in young women aged 15-24 being approximately six times more likely to be infected than are males of the same age (UNAIDS, 2004).

The common driving factor for young

girls a way out of poverty especially since older men are viewed as providers of a better life who could help the girls with education or work opportunities or basic financial support. Luke and Kurz (2002) state that for most girls, the gifts that they acquire from these relationships help to enhance their self-esteem and their status among their peers. Intergenerational sex has clearly become the norm in many African countries with a study in Zimbabwe finding that an estimated 25% of women in their 20s were in relationships with men at least 10 years older (United Nations, 2003). According to Kelly (2002), this behaviour is very common and facilitates the spread of HIV from the older, more sexual experienced man, to the young female who in turn usually passes it on to her younger male sex partners. In support of this Hallman (2005) shows that various studies (Edet, 1997; Meekers and Calves, 1997; Gregson et al, 2002; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002) have established that young women may have older partners for material benefits and at the same time have boyfriends closer to their own age with whom they have more serious relationships.

While men play the major role in the creation of sexual networks, young women are not totally blameless. A significant number of young Zambian women are involved in 'transactional' sexual relationships in which they expect gifts of cash or consumer goods from their sexual partners. According to AVERT (2005) for many young women, their first sexual encounter is with an older man, some of whom entice them with money or gifts.

Luke and Kurz (2002) have described several studies that show young women as 'active social agents' who have come to view sex as a valuable resource and therefore usually maintain several sexual relationships with multiple partners simultaneously in order to maximise the benefits. For many young women sex may function as a source of employment (Meekers and Ahmed, 1997). According to Adams and Marshall (1998) cited in Eaton et al (2002:16) poverty was the main reason for the commodification of sex, in which women in dire economic circumstances agree to sexual relationships with men in exchange for financial support". Hallman (2005:46) cites a study of female Nigerian university students by Edet (1997) which suggest that a young woman may have as many as three simultaneous sexual relationships while

she makes her way through university—perhaps with a teacher in order to ensure good marks, a ‘sugar daddy’ or ‘sponsor’ who can pay her living expenses and school fees, and a boyfriend for emotional reasons. It is important to note that the distinction between commoditised exchanges of sex and receiving gifts that are considered a normal part of dating relationships are not always clear (Hallman, 2005; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002) .

Epstein (2004) argues that even though transactional sex differs from prostitution, it is likely to be almost as dangerous especially when it comes to HIV transmission. But for women in transactional relationships, meeting immediate economic needs greatly outweighs the dangers of possible future illness. Young women in transactional relationships tend to be more vulnerable to HIV because they are more likely than other women to tolerate an unfaithful partner hence encourage the creation of a sexual network that is likely to spread HIV faster. In addition, these women are also more likely to seek out additional concurrent sexual relationships themselves as a way of increasing the amount of gifts that they receive. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2002) in areas with high HIV prevalence a sexual culture that associates sex with gifts and manliness with the ability to attract and maintain multiple sexual partners, participation in this contemporary sexual economy might boost a person’s status but will simultaneously increase their chances of contracting HIV.

#### **2.4. Summary**

Having multiple sexual partners is clearly a factor that is playing a major role in the spread of HIV particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is need to continue to emphasize the risk associated with this behaviour especially among young people in this region. Focusing on the youth is essential because even though they do not have the highest HIV prevalence, most new HIV infections occur during the period of adolescence, therefore efforts which are targeted at this group can have a significant impact on prevalence levels. In addition, focusing on the youth is important as it presents a window of opportunity for introducing new educational programs and reproductive health services that could have a significant impact on the course of the

HIV epidemic. Therefore, as a starting point for more adequate interventions, it is essential to begin to understand the context in which these multiple sexual partnerships exist. Exploring the youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships offers an opportunity to gain contextual insight of the topic. These perceptions can be used in the development of an understanding of youth sexual culture and the context of high-risk sexual activity.

# Chapter Three

## Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in conducting this study. The researcher used an exploratory research design aimed at gaining insight into multiple sexual partners among the youth in Zambia. The study was conducted at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, Zambia.

### 3.2. Context of the study

Zambia was chosen as the focus of this research because it is in the midst of a crippling HIV epidemic with a national prevalence level in the 13.5-20% range (UNAIDS, 2004). According to Zambia Sexual Behaviour Survey (2005) Sub-Saharan Africa has an overall prevalence rate of 7.5%, which makes Zambia one of the African countries with a particularly high prevalence of HIV.

Zambia is a landlocked country which covers an area of 752,612 square kilometres and it is located in South Central Africa. Zambia is divided into nine provinces: two of the provinces, Lusaka and Copperbelt, are predominantly urban while the seven other provinces (Central, Eastern, Luapula, Northern, North Western, Southern and Western) are mostly rural. According to the 2000 census report, the total population is at 9.9 million with a population density estimated at 13.7 persons per square kilometre (CSO, 2000). Approximately 64% of the population lives in rural areas and 36% in urban areas. The highest population density is found in Lusaka (65 persons per square kilometre) and the lowest in North-Western Province (9 persons per square kilometre) (ZSBS, 2005).

There is a very close association between residence and HIV levels in Zambia. The HIV prevalence in urban areas is twice as high as in rural areas, 23 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Lusaka, Copperbelt and Southern are the three largely urban

provinces with prevalence above the national average; 22 percent, 20 percent and 18 percent, respectively (ZDHS, 2000-2001). The lowest prevalence is in the Northern (8 percent) and North-Western (9 percent) provinces.

This study focused on young people in urban Lusaka (the capital city of Zambia) because, as previously mentioned, HIV levels are highest in the urban areas of Zambia (AVERT, 2005). According to UNAIDS (2004) while a little under 40% of Zambians live in town or cities, HIV prevalence is considerably higher in these urban areas than elsewhere. Such high prevalence levels in Lusaka significantly indicate the possible impact of the epidemic on youth who reside there. Therefore this study was conducted at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka. Evelyn Hone College was chosen as the focus of the study because it is the second largest tertiary institution in Lusaka with a student population of 3500 (Evelyn Hone College, 2004). The researcher chose to focus on students because this was the most convenient way to access to people aged 15-24 years.

### **3.3. Research methods**

This study draws on qualitative research methods. In simple terms, qualitative research has been defined as a type of research involving the interpretation of non-numerical data (Welman and Kruger, 2003). On a deeper level qualitative research is defined as a rigorous approach to the study of psychological or social phenomenon in which the researcher examines qualitative differences in phenomenon (Chenail, 2004).

The main advantage of using qualitative research is that it offers detailed insights into a particular phenomenon as it allows the researcher to draw more from the respondents. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) qualitative research gives a more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions and this helps the researcher to gain insight into why and how these events or actions take place rather than just presenting a phenomenon. Qualitative research also allows respondents to express feelings and opinions in their own words.

Qualitative research also has its disadvantages. One of the main disadvantages of qualitative research is that it is extremely time consuming particularly when it comes to data collection and data analysis. The collection of qualitative research data usually involves a lengthy amount of time spent in the field and this may turn out to be very costly for the researcher. Keeping in mind these disadvantages, the researcher still chose to use qualitative research methods as this was the best way to conduct this particular study.

In order to explore youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships, focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted among students at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka. The researcher decided to access the youth through the college because it was cheaper and convenient. Students at this institution were chosen because most of the student population falls into the 15-24 age group, which puts them into a very high risk group for HIV infection (ZAWECA, 2005). Due to ethical issues that surround the participation of minors in research, the sample of students only included those aged between 18-24 years.

While the focusing on college students does raise issues about bias in the sample since it leaves out the less well educated, AVERT (2005) states that unlike in other countries HIV in Zambia is not primarily a disease of the most underprivileged; infection rates are very high among wealthier people and the better educated. In addition, this study was an exploratory study which was limited in both scope and duration and therefore the representativeness of the sample is not a major concern. Four focus groups and 10 in-depth interviews were used to acquire qualitative data for this study. A focus group is a research method that involves the bringing together a group of individuals, usually a relatively homogeneous group, to discuss a specific set of issues under the guidance of a facilitator trained to stimulate and focus the discussion (Schedlin and Schreider, 1995). The main objective of the focus group is to get beneath the surface of a particular topic with the presumption that respondents will reveal more when they are stimulated by the camaraderie and comments of others. Focus groups were used mainly because they provoke different results from individual interviews. Group interaction produces multiple meanings and

understandings which mean multiple explanations for their behaviour and attitudes are more easily articulated (Schedlin and Schreider, 1995). While keeping in mind that the generalizability and suitability of focus groups has been questioned by some, the researcher decided to use them because, according to Kaplowitz and Hohn (1998), focus groups are usually useful in areas of research where there are varying hypotheses that have not been well established.

On the other hand, the in-depth interview is a research method that is used to collect data that not influenced by group interaction. It is often thought that group interaction potentially can influence the data and compromise the integrity. Therefore, an in-depth interview allows for the data to be collected independent of group dynamics. The researcher decided to use semi-structured in-depth interviews as they offer opportunities for probing, asking follow-up questions, and allow for interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mantell et al, 1997:139). In addition, these interviews used open-ended questions which allow the respondents to give details in depth about their attitudes and opinions and therefore provide deeper meanings of the issues (Bernard, 1994). The loose structure of the in-depth interviews also allows the respondent to an opportunity to expand on the topic under discussion (Power, 2002).

### **3.4. Data Collection**

Permission to conduct focus groups and in-depth interviews was obtained from the academic director of the college, while student participation was based on the three ethical considerations in conducting surveys, i.e. voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality (de Vaus, 2002). The focus groups were divided according to sex. Two focus groups were conducted with 20 male students (10 in each group) and other two with 20 female students (10 in each group). The focus groups were convened with the help of an on campus project called SHARES. The SHARES (Stop HIV/AIDS Reach Every Student) project was launched in August 2002 to advocate for the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention including care and support to students in higher learning institutions and to raise awareness on

HIV/AIDS among students and lecturers. This project is funded by British Airways, Change for Goods and is supported by UNICEF. The project currently has three sites: University of Zambia, Evelyn Hone College and Chainama College of Health Sciences. Posters were put around the campus inviting students aged 18-24 years to a discussion on multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS. With the help of the SHARES committee, interested students were divided into four groups and focus group discussions were conducted over a period of four days. The focus groups were conducted in a semi-structured fashion and a relaxed atmosphere was ensured with refreshments provided for the participants.

In addition to the focus groups the researcher used in-depth interviews to collect data. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents for the in-depth interviews. Students aged between 18- 24 were purposely selected to be interviewed. This is a pre-defined age group that has been identified as highly vulnerable to HIV infection. This sampling method was used because it was difficult to obtain a representative number of participants who would be willing to take part in the study. A total of ten in-depth interviews were conducted with five male and five female students. The researcher personally approached the participants and asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. The participants were approached outside the student residences at Evelyn Hone College. According to de Vaus (2002) purposive sampling is suitable for studies that target a specific pre-defined group, particularly where issues of sampling for proportionality and statistical inference are not the main objective. The main advantages associated with purposive sampling are that it allows the researcher to get to the target sample quickly and the researcher is likely to get the opinions of the target population. While the major disadvantage of the purposive sampling method is the fact that findings cannot be generalized to the whole population.

All the focus group discussions and the interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. A research assistant was employed to take notes during the focus group discussions. The recorder was only used after receiving the consent of the respondents. All discussions and interviews were conducted in English as this is

because the respondents spoke the language fluently and in addition many languages are spoken in Zambia so it was more convenient for all the respondents to use a common and official language.

All focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher. The fact that the researcher was female may have influenced the data collected in both the male focus group discussions and the male in-depth interviews. While the exact extent of this may be impossible to detect, this is something that the researcher was conscious of throughout the study. The researcher decided against employing a male researcher to conduct these discussions and interviews because of time and financial constraints. The researcher did not have sufficient time to find and properly train a male researcher and in light of this the researcher decided to conduct the discussions and interviews personally keeping in mind that this might impact on the accuracy of the findings. The main topics discussed in the focus groups and queried in the interviews were perceptions about youth sexual behaviour, and opinions and attitudes concerning multiple sexual partnerships.

### **3.5. Pilot Testing**

The questions answered in both the focus groups and interviews were pilot-tested with a sample of seven students aged 18-24 prior to administration. According to de Vaus (2002) a pilot-test is aimed at ensuring that the participants understand the intended meaning of the questions and that their answers are logical and it also helps to detect errors such as ambiguous questions. The researcher reviewed the responses to the pilot-test and revised the questions where necessary.

### **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent forms were given to all the respondents as part of the requirements for ethical research. In accordance with the principle of informed consent, the participants were informed about a range of matters relating to the study namely: the purpose of the study, how respondents were selected, identity of the researcher, and

how the information obtained would be made available to them (de Vaus, 2002). Informed consent is essential as it ensures people's freedom not to participate in the research if they are not comfortable with it (Scheyvens et al, 2003:142). The researcher ensured that confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were strictly observed. All the first hand information that was collected from the respondents was not revealed to anyone in a form that can allow the identification of the respondent. In addition, the researcher only proceeded with the study upon receiving ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

In order to facilitate analysis, the recordings of the focus groups and in-depth interviews were firstly transcribed. The data from the in-depth interviews and the focus groups was then qualitatively analyzed using thematic analysis which involves sorting data according to themes. Themes are defined as the recurrent ideas or topics which are detected in the material being analysed and usually come up on more than one occasion in a particular set of data (Hayes, 2000). Salient themes from the focus groups and interviews were identified and discussed. Though thematic analysis is a demanding process, it is a useful method as it helps the researcher to explore the depth of qualitative data.

### **3.8. Limitations of the study**

One of the major limitations of the study was the fact that the researcher was forced to change the site of the study from the University of Zambia to Evelyn Hone College. This was because of the unforeseen strike at the University which resulted in the closure of the institution at the time when the researcher had planned to carry out the fieldwork. This not only delayed the research, but also resulted in the researcher having to repeat the process of looking for a suitable site and trying to obtain permission to conduct the research. Another limitation of the study is that it comprised of a very small sample of students at Evelyn Hone College, which may not be regarded as an accurate representation of the college's student population, let alone

the youth in Zambia. In addition, as with any study that deals with the subject of sex, this study has to take into consideration the honesty and completeness of the responses (Dare and Cleland, 1994). According to Kaufman and Stavrous (2004) several researchers in other settings have noted that adolescent participants in particular have a tendency to over- or understate their experiences. This therefore makes it quite impossible to gauge the level of honesty and accuracy with absolute confidence.

### **3.9. Summary**

The study used qualitative research methodology to acquire information about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth in Zambia. A total of four focus group discussions and ten in-depth interviews were conducted with students at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka. The next chapter will present the findings from this study.

# Chapter Four

## Results

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter details findings from a qualitative study of students in Lusaka, Zambia. The chapter describes perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS. A total of four focus group discussions (FGD) and 10 in-depth interviews (IDI) were conducted over a period of three weeks at Evelyn Hone College. The sample was selected by sex and age. The sample consisted of 50 students, 25 male and 25 female aged between 18-24 years. The average age of the students sampled was 22 years. All of the students sampled were Christian, and none of them were married. In order to begin to fully capture the context in which these partnerships exist, the discussion will focus on exploring how the youth regard multiple sexual partnerships. Issues of risk and awareness associated with multiple sexual partnerships will also be discussed.

### 4.2. Youth Definitions and Perceptions of Multiple Sexual Partnerships

#### 4.2.1. Definitions

The majority of the participants, both male and female, defined multiple sexual partnerships along the same lines stating that this was a situation where a person had more than one sexual partner.

*“I think this where you have more than one sexual partner”*

*(IDI # 5, female)*

*“It is having more than one sexual partner”*

*(FGD # 1 male)*

However, some male participants disagreed with this definition stating that a person can only be referred to as a partner if the relationship was steady or committed, they did not view sexual relationships with sex workers or casual encounters with women in nightclubs as partnerships. They thought that these should be referred to as sexual acquaintances.

*“I do not think ladies like prostitutes that you just pick up can be called partners; I think a partner is someone that you are going steady with”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

*“...when you say partner then there has to be some sense of agreement, if there is no commitment between the two of you then that is not a partner”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

*“I would refer to prostitutes as sexual acquaintances not as partners because there is no bond”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

Other participants were against this definition stating that the issue was not about the type of relationship but the number of people that particular individual had sex with.

*“I do not think multiple sexual partnerships are necessarily about relationships, for example I can go and pick a girl at a night club and have sex with her, that’s not a relationship but it is having multiple sexual partners”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

*“I think it is having sex with different people and it does not matter how long I have known them for...”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

#### 4.2.2. Types of Sexual Partnerships among the Youth

The participants were asked which type of sexual partnership, serial or concurrent<sup>2</sup>; they thought was most common among the youth. Most of the male and female respondents thought that concurrent was the most common. The respondents said that they thought most young people usually had more than one sexual partner at the same time. Some respondents thought that having concurrent partnerships was so desirable that even those who did not have concurrent partnerships wished to have them because it allowed them to gain status among their peers.

*“They mostly have concurrent type of partnerships; they have more than one partner...”*

*(IDI # 2, male)*

*“I also think it is concurrent, because even those that do not have concurrent relationships would like to have them, because men think about sex all the time... I think every man given a chance would be concurrent”*

*(FGD # 1 Male)*

*“From what I have observed as a student here on campus, a lot of students go for concurrent type of partnerships where they have more than one sexual partner and they call them ‘investors’. You might have a boyfriend, but he is not able to provide you with all the material things that you need... so as a lady you would prefer to go out with these ‘investors’ who are usually working and already married.”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

A few of the respondents thought that serial was the most common type of sexual partnership among the youth and they thought it was quite rare to find concurrent relationships. Some respondents attributed this to the nature of relationships that the

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<sup>2</sup> The researcher defined concurrent and serial as follows: concurrent refers to two or more sexual relationships overlapping in time; and serial refers to two or more nonoverlapping relationships

youth have, saying these relationships were usually short-term and therefore they did not overlap.

*“It is rare that you find concurrent, where a guy or a girl has more than one girlfriend, as in formally”*

*(IDI # 4, female)*

*“I think it is serial because if you look at our age group it is usually short-term relationships that usually come to end very quickly, I also think concurrent is there but it is usually maybe only two girlfriends, having more than two is mostly for married people”*

*(Male FGD #1)*

*“Serial, especially here at college you find people who come for one year programmes and then they end up finding a boyfriend who they sleep with while here and at the end of the year they leave and go to a different place where they may end up finding another boyfriend, so they are not very stable”*

*(Female FGD #3)*

#### 4.2.3. Reasons for Multiple Sexual Partnerships

##### 4.2.3. a. Male Responses

Male and female respondents had different reasons for why the youth had multiple sexual partnerships. Male respondents cited several reasons for multiple sexual partnerships. Firstly, most of the male respondents said that peer pressure was one of the main reasons why young men had multiple partnerships. They spoke about how their peers who had several sexual partners would look down on those who were not doing the same. Those who were not having multiple partners were not considered to be ‘real men’. They also stressed the fact that the extent of peer pressure usually depends on the environment that one is in. It was thought that there was a lot of peer pressure in their college environment.

*“It depends on the environment you are in; in the school environment you might have friends who pressure you to have multiple partners. They might say that to prove you are a real man you have to have lots of partners”*

*(FGD #1 Male)*

In addition, respondents spoke about the youth having multiple partners as a way of ‘showing off’ or ‘proving a point’ to their peers. They spoke about how one can increase their social status among their peers if they were seen to have multiple sexual partners. It was thought that having multiple partners was a way of proving manliness especially if one takes into account that young men in Zambia have been socialised in an environment which links having many women to being a ‘real man’.

*“As we grow we are indoctrinated with the belief that the source of a man’s pride is having a lady, and then another and another. So you want to show the world that you can do it, you can handle several women at the same time”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

*“Young men want to explore and they also feel the need to show off to their friends about the number of women that they have had”*

*(FGD #2 Male)*

*“The major thing for guys are showing off and proving a point that they can have lots of girls”*

*(FGD #2 Male)*

The respondents were asked to explain further what they meant when they talked about ‘proving a point’, seeing that this was a popular term among them. This issue was linked to young men trying to live up to the stereotypical behaviour that was generally expected of them. In other words the term ‘proving a point’ means trying to show that they are conforming to societal expectations of the role of a ‘man.’

*“I think this proving a point issue is more of stereotypical behaviour of being a male, most of the youth think they are expected to behave in a certain way and*

*therefore they end up stereotyping themselves. Which is not even necessary but you think it is expected of you"*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

The respondents thought that the 'fear of disappointment' was also another reason why young men had multiple partners. They spoke about how one risked heartache and disappointment if they only put their trust in one partner, saying that the chances of that person leaving were always there and so it was important to have several others so that if one partner leaves you still have other partners. They referred to these partners as 'backups'.

*"In my opinion it is just the fear of being dumped and having a broken heart if you only put your trust in one, they think if they have two or three, if this one breaks their heart they can easily get some comfort from another partner. So that is the major reason why people do that"*

*(Male FGD #1)*

*"Men also have a fear of being dumped by ladies so they end up having a lot of partners so they have a backup plan"*

*(Male FGD #2)*

In addition, others said that 'backups' were also necessary in situations where the sexual partner that you have does not want to have sex at the particular moment. They said one had to have other partners that they could go to in order to have their sexual needs satisfied.

The respondents also spoke about the fact that a person's upbringing may also play a major role in determining whether or not they have multiple sexual partnerships. For example, if someone was brought up in a polygamous home then they were likely to have multiple sexual partnerships. It was thought that if one's father was polygamous they were likely to be polygamous as well as they would regard this as a normal way

of life. They said this was particularly true for those who come from the Southern province of Zambia where polygamy was practiced.

*“It also depends on the environment that you grew up in, for example, if your father was polygamous definitely you will also think it is normal to have multiple partners”*

*(FGD # 1 Male)*

*“In some cases, it is genetic- some people are just like that. For example, people from the Southern province believe in having more than one wife”*

*(FGD #2 Male)*

A few of the respondents brought up other reasons such as sex being addictive which leads to people wanting it all the time and therefore they end up with multiple partners so as to meet their needs. Others thought that most women were so attractive that even if you did not intend on having multiple partners you would usually succumb because they were hard to resist. Another reason put forward was the lack of recreational activities for the youth. It was thought that since there were very few recreational activities on campus, the students tend to involve themselves in multiple sexual relationships in order to keep themselves entertained.

*“Most young people usually only want sex from relationships so if he has a lot of girls he can easily go to one of them for sex”*

*(FGD #2 Male)*

*“Also the way ladies are made is also a factor, they are so attractive and they wear things that expose their bodies that even if it was not your intention to have multiple partners you end up doing it”*

*(FGD #1 Male)*

#### 4.2.3. b. Female responses

Most of the female respondents stressed the fact that most women have multiple sexual partnerships because of the material benefits they can gain from these partnerships. They spoke about how as young women they had a number of needs that, in most cases, their parents could not afford to meet because of poverty and therefore they are forced to have multiple sexual partners who can help them financially. These multiple partners usually serve different needs; one may provide money for food and cosmetics, another may provide cell phones, clothes and other accessories, another may provide outings to fancy nightclubs and restaurants, etc.

*“It is mostly due to the need for material things, as the youth we need a lot of things that our parents cannot provide so as a result we end up with multiple partners so that they can provide material things”*

*(FGD #3 Female)*

*“When you look at this institution, for example, there are those...I can even say friends of mine, they do not have just one partner and in the long run they even end up having even six partners...probably people want some financial assistance. In the long run you end up having more than one boyfriend because one is not going to sufficiently give you everything that you need”*

*(IDI # 2, female)*

*“I think it is a very complex situation, some have multiple partners because of poverty while others because of peer pressure and so it depends. Like here at college we do not have a dining hall<sup>3</sup> to go and get food we are expected to get our own food, so if one does not have money for food, she will sleep around so that she can get money for food”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

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<sup>3</sup> The college stopped providing meals to the students at the beginning of the year 2006.

The respondents cited peer pressure as another reason why young women have multiple sexual partners. According to the respondents there is a lot of pressure from peers to have multiple partners especially if one wants to have money and be able to follow the latest fashion trends. They spoke about young women having a tendency of competing among themselves and looking down on those who are not fashionably dressed or those who do not have the latest accessories such as cell phones. In most cases, those women who are looked down upon usually feel pressured to enter sexual partnerships with men who can help them financially so that they can keep up with peers.

*“I say peer pressure especially in place like this you find there is so much competition especially among the ladies to have things that the friends have and as a results they end up with a lot of sexual partners that are going to provide these material things for them”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“At campus I can say that because of the influence from friends peer pressure is very common, you are in boarding and you look at your friend and you say this one has this and that and you ask them how they get these things and they say I have two or maybe three boyfriends so you get driven and you end up thinking it is the right thing”*

*(IDI # 7, female)*

The respondents also thought that young women had multiple sexual partners because they wanted to have fun and also to gain more sexual experience. Others thought some young women had multiple partners in order to distract themselves from problems that they may be facing e.g. family problems, loneliness or abuse.

*“Some of the youth just do it for fun and also to gain more experience in sexual acts”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“Another factor is having too many problems so you just have lots of partners to distract you from all those problems”*  
(FGD # 4 Female)

#### *4.2.4. Youth Views of Multiple Sexual Partnerships*

The majority of the respondents thought the youth regarded multiple sexual partners positively. They spoke about how most of the youth thought that it was a normal way of life and how they thought nothing was wrong with it as long as you are getting what you want out of the relationships with these partners. For example, young women who have multiple sexual partnerships for financial reasons usually regard this behaviour positively as it allows them to satisfy their material needs. In the case of young men they usually gain prestige and a sense of belonging among their peers when they have multiple sexual partners and as a result they tend to regard these partnerships positively.

Some respondents also thought that there was nothing wrong with the youth having multiple sexual partnerships especially since this was a stage in life where young people were looking for future partners and therefore it was necessary for a person to have sexual experiences with different partners in order to make a good choice in terms of a lifetime partner.

*“I think for them to do it then they must think it is a good thing, they are getting what they want from it. If you want to do your hair, you just call someone and they give you the money. You give them the service, they give you the money.”*  
(FGD #3 Female)

*“For youth they think it is a good thing to have multiple partners, it makes them to be alive and it gives them pride and a sense of belonging or something like that, being in the cool class or something like that”*  
(IDI # 2, male)

*“I regard it positively because this is the time that we choose a life partner, and so I cannot say an apple is the best fruit when I have not tasted a banana. I have to taste different fruits so that at the end of the day I can say an apple is the best fruit. Meaning I have had variety and out of that variety I have chosen the best”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

There were also a few respondents, particularly females, who thought some youth regarded multiple sexual partnerships negatively. It was thought that if the youth did regard multiple sexual partnerships positively then they would talk about the fact that they had multiple partners publicly and they would not be ashamed about their behaviour. But instead most did not talk about their behaviour as they were afraid of tainting their reputations.

*“I think it is regarded negatively, if it was something regarded positively it would be something that the girls would be proud of but because it is regarded negatively, it is just the sort of thing that you would talk about when you are the two of you with your friends. But you wouldn't go out and even publicly talk about the fact that you are involved in multiple sexual partnerships, so I think it is regarded negatively and we know that and that's why we try to keep it a secret”*

*(IDI # 7, female)*

*“The truth is they actually do confess that it is a bad thing but they do it because of the positive things they think would yield out of the same kind of relationships”*

*(IDI # 6, female)*

#### *4.2.5. Risks Associated with Multiple Sexual Partnerships*

The respondents were asked what they thought were the risks associated with having multiple sexual partnerships. In all the focus groups and interviews the respondents pointed to the risk of contracting HIV and other STIs as the major risk associated

with having multiple sexual partnerships. In addition, they also mentioned the risk of spreading HIV to other partners after having contracted it.

*“The point of having HIV and STIs cannot be overemphasised especially in our set up here at college”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

*“Contracting HIV and spreading it to all your partners especially in cases where you do not go for an HIV test”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

Another risk associated with having multiple sexual partners that was of major concern particularly for the female respondents, was the risk of falling pregnant and not knowing who the father of the child was. Respondents thought that it was very embarrassing for a woman to get pregnant and not know the father of the child. This clearly indicated to the whole society that the woman was promiscuous.

*“You might end up getting pregnant and you will not know who is the father of the child”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

*“The other risk is that you might have a child who is fatherless in the end because you would not know who to point to as the father”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

While the majority of the respondents thought that having multiple partners increased the risk of contracting HIV, there was one respondent who did not agree. According to this respondent, people who protected themselves by using condoms with their multiple partners then had a reduced risk of HIV infection.

*If you protect yourself I do not think there is a greater risk”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Most of the respondents thought that youth were aware of the risks associated with having multiple sexual partners saying that there have been several sensitization programmes that have highlighted these risks. In addition, they also thought that generally awareness of HIV/AIDS was quite high. Although some respondents did mention that the youth in rural areas may not be as aware as those in urban areas, saying that there was less access to information in rural areas.

*“The youth are very much aware of the risks or consequences which are there, the publicity of the transmission of STIs and HIV has been there, there is no one who does not know”*

*(FGD #1 Male)*

*“I think most of the people are aware because everywhere you go we are being sensitised about the existence of HIV”.*

*(IDI # 7, female)*

The majority of the respondents thought the youth deliberately choose to ignore the risks deciding instead to adopt a fatalistic behaviour. It is thought that the youth usually disregard HIV saying it is going to claim the lives of all people so it does really matter whether they contract it now or later. The youth also have a tendency of thinking that they cannot possibly contract HIV and therefore they continue to have multiple sexual partnerships.

*“The youth are aware of the risks but there is a tendency among the youth to say, as they say in Nyanja<sup>4</sup> ‘it (referring to HIV) came for people’, so that is why we continue to have multiple partners”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

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<sup>4</sup> This is one of the languages spoken in Zambia.

*“Others take it that it (referring to HIV) has come for us people so we cannot run away from it, the fact is that we are all going to die so it does not matter what time”*

*(FGD #1 Male)*

*“I think three quarters of the youth are aware of the risks but they have a tendency of saying it cannot happen to me”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

#### *4.2.6. Barriers to Changing Behaviour*

The respondents were asked what they thought were the barriers to changing this behaviour i.e. having multiple sexual partners. Most of the respondents thought that peer pressure was a major barrier to changing youth behaviour. They thought that the in most cases a person may want to change their behaviour but they fear they might lose their friends or even lose the status that they have gained among their peers.

*“Some people are scared of losing friends so that is why they cannot stop; there is a lot of peer pressure”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

Most of the female respondents thought that poverty was also another major barrier for young women. They spoke about how some young women who came from a poor background usually failed to change their behaviour because for them having multiple sexual partners was a way of surviving, if they stopped having multiple partners then they would also stop getting the financial assistance that these partners provided. According to the respondents, for most women, changing behaviour would mean sinking deeper into poverty.

*“It is also about having little choice, if my parents cannot afford then I have to carry on doing what I do in order to survive, so I think this is a major barrier to change”*

*(FGD #3 Female)*

*“I think the fact that they love the benefits that come with having lots of sexual partners makes it hard for them to change, in most cases if you want them to stop you would have to provide them with the benefits that they used to get from those relationships”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“If most of the guys that you are involved with give you money and maybe your family is not well off, you think if I stop going out with this number of guys how am I going to be able to maintain the status that I have raised myself to, so they would think along those lines”*

*(IDI # 9, female)*

Alcohol consumption was another barrier that the male respondents in particular thought prevented the youth from changing their behaviour. It was thought that alcohol consumption led most of the youth to engage in risky sexual behaviour. In addition, respondents felt that the government was doing very little to regulate the number of bars and nightclubs and contributing to increased alcohol consumption among the youth.

*“It is also the kind of policies that we have; I have observed that there are a lot of taverns, nightclubs, etc., so you find that when youth get drunk they tend to change their behaviour. If we regulate these nightclubs, am sure we can reduce the number of multiple sexual partners but government does not seem to realise this”*

*(IDI # 4, male)*

Some of the respondents thought that the media was also another barrier to changing behaviour. Respondents thought that there was a lot of obscene material on television and on the internet that seemed to glorify risky sexual behaviour like having multiple sexual partners. In line with this, the advertising of condoms was also seen as a barrier. Some respondents felt that the advertising of condoms was encouraging casual sex and multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. It was thought that

condoms made the youth feel safe and therefore they did not see the need to change their behaviour.

*“The way condoms are advertised also plays a role as most people feel that if they use a condom then they is no need to change their behaviour”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“I can blame the media for advertising condoms because it is giving me a backup because I will say afterwards that I am protected and that kind of thing”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Other respondents disagreed with those who said advertising condoms was a barrier to changing youth behaviour. They thought that the aim of advertising condoms on television was to make people aware of the means of protection that were available to them and not to encourage casual sex.

*“I do not think that advertising condoms on television is encouraging sex, I think they just want to protect you”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Respondents also thought that the example being set by elders in society was another barrier to changing behaviour. Most of the youth see elders in their society having multiple sexual partners and therefore end up thinking that if the elders are behaving like this then it is acceptable for young people to also do the same.

*“As young people what we see we take it as the right thing, when we look at these elderly people especially in the villages you find that one man has five wives so as a child who is growing up in that home you think it is right to have many sexual partners. You look at your father and you see that he has many sexual partners, you will grow up thinking it is right”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Lack of recreational facilities for young people was another issue that the respondents thought was a barrier to changing behaviour. Most of the respondents thought that young people were more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour like having multiple partners if they did not have any entertaining activities to do, this is because most young people used sex as a form of entertainment.

*“Lack of recreational activities, youth with things to do will not feel the need to engage in sexual activities all the time”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

### **4.3. Youth Definitions and Perceptions of Fidelity and Partner Reduction**

#### *4.3.1. Definitions*

Most of the respondents were unable to define fidelity saying they were unfamiliar with the word though there were a few who defined it as being faithful to one partner. The majority of respondents defined partner reduction as a process of reducing number of sexual partners.

*“Fidelity I do not know the meaning, partner reduction is a process by which you reduce the number of partners”*

*(IDI # 7, female)*

*“I would define fidelity as faithfulness and partner reduction as the cutting down on the number of partners that you have”*

*(FGD # 1 Male)*

#### *4.3.2. Benefits of Faithfulness*

The respondents were asked if they thought there were any benefits in being faithful to one sexual partner and what these benefits were. All the respondents said there were benefits in being faithful. The major benefit cited by most respondents was that it lessened the chances of contracting HIV and STIs.

*“Yes there are, one, the risks of getting HIV and STIs are reduced”*  
(IDI # 8, female)

*“Yes there are benefits because you do not fall victim of any kinds of diseases like HIV”*  
(FGD # 2 Male)

Another benefit that was cited by the respondents was that if a person was faithful to their partner there was a chance that this would encourage their partner to be faithful as well.

*“Maybe if you are faithful she may start to show the same faithfulness to you because she sees the way that you treat her”*  
(IDI # 2, male)

*“It encourages your partner to also be faithful”*  
(FGD # 4 Female)

Most of the male respondents also thought that faithfulness had economic benefits as well. They spoke about how it was cheaper to be faithful to one partner because it meant that you would only have one girl to spend your money on. If you have a lot of partners its more expensive because you have to have money to take them out and buy gifts for all of them in order to keep them happy.

*“There are a lot of benefits, the first one being that faithfulness is cheap than unfaithfulness”*  
(FGD # 1 Male)

*“You grow economically as you only have to spend on one girl”*  
(FGD # 2 Male)

Another benefit cited by respondents was that if one was faithful then the relationship might last longer and may eventually end in marriage. It was also thought that being

faithful allowed a person to have peace of mind as they did not have to keep on telling lies in order to juggle their different partners, in other words their conscious would be free as there was no deception taking place.

*“Yes, there are benefits to being faithful to one partner because you never know, maybe you can marry the same girl”*  
(IDI # 1, male)

#### 4.3.3. Challenges of Faithfulness

The respondents were asked whether they thought it was difficult for a young person to be faithful to one sexual partner. The responses were very mixed: some respondents thought it was difficult while others thought it was not difficult. The respondents who said it was difficult for young people to be faithful cited several reasons. For starters, they spoke about how the youth are at a stage in life which is mostly about experimentation and self-discovery. They want to explore new things especially when it comes to sexual matters.

*“As a young person it is very difficult because at this stage we are more like on a ‘window shopping stage’ you want to try different things, you try this guy today and tomorrow you want to try something different”*  
(FGD #3 Female)

*“It is difficult because as youth we are not settled, and wherever you go you meet people, you find someone who looks more beautiful than the one you have left behind”*  
(FGD # 2 Male)

Some of the female respondents also thought that it was difficult for young women to be faithful because men were not faithful to them. They thought it was pointless being faithful to someone who was not faithful to you

*“I think its difficult to be faithful because nowadays most guys say they cannot depend on one girl, so how do you expect the girl to be faithful to man that is playing around with other girls”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

*“Even married men are not faithful to their wives, you see them coming here to see their girlfriends that just shows that men will always be the same even when they get married”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

Other respondents thought it was difficult for the youth to be faithful because of the environment that they live in. They spoke about how infidelity was usually tolerated in Zambian society, especially in the case of married men; therefore this was setting the wrong example for the youth. In most cases, when a married man was unfaithful to his wife, people would usually say that it is fine for him to do this because he is a man and it is difficult for a man to be faithful.

*“It might be difficult because of the society we live in where being unfaithful is acceptable, you find that married men go out there and have maybe three or four girlfriends and the wife and his family are aware about it and they will say, ‘his a man it is ok’, so I think it is difficult”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

A few of the respondents said that while they thought that it was difficult for young people to be faithful, it was necessary for those who are Christians to try and control themselves as unfaithfulness was considered to be sin.

*“I think it is difficult but you have to try and control yourself, as a Christian I know that being unfaithful is a sin so I try and control myself”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

In the case of the respondents who said they did not think it was difficult for young people to be faithful, they cited the following reasons. Firstly, they said it was not

difficult for a young person to be faithful if they are principled and self-disciplined. They thought that if one was guided by certain principles then it would not be difficult to be faithful. For example, if a person had a principle that they would never date more than one person at any given time then it would not be difficult for them to be faithful.

*“I think personally you should have principles that should guide you, so if you have a principle that you will never go out with more than one guy then it is not that difficult”*

*(IDI # 9, female)*

*“I think it is not difficult unless you are on the fast lane and you want to explore. You convince yourself that you have to spread your wings, explore the waters, etc. So it is more of a mind set thing”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

In addition, some of the respondents thought that the principles that young people had were linked to the way they had been socialized. It was thought that one's socialisation had a very strong impact on the person's behaviour. According to the respondents if someone had been raised by parents who talked about the dangers of having multiple sexual partners then they would not find it difficult to be faithful.

*“It is not difficult to be faithful to one partner, being faithful has something to do with the way we are brought up; in my case, my mum has been telling me you should not be going out with more than one guy it is dangerous”*

*(IDI # 8, female)*

#### *4.3.4. Unfaithful Partners*

The respondents were asked whether they thought young people tolerated unfaithful partners and were asked to give reasons for their answers. Most of the respondents, especially the female respondents, said that the youth did tolerate unfaithful partners though it was thought that young women were more tolerate than young men. One of the main reasons why it was thought that young women were more willing to tolerate

an unfaithful partner was because in Zambian society male infidelity is to some extent culturally acceptable. Respondents spoke about how women were actually raised to believe that it was acceptable for a man to be unfaithful and that a woman should tolerate this behaviour.

*“There is the Bemba<sup>5</sup> saying which states that a man’s infidelity can never break a home, so women can tolerate unfaithfulness because it is culturally acceptable”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“Women are actually taught to tolerate unfaithful partners with the hope that one day he will change”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

*“Some tolerate thinking one day he might change”*

*(IDI # 10, female)*

Another reason why young women were likely to tolerate an unfaithful partner was because they might be financially dependant on this partner. According to the respondents, most young women are willing to tolerate an unfaithful partner just as long he continues to support them financially. It was thought that because of some women’s dependency on their partners, they are willing to turn a blind eye on their infidelity.

*“We tolerate unfaithful partners because they provide us with so many things materially that we do not want to leave them”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

In addition, some female respondents actually thought that women who want to get financial assistance from relationships usually preferred to have partners who were already married or were in already in a relationship with someone else as they were usually more generous

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<sup>5</sup> One of the languages spoken in Zambia.

*“Some girls actually ‘say married men we share’”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

*“Married men are tolerated because they are more generous”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

The respondents also thought that young people were willing to tolerate an unfaithful partner if they themselves were being unfaithful. They said it was easier to tolerate an unfaithful partner if a person was being unfaithful as well.

*“Yes they tolerate unfaithful partners, they tolerate if maybe they know even themselves that they are doing the same”*

*(FGD # 1 Male)*

*“A small number of girls might tolerate this especially if they are also being unfaithful, they feel more comfortable”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

A few of the respondents did not think that young people tolerated unfaithful partners. According to these respondents, most young people, especially young men, usually ended relationships upon the discovery that their partner had been unfaithful. Most respondents thought that if a man tolerated an unfaithful woman then this would be seen as a sign of weakness on the part of the man but in the case of women it was completely acceptable for them to tolerate an unfaithful partner.

*“There are those that do not tolerate, once someone becomes unfaithful then you are done if it is a relationship it ends there”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

*“No, it does not feel right to be in a relationship with someone who is unfaithful while you are faithful to her”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

#### **4.4. The Community and Multiple Sexual Partnerships**

Respondents were asked whether they thought that their community was concerned about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. According to some respondents, the community was very concerned about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth and they thought that measures were being taken to change this behaviour though there were still a lot of challenges to overcome.

*“The community has become very concerned and they are doing their best to sensitize the people, though I am sure it is quite difficult because of the way we Africans have been raised there are certain issues that are not openly talked about”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

*“There are a lot of adverts about multiple sexual partners but as the youth we look at the posters and just think that these people do not want us to enjoy sex”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

The respondents also spoke about a particular group of unknown male students who were concerned about multiple sexual partnerships. According to the respondents, this group of students had a tendency of getting drunk and then going around the campus at night naming and shaming female students who were known to be having multiple sexual partners.

*“Other people who are concerned about multiple partners are the so called ‘shootists’ these are usually drunk male students who go around campus at night shouting out about the horrible things that people on campus are doing, especially things about women who have a lot of sexual partners, they go around called them prostitutes and all kinds of horrible names”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

When asked whether this group of students also named and shamed male students who were known to be having multiple sexual partners, the respondents said this never happened. They said this was probably because women’s infidelity was taken

more seriously than male infidelity. They said this in reference to the Bemba saying that has previously been mentioned in this paper<sup>6</sup>.

*“They think it is normal for a man to have multiple partners but not a woman”*

*(FGD #4 Female)*

There were some respondents who thought the community was not really concerned about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth because very little was being done to try and address this behaviour. They said apart from SHARES the campus did not have any other initiatives that were aimed at sensitizing the youth on HIV issues like multiple sexual partnerships.

*“No I do not think so, other than this SHARES thing. If there was no SHARES then I do not know”*

*(IDI # 6, female)*

*“I do not think so, if the campus was concerned about such things then they would not be common, the cases of multiple relationships would be less. But I think they are actually on the increase”*

*(IDI # 8, female)*

The respondents were also asked whether people in their community talked about the dangers of having multiple sexual partnerships. The majority said that people did not talk about these dangers often. It was thought that most people found issues surrounding HIV to be boring or they were simply tired of talking about HIV.

*“No it is not often, because sometimes when we try to bring up such kinds of topics, people find them boring, so I think so”*

*(IDI # 6, female)*

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<sup>6</sup> See page 62.

*“No, it is not something that is often discussed because a lot of people think they have heard enough about HIV”*

*(IDI # 3, male)*

A few of the respondents thought that some parents did try and talk but the dangers of having multiple sexual partners to their children, but in other cases where people did talk about the dangers of multiple sexual partnerships, it was usually in the form of gossip so very few people are able to benefit from it.

#### **4.5. Youth Recommendations**

The respondents came up with several suggestions on what could be done to address multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. Most of the respondents thought that the youth should be given more information about the dangers of having multiple sexual partnerships. It was thought that some of the youth usually engaged in such risky behaviour because they were not well informed.

*“I think we need more information about the same, at least we need to learn the effects of this behaviour, the dangers; because sometimes we engage in such kinds of things due to lack of knowledge”*

*(IDI # 8, female)*

*“Information has to be disseminated to everyone; I think they should also encourage radio and television to be talking more about this thing”*

*(IDI # 7, female)*

Respondents thought that the management of the college could ensure that lecturers take advantage of the fact that all students were usually present for lectures and use this as an opportunity to disseminate more information about HIV. Some respondents did not think that dissemination of more information would really make much of the difference seeing that a lot of people had already received so much information about HIV but still very few were changing their behaviour.

Another recommendation that was made by the respondents was that parents should talk to their children about issues like having multiple sexual partnerships. The respondents thought that parents should be more open with their children so that the children can ask them about the experiences that they had when they were young and hopefully learn from this.

*“We do not have much time with our parents where we can ask such things...I have not even asked my dad what happens when you are unfaithful because at least he has all the experience, he has passed through all that am going through”*

*(IDI # 1, male)*

*“I think firstly it should start within a house, parents should start talking about”*

*(IDI # 3, male)*

This failure by parents to talk to their children about sexual matters was linked to barriers of tradition where a parent talking to their children about sex was seen as a taboo. The respondents thought it was necessary to remove these barriers so that young people could talk to their parents about sex rather than just getting most of their information from their peers.

The respondents also suggested that there should be massive sensitization on behavioural change not just for the youth but also for older people. Most of the respondents said they looked at their elders as their role models so when they see older people having multiple sexual partnerships then they are also likely to do the same. It was thought more should be done to change the behaviour of elderly married men in particular, usually referred to as ‘sugar daddies’, who were frequently seen at the college and were involved in sexual relationships with young women at the college. The behaviour of these men usually sets a bad example for the young men at the college who see this happening and think that if this elderly person can do this then they can also do the same.

*“I think there should be massive sensitization on behavioural change not only to the youth but also to the elderly people that we look up to. Youth usually copy the behaviour of those that we look up to. So if it starts from up there it will even be more effective”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

Another recommendation that was made particularly by the female respondents was that government bursaries should be introduced at the college so that female students are not forced into multiple sexual partnerships in order to escape poverty. Many respondents thought that bursaries would help the students to fulfil their basic needs and therefore they might not have to turn to multiple sexual partnerships.

*“In an institution like this maybe the government can introduce bursaries to help students financially like they do at the university”*

*(FGD # 4 Female)*

A few of the respondents did not think that the introduction of the bursaries would make much of a difference seeing that even at the universities where the students were receiving bursaries, the females students were still having multiple sexual partnerships for financial reasons. This was mostly because the bursary given by the government was not enough to cover all the student’s needs. Respondents said they personally knew a lot of female students at the universities who were having multiple sexual partners despite receiving a bursary.

*“But bursaries do not really work because even at universities women are still having multiple partners for material benefits”*

*(FGD # 3 Female)*

Another recommendation that was made by the respondents was that the number of bars should be reduced as they thought that the consumption of alcohol made the youth engage in risky sexual behaviour like having multiple sexual partners. They thought that there were too many bars and nightclubs and therefore this was making alcohol easily accessible to the youth.

*“Reduce on the number of bars”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Some respondents suggested that there was need to encourage the youth to get associated with Christian fellowship groups as this would help build their principles and values. They said young people with strong Christian principles and values were less likely to engage in multiple sexual partnerships. In addition, a few of the respondents thought that the revival of morality in the whole society would help to reduce multiple sexual partnerships. It was thought that Zambian society was losing its sense of morality and that was why there were so many young people having multiple sexual partnerships.

*“Encourage youth to get associated with Christian fellowships to build principles and values”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

*“We need a revival of morality in our society”*

*(FGD # 2 Male)*

Respondents also suggested that the youth need to have more recreational activities that would ensure they are kept busy most of the time. For some of the youth having multiple sexual partnerships was a way of keeping themselves entertained as they had nothing else to do. It was thought that the increase in the number of recreational activities that are available at the college could help keep the students entertained.

#### **4.6. Summary**

This chapter has summarised the key findings of the study undertaken at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka. The students sampled presented varying perceptions and opinions about issues surrounding multiple sexual partnerships. These issues included key components such as: definitions of multiple sexual partnerships, types of partnerships, reasons for having multiple sexual partnerships, risks associated with having multiple sexual partners and views about fidelity and partner reduction. The findings were

consistent in both the focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews. The next chapter will make use of these findings to try and begin to contextualise multiple sexual partnerships among the youth in Zambia.

# Chapter Five

## Discussion of Findings

This study has explored youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS. Data for the study was collected using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with students at in Lusaka. This chapter will provide a discussion based on these findings.

There are several studies that have tried to contextualise high risk sexual behaviour such as early sexual debut, unprotected sexual intercourse and having multiple partners. This is usually with the aim of trying to understand the context in which this behaviour takes place with the hope that this will assist policymakers to come up with more appropriate interventions. The aim of this study was to provide some insight into the youth's perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS. It was hoped that the findings of this study would provide a glimpse of the context in which this behaviour takes place. As with most studies, this one has its limitations. The sample was relatively small and discussions were only for a limited period of time and therefore the conclusions of this study must be considered to be preliminary. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the key findings of this study are in most instances consistent with existing research literature. These are discussed in turn.

The results of this study indicate that the youth are able to correctly define multiple sexual partnerships with the majority of the respondents defining it as having more than one sexual partner. It is important to note, however, that there were some debates about the term partnership. Some respondents thought a person could only be referred to as a partner if the relationship was steady or committed. The existence of multiple sexual partnering among the youth has been well documented by several studies and reviews (HSRC, 2005; Santelli et al, 1998; Marcus, 2002; Varga, 1997). A review of

studies on sexual behaviour by Eaton et al (2004) found that while most young people are not promiscuous there is a persistent minority that reported having more than four partners per year. Several studies reviewed by Eaton et al (2004) suggest that between 10% and 30% of sexually active young people have more than one sexual partner at a given time with men being more likely than females to engage in concurrent multiple partnering. Marcus (2002) also found that multiple partnering among the youth was common and was both serial and concurrent. In line with this, the findings of the present study show that the respondents acknowledged that both multiple concurrent and multiple serial partnerships existed among the youth in Zambia. By their own accounts, these respondents stated that they knew of young people who were in either serial or concurrent sexual partnerships with almost half the respondents thinking concurrent relationships were the most common.

The findings of this study concerning the reasons why the youth have multiple sexual partnerships are also consistent with evidence which indicates that there are several social, cultural, economic and environmental factors influencing these partnerships. Hallman (2005) found that, for many young people, masculinity was strongly linked to multiple sexual partners. In the case of young men, a PANOS (2001) study reported that for young men having a large number of sexual partners can be a way of showing virility and manliness. A study in KwaZulu-Natal also shows that having multiple sexual partners was considered to be an acceptable traditional part of African manhood (Varga 1997).

Foreman (1999) cited in Varga (2001) notes that in most cases, young men who engage in risky sexual behaviour do so less from conscious choice than because that is the way men are expected to behave. The majority of young men grow up believing that their identity as men is defined by their sexual prowess (Varga, 2001; Ndubani et al, 2003; UNAIDS, 2004). Evidence from the current study clearly shows that a traditional culture that associates masculinity with having multiple sexual partners does exist among the youth in Zambia. When the respondents spoke about young men having multiple sexual partnerships in order to 'prove a point', it is evident that in

essence the point they were trying to prove was that they could live up to the cultural expectations of masculinity in Zambia.

With the existence of such cultural norms, it is to be expected that there are high levels of peer pressure to have multiple sexual partners among the young men. Kelly (2002) reported that many young people usually felt compelled to behave in ways that will be approved by their peers. Eaton et al (2002) found that in order to win the approval and admiration of peers, young men were usually pressured into having multiple sexual partnerships. Macphail and Campbell (2001) also reported that young men have internalised the views of their peers to a great degree and therefore are more inclined to live up to the expectations of their peers. In the case of this study, high levels of peer pressure were evident among the male respondents with most of the respondents saying young men usually had multiple partners in order to 'show-off' to their peers.

The findings of this research are also consistent with existing evidence that states that the traditional culture of polygamy may act as a rationale for multiple sexual partnerships among young men. The PANOS (2001) study shows that while polygamy was traditionally used as way of showing wealth by older men, young men usually use polygamy as an explanation for why they need to have multiple sexual partners. This rationale was evident among the male respondents in this study. According to these respondents, the need to have multiple sexual partners was to some extent genetic, particularly in the case of people from the Southern province of Zambia where polygamy was largely practiced. The findings of this study show that the youth think that there is a strong association between being raised in a polygamous home and having multiple sexual partnerships as a youth. Most of the respondents thought that if a person was socialised in a polygamous environment where, for example, if the father was polygamous then the child was likely to have multiple sexual partners as well because this was a normal way of life for them.

The findings of this study also show that another reason for having multiple sexual partnerships was the fear of disappointment. In order to avoid heartache and

disappointment young men preferred to have multiple partners so that if one of their partners decides to end the relationship then they would have someone to turn to for comfort. These partners were referred to as 'backups'. 'Backups' were also necessary in situations where ones partner did not want to have sex at that particular time, if someone had several other sexual partners they can always go to them for sex instead.

The reasons found by this study for why young women have multiple sexual partnerships are also consistent with existing literature (Meekers and Calves, 1997; Luke and Kurz, 2002). Hallman (2005) found that in developing countries, the reasons why women have multiple sexual partners are mostly economic. A study by Meekers and Calves (1997) found that economic need may increase multiple partnering among young women. In Cameroon, Rwenge (2003) reported that socioeconomic disadvantage increased the odds of having multiple sexual partners. Meekers and Calves (1997) also stress the fact that in order to increase their economic security, young women usually try to maximise the number of sexual partners. Luke and Kurz (2002) have also reviewed several studies (Wood et al, 1998; Komba-Malekela and Liljestrom, 1994) which show that young women have learnt that sex is a valued resource and therefore they may maintain several sexual relationships simultaneously to maximise these benefits.

Most of the respondents for this study cited economic reasons as the most common reason for multiple sexual partnerships among young women. According to the respondents, having multiple sexual partners was a way out of poverty for most young women. In most cases, parents were unable to meet all the needs that their children have and therefore young women ended up seeking multiple sexual partners who were in a position to assist them financially. This inability of parents to adequately meet the financial needs has been well-documented by Adams and Marshall (1998) and Kelly and Parker (2000) stating that lack of parental resources has been cited as the primary reason for young women to trade sex for goods or favours or to engage in relationships that involve financial support (Hallman, 2005).

Meekers and Calves (1997) found that young women had different sexual relationships that were intended to achieve different objectives, and hence the need for multiple partners. Since these relationships had different objectives, they were not in competition with one another. In line with this, this study found that young women had multiple sexual partners that were meant to meet several different needs. For example, one partner was supposed to provide food and cosmetics; another was supposed to provide clothes, cell phones and other accessories; while another partner may provide outings to fancy nightclubs and restaurants.

Meekers and Calves (1997) found that some women enter multiple sexual partnerships mostly in order for them to be able to achieve or maintain an upscale lifestyle. This study found that there was a lot of peer pressure among young women to live a certain kind of lifestyle. Young women usually compete among themselves in terms of who is the most fashionably dressed or who has the latest accessories such as cell phones. Young women who are unable to keep up with the latest fashion trends are usually looked down upon by their peers. So in order to maintain this upscale lifestyle, most young women were pressured to have multiple sexual partnerships with men who were able to help them achieve this.

Generally most of the Zambian population is aware of the methods that can be used to prevent HIV infection. According to the ZDHS (2000-2001) most Zambians are aware that having one faithful partner is an HIV risk reduction method. The ZDHS (2000-2001) found that 82 percent of women and 86 percent of men knew that by limiting the number of sexual partners one can avoid contracting HIV. The ZSBS (2005) found that 90.4% for males and 89.4% for females recognised having one faithful partner as an HIV prevention method. In line with these findings, the present study found that all the respondents were able to cite contracting HIV as one of the risks associated with having multiple sexual partnerships. Respondents also mentioned the additional risk of spreading HIV to other partners once a person has contracted HIV. Amidst this high knowledge of HIV prevention methods, studies have found a strong sense of fatalism among young people (Kelly, 2002; Kelly and Parker, 2000; MacPhail and Campbell, 2000). The Horizons report (2005) found a

prevailing sense of fatalism among the youth, with most of the youth believing that HIV is so common and therefore there is no way to avoid infection nor any need to engage in risk reduction behaviour such as mutual monogamy. The findings of this study show that there is indeed a sense of fatalism among the youth in Zambia. Respondents stressed that youth felt as though everyone was destined to die from HIV and therefore they saw no reason to stop having multiple sexual partnerships. Respondents also thought that the youth also had a tendency of thinking that it was impossible for them to contract HIV. Studies have coined this as the 'it can not happen to me' syndrome (Kelly, 2002; Kelly and Parker, 2000). Eaton et al (2002) observe that the youth tend to have an attitude of bravado and denial of personal vulnerability to HIV which increases their risk of contracting HIV.

Studies have found that there are several environmental, economic, social and cultural problems that prevent the youth from transforming safe-sex knowledge into functional, health-promoting, safer-sex behaviour (Kelly, 2000; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). The findings of this study are consistent with this existing research evidence. The present study found that while the youth were knowledgeable about dangers of having multiple sexual partnerships, there were several barriers to transforming this knowledge. Firstly, peer pressure was cited as a barrier because young people fear losing friends or losing the status they have gained among the peers if they were to stop having multiple sexual partners. Secondly, poverty was also cited as a barrier to changing behaviour for young women in particular because for most young women having multiple partners was a survival tactic. In line with this, several studies have found a positive connection between poverty and multiple sexual partnerships for women (Meekers and Calves, 1997; Luke and Kurz, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). In most cases, young women felt they lacked alternative economic opportunities.

Alcohol consumption was another barrier that made it difficult for youth to stop having multiple sexual partnerships especially for young men. People who were under the influence of alcohol were more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour such as having multiple sexual partners. Respondents thought that there were too many bars and nightclubs and this was making alcohol easily accessible to the youth.

Another barrier cited by respondents in this study was the media. Respondents thought that there was a lot of obscene material on television and on the internet which glorified risky sexual behaviour. In addition, some of the respondents thought that the advertising of condoms was also another barrier to changing behaviour. Some felt that condoms encouraged casual sex and multiple sexual partnerships and this is because most people usually feel safe when they use condoms and therefore they tend to engage in multiple sexual relationships. Ndubani et al (2003) found that promoting the use of condoms has not been an easy task in Zambia because the association of condoms with casual sex has continued to reinforce the negative view of condoms. Not using condoms is seen as proof that one is not promiscuous.

The behaviour of older people in society was also seen as a barrier to the youth changing their behaviour. According to the respondents, the youth usually look up to older people in society as their role models, therefore when they see their elders having multiple sexual partnerships then they are also likely to do the same. In line with this, Kelly (2002) reports that one of the difficulties that the youth face is that they usually see older people behaving and living in ways they would condemn in the young. Most societies usually create an almost impossible task for young people, expecting them to behave in certain ways but confronting them with social norms, expectations and role models that point to the contrary (Kelly, 2002).

The lack of recreation was also another barrier that was cited by the respondents in this study. Respondents thought that young people engaged in multiple sexual partnerships because they did not have anything to keep them entertained. In support of this, Eaton et al (2002) found that in poor communities with very few recreational facilities there is usually increased sexual activity among young people. Kelly and Parker (2000) also found that young people in areas that lack recreational facilities claimed that they used sex as entertainment when they had nothing else to do.

The findings of this study also address issues of fidelity and partner reduction. The results of this study show that the majority of the respondents were unfamiliar with the word fidelity but they were able to correctly define partner reduction as the

process of reducing the number of sexual partners. Several studies have reported that the main benefit of mutual faithfulness in a sexual relationship is that it reduces the chances of contracting HIV and STIs (Shelton et al, 2004; Halperin and Epstein, 2004; Green, 2004). The findings of this study are consistent with this evidence with most of the respondents citing this as one of the key benefits of faithfulness. Another key benefit of being faithful that was cited by the male respondents in particular, was that faithfulness had economic benefits. These respondents stated that being faithful was much cheaper than being unfaithful because having one girl was more affordable in terms of taking her out and buying her gifts. They said only men with a lot of money were able to have many girls and still manage to take each one of them out and buy gifts for them. Meekers and Calves (1997) found that several men complained about the costs of having more than one girlfriend especially in light of the fact that they thought most girls were very materialistic. Another benefit cited by the respondents was that if one was faithful then the relationship might last longer and may eventually lead to marriage.

However, it is important to note that being faithful does have its challenges for the youth. Kelly (2002) found that because the youth are at a stage in life which is usually characterised by sexual discovery and experimentation, this made them more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour such as sex with multiple partners. The findings of this study are consistent with this evidence with most of the respondents stating that young people found it difficult to be faithful to one partner because they were not quite settled due to the fact that they did not really know what they wanted out of life and therefore they thought it was important for them to experiment with different partners.

Another challenge to faithfulness particularly in the case of young women was the fact that most men were not faithful and therefore it made it difficult for young women to be faithful to them. Female respondents thought that there was no point in being faithful to someone who was not faithful in return. In addition, several respondents thought that it was difficult for the youth to be faithful especially since they lived in a society where male infidelity was accepted as the norm. There were

some respondents in this study who did not think it was difficult for the youth to be faithful. According to these respondents if someone was a Christian and they had strong principles and values, then it would not be difficult for them to be faithful to one partner. In line with this, Eaton et al (2002) found that young people that were religious were also more likely to postpone sexual activity and have fewer partners.

This study's findings on whether young people were willing to tolerate unfaithful partners were also consistent with existing evidence. Women are generally more likely to tolerate an unfaithful partner than men, according to Meekers and Calves (1997) men usually expect women to remain faithful to them regardless of their own infidelities. This study found that because it is to some extent culturally acceptable for a man to be unfaithful, young women were more willing than young men to tolerate an unfaithful partner. One of the reasons why young women might be willing to tolerate an unfaithful partner was because they might be financially dependant on this partner and therefore they would decide to turn a blind eye so as not to lose their financial security. Another reason why young women might tolerate an unfaithful partner is that they live with the hope that one day he might change his behaviour and finally propose marriage. In support of this, Gaidzanwa (1985) cited in Meekers and Calves (1997) found that some women usually know of their partner's infidelity but tolerate it hoping that he will marry her eventually. In some cases, respondents also thought that the youth might be more willing to tolerate an unfaithful partner only if they themselves were also being unfaithful to that partner.

Lastly, the findings of this study show that some of the respondents thought that their community was concerned about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. According to these respondents, there were several posters around the college advising the students on the dangers of having multiple sexual partnerships; in addition students could also go to SHARES if they needed any information on HIV issues. These respondents also said that there were some male students at the college that were concerned about multiple sexual partnerships at the college and took it upon themselves to go around the campus naming and shaming female students who were

known to have multiple sexual partnerships. The respondents thought that this naming and shaming was only limited to female students because most of society thought that having multiple partners was acceptable for men but not for women. In support of this, Varga (1997) notes that women who had multiple sexual partners were considered to be promiscuous while men who had multiple sexual partners were not considered to be promiscuous at all; this was mainly because it was considered to be normal and natural for men to have several sexual partners. On the other hand, some of the respondents for this study did not think their community was concerned about multiple sexual partnerships. According to these respondents, very few people actually even talked about the dangers of these partnerships, this was mainly because most people found issues about HIV to be boring or they were simply tired of talking about HIV.

In conclusion, the findings of this study also show that the respondents were able to come up with several suggestions on what could be done to address multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. Firstly, many of the respondents thought that the youth should receive more information about the dangers of having multiple sexual partnerships especially since some of the youth usually engaged in such risky behaviour because they were not well informed. Other respondents did not think that the dissemination of more information would make much of a difference seeing that a lot of people had already receive so much information about HIV but there was still very little behavioural change taking place.

Another recommendation that was made was that parents needed to talk to their children about issues like having multiple sexual partnerships. It was thought that information received from parents was likely to be more accurate than the information that the youth received from their peers. The respondents also thought that there was need for massive sensitization on behaviour change not just for the youth but also for older people. Older people in society were role models for the youth and therefore if they changed their behaviour, the youth were more likely to follow suit. Another recommendation that was made particularly by the female

respondents was that the government bursaries should be introduced at the college as a way of ensuring that female students were not forced into multiple sexual partnerships due to poverty. It was thought that bursaries would at least help students to meet their basic needs. A few of the respondents did not think that the introduction of bursaries would make much of a difference considering that the amount that the government paid out in bursaries was not enough to cover all the students' needs.

Respondents also suggested that the number of bars and nightclubs needed to be reduced in order to make alcohol less accessible to the youth. This is because they thought that drinking alcohol made the youth more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour like having multiple partners. Another recommendation that was made was that the youth needed to get associated with Christian fellowship groups that would help them build their principles and values. According to the respondents, young people with strong Christian principles and values were less likely to have multiple sexual partnerships. Last but not least, the respondents thought that the youth needed to have more recreational activities that would keep them entertained most of the time and therefore they would not feel the need to resort to sex with multiple partners as a form of entertainment.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the key findings of this study with the aim of linking them with existing literature on multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. The findings of this study were largely consistent with the existing evidence but in addition also gave insight on multiple sexual partnerships in a Zambian context. Based on this discussion the next chapter will provide a conclusion of the study and it will also offer several recommendations.

# Chapter Six

## Conclusion

### 6.1. Conclusion

Studies on risk behaviour in the context of HIV have shown that increased promotion of preventive behaviour does not necessarily translate into behavioural change. Most interventions worldwide have been based on the assumption that correct information on transmission and prevention would lead to behavioural change. However, with increasing global HIV infections there has been growing demands for a more contextual approach to HIV interventions. This study aimed to provide insight into youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships with the hope of gaining contextual insight on the topic. To date, the ABC approach to HIV prevention has been hailed as the mostly effective prevention message especially in light of the role it played in reducing HIV prevalence in Uganda. With the hope of emulating the success in Uganda, many countries have adopted this approach as their main strategy for HIV prevention but sadly most countries particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa have failed to yield similar results. Several studies have attributed this to the fact that those that have adopted this strategy have not implemented the strategy comprehensively but rather choosing to implement certain components to the detriment of the others. In most cases, the commonly neglected component is the ‘be faithful’ component which according to epidemiological evidence might be the reason why the HIV epidemic is proving difficult to overcome. The evidence shows that as long as multiple sexual partnerships, especially concurrent partnerships, continue to exist it will make it quite difficult to curb the spread of the virus.

In light of this, it would suffice to say that HIV has clearly found a comfortable home in Zambia. With studies clearly demonstrating that having multiple sexual partnerships plays a critical role in the spread of HIV, youth sexuality in Zambia seems like a perfect facilitator for the spread of the virus. Multiple sexual partnerships among the youth in Zambia are greatly influenced by several environmental, social,

cultural and economic factors. For starters, male sexuality in Zambia is acted out in a culture where masculinity is strongly associated with multiple partnering. Having multiple sexual partners is considered to be a laudable male sexual behaviour with most young men striving to live up to these expectations regardless of the fact that most are aware of the risk associated with this behaviour. And in cases where a man does not strive to live up to these expectations, he is likely to be ridiculed by his peers and largely excluded from their circles. In addition, it is also culturally engrained in Zambian women to accept and tolerate male infidelity which as a result effectively increases their chances of contracting HIV from an unfaithful partner. It is evident that cultural expectations and norms are usually so deeply enshrined that they are able to dis-able a person's ability to transform safe-sex knowledge into functional, health-promoting, safer-sex behaviour. Though it is important to note that there is a disturbing trend that has developed among young women in Zambia, most have started to think that if they are involved in a relationship with an unfaithful partner then to some extent it also gives them licence to be unfaithful as well. Most young women do this without taking into account that this only increases the chances of contracting HIV.

High levels of poverty in Zambia are also another factor that influences multiple sexual partnerships especially for young women. With most parents ultimately failing to provide adequately for their children because of economic hardship, many young women have resorted to having transactional sexual relationships with multiple partners as a survival strategy. For these young women the need to survive each day greatly outweighs any fears they might have of contracting HIV.

The sense of fatalism and hopelessness is also another factor influencing multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. Due to the fact that HIV is having such a devastating impact in Zambia, most young people know of someone close to them who has died of AIDS and as a result many are starting to feel as though HIV is impossible to avoid and therefore they see no point in changing their behaviour. For most young people in Zambia it seems it has become imperative that they maximise all that life has to offer in anticipation of an early death because of HIV.

In light of the above mentioned reasons for multiple sexual partnerships among the youth in Zambia, it is evident that multiple sexual partnerships exist in a context that makes it increasingly difficult for the youth to change their sexual behaviour despite knowing all the risks. It is therefore absolutely critical that interventions that are aimed at promoting fidelity and partner reduction have a contextual approach. Taking into account all the factors that are at play will ensure that the intervention is more effective. However, in order for any prevention intervention to be successful it is essential that it makes use of all approaches that are known to be effective, namely condom use and abstinence, therefore ensuring that a comprehensive prevention strategy is put into place.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

First and foremost, with growing numbers of new infections every year there is need to begin to target specific cultural norms that perpetuate the spread of HIV. While it is clearly quite difficult to change deeply entrenched beliefs, there is need to redefine masculinity in Zambia especially if the fight against HIV is to be won. Masculinity in Zambia is currently associated with early sexual debut, multiple partnering and a sense of bravado and invulnerability, all of which are major factors in the spread of HIV. Changing beliefs about masculinity can play a significant role in turning the epidemic around. There is also a need to empower young women; this is because most young women end up having multiple sexual partnerships because they feel there are very few economic opportunities that are available for them. Young women need to be offered different avenues out of poverty to ensure they do not resort to transactional relationships with multiple sexual partners as a means of survival. The sense of fatalism also needs to be addressed. This can be done by ensuring that everyone is made aware of the fact that while Zambia does indeed have a relatively high HIV prevalence rate, the majority of the population is still HIV negative. This may help to convince the youth that all is not lost and they can still avoid infection by adopting risk reducing sexual behaviour.

There is also need to provide not just the youth but the whole Zambian population with a detailed explanation of exactly why multiple sexual partnerships play a major role in the spread of HIV. While the majority are indeed aware that having multiple sexual partnerships increases one's chances of contracting HIV, very few are knowledgeable about the sexual networks that are created as a result of this multiple partnering and how the chances of being infected usually depend on the position within the network and the type of people that are part of the network. It is likely that people might become less tolerant of multiple partnering on their part or a partner's infidelity if they were aware of the giant sexual network which this behaviour links them to. In addition, there is a need to emphasize the fact that the use of condoms has to be correct and consistent if it is to work effectively. Many people usually are under the impression that multiple partnering is risk free as long as one uses condoms, but several studies have shown that in most cases condom use is usually incorrect and inconsistent and therefore people have to be made aware they still face a significant risk of contracting HIV.

Parents also need to start talking to their children more openly about issues like having multiple sexual partnerships. This would ensure that the youth receive information about sex from a more reliable source rather than just receiving information from their peers. Parents are a better source of information because not only do they have experience but they also want the best for their children and therefore they are less likely to misinform.

There is also need to have behavioural change sensitization which is aimed at older people as well. While it is important to target young people as they are less set in their ways and therefore are more likely to change their behaviour than older people, it is important to note that older people are role models for young people and as a result young people usually follow the examples set by their elders. So if the youth see older people having multiple sexual partnerships while they are being told not to engage in such behaviour, they are more likely to follow the example being set by older people. It is therefore imperative that behaviour change sensitization also targets older people if it is to have a significant impact on the youth.

The provision of recreational activities for the youth is also important as it may have an impact on risky sexual behaviour. Many young people usually say they engage in risky sexual behaviour like multiple partnering in order to keep them entertained. In light of this, it is essential that young people are provided with recreational activities that will keep them busy and entertained.

It is also important to take into account the fact that Zambia is largely a Christian nation and therefore the strengthening of Christian values and principles may help in reducing multiple sexual partnerships among the youth. As previously mentioned in chapter five, young people that are religious are more likely to not only delay sexual activity but also have fewer sexual partners. This is because the Christian faith strongly discourages both sex outside marriage and infidelity.

This study has explored youth perceptions of multiple sexual partnerships in the HIV/AIDS. The study has managed to shed some light on the various factors that surround the existence of these partnerships with the hope that this will help to improve HIV prevention interventions in Zambia.

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## Appendix 1

### Youth Perceptions of Multiple Sexual Partnerships in the context of HIV/AIDS: A Case Study of Students at Evelyn Hone College, Lusaka, Zambia.

#### FOCUS GROUP AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

##### Topics Discussed

1. What are multiple sexual partnerships? (personal views)
2. What types of sexual partners do the youth have? Serial? Concurrent?
3. Why do young people have multiple sexual partnerships?
4. Are multiple sexual partners regarded positively or negatively?
5. What are the risks associated with having multiple sexual partners?
6. Are the youth aware of the risks associated with having multiple sexual partnerships?
7. What are the barriers to changing this behaviour i.e. having multiple sexual partners?
8. How do the youth define 'fidelity' and 'partner reduction'?
9. Is fidelity and partner reduction actively encouraged in the youth's environment?
10. What are the factors that encourage multiple sexual partnerships?
11. Do you think a person can reduce their chances of getting HIV by having sex with only one faithful, uninfected partner?
12. Do you think there are any benefits to being faithful to one person? What are the benefits?
13. Do you think it is difficult for a young person to be faithful to one person? Why?
14. Is it generally acceptable for someone to be in a relationship and have sex with more than one person?
15. Is your community concerned about multiple sexual partnerships among the youth? Among young men? Among young women?
16. Do people in your community talk about the dangers of multiple sexual partnerships often?
17. Have you ever received information about multiple sexual partnerships through the radio or television? Through billboards? Through college?
18. Do you think young people talk about fidelity and partner reduction?
19. Do the youth tolerate unfaithful partners? Why?
20. What do you think can be done to address this behaviour?