



**Negotiating and regulating teenage sexuality in rural Zimbabwe:  
Gender, culture and schooling**

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## **Supervisor's Declaration**

**'As the candidate's supervisor I agree / ~~do not~~ agree to the submission of this thesis'.**

**Signed**



**Name     Professor Deevia Bhana**

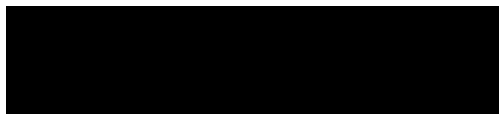
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## Abstract

In the context of HIV and AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and teenage girls' vulnerability to gender inequalities and violence, there have been several efforts in Zimbabwe to address the triple scourge of disease, violence and inequalities. School-based sexuality education is an important context through which these issues can be addressed. However, in Zimbabwe sexuality is shrouded in silence with the real-life experiences of young people often subsumed under the injunctions of culture. Against this backdrop, this study examines teenage sexuality in rural Zimbabwean schools based on qualitative research with teenagers, teachers, school heads and parents. The findings show contradictions between teenagers active sexual agency and adult ideals espousing innocence and tradition.

The study found that while teenagers conform to gender and cultural discourses of girl and womanhood, they simultaneously harness these very same discourses to contest and resist complete regulation. Teenage agency in forging a new account of virginity prioritising individual interests, interrogates the prevalent interpretation of this practice as oppressive and patriarchal. Likewise, teenage boys questioned the gendered moral principles informing the virginity discourse and valued male virginity in the context of trust, and risk of HIV infection. Furthermore, it was established that a reinterpretation of child marriage focusing on girls' agency broadens understanding of the practice beyond the taken-for-granted understanding of girls as victims. Elopement characterised by mutual consent is a culturally recognised process of getting married among the Shona. It is through this culturally acceptable practice that teenagers resist 'sexual damage'. Teenage girls do exercise considerable agency in harnessing cultural practices that help to maintain their respectability in cases of culturally condemned premarital sex.

The study accentuates structures of labour, power, cathexis and culture in the social construction of gender and sexuality, concluding that these ought to be prominent in discussions of sexuality. Integrating components of Connell's Gender and Power Theory in school-based sexuality education could provide opportunities for multifaceted perspectives on significant issues such as teenage sexual agency, pregnancy and child marriage. Provision of sexuality education which addresses gender dynamics and teenagers as sexually knowing within the socio-cultural context, is an important recommendation in this study.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my husband, Charles Kadzere, the wind beneath my wings; and to my sons, Tinotenda, Rufaro and Takudzwa Kadzere.

## **Acknowledgements**

To my supervisor Professor Deevia Bhana, words cannot express the depth of my gratitude. You guided me through this study with expertise and professionalism of the highest level. Most importantly, I learnt that I should continually strive for excellence. Thank you.

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To the learners, teachers and parents who participated in this study, thank you so much for sharing your views. Without you, there would be no study. *Ndinotenda.*

## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CFO	Community Field Officer
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MOESAC	Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture
SDC	School Development Committee
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
ZimVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

## **Publication arising from this thesis**

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**This publication forms Chapter 6 of the thesis. In some places, the published work has undergone minor revisions to better accommodate the style and layout of this thesis.**

# Table of Contents

## Contents

1	Supervisor’s Declaration .....	II
	Declaration.....	III
	Abstract.....	IV
	Dedication.....	V
	Acknowledgements.....	VI
	Abbreviations and acronyms .....	VII
	Publication arising from this thesis.....	VIII
	Table of Contents.....	IX
	List of Tables and Figures.....	XIV
	CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to the study.....	1
1.1	Introduction .....	1
1.2	Background and focus of the study .....	3
1.3	Problem statement .....	4
1.4	Purpose statement.....	5
1.5	Research questions.....	6
1.6	Policy context.....	6
1.7	Definition of key concept .....	8
1.8	Outline of the thesis .....	8
	CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical framework and literature review.....	10
2.1	Introduction .....	10
2.2	The concept of gender .....	10
2.3	Essentialist explanation of gender .....	11
2.3	Social construction of gender .....	11
2.4	Gender as a social structure .....	14
2.5	Gender and Power Theory.....	14

2.5.1	Sexual division of labour .....	15
2.5.2	Power .....	16
2.5.3	Cathexis.....	17
2.5.4	Culture.....	18
2.6	Social construction of sexuality .....	18
2.7	Discourses of teenage sexuality, power and agency .....	20
2.8	Gender, sexuality and identity .....	24
2.9	Denial, danger and desire .....	25
2.10	Learning about sexuality .....	29
2.11	Culture and sexuality .....	32
2.12	Conclusion.....	34
CHAPTER THREE: The Zimbabwean context .....		35
3.1	Introduction .....	35
3.2	Zimbabwe: ‘Land is the economy; the economy is the land’ .....	35
3.3	Gender, sexuality and Shona culture .....	40
3.4	Sexuality, culture and education .....	42
3.5	Conclusion.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology.....		47
4.1	Introduction .....	47
4.2	The Interpretivist paradigm .....	47
4.3	Qualitative Methodology .....	49
4.4	The case study approach .....	50
4.5	The research setting and participants .....	51
4.5.1	Teenage learners.....	56
4.5.2	School heads and teachers .....	57
4.5.3	Parents .....	57
4.6	Data collection techniques.....	58
4.6.1	Focus group discussions.....	59

4.6.2 Individual interviews .....	62
4.7 Data collection process.....	64
4.8 Trustworthiness .....	65
4.8.1 Credibility .....	65
4.8.2 Transferability .....	66
4.8.3 Dependability .....	66
4.8.4 Confirmability.....	67
4.9 Ethical considerations .....	67
4.10 Reflexivity.....	67
4.11 Data interpretation .....	68
4.12 Conclusion.....	70
CHAPTER FIVE: Domination, resistance and teenage heterosexual relationships .....	71
5.1 Introduction .....	71
5.2 In our culture a woman is under a man's feet.....	72
5.3 Teachers just want to stop you from enjoying yourself .....	80
5.4 Girls, you need to be decent, do not get involved with boys. ....	85
5.5 They do not really tell us what to do if these feelings overcome you.....	93
5.6 You do not eat a sweet while it is in its wrapper.....	103
5.7 Conclusion.....	111
CHAPTER SIX: Virginity, culture and gender inequalities.....	113
6.1 Introduction .....	113
6.2 Girls, you must maintain your virginity.....	114
6.3 If you maintain your virginity you will enjoy your marriage.....	122
6.4 My virginity is very significant to me .....	125
6.5 Conclusion.....	128
CHAPTER SEVEN: Poverty, teenage sexuality and restricted choices.....	131
7.1 Introduction .....	131
7.2 What about my money which I spent on you? .....	132

7.3	Getting the culprit arrested or to get the culprit to marry? .....	148
7.4	Go back to your boyfriend, you can't live here anymore.....	153
7.5	You start seeing yourself as a parent .....	161
7.6	Conclusion.....	166
CHAPTER EIGHT: Adults' anxiety regarding school-based sexuality education.....		169
8.1	Introduction .....	169
8.2	Sexuality education: Not getting the time it deserves.....	169
8.3	Why do they want to teach them that?.....	171
8.4	They must have morals.....	175
8.5	Conclusion.....	179
CHAPTER NINE: Conclusion.....		182
9.1	Introduction .....	182
9.2	Main findings .....	183
9.3.1	Gender and teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe.....	183
9.3.2	Cultural norms shaping teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe .....	185
9.3.3	Negotiation and regulation of teenage sexuality in a context of poverty in rural Zimbabwe	188
9.3.4	Adults' view of school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools	191
9.4	Contribution of thesis .....	193
9.5	Implications.....	194
9.6	Strengths of the study.....	196
9.7	Recommendations .....	196
a)	Individual and family level .....	196
b)	School and societal level.....	197
c)	Policy and government implementation level .....	199
d)	Suggestions for further studies.....	199
9.8	Conclusion.....	200

References .....	201
Appendices.....	235
Appendix A: Ethical Clearance – Zimbabwe.....	236
Appendix B: Ethical Clearance UKZN.....	237
Appendix C: Change of Title.....	238
Appendix D: Informed Consent Participant - School Head.....	240
Appendix E: Informed Consent Participant - Teacher.....	243
Appendix F: Informed consent- parent/guardian for Learner FGD .....	246
Appendix G: Informed consent- parent/guardian for Learner Interview .....	249
Appendix H: Informed consent: Participant- parent/guardian.....	252
Appendix I: Interview Guide- School Head .....	255
Appendix J: Interview Guide (1) - Teachers .....	258
Appendix K: Focus Group Discussion Guide - Learners.....	259
Appendix L: Focus Group Discussion Guide - Parents.....	262
Appendix M: Interview questions-learners .....	263
Appendix N: Interview guide-parents .....	265
Appendix O: Interview Guide (2) – Teachers .....	267
Appendix P: Turnitin Report .....	268

## List of Tables and Figures

Figure 2.1.....	15
Figure 4.1.....	52
Table 4.1 .....	59
Table 4.2.....	60
Table 4.3.....	61
Table 5.1.....	72
Table 6.1.....	116
Table 7.1.....	133
Table 8.1.....	171
Figure 9.1.....	197

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction to the study

## 1.1 Introduction

*A gold panner in Zimbabwe fatally assaulted his 15-yr old daughter using a car tyre whip, leaving deep cuts all over her body. He was enraged after discovering that she had a boyfriend. He declined to seek medical attention for her, hid her in their house and she died in pain after five days (Dube-Matutu, 2018).*

*A 15-yr old girl, accused of having sex and taking drugs at an early age, was beaten to death by her 31 year old mother using an electric cable (Chitumba & Ndlovu, 2016).*

Across the globe, teenage sexuality is conceptualised as a problem and dominant discourses highlight young age and immature development as the cause of risky behaviours which make teenagers vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, violence and unplanned pregnancy (Fried & Smith, 2018; Reddy, Sewpaul, & Jonas, 2016; Heslop, *et al.*, 2015; Bhana, 2015b; Bay-Cheng, 2003). Girls' sexuality is particularly under scrutiny and at risk, as they are regarded as victims of HIV, violence, unintended pregnancy and subsequent child care; whereas teenage boys' sexuality is framed as natural and irrepressible (Tolman, Davis, & Bowman, 2016; Heslop, *et al.*, 2015).

To date, most of the research on teenage sexuality has been conducted in highly industrialised countries (Allen, 2018, 2015a, 2015b, 2007a, 2007b, 2005, 2001; Santelli, *et al.*, 2018; 2017; Santelli & Schalet, 2017; Bell, Aggleton, Ward, & Maher, 2017; Tolman, Davis, & Bowman, 2016; Kehily, 2013; Schalet, 2004; Kehily, 2002). In Africa, most studies have been carried out in South Africa (Bhana, 2007, 2012, 2015b, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2018; Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015; Bhana, Morrell. Shefer & Ngabaza, 2010; Bhana, Clowes, Morrell & Shefer, 2008; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010, 2012). Previous Zimbabwean studies mainly located teenage sexuality within discourses of danger, risk and disease (Landa & Fushai, 2018; Chiweshe & Chiweshe, 2017; Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Mutanana & Mutara, 2015; Pascoe, *et al.*, 2015; Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014; Runhare, Dzimir, Mulaudzi, & Vandeyar, 2014; Bhatasara, Chevo, & Changadeya, 2013; Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013; Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012; Sambisa, Curtis, & Stokes, 2010; Chikovore, 2004; Gregson, *et al.*, 2002; Gwede, *et al.*, 2001; Schatz & Dzvimbo, 2001). Myriad contextual factors shape teenage

sexuality with a quantitative study by Sambisa, Curtis and Stokes (2010), suggesting that ethnic differences could account for different sexual behaviours among young people. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of qualitative studies investigating the role of culture in shaping teenage sexuality. This thesis investigates how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated within the Shona socio-cultural context in rural Zimbabwe.

This chapter began with highlights from a Zimbabwean newspaper, *The Chronicle*, that capture how teenage sexuality is problematised, being viewed as requiring punitive action and in need of adult regulation. While the fatal outcomes of those indicated above are not necessarily the norm in Zimbabwe, they indicate the widespread rejection of teenage sexual agency. It is denied and silenced, particularly among teenage girls. Intimate relationships are believed to provide a context for premature sexual activities (Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012), hence the hostile reaction from parents. Teenage sexual activity challenges the notions of ideal childhood. Despite adult denial and regulation, beating teenagers to comply with abstinence and an ideal childhood, teenagers do engage in sex. Reports indicate that teenagers in Zimbabwe are becoming sexually active at an early age (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Bhatasara, Chevo, & Changadeya, 2013). Statistics indicate that almost 40% of girls and 24% of boys are already sexually active before they turn 18 years (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and ICF International, 2016a). Subsequently, early childbearing among teenagers is 3% at age 15 and 48% among those aged 19 years (ZIMSTAT and ICF International, 2016a).

Understanding how teenagers make meaning of sexuality is essential, as studies show that they engage in risky sexual behaviour even when they are provided with information on safer sexual practices (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Nubed & Akoachere, 2016; Wood & Rollerick, 2014; Bhatasara, Chevo, & Changadeya, 2013; Bruce, *et al.*, 2011; Letamo, 2011; Sambisa, Curtis, & Stokes, 2010). Sexuality is socially and culturally formed (Chisale & Moyo, 2016), thus a comprehensive understanding of how teenagers in rural Zimbabwe give meaning to it involves consideration of gender and cultural norms. This study examines the phenomenon of teenage learners' sexuality within the socio-cultural context of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, being defined, regulated and negotiated in schools, families and the community at large.

## **1.2 Background and focus of the study**

Sexuality is produced as individuals interact in a specific social environment (Bhana, 2018; Aggleton, Parker, & Thomas, 2015), with cultural norms influencing how people make sense of sexuality, which is fluid and socially determined (Jackson, 2006). Bhana (2017b) contends that social, cultural and material processes influence young people's sexuality in significant ways. Learners' interaction with teachers and parents in school, family and the community occur within existing cultural discourses on sexuality. Allen (2007a) maintains that teachers and learners negotiate numerous moral, religious, medical and cultural discourses that are pronounced in schools. Young people's sexuality is often perceived as problematic or complex, being habitually regulated by adults (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). In Zimbabwe, sexual innocence is anticipated among young, single individuals (Landa & Fushai, 2018). As an example, the matter of teenagers' access to contraceptives is contentious such that conflicting messages are communicated (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Banda, 2014).

While the Ministry of Health and Child Care permits teenagers to receive contraceptives in hospitals and clinics, conservative attitudes regarding teenage premarital sex remain prevalent in society (Banda, 2014). Understanding and addressing teenage sexuality is important given their increased vulnerability to unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, early childbearing, child marriage, teenage parenthood, school dropout, poverty and HIV (Bhana, 2018; Masvawure, 2010). Girls appear more susceptible to these challenges compared to boys. Zimbabwe's national HIV prevalence rate is 14% in urban and rural areas, being higher among women (17%) than men (14%) (ZIMSTAT, 2015). Zimbabwe has high maternal mortality rates, being reported as 651 per 100 000 live births in 2016, with approximately 20% occurring among girls aged 15-19 years (Amnesty International, 2018). Illegal, unsafe abortions account for 16% of maternal mortality (Phiri, 2018), and approximately one third of these involve teenage girls (Langa, 2018). In addition, approximately 45% of girls aged 15-19 years are likely to experience intimate partner violence in the form of emotional, physical or sexual violence (ZIMSTAT and ICF International, 2016b).

Young people's sexual and reproductive health issues have progressively become part of Zimbabwe's countrywide health programmes (Sambisa, Curtis, & Stokes, 2010). From the early 1990s, Zimbabwean schools have been expected to deliver an AIDS action package that

consisted of lessons on life skills, relationships, gender roles and peer pressure (Schatz & Dzvimbo, 2001), which resulted in a conflation of teenage sexuality with disease and danger. Additionally, appeals have been made for parents and guardians to do more regarding teaching their children about sex and sexuality (Dube, 2014). However, for the Shona people, the topic of sex is private, with specific people being expected to teach individuals about it: aunts, uncles and grandparents (Mugwini & Matereke, 2010; Decosas & Padian, 2002). Unfortunately, the breakdown of extended family networks due to migration and urbanisation interrupted this traditional sexual socialisation approach (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014; Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012; Mugwini & Matereke, 2010). Parents are therefore uncertain about assuming this role (Amnesty International, 2018; Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014), as culturally, they have neither the authority nor freedom to deliberate sexual matters with their offspring (Pattman, 1996). As traditional sex education is no longer common at the family and community levels, it has been assumed that schools have taken up this role (Decosas & Padian, 2002). Parents and teachers are therefore perceived as central in initiating and sustaining sexuality conversations with teenagers, at a time when the topic of sexuality has evolved to an extent that it is framed as a matter of life and death.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

Teenage sexuality is a cause for anxiety among teachers and parents in Zimbabwe. Teenagers' vulnerability to HIV infection and unplanned teen pregnancy is often highlighted, as are subsequent issues such as illegal, risky abortions, teen parenthood, school dropout, low educational achievement and limited employment prospects. The anxiety is valid, as these are real dangers that teenage boys and girls must contend with. Contradictorily, silence characterises the topic of sexuality in Zimbabwe at a national level (Landa & Fushai, 2018; Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Mugwini & Matereke, 2010; Schatz & Dzvimbo, 2001). While regulating teenage sexual activity is generally accepted as the answer to the dangers of sexuality, the statistics indicate that their susceptibility to these dangers is on an upward trend, while knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health is on a downward trend (Amnesty International, 2018; Moyo & Rusinga, 2017). For example, pregnancy rates among 15-19-year-old girls increased from 21% in 2005-2006 to 24% in 2010-2011, and are three times higher in rural than urban areas (Amnesty International, 2018). Pregnancy is a sign that teenagers engage in unprotected sex, making them prone to HIV infection. Schatz and Dzvimbo (2001) noted that many formal HIV and AIDS prevention communications focus on increasing knowledge

and consider cultural issues to be superficial. Nonetheless, socio-cultural factors are influential in how a person understands and negotiates competing discourses of sexuality. Meaningful appreciation of teenage sexuality demands taking account of individual understandings and the social-cultural context.

Teenage sexual realities are shaped by, and shape the social and cultural environment in which they exist, with the learners, their parents and teachers all being key contributors to teenage sexuality. An appreciation of how they position sexuality is critical in making sense of how teenage learners negotiate sexuality. Significant adults in teenage learners' lives could be complicit in rejecting teenage sexuality. An in-depth examination of this issue in a specific socio-cultural context provides a better sense of possible ways to intervene to ensure that teenage sexual agency is not viewed with mistrust. This research builds on previous studies (Mutanana & Mutara, 2015; Pascoe, *et al.*, 2015; Woog, Singh, Browne, & Philbin, 2015; Wood & Rollerick, 2014; Doyle, Mavedzenge, Plummer, & Ross, 2012; Sambisa, Curtis, & Stokes, 2010; Gwede, *et al.*, 2001) through a qualitative case study by simultaneously listening to teenagers, parents and teachers. Sexuality has always been a difficult topic in the Zimbabwean context, which is why this study is essential. Furthermore, little research has been conducted to understand how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated within Shona culture in Zimbabwe. The implications of this are that Shona teenage sexuality may not be specifically and adequately addressed in national programmes focusing on learners' sexuality. The context specific nature of sexuality increases the need for this research focusing on teenage learners, teachers and parents in a particular socio-cultural environment in rural Zimbabwe.

#### **1.4 Purpose statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated within Shona culture in family and school contexts in rural Zimbabwe. An enquiry of teenage sexuality within a cultural context is significant because culture generates the discourses that convey values regulating sexuality in a society. Sexuality values and norms must be understood, being informed by what teenage learners, parents and teachers themselves say about sex and sexuality. This sphere is interpreted as sensitive,

contentious and personal (Kehily, 1999). A qualitative methodology reveals the nuanced teenage sexual realities.

## **1.5 Research questions**

The main research question of this study is:

How is teenage learners' sexuality defined, negotiated and regulated within Shona culture in family and school contexts in rural Zimbabwe?

Sub-questions:

- i) In what ways does gender shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
- ii) In what ways do cultural norms shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
- ii) How is teenage sexuality negotiated and regulated in the context of poverty in a rural setting?
- iv) How do adults view school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools?

## **1.6 Policy context**

Although this study focuses on teenagers aged 15-19 years old, the relevant national policies are targeted towards adolescents (10 – 19 years). As teenagers fall within the adolescents group, in this section of the thesis the term adolescents will be used rather than teenagers, to remain consistent with the wording of the policies. Almost a quarter (24%) of Zimbabwe's total population consists of adolescents (Ministry of Health and Child Care, 2016), with the government having put in place policies aimed at improving the sexual and reproductive health of this section of the population (Amnesty International, 2018; Landa & Fushai, 2018).

The first national Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) strategy was adopted for the period 2010-2015 (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2009). It set out the three programmes through which sexual and reproductive health facilities would be availed to adolescents under the auspices of the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2009). The first programme is community based, where adolescents have access to counselling, recreational activities and condoms at youth centres. Secondly, there are youth friendly corners within health facilities, such as government or

mission hospitals and clinics, which offer condoms and other family planning methods in addition to Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) for HIV. The last programme is school-based Life Skills. Sexuality, HIV and AIDS training and counselling (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2009). Through the ASRH (2010-2015) strategy, the Ministry clarified that adolescents less than 18 years of age do not require parental consent to access contraceptive and HIV services (Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, 2009).

The second ASRH Strategy (2016-2020) recognises the impact of socio-cultural and religious norms and beliefs in promoting the view that the deliberation and acceptance of adolescents' sexuality and reproductive health is taboo (Amnesty International, 2018). Therefore, it emphasises enhancing adolescents' grasp of their sexual and reproductive health rights to ameliorate the negative impact of certain cultural norms on their health. In line with this objective, The Life Skills, Sexuality, HIV and AIDS Education Strategic Plan (2012-2015) had proposed syllabus amendments to broaden the focus beyond abstinence by including issues on Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), individual competence in condom use, male circumcision and partner age differences (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014).

Nevertheless, Remez, Woog and Mhloyi (2014) cautioned that the authentic adolescents' sexual lives contrast with what policies envisage. This is largely due to the impact of intricate socio-cultural, economic and political factors which make youth-friendly services inaccessible to young people (Ministry of Health and Child and Care, 2015; Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014). The implementation of policies is often hampered by inadequate funding, shortage of resources, lack of clarity among policies and laws, and levels of individual comfort in accessing services (Amnesty International, 2018; Landa & Fushai, 2018; Blum, Mmari, Alfonso, & Posner, 2015; Woog, Singh, Browne, & Philbin, 2015).

Ambiguity in relevant laws and policies is most pronounced in terms of the age at which sexual and reproductive health services may be sought and offered. The National Family Planning Guidelines specify that any sexually active adolescent can choose, and obtain, any contraceptive method (Landa & Fushai, 2018). However, according to the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23] 2004, sections 61 (1) and 70 (1) the age of consent to sex in Zimbabwe is 16 years (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005), with extra-marital

sexual intercourse with a person below the age of 16 being regarded as statutory rape. While these provisions are meant to protect children from sexual abuse, it becomes illegal for health care professionals to provide ASRH services to individuals below this age (Blum, Mmari, Alfonso, & Posner, 2015). Furthermore, the legal age of majority is 18 years for both male and female Zimbabweans, with health care officials routinely providing services to married adolescents and those above this age, while requiring the presence of parents for those below (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017).

It is also apparent that many young people are not accessing essential services from youth-friendly centres and corners, with those in the rural areas and adolescent mothers not being fully catered for in particular (Blum, Mmari, Alfonso, & Posner, 2015). This is significant, given that 67% of the Zimbabwean population live in rural areas, where early childbearing is higher than in urban areas (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014). In addition, it is unclear whether there should be differences in services provided to adolescent learners and those not attending school when they visit youth centres (Blum, Mmari, Alfonso, & Posner, 2015). Moreover, youth centres are often regarded by the young people as a masculine space, largely used by males for their pastime (Blum, Mmari, Alfonso, & Posner, 2015), which results in fewer females accessing necessary services due to their not being girl-friendly (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014).

## **1.7 Definition of key concept**

Sexuality is a fundamental trait of human beings, combining all erotically noteworthy features of social life, including desires, intimacy, pleasure practices, relationships, reproduction and gender identities. (Jackson, 2006). It is produced through an integration of biological, political, economic and socio-cultural factors (Vance, 1984; Rubin, 2007; Bhana, 2017b), thus it is rooted within social relationships that are evidently gendered but non-sexual (Jackson, 2006). This is the working definition of sexuality adopted for this study, as it captures the concept of sexuality as a social construction, presented and acted upon differently in various contexts. This resonates with the social constructivist standpoint from which this study was conducted.

## **1.8 Outline of the thesis**

The study is presented in the following chapters:

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework that informs this study and reviews relevant local and international literature. The concept of social construction of gender and sexuality undergirding this study is discussed from the applicable theoretical viewpoints.

Chapter 3 presents the Zimbabwean socio-cultural and economic context. This provides the backdrop for teenage sexuality that the study focuses on and reviews the study setting.

Chapter 4 describes the methodological grounding of the study and justifications are provided for the adoption of qualitative case study design and data generation tools in view of an understanding of sexuality as a socially constructed reality.

Chapter 5 is the first of the four data interpretation chapters. This chapter addresses the first research question, presenting and interpreting perspectives of parents, teachers and learners on the influence of gender, power and age on their understanding of teenage sexuality

Chapter 6 addresses the second research question, and focuses on the cultural valorisation of virginity as it shapes, and is deployed by teenagers and adults as they express meaning of sexuality and gender. It is based on a paper published from this study's findings (Matswetu & Bhana, 2018).

Chapter 7 addresses the third research question and focuses on participants' perceptions and attitudes towards teenage sexuality in a context of poverty and gendered economic inequalities. It highlights how gender and poverty mediate and restrict adults' and teenagers' choices and practices.

Chapter 8 focuses on the fourth research question and presents adults' anxieties regarding school-based sexuality education. It centres on how teachers and parents draw from conservative discourses on sexuality that restrict teenage agency, thus failing to sufficiently prepare teenagers to confront both the dangers and pleasures of sexuality.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter, and highlights the major findings of the study and their significance. Implications for practice and suggestions for further study are put forward.

## **CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical framework and literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The social constructionist standpoint undergirds this study, this perspective contending that human behaviour has a cultural and historical basis and is subject to change in response to people's shared actions (Mallon, 2007; Vance, 1989). Therefore, sexuality is a facet of human behaviour that is produced in historical and social contexts (Moore, 2013). While society's gender structure constrains girls and boys differently with regards to sexuality, people are not passive, they have consciousness and agency to actively resist and transform restrictive situations. According to Connell (1987), scrutinising social structure is essentially to attempt to grasp its restrictions and its possibilities for modification. Understanding how teenage learners, teachers and parents make meaning of sexuality may lead to an appreciation of the complex phenomenon of teenage sexuality. This chapter examines the concept of social construction of gender and sexuality, theoretical frameworks informing this study, as well the review of related literature. The concepts of gender and sexuality shall be examined from essentialist and social constructionist perspectives, with reference being made to post-structuralist and gender theories in the discussion of how gender and sexuality are socially constructed. Thereafter, discourses of teenage sexuality are considered from the viewpoints of teachers, parents and teenage learners.

### **2.2 The concept of gender**

Schools, particularly at the secondary level, are perceived as one of the most influential social sites where boys and girls acquire knowledge about gender and sexuality (Iyer, 2015). They are agents of socialisation where young people can learn and develop gendered attitudes and behaviour towards one another. This could lead to the development of gender stereotypes which may encourage sexism and gender inequality. However, the school is also able to play a transformative role to deconstruct gender and challenge gender inequalities that may be accepted as the norm in the school and community. It is therefore important to recognise and address the significant role of gender to facilitate transformative school practices for teachers and learners (Schwandt & Underwood, 2016), and to consider the various ways in which the concept of gender has been understood over the years in the society, as well as by social

scientists. An understanding of such views is necessary as it can illuminate the reasons behind gendered practices and provide direction for possibilities of change.

### **2.3 Essentialist explanation of gender**

The meaning of sex and gender has transformed substantially over the years due to the diverse theoretical approaches. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century conceptions of gender were based mainly on theories put forward by biologists, medical researchers and psychologists seeking biological reasons for human behaviour (Richardson, 2008). They proposed the essentialist view, that there are some distinct characteristics that delineate objects, for instance, some essence that makes a woman a woman (e.g. the potential to bear children, a potential which is lacking in the male body) (Holmes, 2007). There was a belief that the physical differences between males and females could account for their contrasting psychological and behavioural dispositions. As such, social and cultural notions about femininity and masculinity are imposed on this body leading to views such as, men are ‘naturally’ rational while women are emotional (Holmes, 2007). At this stage, no distinction was made between sex and gender as it was assumed that natural characteristics are the ones being represented in the gendered bodies (Richardson, 2008; Holmes, 2007). These approaches have a binary interpretation of sex, where male and female are regarded as different, but naturally complementary opposites i.e. male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine due to the assumption that gender is a natural, biological fact (Richardson, 2008). During this period few social scientists interrogated the biological explanations for human behaviour.

### **2.3 Social construction of gender**

In the 1960s and 1970s, critiques of previous essentialist frameworks indicated a move to social interpretations of gender. These accounts put an emphasis on the significance of societal aspects in describing gender, but did not invalidate the role of nature (Richardson, 2008). The view that gender is socially constructed highlights how social processes engender the body (Holmes, 2007). This notion contradicts the biological explanations of gender by stressing that gender is a result of complying with social expectations for male and female bodies, that the bodies do not determine people’s behaviour per se. Therefore, females may not be aggressive like males, as some societies expect them to be gentle and caring, not necessarily due to some

in-born trait. This can be seen when young boys are expected, and encouraged, to engage in rough and tumble games, while girls play gently with dolls or kitchen utensils.

Becoming a man or a woman is not determined by one's sex, it is culturally constructed (Butler, 1988; Connell, 2009), this becoming being a condition that is actively created (Connell, 2009). As such gender cannot be regarded as something that one is simply by being male or female, but rather it is constructed through social interaction, actions, practices and the way it is spoken about (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Butler (1988) likens this construction to performative acts in the context of the theatre, and proposes that gender is not a fact as is the case with sex, but is brought into being through the several acts of gender. The performative act creates gender and does not express a fact that is already in existence in the normal sense of a theatrical performance: 'doing gender' (gendered action) produces the misleading notion that there was a gendered person who came first before the performance (Richardson, 2008). Social interaction creates gender, it does not exist prior to interaction (Ryle, 2012). For instance, boys are subtly encouraged to engage in aggressive play, while girls are directed to less physically demanding ways of play at school. In so doing, children are indirectly taught the socially acceptable activities for boys and girls, thus creating gender. Butler (1988) challenges the idea that gender identities are always in existence and concludes that without these performative acts, gender would not exist as it is a social construction that convinces individuals that it is both inborn and essential.

The emergence of women's and gay and lesbian liberation movements, as well as studies of transsexuality in the US and Europe, made an important contribution to the distinction between sex and gender (Richardson, 2008). Attempts to explain how gays, lesbians and transsexuals behave and view themselves in ways that do not fit in with the social and cultural expectations regarding femininity and masculinity were problematic, without differentiating the body and identity i.e. sex and gender (Richardson, 2008). While sex is the biological distinction between males and females, gender is culturally constructed (Butler, 2002), these differences being perceived as an expression of the natural differences between their bodies that are conceptualised as femininity and masculinity (Connell, 2009; Richardson 2008). This difference between sex and gender is referred to as the sex/gender binary, the main assumption being that whereas the former is biologically specified and universal, the latter is socially

constructed, varying with time and culture (Richardson, 2008). The sex-gender binary was a conceptual development that reinforced the feminist contention that male and female social roles are not natural and can therefore be altered (Rubin, 2007).

Butler (2002) maintains that gender is not determined by sex nor is it constant, this conception of gender appearing to be liberating as it does not necessarily impose limitations by sex. Nevertheless Paechter (2012) cautions that while our bodies do not necessarily determine our destiny, it is inescapable that the body is essential to identity, making it important to have a strong component of materialism in the way gender is conceptualised. This is suitably expressed by Connell (2009 p.11), who considers gender as “*the organisation of social relations that focuses on the reproductive domain, and the set of practices that express reproductive difference between bodies in social practices*”. This considers the different yet complementary roles that females and males play in the reproductive process. Gender is constructed when these reproductive roles are taken as the basis for determining the social relations between males and females. This physical distinction is also used as the justification for the stereotyping of roles, such as child care as feminine as the female body is biologically designed for pregnancy, birthing and nurturing a baby.

The concept of the social construction of gender is useful in this study, as it sheds light on how gender is socially produced through gendered practices in the family, school and community. Given that gender difference is not natural, and that children actively take part in sex role socialisation, it means that it is something that can be changed and become less significant (Connell, 2009). Gender practices comprise processes that continuously replicate gender inequalities and practices as well as those aimed at achieving equality (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Hence, the idea of gender as actively constructed and receptive to modification opens possibilities of interpreting the practices of learners, teachers and parents in meaningful ways. Nevertheless, the notion that gender is culturally constructed does not account for the high respect and esteem that is associated with masculinity but not with femininity (Connell, 2009), which leads to the consideration of gender as a social structure.

## **2.4 Gender as a social structure**

Gender is not just a matter of personal identity, but an important structure which influences the organisation of society at different levels (Connell, 2005; Risman, 2009). It is regarded as a system as it is an arrangement in the social activities and the daily actions or practices regulated by those activities (Connell, 2009). This perception of gender promotes an understanding of how it is related to power, social, economic and cultural status in society, resulting in gender inequality (Richardson, 2008). Gendered social arrangements in a community may limit girls and women's aspirations for instance by dictating that the men go out to work for a wage and provide for the family while the women stay at home doing household chores; that boys pursue education up to tertiary levels while girls can leave school after completing primary school; that marriage and motherhood denote the main aspirations of a woman while a successful career defines a man and so on. Such arrangements are reproduced socially and have the capacity to influence individual action, thus often giving the impression that they are fixed (Connell, 2009).

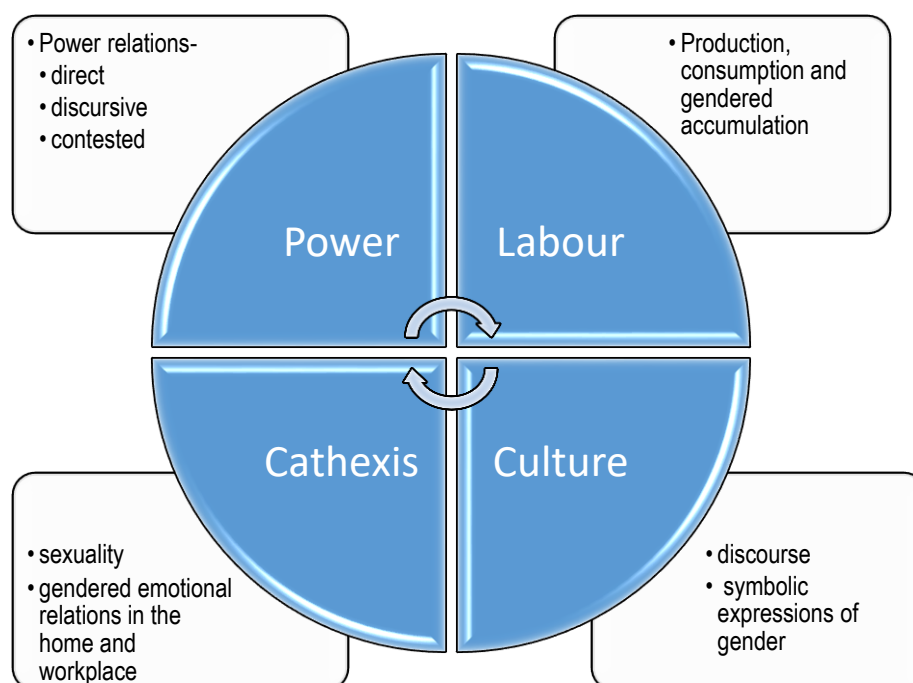
While both Risman and Connell assert that gender is a social structure, they explain the facets of that structure in different ways. Risman (2009) asserts that gender is entrenched in the individual, interactional and institutional aspects of our society. This can be seen in the way people make personal decisions at the individual level, how they might interact with other women and men and how they act and are regarded in various institutions in our society. At all these levels, decisions and actions taken or not taken may be determined by the gender structure in the society. Connell focuses on how gender relations influence the organisation of structures of power, labour, culture and emotional aspects in the society (Connell, 1987; 2009). Connell's analysis of these four structures is applicable at the three levels identified by Risman (2009) of individual, interactional and institution, and provides analytical tools for understanding gender as social practice and social structure (Connell, 2016).

## **2.5 Gender and Power Theory**

Connell's (1987; 2009) Gender and Power Theory undergirds this study. From the foregoing discussion, gender can be regarded as being performed differently by males and females interacting in unequal relationships, where one group (men) have power over another group

(women), with power functioning at all levels of society in the construction of gender inequalities (Hines, 2008). Connell (2009; 1987) describes the four structures in the gender relations of contemporary society as: labour, power, cathexis and culture, as depicted in Figure 2.1. They are contextual and always connect with, and impact on each other (Connell, 2009), for example, the cultural factors in a context may affect the community's allocation of labour based on sex.

Connell (1987) maintains that gender needs to be considered as a structure in the same way as we think of economic or political structures. She goes on to argue that the idea of structure expresses the restrictions that are inherent in any form of social organisation. The four structures of labour, power, cathexis and culture, constrain men and women in diverse ways that produce and reproduce gender in the society.



*Figure 2.1: An illustration of Connell's Gender and Power Theory*

### **2.5.1 Sexual division of labour**

The sexual division of labour is a social structure, in that this division is a restriction on other practices. The training of students in preparation for work in the economic sector is a feature of the crossing point between the education and economic institutions (Connell, 1987). The gender stereotyping of school subjects and career options occurs in part due to the sexual

division of labour in the employment sector. Consequently, fewer women obtain relevant training to be considered for employment in jobs that are stereotyped as masculine. When this happens, the sexual division of labour appears as a rational, purely technical exercise instead (Connell, 1987), and becomes part of a “*gendered system of production, consumption and distribution*” (p.103). Women and men occupy different positions in the relations of production with a larger proportion of men than women owning the means of production and occupying more of the higher paying jobs in the associated systems. This puts them in a better position to accumulate more economic resources and profits in contrast to women, who are mainly consumers of the products from industry. This way, the sexual division of labour has implications on the position, and relationships of men and women in society.

### **2.5.2 Power**

It is impossible to ignore power in discussions of gender, which is present at the micro-level in the day-to-day individual and group choices and influence of the dominant societal institutions (Ryle, 2012). The meanings that individuals attach to gender are influenced by the prevailing discourses, hence post-structuralism’s crucial proposition is that discourse generates meaning. (Hinnes, 2007). Foucault defines discourse as forms of knowledge and power systems of connected ideas that give us our knowledge of the world (Foucault, 1978). The different discourses that we encounter govern our thoughts and knowledge, and ultimately our identity (Jones, Bradbury, & Le Boullier, 2011). All social activities are sustained by discourses brought into being by the powerful groups in society in a given period to serve their needs in some way. The less powerful are dominated by the effect of the discourse, which places restrictions on the perceptions they have of their identity and their capabilities. For example in Zimbabwe, the patriarchal discourse promoting the primacy of the wife/mother role for women over personal interests and career development (Langa, 2016; Kambarami, 2006), serves to maintain the dominance of men over them. Butler (2002) maintains that restrictions are set within the language of a hegemonic cultural discourse based on binary structures that give the impression of universal rationality in deciding the possibilities for men and women. However, Foucault (1978 p.95), emphasises the potential of opposition to domination when he claims that “where there is power there is resistance”. He states that people constantly challenge fixed identities and relations in latent ways. Similarly, Connell (2009) reiterates that structure and change are part of our social life as both are the result of human behaviour.

Connell (1987) proposes that the centre of the power structure of gender is the universal association of authority with masculinity, and notes that men occupy the core of the power structure. This core has sectors such as the police, army, government, heavy industry and those occupations that make use of a lot of technology. Men's occupation of these spaces legitimates their authority over women and positions them for creating and disseminating ideas that reproduce the relationships of domination and subordination. This is different from the patterns of power in the periphery that are open to challenge. Gender relations have to do with power, whereby masculinity is valued over femininity, hence leading to gender inequalities where men are dominant over the women. The gender discourse operating in a society at any given time can place limits, or open possibilities, of what men and women, boys and girls can aspire to and the relationships between them. At the same time, it needs to be emphasised that gender is not fixed, and that change can be initiated in any structure of society, resulting in changes in other levels and structures.

### **2.5.3 Cathexis**

Cathexis is the structure in which emotional attachments among individuals are organised (Connell, 1987). All social relationships have an emotional dimension, be they in the household or workplace. According to Connell (1987), sexuality is a social construction but in the structure that is socially dominant, sexual difference is assumed. It is presumed that a person will be attracted and get attached to a member of the opposite sex. However, power comes into play as the two are not only different, but also unequal (Connell, 1987). This is explained through the concept of the heterosexual matrix, which considers the sex, gender and sexuality of an individual (Butler, 2002). Jackson (2006) contends that heterosexuality is more than a classification of sexual expression, it is a significant structure for connecting gender and sexuality. In a heterosexual union, people are socialised to believe in the naturalness and necessity of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity. When society accepts these unequal gender relations, it may lead to the endorsement of women's subordinate position in the other structures of gender.

#### **2.5.4 Culture**

Connell (1987) asserts that culture informs the ideas of what is natural and what natural variations are, and that this eventually becomes part of our views about gender. Mallon (2007) notes that from a social constructionist perspective, culture wields considerable, but usually overlooked, power over the way people conceptualise their social reality. There are cultural meanings and implications attached to the words ‘man’ and ‘woman’. In some communities, the word ‘woman’ is associated with weakness, subservience, dependency or inferiority. Thus, it becomes degrading for a man to be associated with any activities, behaviour or feelings that are culturally stereotyped as feminine. However, the symbolic expression of gender and perceptions about feminine and masculine status evolve (Connell, 2009). This change could be initiated in one of the other structures, as they are not autonomous (Connell, 1987). For instance, if the division of labour is done based on one’s expertise rather than sex, it may result in fairer gender relations in the power structure and so on.

### **2.6 Social construction of sexuality**

Scepticism about the value of essentialist explanations for sexuality highlight the dual nature of the phenomenon as both biological and deeply entrenched in the social aspects of life (Coleman & Roker, 2014; Parker, 2009). The main assumption of the social constructivist view is that sexuality is culturally, discursively and historically generated hence it is not fully explicable from an essentialist outlook (Moore, 2013; Kehily & Montgomery, 2009; Rubin, 2007). Social construction theory suggests that sexuality is subject to change in response to social and historical context (Vance, 1989). Sexuality is routinely limited to sexual activity, although it is a much broader concept (Bhana, 2017b; Robinson & Davies, 2008). Jackson (2006 p.106) states that sexuality refers to “*all erotically significant aspects of social life and social being such as desires, practices, relationships and identities*”. Aspects such as desires or identities are not products of biology per se. For instance, people learn to express desire in a certain way towards male or female people, based on what is deemed acceptable in their society. Hence sexuality is fluid and varies historically and culturally.

Foucault (1978) maintains that sexuality is produced by discourses that are expressed around a configuration of power relations in society, with some individuals and groups having the power to repress certain knowledge. For instance, adults generally have the power to restrict young people’s access to knowledge concerning sexuality and deny their sexual subjectivity. Silence

then becomes an important feature of this repressive discourse, hindering young people's familiarity with sexuality though paradoxically this directs attention to sexual matters (Foucault, 1978). In school settings, sex is suppressed and liable to scrutiny and regulation thus restraining conduct and mind-sets of learners (Foucault, 1978). Grow (2018) noted that Foucault does not focus on gender, in addition to sexual desire in his views on sexuality. It is important to recognise the significance of gender in shaping individuals' sexual identities, desires and behaviours (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Jackson, 2006; Rubin, 2007).

Masculine and feminine norms shape the sexual behaviour and desires of men and women in different ways. For example, there are masculine norms to do with unmanageable male sex drive, sexual prowess and dominance, which shape their sexual conduct (Fleming, DiClemente, & Brighton, 2016). Such norms determine not only male sexual behaviour, but female sexual actions as well. Sexuality is mediated by the broader social-cultural context (Muwonwa, 2017). Therefore, the social constructionist approach is valuable in studying teenage sexuality as it locates individuals in a socio-cultural background. Prominence is given to personal construction of reality directed by culture and discourses within a specific context.

Sexual socialisation is the process through which agents such as parents, peers, and media shape teenagers' feelings, beliefs and actions concerning sexuality (Vandenbosch, 2018). This is identical to what formal sexuality education in school entails, with adults and peers possibly playing contradictory roles in this process. Coleman and Roker (2014) identify four functions expected of adults in relation to young people's sexuality: protect them from potentially harmful experiences; define limits on their sexual activities; advocate for young people's sex education, and avail high quality services and educational opportunities in the given environment. These functions are applicable to adults both in and out of educational settings. Such sentiments dovetail with the argument that the concept of sexuality education should encompass both formal and informal lessons on gender and sexuality taking place in school and beyond (Fields, Gilbert, & Miller, 2015). Parents are a key source of sexuality education and socialisation, as they transmit sexual information, norms, values and beliefs to teenagers (Christensen, Wright, & Dunn, 2016; de Looze, Constatine, Jerman, Vermeulen-Smit, & ter Bogt, 2015), but are unlikely to emphasise the value of developing sexual agency (Vandenbosch, 2018). While the views of teenage sexuality in schools are constrained by moral

principles in the society at large (Mac an Ghail, 2000), they remain important settings for exploring teenagers' development of sexual subjectivity and negotiation of power relations (Moon, 2008). Teenage peers are central for indicating which sexual behaviours and values are typical within peer groups, thus compelling members to conform (Vandenbosch, 2018)

## **2.7 Discourses of teenage sexuality, power and agency**

Prevailing discourses in a cultural context shape individuals' understanding of their sexuality (Bhana, 2017b; Moon, 2008), with Foucault (1978) contending that discourse is a set of statements illustrating the ideals and assumptions about the social world within a discursive field. In the domain of sexuality, discourse demonstrates and communicates norms and expectations about sexuality. These are conveyed through various means such as language, images, stories, scientific descriptions, and social and cultural practices with individuals adopting discourse and constructing their sexual roles. While sexuality is a significant feature in developing an identity amongst young people (Christensen, Wright, & Dunn, 2016; Sanjakdar, 2011; Allen, 2007a), the association of childhood to sexuality is complex and controversial (Robinson, 2012). Discourses of sexuality and relations of power are intimately connected (Allen, 2007b). The body is always mediated by the cultural meanings assigned to it, thus children's sexuality must be understood as culturally constructed and bound by the context in which they exist (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009; Rubin, 2007). Multiple and competing discourses of children's sexuality operate in society (Allen, 2007b).

It is important to note that childhood sexuality is not completely suppressed, but is consigned to specific spaces and times, for example, marriage is presumed to be the suitable context for sexual activity (Harden, 2014). Halpern (2010) presumes that given a chance, many would prefer enabling their children to realise safe, knowledgeable and satisfying sexual activities over the course of their lives. While the sexual practices of young people are not inherently risky, they are seen as undesirable, largely due to the naivety and irresponsibility which adults associate with the young (Halpern, 2010). Childhood is regularly framed as a time of innocence, which must be protected from the stain of sexual knowledge (Moore, 2013; Kehily, 2002). As a result, children's sexual knowledge and experience is rejected, and their sexuality suppressed and controlled (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). Discourses of childhood innocence

locate sexuality in the domain of adulthood such that sexuality and childhood are framed as incompatible (Moore, 2013; Kehily, 2002). Thus, calls for providing sexual knowledge to empower children are frequently rebuffed on the basis that they lack the experience to deal with this information (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). Allen (2007b) concludes that children are viewed as immature and therefore not sexually knowing, independent or experienced.

The notion of childhood sexual innocence is often contrasted with that of a dangerous adult existence with the potential to taint childhood (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009). Therefore, young people's sexuality is perceived as a danger from which they must be protected (Allen, 2007b). The perception that sex is harmful to children has influenced the establishment of social and legal structures meant to prevent their access to sexual information and experience (Rubin, 2007). Through various regulatory practices, sexuality is controlled in different institutions in modern society (Foucault, 1978), such as parental controls and age restrictions of sexual content in the media, and legal provisions on the age at which individuals are believed to be capable of consenting to sex. Similarly, discourses of danger are paramount in sexuality education, being premised on the need to protect young people from possible harm and negative outcomes of sex (Allen, 2007a).

Furthermore, articulating sexual desire or experiencing sexual pleasure outside the context of marriage is presented as inappropriate and risky for young people (Allen, 2007a). Thus, sexual desire is not discussed in sexuality education, as schools position young people's sexuality as a problem, a health issue and something to be ashamed of (Carlson, 2012; Mac an Ghail, 2000). Nevertheless, contradictions lead to the pedagogization of children's sex (Foucault, 1978), this being a two-fold process in which adults regard children's sexual activity and pleasure seeking as biologically stimulated and therefore natural. At the same time, adults regard such activity by children as unacceptable (Foucault, 1978).

As discussed above, discourses vary historically and are embedded in power relations (Bhana, 2017b; Beres, 2014; Foucault, 1978). Foucault (1978) notes that the body is a central location for the exercise of power; not only in a repressive sense but also productively. It becomes productive in that it generates a resistant discourse that empowers some groups. This dual effect

of power is appropriately captured in the notion of body-reflexive practice (Connell, 2005). According to Connell (2005), this concept describes two aspects: (a) an understanding that positions bodies in an intricate system as both agents and objects of social practice, and (b) active interactions of bodies within social and institutional restrictions, and the sense of agency, suggesting opportunities for change and a breach of constraints. Therefore, cultural norms in prevalent discourses do not merely provide prescriptions of the meaning that young people must deduce about sexuality. Meaning emerges from and is negotiated in social interaction, by which people make sense of gendered and sexual identities (Jackson, 2006).

Despite the use of the term ‘agency’ in most research with young people, the meaning and indicators of the concept remain unclear (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Coffey & Farrugia, 2014). Most definitions of this concept emphasise the aspect of individual choice of action in certain situations. Agency may be conceptualised as an individual’s capacity to have an impact on the course of their lives (Kang, Lessard, Heston, & Nordmaken, 2017). White and Wyn (1998), cited by Coffey and Farrugia (2014), are of the view that it involves one acting intentionally, with free-will in making choices or decisions and being assertive. The issue of choice and action is also stressed by Munoz Boudet *et al.* (2012), who state that agency is the capacity to make one’s choices and follow them through with the appropriate action. The definitions cited above do not call into question the constraints that some individuals may experience in exercising their agency due to unequal power relations among individuals and groups in the society. As an example, opposing discourses of femininity position girls simultaneously as sexually accessible but innocent bearers of sexual morality (Bell & Aggleton, 2013; Maxwell & Aggleton, 2013; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). Additionally, female sexuality is linked to passivity and weakness as opposed to male domination, violence and desire (Hlavka, 2014). Research among young people in South Africa indicates that power differences based on age, gender and economic resources leave girls particularly vulnerable to the risks of sexuality (Monde, Gumede, & Molobela, 2018; Heslop, *et al.*, 2015; Bhana, 2015b; Bell & Aggleton, 2013; Jewkes & Morell, 2010). Nevertheless, girls are not necessarily without agency, to protect themselves from risk (Bay-Cheng, 2015; Bhana, 2015b). They possess what Bhana (2018) has termed ‘lite agency’, limited agency within masculine domination.

Spencer and Doull (2015) argue that notions of power are crucial to appreciating agency, and that it cannot be understood without an in-depth engagement with the interrelated concept of power. Power may be viewed as ‘power over’, which entails domination, or ‘power to’ which necessitates empowerment (Haugaard, 2012). Domination suggests the existence of individuals or groups who, for their own benefit, have the capacity to influence the choice and actions of other individuals and groups. Empowerment on the other hand implies that the subordinate groups also have the power to choose certain actions over others, taking into cognisance what best serves their interests. Spencer and Doull (2015) also stress that ‘power over’ has to do with domination of others, which may include various manifest and hidden economic and gendered forms of control over people. In relation to power, which entails empowerment, Spencer and Doull (2015) argue that this takes two forms: ‘power to’, involving the capacity to act and influence others where intentionality on behalf of the individual is assumed, and ‘power within’, whereby a person believes that he/she has control over his or her actions. This is a very crucial distinction between feelings of empowerment and the capacity to choose a course of action and carry it out.

A person may feel that in a given situation they can make a choice as to which way to act, but when presented with the situation, they may not necessarily act in the way they would have wanted due to the influence of other people with power over them. An example could be of young women who are aware of the need for practising safer sex but fail to insist on protected sex in intimate relationships with older men who have the power to dictate such aspects of the relationship. Albanesi (2009) emphasises the difference between the capacity to act and a willingness to act, concluding that only the latter can be regarded as clear evidence of agency. Choosing to act or not to act is not solely an individual decision, and these more personalised perceptions of agency as the power (to act) have been greatly condemned for ascribing less importance to the impact of structural forms of power entrenched in class inequality or gender divisions (Spencer & Doull, 2015; Coffey & Farrugia, 2014).

Although choice is one of the key ideas regarding feminist views of girls’ agency, it is problematic to use as a measure of agency as personal decisions are made within a social context (Harris & Dobson, 2015). As such, people’s agency is restricted or heightened by their social position in terms of race, class, gender and sexuality (Kang, Lessard, Deston &

Nordimaken, 2017). Evans (2007) calls this ‘bounded agency’ to explain how society restricts young people’s lives, and is contrasted with ‘empowered agency’, whereby young people resist prevailing power structures (Coffey and Farrugia, 2014). Nevertheless, Raby (2005) cautions against viewing all resistant actions as forms of agency, as the same actions may strengthen fundamental structural disparities. Harris and Dobson (2015) contend that we should not only understand agency in terms of actions that are considered as resistant, but also in struggles for consistency, societal approval and survival. They state that young women can now freely choose and appreciate gender identity practices, not necessarily because they have been imposed on them by the patriarchal structure of society. Thus, both structure and agency are involved when making choices out of the possibilities that are available in their society.

Contributing to the structure-agency debate, Aikman, Halai and Rubagiza (2011) emphasise that there are structural and power inequalities that affect girls’ capacity to exercise their agency. For males and females, agency varies with reference to: levels of empowerment, available choices, opportunities, and the ability “*to exercise their choice and levels of achievement of chosen outcomes*” (Munoz-Boudet, Petesch, Turk, & Thumala, 2012, p. 22). In all these aspects, males usually have better chances of exercising their agency. Bhana (2012) stresses that girls’ expression of free will is hampered in poor settings by the existence of toxic forms of masculinities. Girls generally experience gender-based violence and the threat of violence that might discourage them from acting in ways that are not socially accepted as feminine, such as challenging male authority and domination.

## **2.8 Gender, sexuality and identity**

Gender and sexuality are important aspects of an individual’s identity, although the sexuality of young people is habitually overlooked. Allen’s (2007a; 2007b) research in New Zealand shows that, to a large extent, teenage learners engage sexuality in the construction of masculine and feminine identities. Contradictorily, the ideal learner in the school is considered as non-sexual (Allen, 2007b; 2007a), this denial leading to regulating their bodies and desires in school (Paechter, 2004). Such denial is evident even when schools have programmes supposedly focusing on sexuality and relationships education. Robinson and Davies (2008) found that denial of children’s sexuality endures in the sexuality education curricula of Australian schools. Nevertheless, schools remain important contexts in which children acquire gendered and

sexualised identities (Kehily, 2013). A school-based ethnographic study of learners aged between 13 to 15 years indicate that the school setting places important boundaries on gender identity, regardless of extensive cultural changes nationally or globally (Kehily, 2009). Findings of the study show that masculinity is founded on toughness and heterosexual orientation, while the issue of reputation is crucial for feminine identity (Kehily, 2009).

Research from South Africa and Zimbabwe also highlights that different sets of masculine and feminine expectations are prevalent (Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013; Mathe, 2013). Mathe (2013) shows how teachers at a South African high school frame teenage boys' sexual desire and pleasure as natural and sexually active girls as tainted. The teachers present teenage sexual activity as necessary for boys to release sexual tension, which simultaneously desecrates girls. Furthermore, gender differences entail unequal sexual roles in intimate relationships. Mugwini and Matereke (2010) argue that ChiShona language in Zimbabwe incorporates these disparities through attribution to males of verbs denoting actions such as initiating courtship, marrying and making love. Females, on the other hand, are positioned as objects of these actions thereby reducing their agency (Mugwini & Matereke, 2010). Curtailing female agency leaves them susceptible to coercive sexual practices and HIV infection (Muwonwa, 2017). A study by Bhatasara, Chevo and Changadeya (2013) in an urban high-density residential area in Zimbabwe indicates that teenagers adopt society's discourses of masculinity in the construction of identities. Discourses of male sexual prowess were implicated in the teenage boys' decisions to engage in sexual activity to attain recognition and esteem among their peers. The boys felt that teenage girls sometimes coerced them into unwanted sexual activity by endorsing the male sexual prowess discourse for their own intentions. Bhatasara, Chevo and Changadeya (2013) learnt that girls shamed boys who did not want to engage in sexual activity as unmanly, with the expectation of financial support from these male sexual partners. In some cases it was therefore not the boys' choice to take part in sexual activity.

## **2.9 Denial, danger and desire**

Denial of teenagers' sexuality by parents and teachers is largely premised on the notion of teenage sexuality as dangerous. A study conducted by Elliot (2010) in the USA revealed that

parents associate teenage sexual activity with nonconformity and disastrous outcomes. Viewed in the context of children's age and economic dependence, sex becomes untenable for both boys and girls, with the latter regarded as sexually naïve and passive objects of male desire (Elliot, 2010). Similarly, urban Vietnamese parents deny their children's sexual subjectivity, labelling those who display sexual awareness as bad (Do, Boonmongkon, Paek, & Guadamuz, 2017). The parents justified monitoring teenagers, especially girls, to prevent them from developing into bad children. From this perspective, teenage sexual subjectivity needs to be suppressed to protect them from the dangers of sexuality. The protection discourse is also prevalent within schools, with Allen (2007a) finding that learners are cognisant of the protectionist discourse in sexuality education. Nevertheless, learners reasoned that curricula informed by discourses of danger and protection ignore topics such as pleasure, desire and the mechanics of sex, which are of interest to them (Allen, 2007b). Likewise, Smith and Harrison (2013) established that teachers in rural South Africa emphasise the prevalent adult view that young people are a 'problem', and were particularly disapproving of girls' sexuality. In evaluating the negative outcomes of sexuality, such as HIV infection, teachers stressed individual level factors, such as unfortunate choices and negligent behaviour instead of risk-reducing strategies (Smith & Harrison, 2013).

Although some parents accept that their children are sexual beings, they do not condone premarital sexual activity, particularly among girls. Chiweshe and Chiweshe (2017) found that while some parents in Zimbabwe recognise that teenagers are engaging in sex, they criticise the provision of condoms to this group. Parents' denial of teenage sexuality is premised on cultural and religious values that construe it as dangerous and detrimental to their opportunities in future (Chiweshe & Chiweshe, 2017). Research involving mothers of teenage girls in South Africa showed that they concentrate on preserving virginity until marriage for personal esteem and protection of their daughters' marital union (Mudhovozi & Ramarumo, 2012). Drawing from discourses of childhood sexual innocence, the mothers stated that a child is persistently regarded as a child until marriage (Mudhovozi & Ramarumo, 2012). Discourses of innocence provide justification for adults' restriction of teenage premarital sexual activity. Teenage boys' pre-marital sexual activity is not similarly condemned in some cases, with studies in some Zimbabwean urban areas noting that most parents were not necessarily worried about boys' loss of virginity, but about unintended pregnancy and fatherhood (Marindo, Pearson, & Casterline, 2003). The teenage boys in this study were distrustful of parents who had frank

discussions with their sons on the need for protected sex (Marindo, Pearson, & Casterline, 2003). The teenagers were likely familiar with discourses of the safety of sex within the marital union so did not expect their parents to be aware of the need for protected sex, and suspected that parents who highlighted the necessity for protection were involved in extra marital affairs.

Scholars have highlighted that gendered surveillance of teenage sexuality is linked to the perception that girls are more vulnerable to negative outcomes, such as HIV infection, unplanned pregnancy, parenthood and school dropout (Bhana, 2015b; Chikovore, 2004). Unintended pregnancy is an immediate and most visible danger to schoolgirls, which is the focus of much research on teenage sexuality. Nkani and Bhana (2010) established that regardless of government policy guaranteeing pregnant girls' access to education, male principals in South Africa perceive schoolgirl pregnancy as patently conflicting with prevailing discourses of childhood innocence and the ideal asexual learner. Consequently, they found minimal administrative efforts towards inclusivity with reference to pregnant learners. In a comparable South African study, the findings show that while teachers were encouraging and understanding, they expressed doubts about their competency to handle emergency cases with respect to pregnant learners (Mpanza & Nzima, 2010). Pregnant or young mothers in school hardly report positive experiences, as stigma and inadequate attention to their well-being persists (Chiweshe & Chiweshe, 2017; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Chigona and Chetty (2007) explored the experiences of teenage mothers learning in South African schools and identified an exclusionary approach to their education, as they do not receive specific attention to enable them to excel in their studies. They concluded that policies merely secure young mothers' access to education, without taking cognisance of how their role as mothers affects their learning.

Regulating teenage sexuality is a consequence of adults characterising it as risky and dangerous. However, some scholars emphasise that teenage sexuality should not be viewed solely through the lens of disease and danger, as they portray agency by expressing love, pleasure and desire in relationships (Bhana, 2017a; 2016; Hirst, 2013; Mathe, 2013; Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Bhana's (2015a) work among black teenage boys and girls in South Africa reveals that care, closeness, commitment and hope are echoed in their ideas about love. She notes that despite adults' perceptions of sexuality as risky, with particular reference to teenage

sexual activity, sex was not paramount in these teenagers' conception of love. Similarly, Mathe (2013) highlights teenage sexual agency through a school-based ethnography, indicating that teenage learners are optimistic about sexuality as an avenue through which their identities as active sexual agents is negotiated. It was concluded that learners who framed their sexuality positively in terms of choice and desire seemed less susceptible to the dangers of sexuality (Mathe, 2013).

Likewise, studies in Zimbabwean high-density suburbs show that teenagers believe that sex is an important part of intimate relationships (Mangeya, 2019; Bhatasara, Chevo, & Changadeya, 2013; Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012), and unprotected sex is commonly approved among them (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017). However, school-based sexuality education endorses abstinence, and teenagers who engage in sexual activity in Zimbabwean schools are expelled (Mangeya, 2019). Nonetheless, teenagers resist this regulation of sexuality by viewing sex as a requisite part of a serious relationship, especially among boys, for whom abstinence is considered as non-normative (Mangeya, 2019). Masvawure (2015) also established that due to changing contexts, young people are not practising abstinence, despite cultural expectations. Moreover, Zimbabwean society predominantly relates HIV to moral weakness (Manyonganise, 2017), and much of the HIV and AIDS discourse centres on adverse outcomes of unprotected sex while promoting abstinence only (Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Mutanana & Mutara, 2015). Nevertheless, there have been calls to acknowledge that teenagers are not sexually innocent as expected (Mangeya, 2019).

According to Diamond (2006), young people's sexuality is generally depicted as risky and problematic rather than as a vital feature of human development. In the light of young people's resistance to this characterisation, there have been appeals for a sex positive perspective of teenage sexual practices as normative and possibly healthy (Harden, 2014). A principal tenet of positive sexuality is that healthy sexuality goes beyond circumventing undesirable results and encompasses desire, consensus, wellbeing, agency and the understanding of sexual minorities (Harden, 2014). Schalet (2011) put forward the ABC-and D framework to elucidate the concept of positive youth sexuality while acknowledging the dangers of sexuality. The four features are autonomy, building relationships, connectedness and respect for diversity. Schalet (2011) outlines autonomy as the knowledge of sexual desire, identifying and expressing sexual

needs and limits, as well as learning to expect and prepare for sexual actions. In this respect, positive sexuality does not necessitate sexual abstinence (Harden, 2014). However, the ability to detach sexual feelings from those of others and control them is regarded as important for decision-making (Schalet, 2011).

Another feature of positive sexuality is building good romantic relationships, which authenticates young people's desires for intimacy. This involves enabling them to build equal and nurturing romantic relationships appropriate to their life, not endorsing marriage as the only acceptable relationship. Positive age-appropriate relationships involve getting to know each other, building trust over time, managing conflict, making efforts to promote power equality and just enjoying one another's company (Schalet, 2011). Connectedness with parents and other caregivers through frequent communication is expected to result in teenagers developing a view of their parents as open, experienced and calm (Schalet, 2011). Lastly, young people need to learn to respect the diversity of others and their own uniqueness (Schalet, 2011). For example, it must not be assumed that abstinence until marriage to a person of the opposite sex is the only route to healthy sexual behaviour. (Harden, 2014). Promoting positive sexuality among young people is believed to result in pleasure, affection, proficiency and contentment (Harden, 2014). These four features of positive sexuality described above would need to be consciously inculcated in young people as increasing knowledge of oneself in these aspects supports the development of positive sexuality (Anderson, 2013).

## **2.10 Learning about sexuality**

Children learn about sexuality in social institutions, such as the school and the family, with Kehily (2002) establishing that opposing discourses exist in the school setting; the informal active and knowing sexuality versus the formal discourses of innocence and protection. Kehily (2009) states that there is conflict, as learners exercise sexual independence and agency while adults in school suppress this as they characterise teenage sexuality primarily as problematic and risky. Schools then draw on the discourses of danger and childhood innocence to rationalise regulation of learners' bodies (Paechter, 2004; Kehily, 2001) and knowledge about sexuality (Robinson, 2012; Robinson & Davies, 2008; Kehily, 2001). Allen (2007b) argues that discourses operating within the school are closely related to meanings in the broader social context, hence teachers focus on delivering information that lessens learners' vulnerability to

the dangers of sexuality. Sanjakdar (2011) conducted a study with teachers in USA schools who perceived learning about sexuality as possibly risky and tainting childhood sexual innocence. However, Sanjakdar (2011) concludes that children's grasp of sexuality issues and their self concept are weakened by regulating sexual knowledge in the school and family.

Personal values, beliefs and experiences have been identified as important in determining how teachers teach sexuality education in school (Kehily, 2002). In an ethnographic study carried out in England, Kehily (2002) found that teachers who were interested in morality and ideals of family life were more inclined to assume a conservative viewpoint. The teachers who adopted a liberal position believed in imparting the necessary information to enable learners to make informed choices and decision, the importance of this approach having been underscored in other studies in Africa. A cross-sectional study involving young learners aged 12-15 years in South African schools revealed that they were already participating in a range of sexual behaviours from kissing to intercourse (Gevers, Mathews, Cupp, Russell, & Jewkes, 2013). The researchers accented the need for the early provision of comprehensive education and services to equip young people with negotiation and decision-making skills. Nevertheless, in some instances the teachers lacked the knowledge to assist learners in this respect, and often expected families to provide children with the relevant information (Runhare, Mudau, & Mutshaeni, 2016).

Monitoring young people's sexuality and relevant information is also reported within family settings. In a study by Elliot (2010), parents of teenagers in the USA described how they struggle with opposing discourses in comprehending teenage sexuality. The parents viewed their children as too young to know about sex but at the same time too obsessed with it, and were unsure if it was proper to tell them about sex. Parents stated that they resolved this dilemma by emphasising sexual morality rather than contraception and sexually transmitted infections (Elliot, 2010). In hindsight, this approach was regarded as ineffective by American undergraduate students who took part in a survey about their parents' communication about sexuality (Angerra, Brookins-Fisher, & Inungu, 2008).

Studies in Africa echo the findings from Western countries that parents struggle to communicate sexuality issues with their children. An investigation by Mkwanazi (2010) in a South African township uncovered that mothers were not at liberty to discuss sexual matters with their daughters, as it is deemed inappropriate for different generations to deliberate on such issues. This silence was maintained, even with an awareness that they were having premarital sex that resulted in more opportunities for teenage pregnancy to happen. Nkani and Bhana (2016) found that mothers do talk openly with their daughters about contraceptives and monitor contraceptive adherence, but only after a teenager's first pregnancy, in apprehension of recurrent pregnancies. Studies in Zimbabwe show that while parents are generally silent about the topic of sexuality with their children due to generational respect, teenagers felt they could gain a lot from such discussions with them, given that they have prior experience of teenage sexuality (Bhatasara, Chevo, & Changadeya, 2013; Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012).

African culture largely makes discussion of sexuality between parents and their children taboo, that role being for aunts, uncles and grandparents (Mutema, 2013; Mugwini & Matereke, 2010). With the demise of the extended family network due to migration and urbanisation, uncles and aunts cannot effectively perform their role (Mutema, 2013), with school staff, or people not related to teenagers, discussing sexuality issues with them. According to Tamale (2006), the Ssenga is the traditional practice of sexual initiation for females in Uganda, undertaken by the paternal aunt who is responsible for instructing girls and young women on sexual issues (Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003). However, the role has evolved, as Tamale (2006) reports that commercial Ssenga services have emerged in urban areas and on the radio. Furthermore, a study in rural Uganda revealed that this role can be taken up by any woman whom the community considers to be of exemplary conduct (Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003). The women received training in both traditional and contemporary sexuality issues, and their communities were largely satisfied with the services and information that they provided (Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003). Modern Ssengas focus on a variety of issues, including traditional practices before the onset of menstruation, preparation for marriage, erotics and reproduction, HIV and safer sex practices, and women's economic empowerment (Tamale, 2006; Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003).

Parents and teachers express misgivings over the provision of sexual and reproductive health information to learners in school, as this is regarded as condoning premarital sexual activity (Amnesty International, 2018; Chikovore, 2004). The sexuality education offered in Zimbabwean schools has been found to be incongruent with cultural traditions and the reality of the sexually active teenager (Nyanungo, 2018; Schatz & Dzvimbo, 2001). It appears that even traditional African sexuality education is viewed with mistrust, as is the formal sexuality education in schools. During the *unyago* initiation ceremony into local Tanzania social roles and sexuality, girls are taught about self-sufficiency, successful interaction in the community, women's roles and tasks, and satisfying male partners (Mbeba, et al., 2012). Boys are instructed on practising sex a sign of maturity. However, *unyago* is frequently identified as a significant cause of early pregnancy (Mbeba, et al., 2012). A study of traditional sexuality education in a high-density suburb in Zimbabwe also revealed that cultural initiation ceremonies were implicated in early sexual debut of teenagers (Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012).

The lack of comprehensive information to fully understand and make informed decisions about sexuality is highlighted by teenagers. A survey conducted among South African high school students who had experienced a pregnancy exposed that they had inadequate know-how on contraceptive use (Majozi, Ige, & Tshabalala, 2016). A study was carried out among rural learners in Zimbabwe in which they were requested to anonymously ask questions that they were afraid or ashamed to ask adults (Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013). It was found that there was denial of their sexuality, and that their struggles to understand sexuality and pregnancy were not resolved (Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013). Culture appears to be one of the factors that determines whether parents and teachers will discuss sexuality with young people and to what extent they do so.

## **2.11 Culture and sexuality**

Prevailing discourses of sexuality in specific cultural contexts appear to influence parents' interpretation of teenage sexuality, regardless of economic status of a nation. Schalet's study involving parents of teenagers in the Netherlands and the USA, both economically developed nations, articulates how different cultural constructions of human dimensions and relations lead to contrasting discourses on teenage sexuality among parents (Schalet, 2004; 2000). The

findings of her study show that compared to the US, the Netherlands culture is more accepting of teenage sexuality, and thus parents espoused such discourses as normative. Alternatively, in the American culture, teenage sexuality is regarded as a problem, as the parents adopted discourses of danger and risk (Schalet, 2010; 2000). Schalet (2004; 2010) concluded that in settings where teenage sexuality is interpreted as normative, more open communication ensues between parents and their children compared to when discourses of danger are paramount. Furthermore, dialogue prepares and empowers teenagers to practise safer sex, thus reducing their vulnerability to risks such as unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (Schalet, 2011).

Family cultural values may be slow to change compared to the broader society. Do, Boonmongkon, Paek & Guadamuz (2017) found that Vietnamese parents' judgements of teenage sexuality had not transformed at a time when fast economic advances had spurred social and cultural changes. Parents maintained that culturally, they are obliged to manage any rights that their children can claim, including those to access sexuality material, as they can regulate friendships and internet access (Do, Boonmongkon, Paek, & Guadamuz, 2017). Patriarchal cultural values may fluctuate and shape teenage sexuality in complex ways. In Ghana, cultural values largely condemn female premarital sex but condone where there is need to provide the family with a male child (Krug, Mevissen, Munkel, & Ruiter, 2017).

Certain cultural practices may provide a fertile context for young people to participate in risky sexual behaviours. In South Africa, the Zulu people's cultural practice of *umhlalapanzi*, a celebratory traditional dance held at night, incites teenage boys' involvement in unplanned and unprotected sexual activity (Mvune, Bhana, & Mayeza, 2018), which frequently leads to unintended early pregnancy and teenage fatherhood. The specific social and cultural context that shapes sexuality must be taken into account to enable meaningful interpretations and essential interventions concerning teenage sexuality (Mvune, Bhana, & Mayeza, 2018; Wood & Roller, 2014; Sambisa, Curtis, & Stokes, 2010). Unfortunately, research indicates that focus is placed on individual attitudes, while the influence of this intricate context is often ignored in policies, programmes and practices in school, resulting in a limited positive impact in the lives of teenage learners (Wood & Roller, 2014; Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013).

## **2.12 Conclusion**

The socio-cultural context in which sexuality is produced has an influence on how teenagers construct and negotiate their sexuality. Social constructionist approaches to gender and sexuality inform this study, as they seem more amenable to prospects of interruption and change (Vance, 1989). Sexuality is constructed differently in specific social and cultural contexts, while culturally determined gender relations have consequences for sexuality. Therefore, sexuality cannot be understood separately from the socio-economic and cultural context in which it is entrenched. An appreciation of how this context shapes sexuality is important for meaningful engagement with teenagers in this respect in the family and at school. Understanding and addressing teenage sexuality is important, given their increased vulnerability to dangers of sexuality such as abuse, STIs, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion or teenage parenthood. The social and cultural construction of gender and sexuality should be prominent in discussions of teenage sexuality. An enquiry of teenage sexuality within a cultural context is important, as culture generates the discourses that convey values regulating sexuality in a society. Nonetheless, there is a paucity of qualitative studies investigating the role of culture in shaping teenage learners' sexuality in Zimbabwe. Sexuality values and norms must be understood from the perspectives of teenage learners, parents and teachers on sex and sexuality. This thesis focuses on how teenage learners' sexuality is shaped within the Shona socio-cultural context in rural Zimbabwe, specifically how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated. An understanding of how people make sense of sexuality in a socio-cultural context enables us to comprehend and question the rationale for their views and practices, and to generate productive discussion of teenage learners' sexuality at school, community and national levels.

## **CHAPTER THREE: The Zimbabwean context**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Sexuality is entrenched in intricate political, economic and social structures that produce sexual identities and practices among people (Connell, 1987; Weeks, 1986). Therefore, a consideration of these structures is important for informed inferences to be made about people's sexual decisions and behaviour. This chapter reviews some aspects of the Zimbabwean economic and socio-cultural context to facilitate a holistic understanding of sexuality in the research context. The land issue is crucial to understanding the Zimbabwean economy, with an historical background of the land question being provided. The economic and social problems in Zimbabwe are ascribed to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), which began in the year 2000 (Pufall, *et al.*, 2016; Ngubentombi, 2004), with citizens having actively adapted to this unfavourable situation by engaging in various survival strategies. Cultural values and social practices with reference to gender relations and sexuality are considered. Children are socialised into these values by way of different sexuality discourses in the family, school and community, which emanate from particular material and social conditions, hence an appreciation of the economic and socio-cultural circumstances in Zimbabwe is useful.

### **3.2 Zimbabwe: 'Land is the economy; the economy is the land'**

Zimbabwe was colonised by the British in 1890, and since then the land struggle has been a part of the nation's history (Nyandoro, 2012). The initial case of land segregation was the Gwaai and Shangaani reserves set up in 1894 for the Ndebele people who had lost their land to Europeans when King Lobengula was defeated in the 1893 Anglo-Ndebele War (Madhuku, 2004). The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 formally divided land along racial lines into three areas: for the whites, Tribal Trust Lands (formerly reserves) for Africans, and Crown Land belonging to the state for future allocation depending on need (Mlambo, 2010). The Land Apportionment Act was amended many times and eventually replaced by the The Land Tenure Act of 1969, which maintained racial segregation in ownership of land until 1980 (Madhuku, 2004). The British colony was characterised by settler large-scale commercial agriculture on fertile land, reducing many Africans to a hopeless life on small, barren plots in the overcrowded Tribal Trust Lands (Peters, 2004). Thus, Africans became economically and politically

subordinate to the Europeans (Austin, 1975). The racial inequalities in land ownership incensed and motivated Africans to wage the liberation war to regain the land (ZANU-PF, 2018; Mlambo, 2010; Mudege, 2005). The country gained political independence on 18 April 1980, although it was soon obvious that the racial basis of land ownership remained intact.

The land issue remains a significant aspect of politics and the economy in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Mudege, 2005). The indigenous Zimbabweans awaited land redistribution, as it was the main cause of the liberation war (Hill & Katarere, 2002). Unfortunately, the Lancaster House constitution that was adopted by the new government stated that land for resettlement had to be acquired through the willing-buyer-willing-seller policy (Mukwada, 2008). The British government promised to fund the land acquisition process, but the white commercial farmers were not willing to sell their land (Chilunjika & Umzeyimana, 2015; Hill & Katarere, 2002). By 1989, only 33% (52 000) of the targeted families had been resettled, while in 1991, 70% of the most productive land remained in the hands of 4 500 whites (Mlambo, 2010). In addition, Britain soon reneged on its promise to fund compensation of the farmers who wanted to sell (Chilunjika & Umzeyimana, 2015; Cliff, Alexander, Cousins, & Gaidzanwa, 2011; Mlambo, 2010), with the Zimbabwe government not having the money to buy it, which resulted in the resettlement process stalling.

According to Tinarwo and Pasura (2014), Zimbabwe's economy had been on a downward trend since the early 1990s, when the government adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, with disastrous consequences. Upset at the slow pace of land resettlement and struggling in difficult economic conditions, the liberation war veterans and land-hungry peasants started invading white-owned farms in 2000. The government then passed the Land Acquisition Amendment Act of 2000 to legalise land acquisition and reallocation without compensation for the value of the land itself, and only for improvements (Cliff, Alexander, Cousins, & Gaidzanwa, 2011).

Land reform is a sensitive topic, and Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform programme has engendered an extremely divided debate (Cliff, Alexander, Cousins, & Gaidzanwa, 2011). Mlambo (2010) notes that there are some who denigrate the Zimbabwean government for ignoring human rights and ruining the country's economy due to the unplanned land acquisition

process. Agriculture is one of the main drivers of the Zimbabwean economy, with reduced agricultural production having had a huge negative impact on the economy (Gadiel, 2018; Matondi, 2012; Peters, 2004), with the country's GDP dropping by 52% between 1999 and 2008 (Kanyenze, Chitambara, & Tyson, 2017). At the other extreme are those who view this situation as dealing with the previously unsettled land question, and therefore a logical step in the country's independence from colonial rule (Moyo, 2011; Mlambo, 2010). Considering the position of race in the history of land ownership in the nation (Mlambo, 2010), the land invasions of 2000 and the ensuing FTLRP should be regarded as the escalation of historical conflicts over land ownership (Nyandoro, 2012).

It has also been acknowledged that the the ruling party, led by Robert Mugabe at that time, was not really interested in genuine land reform, but used the programme for political survival (Madhuku, 2004; Sachikonye, 2003). Zimbabwe was due to have parliamentary elections in 2000 and presidential elections in 2002, at the time of emergence of a new strong opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Chilunjika & Umzeyimana, 2015; Cliff, Alexander, Cousins, & Gaidzanwa, 2011; Peters, 2004). The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) made land the centre of their campaign, with the election slogan 'Land is the economy, economy is the land' (Chilunjika & Umzeyimana, 2015; Nyandoro, 2012). Leaders of the MDC remained detached from developments in the land reform process (Nyandoro, 2012; Moyo, 2011) and ZANU-PF won the elections, with land resettlement being related to the ruling party, even in subsequent elections (ZANU-PF, 2013; 2018). While it cannot be ruled out that the land reform played a part in the political survival of ZANU-PF, it is equally indisputable that Zimbabwe's rural population was in need of land, and that land reform was redressing a colonial injustice (Nyandoro, 2012; Peters, 2004). As most Zimbabweans live in the rural areas, the land reform was potentially advancing the well-being of most of the citizens. By 2009, the Zimbabwean government had repossessed, for resettlement purposes, 88% of the 12.3 million hectares of commercial agricultural land (Matondi, 2012). In 2018, the government stated that 91% of the land had been returned to indigenous Zimbabweans (ZANU-PF, 2018). While it has been said that only eminent members of ZANU-PF profited from the land reform programme (Gadiel, 2018), empirical evidence does not support this assumption. Statistics indicate that most (70%) beneficiaries were poor, unemployed rural people (Cliff, Alexander, Cousins, & Gaidzanwa, 2011; Moyo, 2011). Regardless of the intent and purpose of the FTLRP, there were both positive and

negative outcomes. The process decongested the rural areas (former Tribal Trust Lands) and made amends for the colonial legacy of inequitable land ownership, which favoured the white minority. Small producers were not immediately productive and agricultural sector output took a while to recover (Moyo, 2011). The virtual collapse of the agricultural sector, coupled with inflation, negatively affected the manufacturing sector, leading to unprecedented company closures, loss of jobs and scarcity of basic provisions.

Zimbabwe's economy decreased rapidly between 2000 and 2008, resulting in a *kukiya-kiya* economy (hustling for survival) (Jones, 2010). Hustling (*kukiya-kiya*) is a new economic rationality, whereby individual survival justifies nearly any economic act as proper and essential, given the country's economic crisis (Chagonda, 2012; Jones, 2010). Both formally employed and unemployed people engaged in a variety of activities to fend for their families, such as: migrating to other countries especially South Africa in search of jobs, minor commodity vending, cross-border trading, dealing in foreign currency, bartering for basic food as well as engaging in transactional sexual relations (Chagonda, 2016; 2012).

In 2006, as economic conditions worsened due to the breakdown of the formal economic sector, a large deposit of alluvial diamonds was discovered in Chiadzwa, in the Marange area in Manicaland Province (Saunders & Caramento, 2018; Mupfumi, 2017). Consequently, there was a diamond rush that consisted of thousands of illegal artisanal miners (Doro & Kufakurinani, 2018), as the Marange diamond fields became an alternative source of livelihood for people from across the nation (Maguwu, 2013; Nyamunda, Mukwambo, & Nyandoro, 2012). However, in 2008, the army and police were deployed to Marange to expel the illegal diamond miners, a move meant to protect the diamond fields and entrench state control (Mupfumi, 2017). The operation led to conflicts between security personnel and the illegal miners, which resulted in deaths of some miners (Doro & Kufakurinani, 2018). The artisanal miners were driven out, and companies working jointly with the state were issued with licences to work in the diamond fields (Mupfumi, 2017)

The land policy made Zimbabwe an insecure destination for foreign investment (Peters, 2004) and it went through a period of hyperinflation, such that by May 2007, Z\$200 000 was equivalent to US\$2 (Amon & Kasambala, 2009). This culminated in the dollarisation of the

economy in 2009 (Kanyenze, Chitambara, & Tyson, 2017), since which time Zimbabwe has not had a currency of its own, with a multi-currency system being in operation until March 2019. The United States dollar was the base currency for transactions, and other currencies, such as the South African Rand, Botswana Pula, British Pound and the Euro, also being accepted. A virtual Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) dollar was introduced in March 2019 to function as a new Zimbabwe dollar for use by all entities and individuals for domestic transactions, thereby eliminating the multi-currency pricing system in Zimbabwe (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2019)

Statistics on unemployment are often contested, but it is assumed to be more than 90% (Davies, 2017), with high informal employment ranging from 84% to 94.5% (Kanyenze, Chitambara, & Tyson, 2017). Many Zimbabweans migrated to other countries in search of better employment and economic opportunities, leading to breakdown of family units. While accurate figures of those who have become economic migrants in other countries are not available, estimates indicate more than three million have migrated (Gadiel, 2018; Davies, 2017; Tinarwo & Pasura, 2014). The economy continues to experience complications from increased informality, excessive public debt, fragile investment and a troubling political situation (African Economic Outlook, 2018).

Zimbabwe's economic crisis has resulted in subsistence farming becoming inadequate as a source of livelihood in the rural areas. Many have turned to vending or small-scale gold mining wherever gold deposits are available (Mkodzongi & Spiegel, 2018; Mawowa, 2013; Wekwete, 1998). To be involved in small-scale legal mining requires registration with the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, with payments for prospecting licences (\$200), mining claim registration (\$200), explosives registration (\$1000), and variable amounts in surveyor's fees. These costs have resulted in a few (16%) registrations as required by the law, while 84% are mining illegally (Kazunga, 2018). Many people in the rural areas do not have the capital outlay for the registration process and the mining equipment, with most being involved in illegal gold mining in disused mine shafts and along river beds, at the risk of arrest and loss of one's minerals. The absence of suitable equipment makes this a gruelling occupation, as shafts must be dug by hand, and often collapse and trap the miners, resulting in injuries and deaths. Consequently, this informal sector of the economy is perceived as physically demanding and

dangerous, such that men, rather than women, often become involved. The people working in the informal mining of gold are referred to as gold panners. When new gold deposits are discovered, the men usually migrate to that area, leaving women to take care of the family. This makes women economically dependent on men, although a few women have become involved in gold panning, especially along the river beds.

### **3.3 Gender, sexuality and Shona culture**

The Shona and Ndebele are the two chief ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (Percival & Patel, 1993), the former mainly inhabiting the Mashonaland, Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces, and the latter inhabiting southern Zimbabwe. While different dialects of the Shona language delineate the Shona tribes as Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, Ndau and Karanga, their cultural practices are almost identical (Sibanda & Khumalo, 2017). This study was conducted among indigenous Shona people of the Zezuru tribe.

Patriarchy propagates gender inequality among the Shona (Kambarami, 2006), with cultural norms, particularly the patriarchal features, being upheld and presented as overriding individual rights. Women are urged to defer to culture even when they are educated, especially those in marriage unions (Langa, 2016). Married women are habitually treated more respectfully than unmarried ones (Kambarami, 2006), as marriage confers status on women. However, women generally occupy a subordinate position, and in conjunction with poverty, this has been identified as a crucial factor of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe (Amon & Kasambala, 2009). At the same time, multiple concurrent sexual partnerships for men are not objectionable (O'Brien & Broom, 2011). The term 'small house' is used to refer to the extra marital partner of a married man (Tinarwo & Pasura, 2014; Shamu, Abrahams, Temmerman, & Shefer, 2012).

Marriage is anticipated for women, with the majority fulfilling this expectation (Duffy, 2005; Hindin, 2003). Statistics indicate that the fraction of women who have never married drops from 74% in the 15-19 years age group to 2% among those aged 45-49 years (Mugweni, Omar, & Pearson, 2015). Marriage remains important in determining Zimbabwean women's authority and identity (Tinarwo & Pasura, 2014). The significance of marriage for women is emphasised when parents even turn to traditional spirit mediums to break 'the curse' if a daughter remains

unmarried (Kambarami, 2006). Marriage is conceptualised variously as a customary, court or religious wedding and even cohabitation as husband and wife (Nyanugo, 2018; Mugweni, Omar, & Pearson, 2015). Elopement, based on mutual agreement of partners before payment of bride wealth (*roora*), is viewed as a necessary stage towards customary marriage in cases where premarital sex or pregnancy has occurred (Chisi, 2018; Meekers, 1995). Therefore, a couple that is cohabiting after elopement is considered as husband and wife, although they would still need to formalise this union through payment of *roora* (Chisi, 2018; Batisai, 2013). However, some people may live together for many years, bearing children and even getting to old age without payment of *roora*. In contemporary Shona culture they will be regarded as husband and wife, as *roora* does not necessarily have a time frame in which it must be paid up, and can be done even after the death of the wife (Batisai, 2013; Meekers, 1993). Registration of a marriage at a court or church is not an obligation of law (Hanzi, 2006; Meekers, 1993), which makes it difficult to have clear statistics, for instance of child marriage. The law allows polygamous marriages, and men's extra-marital affairs are largely tolerated, as men are believed to have a higher sexual drive than women (Chimbandi, 2014; Tinarwo & Pasura, 2014; Kambarami, 2006). Traditional medicines to fortify men's sexual drive are habitually sold or sought to guard against impotence (Sayagues, 1998).

Another facet of cultural expectations regarding sexuality is virginity, with female virginity being highly valued in Shona culture, which regards it as disgraceful for a girl not to be a virgin at marriage (Sibanda & Khumalo, 2017; Chimbandi, 2014; Kambarami, 2006). A man who marries a virgin pays a cow (*mombe yechimanda*) to the bride's family as gratitude for the parents' guidance in maintaining their daughter's virginity (Shenjere-Nyabezi, 2016). The payment of this cow is a highly regarded cultural practice among the Shona. The cow is paid in addition to the bride wealth (*roora*) and differs from the mother's cow (*mombe yehumai*), which is an acknowledgement of the role of the mother in raising a daughter, and also has spiritual significance (Nzenza, 2017). Non-payment of *mombe yehumai* is believed to lead to misfortunes, such as unemployment, infertility or failed marriages among the son-in-law's children (Mwandayi, 2017; Nzenza, 2017). Hence the mother-in-law's ancestors need to be recognised and informed of their granddaughter's marriage through *mombe yehumai*. A son-in-law pays *mombe yehumai*, regardless of his wife's virginity status, it is part of normal bride wealth. The average bride wealth in the study setting is eight cows for the father (*mombe dzedanga*), *mombe yehumai* and varying amounts of money. *Mombe yechimanda* is added once

the virginity status of the bride is confirmed but it does not have any spiritual significance (Matswetu & Bhana, 2018).

If a young woman's aunts find out that she is pregnant before *roora* has been paid, the prospective son-in-law is obliged to pay damages (*pwanyaruzhowa*) to the young woman's father (Chisi, 2018). The bride's family decides on the amount of money to be paid as *pwanyaruzhowa*, this being the son-in-law's way of acknowledging and apologising for having premarital sex, although consensual, with the young woman. It is assumed that the young woman is still a virgin if there is no payment of *pwanyaruzhowa*. The son-in-law's aunts were traditionally in charge of checking the couple's bed linen after the wedding night to establish the bride's virginity status, which now seldom happens, as the couple may go away on honeymoon or live away from the extended family. The husband then informs both families through *jira remasungiro*. This is a fabric, at least six metres in length, which is checked by the bride's family in the company of relatives and friends. If it is intact, then there is dancing and ululation, while a hole in the middle of the fabric, is a sign the girl was not a virgin at marriage (Matswetu & Bhana, 2018). The son-in-law will not pay *mombe yechimanda* and the parents are regarded as having failed in their duty of raising a virtuous daughter. *Mombe yechimanda* and *jira remasungiro* are paid only once in a woman's life. Accordingly, if she loses her virginity before marriage, these will be paid only if she is married by the man responsible for her loss of virginity (Matswetu & Bhana, 2018). The celebration of female virginity vis-à-vis tolerance of male multiple sexual partners accentuates the difference in Shona cultural views of male and female sexuality.

### **3.4 Sexuality, culture and education**

Similar to Masvawure's (2010) research at a Zimbabwean university, this study centres solely on learners' heterosexual experiences and makes no mention of homosexuality. Zimbabwe's political and legal institutions position homosexuality as deviant, and as such, homosexual tendencies are not tolerated. This status quo is emphasised by hostility towards homosexual disclosure and research in the education sector (Madhomu, 2018a; 2018b; Bloomfield & Thornycroft, 2018), or discussion in the nation at large (Mangezvo, 2013). In addition, in one of the initial interviews, a participant spoke of how silence on this matter is underscored in schools. While I do not rule out the possibility of learners with non-heteronormative sexualities,

it was not possible to discuss this issue with them, as that would have been risking revocation of the Ministry's clearance to conduct this study.

According to Zimbabwe's laws, gay marriages are not recognised, although both lesbianism and homosexuality are not clearly forbidden. Nevertheless, features of homosexuality, such as sexual intercourse (referred to as sodomy), are illegal (Dube, 2013). The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act 2004 [Chapter 9:23] criminalises consensual anal intercourse, or any physical contact regarded as indecent between men (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). Individuals found guilty of this practice are liable to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or both. However, sexual relations between women are not considered as a criminal offence under this code. Christian and cultural principles also influence public sentiment toward homosexuality, with Shoko (2010) finding that Christians were certain that homosexuality is wrong because the Bible classifies it as a sin. In addition, Shona traditional culture accentuates procreation in heterosexual relations, rather than sex for its own sake; thus, sexual gratification in homosexual unions is frowned upon as they cannot reproduce (Shoko, 2010). As noted by Mangezvo (2013), the sexuality discourse is outlined in moral and cultural terms rather than as a question of rights by both the state and religion. The education system is informed by the legal, cultural and religious position regarding sexuality in Zimbabwe. Thus, the education system echoes both the silence and disdain for homosexuality in the country; it is neither publicly articulated nor framed positively (Masvawure, 2010). Acceptance of heteronormative sexualities and marginalisation of non-normative sexualities in the country may therefore influence teenage learners as they negotiate sexuality.

Nevertheless, homosexuality or same-sex practices have not been invisible since 1995, with the Gays and Lesbian Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) having been established in mid-1990 as a community opposing homophobia (Goddard, 2004). The GALZ applied to showcase their organisation at the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) as a way of ending invisibility of the gay and lesbian community in the country. Goddard (2004) concludes that the fallout that ensued with the government and the ZIBF Board brought much needed publicity to the gay movement in Zimbabwe. There is now recognition by health personnel of the existence and challenges associated with men who have sex with men (MSM). According to the Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan [ZINASP] 2011-2015, there is limited

condom promotion and health sector experience in enabling service delivery among MSM (National AIDS Council, 2011). This was attributed to the fact that this section of the population tends to live in fear of retaliation from their communities, hence they are not open about their sexuality (National AIDS Council, 2011). Although homophobia exists in Zimbabwe, even GALZ participants acknowledge that gay-bashing is neither intense nor universal, as it is in a lot of western countries (Epprecht, 1998)

Cultural influence on the views and responses to teenage sexuality is noticeable, with openly deliberating sexual matters, or displaying nude pictures, often being viewed as going against tradition or signs of weakening cultural values (Sachiti, 2012). In 2012, officials from the National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe and Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MOESAC) noted that school children were sexually active, and proposed that condoms be disbursed in schools (Jamela, 2012). Both the Minister and Deputy Minister of MOESAC rejected the proposal outright on the basis that it was not acceptable culturally, would promote promiscuity and that Ministry policy was dedicated to HIV and AIDS Education (Jamela, 2012).

Furthermore, disciplinary measures are in place for learners who become pregnant, with the Circular Minute P.35 setting out the procedures to be followed when a school girl falls pregnant (MOESAC, 1999). According to section 5.3 of the Circular Minute P.35, when pregnancy is a result of a mutually agreed sexual relationship, it is in the interest of school, the pregnant learner and the unborn child that she be allowed to take leave from school. If she intends to come back to school after giving birth, her parents/guardians are required to indicate their wish for their daughter to continue with her education. The school Head at her former school must facilitate her re-enrolment in the same grade/form in which she was before taking leave. In the case of another learner being responsible for the pregnancy, he shall also be expelled from school for the same period of time. It is clear that in the situation described in section 5.3, there is recognition that learners can choose to become sexually active, leading to pregnancy. In such circumstances, pregnancy could be prevented if the school promoted the use of condoms and other contraceptives among sexually active learners.

In an address to the Zimbabwean parliament in 2013, the Minister of Health and Child Care acknowledged the prevalence of unwanted pregnancies and attendant illegal, unsafe abortions, especially among girls younger than 15 years of age (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2013). Nevertheless, he proposed education underlining cultural values as the best way to deal with the situation, rather than contraceptives. Therefore, sexuality issues in Zimbabwe are closely related to cultural norms, with sexuality education that teenage learners receive from adults being largely drawn from the cultural discourses in the country.

School-based sexuality education takes place formally in Guidance and Counselling<sup>1</sup> lessons. Since 1992, both primary and secondary schools were mandated to teach what was then referred to as HIV and AIDS and life skills from Grade 4 up to Form 6 (MOESAC, 2012), and was later expanded to include sexuality. Teachers are expected to provide pupils with age appropriate, culturally acceptable and comprehensive knowledge on life skills, sexuality, HIV and AIDS education. The Guidance and Counselling lessons are offered to each class for a period of 30-40 minutes once a week. Lessons are for all learners in the primary and secondary schools, the topics covered being the same throughout, with only the depth of coverage increasing at each successive level. Nevertheless, taboos on topics such as sexuality or safer sex are still prevalent in rural areas, where communities are culturally conservative. (Zhou, Landa, & Zhou, 2016). As children move into adulthood, they are exposed to existing social arrangements and persuaded to preserve their culture by adults (Women's Refugee Commission, 2012). For instance, women and girls' subordination to men and boys is still commonplace in some Zimbabwean communities (Zhou, Landa, & Zhou, 2016).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The research context is considered so that the meanings, constructions and actions of the community and the participants are understood in their context. As sexuality is rooted within social, cultural, political and economic conditions, the background discussed in this chapter provides the setting within which discourses on sexuality are generated, and in which it is experienced and expressed in Zimbabwe. Given that sexual viewpoints and behaviour are fluid, they need to be considered in relation to wider social arrangements in which they occur.

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<sup>1</sup> School-based sexuality education in Zimbabwe is referred to as Guidance and Counselling,

Economic insecurity in the community shapes the lives of both parents and their children, while poverty and cultural values might affect teenagers' autonomy or influence the choices they make. It is therefore important to understand how the school environment, local culture and gender manifestations merge in the regulation and negotiation of teenage sexuality in this rural setting.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This qualitative case study investigated how teenage sexuality is defined, negotiated and regulated in family and school contexts within the Shona culture in rural Zimbabwe. This chapter presents the philosophical assumptions informing the research, which was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm, as well as the research strategy and techniques applied. Fieldwork was conducted from November 2015 to August 2017 to obtain data using qualitative data collection methods, these being focus group discussions and individual interviews with teenage learners, school heads, teachers and parent representatives in the School Development Committees (SDCs)

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. In what ways does gender shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
2. In what ways do cultural norms shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
3. How is teenage sexuality negotiated and regulated in the context of poverty in a rural setting?
4. How do adults view school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools?

### **4.2 The Interpretivist paradigm**

This section outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological position of the interpretive paradigm, with the ensuing choices regarding the conduct of this research within the framework being indicated. A paradigm is variously referred to as framework, theory, approach, belief or worldview by different authors (Nyawaranda, 2014; Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012; Otieno, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is a particular worldview that guides the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), with various writers having identified them as positivist, post positivist, constructivist, interpretative, transformative, emancipatory, critical-theoretic, pragmatist, deconstructivism (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Ernest, 1997), the main ones being positivism and interpretivism (Gray, 2013; Ernest, 1997; Bryman, 1984). Interpretivism is sometimes referred to as phenomenology (Bryman, 1984) or interpretivism-constructivism

(Tuli, 2010). However, in this chapter I shall refer to this paradigm as interpretivist or interpretivism.

Ontology denotes beliefs about the nature and meaning of reality in the world and what can be known about it (Nyawaranda, 2014; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). One of the main ontological questions in social research concerns whether or not reality occurs autonomously of human ideas and understandings (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The interpretivist assumption is that reality is socially constructed and subjective, as individuals create their personal sense of the world (Tuli, 2010; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Ernest, 1997). From an interpretivist position, as reality is socially constructed, there are bound to be multiple realities that may be different, but are still valid interpretations of the world (Ernest, 1997; Prus, 1990). Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that such realities are limited to a specific group, and rely on the different individuals' or groups' views for their form and content. These constructions and realities can be changed in the interaction process. Interpretivists therefore believe that human actions may be organised and consistent, given that interpretations of the social world arise from culture and are historically positioned (Gray, 2013; Tuli, 2010). Thus, the existence of certain behavioural patterns among groups or communities can be expected. In this study, as the school is a part of the community, a mutual relationship between the school and the community was assumed in constructing localised patterns for experiencing teenage sexuality.

Epistemology offers a logical basis for determining what kind of knowledge is appropriate and sufficient (Gray, 2013; Snape and Spencer, 2003; Ernest, 1997). Epistemology centres on the following issues: the nature of truth and knowledge, the relationship between the researcher and the participants or the researched, and how we get to know (Nyawaranda, 2014; Tuli, 2010; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bryman, 1984). The interpretivist view is that knowledge is subjective and socially constructed (Taylor & Milton, 2013; Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012; Ernest, 1997), thus the social researcher tries to discover and comprehend the social world through a combination of participants' and his/her own understanding of the condition under study (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Prus, 1990). Therefore, to understand the social world, there is need for both observation and interpretation of the participant's view, while acknowledging the possible influence of researchers'

perspectives and values on the study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Prus, 1990).

Interpretivism holds that the social world is mediated by means of meaning and human agency and is not directed by strict guidelines (Gray, 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Consequently, approaches that promote interaction between the researcher and participants are called for to acquire interpretive knowledge about how individuals know and attach meaning to what they experience (Taylor & Milton, 2013; Tuli, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm offers a viewpoint of the world and procedures of attaining knowledge (Nyawaranda, 2014; Taylor & Milton, 2013; Otieno, 2009), which is not inherently better than the other methods (Ernest, 1997; Peshkin, 1993). The choice to carry out this study within the interpretivist framework was determined by the issue under investigation and the kinds of research questions that are at the centre of the study (Tuli, 2010). The focus is on getting to know participants' own understanding of how gender and culture shape the views and practices related to teenage sexuality, recognising that both reality and knowledge are socially constructed.

Constructionism is the epistemological standpoint, which is embedded in the interpretive paradigm informing this study. Social constructionism embraces the view that culture determines human behaviour, and emphasises the shared creation and communication of meaning in a society (Crotty, 2010). Together, people develop the meanings that certain objects, ideas or social beings have for them. In this respect, people may have a shared understanding of the qualities, roles, behaviour or attitudes recognised as appropriate concerning teenage sexuality. To arrive at this knowledge of local understanding and the way of life in the school and family, it was necessary to interact with the participants (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Choices about methodology and research design were made in line with assumptions of the paradigm underpinning this study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

### **4.3 Qualitative Methodology**

The choice to ground my research in the interpretive paradigm influenced the adoption of the qualitative methodology, and being emic in perspective (Nyawaranda, 2014), it strives to attain knowledge on the research topic from the point of view of the local people (Tuli, 2010; Otieno, 2009; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). As people interpret the social

world based on the meanings that they make of it, arriving at this meaning can assist with having an improved appreciation of the various dimensions of a situation (Nyawaranda, 2014; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Qualitative research acknowledges that psychological, social, historical and cultural elements make an important contribution in determining individuals' understanding of their world (Snape & Spencer, 2003). One of the strengths of qualitative methodology, in the context of this study, is that it allows for a consideration of these factors, leading to a deeper understanding of teenage sexuality issues within the context of the family and the school. However, the main limitation levelled against qualitative research is that the findings cannot be generalised to the broader public with as much confidence as in quantitative research (Otieno, 2009). Nevertheless, Nyawaranda (2014) argues that questions of generalisability resonate with philosophical traditions fundamental to quantitative research, which are therefore incompatible with qualitative research.

#### **4.4 The case study approach**

To conduct research that is attentive to epistemological principles of the interpretive paradigm, it was necessary to employ research methods that enable one to get an insider's perspective (Bryman, 1984). Qualitative approaches mentioned in the literature are narrative, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology and participatory action research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The case study approach was adopted for this study, as it allows for a contextual, in-depth study of a phenomenon by means of a range of information sources, permitting several of its features to be discovered and appreciated (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Tellis, 1997).

However, there is no unanimity on the definition of a case study and how it is planned and executed (Yazan, 2015; Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) is of the view that a case study is an inclusive strategy of inquiry into empirical subject matter that is guided by a set of previously stipulated techniques, while Stake contends that "*case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied, by whatever methods we choose to study the case*" (Stake, 1998, p. 134). Yin (2003) regards Stake's definition as too general, as any study of units that are eligible to be considered as objects of study such as people, associations and nations, notwithstanding the approach employed, would be a case study (Yin, 2003). In Yin's definition of case study, the outlook guiding his work on case study design and implementation is

positivist, while that of Stake and Merriam is constructivist (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Yazan (2015) recommends choosing the research design which is attuned to the researcher's epistemological inclination and appropriate for the research questions, or a combination of these viewpoints. The ideas of Stake and Merriam on case study method were therefore employed in this investigation.

Merriam (1998) states that case study research in education is undertaken to enable themes and complex social aspects to be known and clarified. She maintains that by focusing on one unit (the case), the researcher's goal is to find out the links between the important features representative of the theme under study. In choosing the school as a unit of study, I was guided by the need to select a case where I could make the best use, in terms of acquiring the relevant knowledge, in the time set for the study (Stake, 1998; Tellis, 1997). This meant selecting two rural schools closest to where I live in Mashonaland Central Province. After considering Stake's advice about selecting a small number of exemplars, I decided to do a case study of two schools to show how the phenomenon takes place in these settings, as they can offer important and dependable information (Stake, 1998).

The criticism persistently levelled against case study research is the lack of generalisability of its findings (Merriam, 1998; Tellis, 1997), due to the small sample sizes involved, which are not representative. In response, Stake (1998) argues that the prospect for acquiring knowledge is at times a more important benchmark than representativeness. In-depth understanding of the case or social situation is preferable to producing generalisable information (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005; Stake, 1998). The primary purpose of adopting the case study approach is to discover the distinctive traits and conditions of a specific case, which may be regarded as an example of similar more widespread cases (Ernest, 1997). Lack of rigour in case studies has also been identified as a weakness of this approach (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998), which shall be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections in this chapter.

#### **4.5 The research setting and participants**

This research was undertaken at two rural secondary schools in Shamva District of Mashonaland Central Province, one of Zimbabwe's ten provinces (See Figure 4.1).

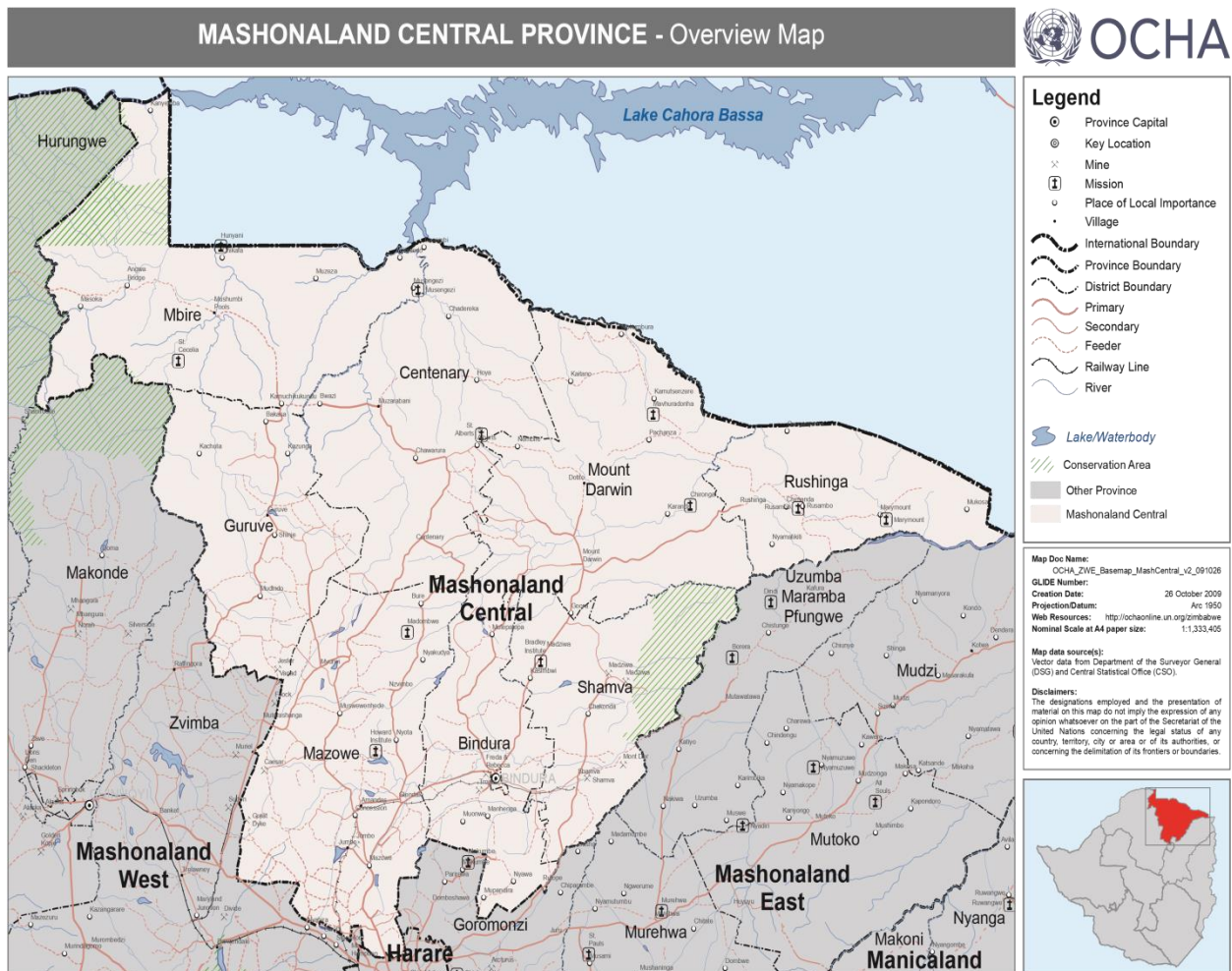


Figure 4.1: Map of Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe

Source: <http://ochaonline.un.org/zimbabwe>

Bindura is the provincial capital, located 90 km from the capital city, Harare, the major economic activities being farming and mining. There are three large gold mines, Mazowe, Shamva and Freda Rebecca in Bindura. The province is dominated by the Shona speaking people, with the Shamva District being 29 km north-east of Bindura and largely rural. At the last census in 2012, its total population was 123 650, with 0.7% being the urban population (ZIMSTAT, 2014). The district is generally populated by the Zezuru (55.2%) and the Korekore (29%), and about 9% Mozambican and Malawian workers in mining and commercial farming (Wekwete, 1998). Mupfurdzi Phase 1 and 2, and Sanye are the planned intensive resettlement schemes set up in 1981 due to the willing-buyer-willing-seller policy (Mukwada, 2008; Wekwete, 1998). Shamva Gold Mine is located on the outskirts of Shamva town in which some of the residents are employed. Many more people are involved in vending agricultural produce and second-hand clothes at the market or in front of their homes, while some engage in small businesses like garages, hair salons and retail shops.

Further out of the town, beyond former commercial farms, Rufaro Secondary School is situated in the Garikai (*pseudonym*) rural area. I provided pseudonyms for the schools to maintain their anonymity, one is referred to as Rufaro Secondary School, and the other as Tariro High School. Rufaro Secondary School is run by a Christian church and consists of six classes, two classes each for Form 1 and 2. These are the first two years of secondary schooling after seven years of primary school in Zimbabwe. There is also one class each for the next levels, Forms 3 and 4 due, to high drop-out rates when learners transition to Form 3, the average class size being 45 learners. In Form 4, learners register and sit for the Ordinary Level National Examinations that are administered by the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC). Those who pass at least five subjects at Ordinary Level ('O' Level) can proceed to high school for Advanced Level ('A' Level) studies or enrol at tertiary colleges to study for various professional qualifications e.g. teaching, nursing, technical occupations. This school does not offer 'A' level classes, and is therefore referred to as a secondary school. There are eight teachers, including the school head at the school, and the learners coming from the surrounding villages within a 15 km radius.

Tariro High School is approximately 8 km from Rufaro Secondary School, but still within the Garikai rural area, being run by the local Rural District Council. This is a bigger school, with 12 classes for Forms 1 – 4, three classes at each level, as well as two 'A' Level classes for Forms 5 and 6. At the end of the two-year 'A' Level course, learners sit for the ZIMSEC Advanced Level examinations, a pass of at least two out of the three subjects offered at this level enabling enrolment at university. Some learners who do not pass the two subjects, or those who pass but find university unaffordable, can enrol at tertiary colleges to acquire professional qualifications just like those with 'O' Level passes. Most learners come from the villages around the school within a radius of 15 km. Villages are made up of groups of families under the leadership of a village head (*sabhuku*), one of the teachers who participated in the study holding this position. He explained that the village head is usually the eldest male person chosen from those families who have a traditional right to this position. The village head is the custodian of the people's traditions on behalf of the chief (*mambo*), to whom they all report.

Both schools have learners walking as far as 15 km to and from home, with the school head of Tariro High School noting that parents are not “well placed to finance the kid in terms of transport”, despite there being public transport plying the routes to the schools. At the time of the study, a journey to and from school using public transport would cost a learner US\$1 each day, which most parents in this area cannot afford. The dire financial situation of most families was also evident during break and lunch time at school, with most learners not having money to buy snacks from the school tuck-shop, many standing in the shade and talking with their friends or improvising some ball games. A few buy small packets of *maputi* (a snack made from maize, which looks like popcorn) or *freesits* (frozen sweetened drink in 50ml or 100ml plastic tubes) at 5 or 10 cents each. On numerous occasions, learners were seen with outstretched hands asking for a share from those who had bought *maputi* or *freesits*. The school fees at Rufaro Secondary School were US\$30 each term. At Tariro High School, learners from Forms 1 to Form 4 paid US\$25/term, while those in Advanced level classes paid US\$35/term. The Zimbabwean school year is made up of three terms, each lasting three months and a month’s holiday between them. As some parents cannot afford to pay the school fees at both schools, some non-governmental organisations assist by paying school fees for some, while others receive assistance from the government. A few learners are the children or relatives of civil servants working in schools and clinics in the area.

Agriculture is a vital part of Zimbabwe’s economy and the main livelihood undertaking for most people in the rural areas (UNDP, 2016; ZimVAC, 2013). Many parents and guardians of learners at both schools are involved in subsistence farming of crops such as maize, beans, groundnuts and vegetables, with 90.1% of households in Shamva District being regarded as food secure (ZimVAC, 2013). They normally depend on crop production and livestock rearing for much of their income (ZimVAC, 2011). In recent years, they have not been getting optimal prices for their produce due to a combination of poor rains and inadequate farming inputs, which have resulted in low production levels. Climate change has led to drought and mid-season dry spells during some farming seasons with serious repercussions, as there are few viable irrigation schemes in the rural areas (UNDP, 2016; ZimVAC, 2013).

Depressed crop prices make it difficult to make ends meet, even when they have some surplus grain for sale, with the community depending on other low-income non-agricultural activities.

Some work for cash or food in the neighbouring resettlement farms, sell firewood and grass for thatching huts, build various structures or trade in local crafts items (ZimVAC, 2011). Other family members migrate to the city, although dwindling employment opportunities have encouraged them to turn to gold panning as there are rich gold deposits in the district (Wekwete, 1998). As a result, most parents, young men and women as well the learners are involved in the more lucrative, illegal gold panning. However, they constantly engage in running battles with the police and some indigenous small-scale miners with mining claims dotted around this area. Gold panning for survival is now widespread in the country to the extent that the ruling ZANU-PF party recommended the decriminalisation of gold panning activities and licensing of the panners by government (ZANU-PF, 2012). However, not many people can afford the mining licences (Kazunga, 2018).

The teachers in both schools are all professionally qualified to teach, having any one of the accepted teaching qualifications such as: a Certificate or Diploma in Education, Honours degree in Education, or a combination of an Honours degree in any subject offered in the school curriculum and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. The teachers with degrees can teach up to Advanced level, while those without a degree teach up to Ordinary level. Typical of other rural schools in Zimbabwe, these two schools face challenges that have an impact on the quality of education, such as poor funding and inadequate teaching and learning resources, (Mukeredzi, 2016; Mushava, 2016; Chinowaita, 2015). Delays in the disbursement of funds from the government programme for poor and vulnerable learners results in schools operating without much-needed resources. Schools are responsible for purchasing all the educational materials required except for learners' stationery provided by the parents.

In addition to a lack of school resources, teachers must contend with isolation from their families and a scarcity of social amenities or opportunities for professional development (Mukeredzi, 2016; Mushava, 2016; Chinowaita, 2015). The teachers were accommodated in six-roomed houses at the schools. At Rufaro Secondary School, each teacher was allocated a house while at Tariro High School at least two teachers were sharing a house. Sharing presented challenges in cases where more space was required for some families. Both schools are electrified and had functioning computer laboratories. Tap water is available but at Tariro High School it flowed only on some days of the week. Furthermore, teachers became targets of

politically motivated assaults or death threats in the run-up to elections (Mushava, 2016; Chinowaita, 2015). According to the Research and Advocacy Unit (2012), young teachers and those who stated their political party affiliation were more susceptible to violence; regardless of whether they were associated with MDC or ZANU-PF. The government takes cognisance of teachers' difficult working and living conditions and pays them a Rural Allowance of US\$13 each month (Mushava, 2016). Teachers are constantly on the lookout for transfer opportunities to urban areas (Mushava, 2016).

The aim of this case study is to obtain insights into the issue of teenage learners' sexuality in family and school settings, thus participants were purposefully selected to enhance understanding (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) of the issues raised in the research questions. Use of multiple sources of data is a feature of case study design, which promotes the emic perspective of interpretive study (Nyawaranda, 2014; Stake, 1998), helps to increase understanding of the phenomenon under study (Yazan, 2015; Tellis, 1997), and adds to the credibility of the findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The teenage learners, school heads, teachers and parents/guardians of learners at the schools were regarded as information-rich sources as they interact daily in the school and the community. Using various groups with different ages and perspectives enabled a comprehensive perspective of teenage sexuality. I identified and recruited the teachers and parents to participate in the study in consultation with the school heads (Mack *et al*, 2005), who were important school gate-keepers in terms of making it possible for me to have access to the participants.

#### **4.5.1 Teenage learners**

Eighty-one teenage learners (aged 15-19 years) in Forms 3 and 4 were recruited from four of the classes taught by the teachers who participated in the study, two classes from each school. Individual learners were not specifically asked to state their age, with information on the age range being obtained from official school registers at the schools. The inclusion criteria for learners in the study were:

- to be in one of the classes taught by the teachers participating in the study
- to volunteer to take part in the study as sensitive topics would be discussed
- permission to take part in the study was indicated by parent/guardian signing the consent form

After explaining the focus of the study to the learners and what they would be expected to do, those who volunteered to take part were given consent forms for their parents or guardians to sign. Although more learners than required expressed interest, they were all given consent forms for their parents' signature. Nevertheless, some did not get permission from parents so were excluded from study despite meeting the other two inclusion criteria.

#### **4.5.2 School heads and teachers**

The two heads of schools were included in the study as they could provide an overview of pertinent procedures within the schools, as well as those involving the community and other stakeholders. While the plan was to include teachers at each school who had at least 10 years' teaching experience, at Tariro High School, five staff members met this criteria. The focus of the study was explained to the teachers, after which they received consent forms and were given time to think about it. One teacher did not return to discuss his participation, which resulted in the four who signed the consent forms being interviewed. At Rufaro Secondary School, only two teachers had at least 10 years' teaching experience, as the school has a high staff turnover, many leaving for schools in town or out of the country, which is characteristic of other schools in the area. Of the five remaining teachers, three were selected as they had more teaching experience than the others, despite this being less than 10 years. In total, eight teachers and two school heads took part in the study. The periods spent in the teaching profession ranged from 12-27 years for participant teachers at Tariro High School, while for those at Rufaro Secondary School it ranged from 2-11 years.

#### **4.5.3 Parents**

Parents or guardians in the School Development Committee (SDC) at the two schools participated in the study. SDC members are chosen on the basis that they have a child attending the school. Four members of the SDC at Tariro High School and six at Rufaro Secondary School took part in the study. At Rufaro Secondary School, the head had invited an extra parent who stayed close to the school as a contingency measure in case one of the SDC members, who stayed far away, did not arrive. The SDC member arrived when the focus group discussion was already in progress and could not be asked to leave as he had made the effort and culturally it would have been construed as lack of respect on my part.

In addition, 19 parents who were Community Field Officers (CFOs) also took part in the study. Each village chooses one parent or guardian with a teenage child at either Rufaro Secondary

School or Tariro High School to become a CFO. The 19 villages are in the catchment area of the two schools. Four of the parents were both CFOs and members of the schools' SDCs, which resulted in 25 parents taking part in the study. The CFOs were sources of information relevant to the study as they were parents or guardians of teenage learners and they are privy to the views of other parents and teenage learners on the topic of this study. The CFOs work under the auspices of a non-governmental organisation, SOS Children's Villages in Zimbabwe, which is part of SOS Children's Villages International (SOS, 2019a) . As part of its diverse programmes in Zimbabwe, the organisation is involved in advocating for children's rights by standing up for children and helping to enlighten communities and decision makers about their rights (SOS, 2019b). They work to promote the interests of teenage learners on a variety of issues and have meetings, workshops or discussions with individual groups of teachers, parents in the community, or teenage learners.

#### 4.6 Data collection techniques

Data collection techniques that uphold the view that knowledge is socially constructed (Nyawaranda, 2014) and are proper for the qualitative methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) were chosen, with interviews and focus group discussions being used in this study. Table 4.1 indicates the research questions that guided the study enquiry, the methods that were used to obtain the qualitative data and the participants who contributed to achieving the study aim in both the FGD and interview.

*Table 4.1 Research questions, methods and participants*

Question		FGD	Interviews
1	In what ways does gender shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?	a. 44 teenage learners b. 10 parents	a. 49 teenage learners b. 2 school Heads c. 8 teachers d. 19 parents
2	In what ways do cultural norms shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?		
3	How is teenage sexuality negotiated and regulated in the context of poverty in a rural setting?	a. 44 learners b. 10 parents	a. 49 teenage learners b. 2 school heads b. 10 teachers c. 19 parents

4	How do adults view school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools?	a. 10 parents	a. 2 school heads b. 8 teachers c. 19 parents
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#### 4.6.1. Focus group discussions

FGDs were conducted with teenage learners and parents, the intention being to enable the participants to freely expressing their views, which facilitated the gathering of information that is rich and specific to a social context (Nyawaranda, 2014; Tuli, 2010; Mack *et al*, 2005). The FGDs encouraged participants to discuss their perceptions on gender issues in the school and the home, and proved useful in bringing out general ideas on issues relevant to the groups (Mack *et al*, 2005). Participants were encouraged to feel free to participate by indicating at the beginning that this was just an informal talk, not a serious lesson, and that there were no wrong or right answers (Puchta & Potter, 2007). Participants chose their own pseudonyms at the beginning of the FGD, which created considerable laughter and helped participants to feel at ease. They were discouraged from feeling pressured to concur with other participants' views (Puchta & Potter, 2007), especially in the discussion with parents, where one was the chairperson of the SDC. At times, the women tended to be deferential to the views of the men. One male participant pointed out that the women in the SDC were submissive to the men in their usual meetings, and wondered what could be done to encourage them to be more assertive.

##### a. Teenage learners

Six FGDs were conducted with the learners as indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Learners FGD participants

Group	Participants	Group	Participants
<b>Rufaro Secondary School</b>			
<b>Boys FGD: Form 4</b> Day 1: 25 min Day 2: 27 min	Matt Munashe Thulani Master L Alesha Panashe Tawanda Innocent	<b>Girls FGD: Form 4</b> Day 1: 30 min Day 2: 14 min	Annabel Enemia Christabel Ropafadzo Thandiwe Michelle Samantha Melody
<b>Boys and girls FGD: Form 3</b> Day 1: 1 hr	Elliot Primrose Tinashe Petronella		

Day 2: 27 min	Peter Faith Sharmaine		
<b>Tariro High School</b>			
<b>Boys FGD: Form 4</b>  1 hr 27 min	Malcom Drew Tinotenda Rashid Anotida Tapiwa	<b>Girls FGD: Form 4</b>  Day 1: 1 hr 12 min Day 2: 1 hr	Primacy Stacey Migal Charmaine Manleesha Tania Munashe Rutendo.
<b>Boys and girls FGD: Form 3</b>  Day 1: 1 hr Day 2: 1 hr	Anisha Shalome Natasha Ebiot, Shadweck Stickrod Tehila		

The FGD guide was adapted from the Gender in Education Network in Asia-Pacific (GENIA) Toolkit (UNESCO, 2009) and the following issues were discussed in the FGDs.

- Security and health issues affecting learners
  - a. safety on the way to and from school
  - b. bullying
  - c. sexual harassment
  - d. discrimination
- School and classroom facilities- provision of school facilities for boys and girls
- Curriculum
  - a. gender and subject choice
  - b. attitudes of boys and girls towards school
- Teaching and learning materials- portrayal of boys and girls
- Boys and girls' participation in decision making in the school.
- The scope of Guidance and Counselling programme
- Community and parental support for the education of boys and girls

While for some groups nine learners had expressed interest in participating, only eight arrived for the FGD, some of which could not be completed at one sitting due to time constraints. Discussions were held in the afternoon and learners had to leave early as some walked long distances back home. In some cases, learners did not attend one of the two FGDs for their group, which resulted in the participants ranging from 6-8 for different groups. Only six participants attended the boys' FGD at Tariro High School on the

scheduled day, with some learners being involved in sporting activities. It was necessary not to disturb school activities, as this could have alienated me from the participants and the gate-keepers. One group at Tariro High School suggested they would be free to have the discussion on a Saturday after getting permission from the school head, which took place as arranged.

**b. Parents**

Two FGDs were conducted with parents who were in the SDC at each school as shown in table 4.3 below

*Table 4.3: Parents FGD participants*

School	Participants
Tariro High School 1 hr 26 minutes	Needmore Mararike (male)
	Barts Hwedza (male)
	Gumbo Zvamaita (male)
	Tatenda Mazvita (female)
Rufaro Secondary School 43 minutes	Zuze (male)
	Mandebvu (male)
	Brown (male)
	Molline (female)
	Sarah (female)
	Zvamada (female)

The issues covered in the FGDs with parents are listed below.

- Understanding of gender inequality
- Causes of gender inequality in the school and the society
- Indicators of gender inequality in school and society
- Understanding of gender equality
- role of the school in promoting gender equality in the school and society
- role of the family in promoting gender equality in the school and society
- Gender related issues and challenges that SDC members encounter in their duties at school
- Role of the family in promoting or impeding the learning of boys and girls
- Creating a conducive learning environment for all learners
- parents as resource persons in the school

Focus Group Discussions proved quite useful in providing a richer picture of the community’s views and practices concerning gender (Mack *et al*, 2005). This was the case in both single-sex and mixed-sex groups. The single sex FGDs with learners were the only instance in which

some readily admitted that they were involved in a heterosexual relationship. In the interviews, the learners mostly preferred phrasing their responses in ways, which implied that they were talking about other learners in the school. In trying to make sense of this discrepancy, I realised that in an individual interview it might have been more difficult for learners to admit involvement in culturally unacceptable behaviour to an adult interviewer. They possibly felt safer doing so in a group context, or they were probably just trying to gain the esteem of their peers in the FGDs.

#### **4.6.2 Individual interviews**

##### ***a. Teenage Learners***

Interviews were conducted with 49 learners, 12 of whom had also taken part in the FGDs. The interviews took place in a classroom or a teacher's office that was not occupied on any of the days on which interviewing took place and duration ranged from eight to 47 minutes. The issues covered in the interviews focused on gender, culture, sexuality and schooling, namely:

- Upbringing of boys and girls in the family and home.
- Constructs of masculinity and femininity
- Teenage heterosexual relationships
- Marriage
- Virginity
- Gold panners
- Teenage pregnancy
- School dropout
- Sexual abuse
- Sexuality education

##### ***b. School heads***

The interviews with the two school heads concentrated on the same issues that were covered in the FGDs with learners and were conducted in their offices at the schools.

##### ***c. Teachers***

The interviews with teachers were semi-structured in nature, an interview guide with the issues to be discussed guided the discussion. The questions asked varied depending on the interviewee's responses. The first interviews with teachers focused on their understanding of gender issues in general in the school and community were:

- Understanding of gender equality.
- Indicators of gender equality in education.
- Causes of gender inequality in society and the education system.
- The role of the school in promoting gender equality in society
- The role of the teacher in promoting gender equality in the school.
- Gender related issues/problems/challenges that teachers encounter during the course of work in school
- Creating conducive learning environment for all learners
- gender stereotyping in learning materials
- The role of families in enhancing or impeding the learning of boys and girls
- activities (such as sports, cultural events, etc.) organized by teachers and/or learners to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote fair and mutually supportive gender-friendly culture in the school

The second interviews with teachers were also semi-structured in nature and focused on issues to do with gender, sexuality, culture and schooling, namely:

- Constructs of femininity and masculinity
- Heterosexual relationships
- Virginity
- Marriage
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood
- Sexuality education

Teachers' interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes and were conducted in the staffroom, teachers' office or classroom, depending on what venue was unoccupied on the day an interview was scheduled.

#### *d. Parents*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 parents who were CFOs, either in the parents' homes or in a free office at school. The issues covered in the interviews were:

- Upbringing of boys and girls in the family and home – Shona cultural context
- Constructs of femininity and masculinity
- Teenage heterosexual relationships
- Virginity
- Marriage
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood
- Children's sexuality education

## 4.7 Data collection process

In the first phase of data collection, FGDs with parents and learners were conducted first, then interviews with school heads, followed by the first interviews with teachers focusing on gender issues in the school and community. In the second phase, interviews were conducted with learners, teachers and parents concentrating on issues to do with culture, gender, sexuality and schooling. These issues were highlighted by participants in the FGDs and initial interviews as significant to understanding gender issues in the community. Qualitative research is flexible, therefore the way in which the researcher and participant interact with each other shapes initial assumptions and also changes these assumptions. Whilst the change in the research question did not impact on the overall objective, the change was manifest in how participants were setting the agenda for what mattered to them.

As sexuality is a sensitive topic among the Shona people (Moyo & Zvoushe, 2012; Mugwini & Matereke, 2010), it was important for me to establish rapport with both the learners and teachers so that they would feel at ease discussing these issues. I interacted informally with both teachers and learners during break or lunch times from January-June 2016 “*to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting a core of group membership*” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 145). For instance, I would often sit and talk with one of the teachers while she sold snacks to learners at break time, which gave me an opportunity to establish a rapport with some learners out of the classroom. Nonetheless, I did not take part in the actual teaching activities, remaining out of the core group. I tried not to disturb teachers and learners during the planned school activities (Wright & O’Flynn, 2012). As alluded to by Anderson (2013), I encountered some difficulties in getting learners to talk about their sexual experiences, as this is a very sensitive issue in the Shona cultural context. Most learners avoided talking about their own experiences and largely focused on discussing what ‘other’ learners in school do. This could have been either a convenient way of avoiding reporting personal behaviour that goes against cultural expectations or they were genuinely not involved in intimate relationships.

Audiotaping was done during the FGDs and interviews to have a record of the actual words said (Mack *et al*, 2005; Stake, 1995). These were transcribed and some were translated into English as some participants requested to speak in ChiShona. According to Birbili (2000), the comparability of meanings from the actual data collected and that presented in the findings is enhanced when the translator is familiar with the participants' culture and their language. I translated the data from Chishona into English, striving to achieve conceptual equivalence between what participants said and what was reported in the thesis. I am bilingual and a Shona person from the Zezuru tribe, so I believe that my familiarity with the language and culture of the participants assisted me significantly in this respect.

## **4.8 Trustworthiness**

There have been debates on the meaning of 'rigour' in qualitative research (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003), with a realisation that positivist concepts of validity and reliability are not applicable in the same way to interpretive studies (Yazan, 2015; Shenton, 2004; Caelli et al, 2003). There is however a universal agreement that qualitative investigators should provide an indication of the credibility of their research (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Different authors have created varied constructs of validity (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Cresswell & Miller, 2000). It is accepted that the most eminent and logical are those of trustworthiness put forward by Guba and Lincoln, which are not the same as, but comparable to, validity and reliability in positivist studies (Taylor & Medina, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Trustworthiness is different from validity as its emphasis is on the circumstances in which data is collected not on the intrinsic truthfulness of the data (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Investigators consider how data is collected and the significance of that for the quality of the information produced (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Trustworthiness comprises the following qualities: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Taylor & Medina, 2013).

### **4.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility has to do with trying to show that the phenomenon under study is being depicted accurately (Shenton, 2004). I visited the schools over 14 months, from November 2015 to August 2017. I did not visit the schools during the holidays in between each term. Prolonged engagement in the field enabled me to have a good idea of practices in the school and to establish rapport and a level of trust between the participants and myself (Tuli, 2010; Shenton,

2004; Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Owing to this relationship, I believe I obtained truthful information from the participants. The long period spent at the schools also enabled me to verify the information I obtained from the different data sources and gain a better grasp of participants' actions or statements (Nyawaranda, 2014; Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

Triangulating the data collection methods was beneficial for examining the trustworthiness of different sources of data (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Shenton, 2004). I collected information from multiple sources, which enabled me to corroborate the views of some participants against those of others, and allowed a clearer picture of participants' actions to emerge (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Shenton, 2004). In the data presentation and interpretation chapters, I provide thick, rich descriptions of the study to enable the readers to ascertain the credibility of the situations being described (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

#### **4.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability replaces generalisability in qualitative studies and it is not demonstrated in the same way as in quantitative research (Nyawaranda, 2014). In qualitative studies, the focus is more on acquiring a deeper understanding of small samples in specific situations rather than generalising. The reader is the one who chooses to transfer the findings to a new setting if he/she is convinced that the setting of the study is like another one (Shenton, 2004). To assist readers to make decisions about transferability, detailed description of the study setting, and procedures is provided (Shenton, 2004; Cresswell & Miller, 2000), in Chapters 3 and 4. I am of the view that if the reader has a clear understanding of the setting, they can make informed judgements on whether there are similarities with another setting to which they may tentatively transfer some of the research findings.

#### **4.8.3 Dependability**

This involves enabling another investigator to replicate the study, which is not easy due to the constant changes in the subject matter of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). I have provided much detail about the study in this chapter as well in Chapter 3. Copies of instruments used to generate data have been availed in the appendices.

#### **4.8.4 Confirmability**

This involves showing that findings develop from information gained from the study (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation of methods and sources that was done supports confirmability (Shenton 2004).

### **4.9 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues were considered during this study to protect the participants from harm.

- Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Reference HSS/0492/015D) and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe (Reference C/426/3 Mash Central).
- Informed consent of all participants was sought after the researcher explained the purpose of the research and the role they would play. Participants were asked to sign forms to indicate consent and voluntary participation in the study. While the children provided assent, the parents and guardians gave written consent for their children to participate in the study. While I was not able to meet the individual parents as it was not possible to invite them to school, I hoped that the explanation provided to the learners and in the letters would be adequate for the parents. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.
- The confidentiality of the participants and schools was guaranteed through the adoption of pseudonyms for the individuals, schools and surrounding areas (Wright & O'Flynn, Conducting ethical research, 2012). The researcher also undertakes to keep all notes, audiotapes and transcripts in a secure place during and after the research to avoid misuse of the data by other parties for other purposes not related to this study. Any original research material (hard copy and digital) will be destroyed with the permission of the supervisor after five years.

### **4.10 Reflexivity**

Interpretivism calls for interaction between researcher and participants so as to acquire knowledge of how the participants attach meaning to what they experience, at the same time taking into account the possible influence of the researcher's perspectives and values on the

study (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). My role as an academic adviser at the university where I work involves having discussions with students who may have social, financial or academic related problems that impact negatively on their studies. I usually interact with more women than men, who often find themselves dealing with social problems involving their spouses or families. For instance, one woman had to become pregnant in her first year at university because her husband demanded it as a way of safeguarding the marriage; another had a husband who phoned her throughout the day, even during lesson time, to ask about her performance in the different courses, to the extent that she spent nights reading and then dozing during classes. Such cases made me wonder about the gender relations that seemed to put women at a disadvantage relative to men. It can be said that such a personal perspective may obstruct me from realising the negative effect of gender relations on the learning of the males, as I am more attuned to identifying the hindrances to female students. Nevertheless, I am sure that being aware of this potential source of bias alerted me to both sides of the matter as I made sense of the data obtained from the study.

Being older than the learners participating in the study presented an inequitable power relationship between us, and may have influenced them to give socially acceptable responses that may not be truthful on some issues. However, the fact that I was an adult, and an outsider, meant they could also give truthful responses on some issues as they knew I would not use that information against them. This was evident in the case where many outlined the problems they had with one of the teachers in the school and asked me to intervene on their behalf. This occurred during a focus group and when they escorted me to my car, I encouraged them to talk to their form teacher about it, but they were sceptical about the advisability of doing so in fear of victimisation. Thus, they were cognisant that even though I was an adult, I was an outsider who would not harass them for saying what or how they felt.

#### **4.11 Data interpretation**

According to Nyawaranda (2014), it is fitting to refer to data interpretation instead of analysis in qualitative studies. The researcher is the primary instrument of data interpretation in qualitative research as information is made sense of by the researcher (Otieno, 2009). I interpreted the data by carrying out an inductive style of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This analysis was conducted in two parts, the first occurring after the first phase of data

collection to establish if themes had emerged that needed to be explored further with the participants. The second part occurred after the second phase of data collection.

Thematic analysis entails the content of the data determining the codes and themes that are generated. After the FGDs with learners and parents and the first interviews with teachers and school heads were conducted, the first stage in thematic analysis was carried out. Familiarisation with the data was done by way of listening to the audiotapes and repeated reading of the transcripts, and allowed me to notice issues that were pertinent to the research.

Stage 2 involved developing initial descriptive codes of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Both large and small chunks of the data in typed transcripts were highlighted with codes being written next to every chunk that had been highlighted. These codes drew attention to the significant topics that were brought up by the participants, for instance, schoolgirl pregnancy, differences between males and females in society and the school, and poverty. Data that matched these initial codes was collated in clusters which enabled me to outline the patterns, parallels and ambiguities in the data.

Stage 3 involved actively constructing themes by going through the coded data. This necessitated recognising the meaning of the data and creating interpretative codes. This enabled me to come up with potential themes like patriarchal ideology, discourses of childhood and so on. These potential theme were studied to check for relationships among them. The potential themes constructed from the data revealed topics that needed to be substantiated by the participants and this informed the design of the interview guides for the second phase of data collection.. Interviews were conducted with learners, teachers and parents. Triangulation of information provided by the participants was done during the interviews. Thereafter, I repeated the first three phases of thematic analysis as described above.

Stage 4 of thematic analysis was carried out with data sets from the first and second phases of data generation. Themes were revised and data which best denoted each theme were selected for a more in depth interpretation with the theoretical lenses of Connell's gender and power theory as the core interpretive tool. Stage 5 of the analysis involved reviewing and refining of themes which resulted in identification of four broad themes. The views of the different groups of participants are presented collectively under each theme so that patterns, similarities and contradictions explored with quotations from the participants used in naming each sub-theme.

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), this captures the language and views of participants while communicating what the theme focuses on.

## **4.12 Conclusion**

A case study method was used that engaged the interpretive paradigm to understand the various participants' perspectives on the four research questions. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes that were both common and different among the groups. The next four chapters focus on the presentation and interpretation of data according to the four broad themes identified. The themes are interpreted and discussed in line with the four components of Connell's Gender and Power Theory. Chapter 5 centres on perspectives of parents, teachers and learners on the influence of power, gender and age in shaping teenage sexuality. Chapter 6 focuses on the cultural valorisation of virginity as it shapes, and is deployed by teenagers and adults as they negotiate and regulate sexuality. Chapter 7 addresses how the context of poverty and gendered economic inequalities shapes participants' perceptions and attitudes towards teenage sexuality. It highlights how gender and poverty mediate and restrict adults' and teenagers' choices and practices. Lastly, Chapter 8 presents adults' anxieties regarding school-based sexuality education. It centres on how teachers and parents draw from conservative discourses to regulate and restrict teenage sexual agency.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: Domination, resistance and teenage heterosexual relationships**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The chapter addresses Research Question 1: In what ways does gender shape teenage learners’ sexuality in rural Zimbabwe? It presents and interprets the perspectives of the teenage learners, teachers, and parents as enunciated in the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Sexuality is partly a biological, and partly a social phenomenon, shaped by biological bodily processes as well as the prevailing discourse in society, thus leaving room for resistance and contestation (Egan & Hawkes, 2009). While sexuality is individually experienced, it is not autonomously created, as it encompasses relations of power and is formed by social structures such as gender, class and age (Murphy, 2012). Through sexual socialisation, agents of socialisation, such as the school, family and peers, transmit the norms regarding teenage sexuality, thereby controlling the sexual life, practice and identity of teenagers (Tolman, 2016; Bay-Cheng, 2003).

I argue that while Black rural teenage learners’ sexuality is constrained by normative age and gender role expectations, the contradictions between adults and teenagers, as well as boys’ and girls’ agency, creates opportunities for resistance and modification of dominant norms. The main theme and its sub-themes that are the focus of this chapter are shown in Table 5.1. The sub-themes will be discussed in line with the components of Connell’s Gender and Power Theory.

*Table 5.1 Main theme 1: Domination and resistance in teenage heterosexual relationships*

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Sub-theme title</b>
1. Patriarchal ideologies shaping gender relations in the community: 2. Rejecting teenagers’ sexual agency 3. Discourses of danger 4. Abstinence 5. Teenage premarital sexual activity	1. In our culture a woman is under a man’s feet  2. Teachers just want to stop you from enjoying yourself 3. Girls, you need to be decent, do not get involved with boys. 4. They do not really tell us what to do if these feelings overcome you 5. You do not eat a sweet while it is in its wrapper

## 5.2 In our culture a woman is under a man's feet

This theme emerged from all the respondents, both male and female, and this section presents the views from all groups of participants. The FGD and individual interviews with parents highlighted the patriarchal ideologies that shape gender relations in the community, where women are considered inferior to men (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010).

CHIPHERA (f): In our culture, men have learnt a bad thing, they believe that *mukadzi ari pasi petsoka dzemurume* [a woman is under a man's feet], "whether it is my sister, or a woman married into the family, she must be subordinate to me." I have not yet seen them encouraging or supporting women. (Parent, Interview)

It is evident that gender power relations are characterised by men's dominance over women, (Connell, 2005; Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985), with girls being raised as subordinate to boys and men. In the focus group discussions, parents illustrated how culture and religion intertwine to reinforce gender inequality as indicated in the following excerpts.

NEEDMORE (m): When we are with our children in the community or churches where we worship, the boys and the girls are taught how different they are from each other in their lives. In their upbringing, the boy is prepared to represent the father while the girl is prepared to leave eventually. She learns here in the family that where she goes she must be well mannered and that she is not equal to the man. (Parents FGD, Tariro High School).

MR BROWN (m): Uuum, from long ago that's the way it is. It has always been the case that in the family the girls grow up knowing that the boys are their fathers. They will be their fathers in the future (*Assenting voices from the other male participants*). So they grow up with the knowledge that this boy is my 'father' so the respect will always be there. It will not come to an end.

SARAH (f): So the issue of power between men and women starts from the time they are still young. If you pay close attention you shall see that a girl is usually afraid of a boy. When she gets married she is also afraid of the husband. It is a few women who dominate men in the families. It starts from an early age. (Parents FGD, Rufaro Secondary School).

There is anticipation that girls will marry and move to the husband's family, while sons will remain and take the father's dominant position in the family. Essentialist ideas about gender are influential in society and provide the basis for patriarchy (Mfecane, 2018; Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). The socialisation process in the family and religion is based on patriarchal values, and endorses gender inequality.

Most parents were sceptical of the notion of gender equality, and discussed how their own lives in the home are characterised by unequal gender relations. This was enunciated in the focus group discussion with parents at Rufaro Secondary School.

MOLLINE (f): The way I see it, if we go back to the Bible; the Bible says the woman must be subordinate to the man. The man is the head of the family, isn't that so? These opportunities we are giving ourselves, this gender...

ZVAMADA (f) (*interjects*): Yes, these opportunities.

MOLLINE (f) ...that was not designed by God. These are our own things that we are just allowing ourselves, isn't that so? (*Sounds of assent from ZUZE (m)*). The way I see it, when we are a family with Mr Brown here, we are in our home. I should not say when I am just seated doing nothing, 'Er, Mr Brown today it is your duty to do all household chores.'

ZVAMADA (f): Because of equal opportunities!

ZUZE (m): No, no. (*In a disapproving tone*)

MOLLINE (f): Such cases are there but we are going wrong somewhere. We must check the Word of God. It says the woman must be subordinate to the man. Even in our culture, the woman must be subordinate to...?

MANDEBVU (m): The man.

MOLLINE (f): But in cases where Mr Brown realises that I have too much work to do...

ZVAMADA (f) (*interjects*): ...or I am not feeling well.

MOLLINE (f): (*continues*)...he may decide to assist... only because...

ZVAMADA AND MOLLINE (*in unison*): The wife is not well.

MOLLINE (f): Not that while I am not occupied then I ask, "Mr Brown how far have you gone with the cooking?"

ZVAMADA (f): Is that acceptable?

MOLLINE (f): No, no. We may be giving ourselves equal opportunities but let us go back and check, what does God say? What does our culture say?  
(Parents FGD, Rufaro Secondary School).

It may be assumed that children also learn about gender relations by observing their parents' behaviour and gender division of labour in the home. According to Connell (1987), the structure of labour and other arrangements of gender relations mutually reinforce female inferiority. In both the family and religious settings, parents emphasised the hierarchical position of males and females. Religious ideology premised on biological essentialism and male dominance construe men and women as primarily different (Siordia, 2016). When patriarchal traditions and religious norms converge, they produce and reinforce gender inequalities, thus influencing behavioural expectations for men and women (Siordia, 2016; Klingorova & Havlicek, 2015). While the Zimbabwean government and civil society organisations actively promote gender equality, most parents indicated their disdain for a practice that they perceived as contradicting their cultural and religious values, this view being held by both male and female parents. In this way, women become complicit in their own subordination, and when children learn about gender in the family and religious institutions, they are primarily learning about inequality.

Patriarchal values similarly permeate the cultural basis through which teenagers indicated that they make sense of sexuality in the study setting. There was a tendency to assign a dominant status to boys, while girls were simultaneously viewed as subordinate, but with agency to make appropriate decisions regarding their sexuality in some instances. According to Bhana (2017a), males and females negotiate sexuality in conditions of male dominance. This was evident in this study in terms of roles in intimate relationships and the belief in uncontrolled male sexual desire. As indicated in data from the learners, males were portrayed incapable of suppressing their sexual desire. Thus there was frequent reference by learners, teachers and parents of girls' responsibility in preventing premarital sexual intercourse. When asked about the role of males and females in initiating intimate relationships, learners largely regarded this as a masculine role.

PETER (m): In most cases it is the boy. If the boy does not take the initiative nothing happens. (Learner, Interview)

TASHIA (f): Obviously the boy is the one who asks the other about starting a romantic relationship. (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): It has always been like that, God created it that way. (Learner, Interview)

Male sexual prerogatives are highlighted, illustrating male sexual entitlement and their right to initiate romantic relationships. A religious influence was also apparent in learners' understanding and approval of male dominance. The subordinate status of females was highlighted by both girls and boys in their responses as to how they would react if a girl exhibits agency by acting on her desire.

VSM: If a girl approaches you and tells you that she likes you what would you do?

FRANK (m): Ah in most cases your friends, other boys, if they get to know of it they may start saying to you, "What are you, Frank you were approached by a girl *tibvirei*<sup>2</sup> you have to be approached by girls, you cannot even approach them". (Laughter)

VSM: Oh, so girls should not approach boys in that respect?

FRANK: Mostly it is done by the boys... your friends and others *vanogona kuzokureducer* (you will lose your social standing among friends and others). (Learner, Interview)

Self-awareness as a sexual person is an essential element of agency (Tolman, 2016, 2012; Hawkes & Egan, 2008), which influences the capacity to believe that he/she can decide to make

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<sup>2</sup> *Tibvirei* - literally means get away. But it is also commonly used when one is being dismissed as a person of an inconsequential social position, as in this context.

things happen, and act to make them happen. Societal norms in this context dictate that boys should approach girls, and that a departure from this is taken as an affront to masculinity. Accepting such a girl's proposal may result in the loss of social standing among male peers. Both boys and girls noted possible reactions of boys to females exercising agency in this respect.

NOBLE (m): In most cases it is the boy who initiates...because if the boy *akatangwa* (is approached by the girl) and the girl says, "I love you," the boy will never accept. (Learner, Interview)

VENUS (f): I do not think so (that the boy will agree). Because that boy may go around broadcasting to everyone, "That girl told me that she loves me". (Learner, Interview)

There could be outright refusal to have a relationship with the girl who made such a declaration. Several learners also stated that the boy might shame the girl by spreading word in the neighbourhood of the girl's declaration of her feelings towards him.

OBVIOUS (m): Girls are very shy; she will be worried that if I tell him that I love him then he might spread the word in the neighbourhood. (Learner, Interview)

STICKROD (m): As a boy, if a girl tells me first that she loves me, I might tell my friends, "See what this girl is doing to me. Is she in her right mind?" (Laughs)

VSM: It is not the proper thing for her to do?

STICKROD: It's not. (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): In few instances a girl may be the first to tell a boy that she loves him...She may tell him but that is extreme, because if John does not love her, he will go around saying, "So-and-so said she loves me." That is embarrassing. But if John just wants to use the girl he will agree but without really loving her in his heart. (Learner, Interview)

It seems that even when boys really have feelings for the girl, they object to girls initiating romantic relationships. Masculinity is produced and regulated by peers, as they shame girls who do so and thereby reproduce the sexual double bind, where male sexual entitlement is valorised. When boys accept proposals from girls it was put in the context of 'using the girl' and in so doing reproducing the 'slut', or 'loose' construction of girls who show agency. Thus, girls' agency in this respect is generally viewed in a negative light, such girls being regarded having loose morals.

JUNIOR JOKER (m): Ah I do not think it is right for a girl to tell a boy that she loves him first because boys cannot keep secrets... I will start telling others about her. Then we would be calling her a whore because of that. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): I think it is nature; it is just like that the boy should approach the girl. Some of us believe that if you see a girl taking the initiative, then she is

not a decent girl, because she may do the same to another boy. (Learner, Interview)

CONFLICT (m): It may happen in other areas but here no girl does that...As an individual I may accept that, but other people will say, "That girl is a whore, *anoda zvinhu* (she loves sex or material things) and so on and so on." That is because it will be regarded as unusual that a girl tells a boy first that she likes him. (Learner, Interview)

Therefore, a girl who approaches a boy is viewed with suspicion, and boys make negative judgements about her character. She is regarded as a whore and labelled the one '*anoda zvinhu*', which is an informal expression that means one who is interested in sex or who wants material things. The dominant position of males is reinforced through the cultural norm that males make the first move in intimate relationships. The possibility of females doing the same is taken as usurping the masculine role, which calls into question the masculinity of boys who might get involved in such relationships. In this case, hegemonic heterosexual routines are sustained by means of shaming and regulating of gender practices which they regard as anomalous (Renold, 2006). This is achieved partly through refusal to benefit from them, as when boys decline relationships initiated by girls, and public humiliation of girls who approach boys. Boys indirectly reaffirm their masculinity when they publicly communicate such instances of atypical femininity, which most likely occurred in private. These practices serve a dual function: constituting the essence and valid standard of gender and sexual distinction, and upholding gender and sexual inequalities (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013; Chu, Porche, & Tolman, 2005). For these teenage boys, their masculinity is strongly related to having the power to determine when, and with whom, to have an intimate relationship, as emphasised by Peter, that there would be no relationship at all if the boy does not take the initiative. Furthermore, females are acquiescent in their subordination by not considering the option of instigating an intimate relationship.

The adults also seem to hold a similar view as spelt out by one of the teachers.

VSM: But if a woman were to propose do you think...

MR DHADHIYA (m): It would be unnatural.

VSM: Do you think you would accept that woman?

MR DHADHIYA: Depending on how...Maybe the boy is shy but the girl has identified that this boy loves me but he is shy, he is failing to punch. She can use all tricks to lure him and to capture him but the verbal thing to say, "I love you", and the women have always responded. They respond to proposals, the men normally propose. But, "Marry me", after they have been in love for a long time, she can go on and say, "Please marry me. I don't want to keep on with this love affair please marry me".

VSM: That they can do?

MR DHADHIYA: Yes that they can do. (Teacher, Interview)

Heterosexuality is grounded on a gendered relationship, whereby males' power is superior to that of females (Allen, 2003). The teacher appeals to essentialist notions in reinforcing the dominant masculinity characterising intimate relationships by claiming that to behave otherwise would be unnatural. The notion of heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2002) illuminates the intricate relationship between gender and sexuality. Bodies are bound in consistent, logical relationships through a constant sex that is articulated via a constant gender, which is contrasting and ranked, expressed by way of the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Butler, 2002). This is echoed by Rich's (2003) observation that heterosexuality is a political institution that makes females powerless, being the basis of male dominance. Femininity is ascribed to a subordinate role, whereby the female has to work at attracting the attention of the male and may even have to beg a man to make a commitment. Being committed in a relationship is also viewed as a mark of femininity, as evidenced by implicit acceptance during interviews with girls that a young man may leave his partner even after he has lured the girl into having sex.

Nevertheless, a few learners offered a different perspective on male dominance in this regard, as expressed by Munashe and Ryan.

MUNASHE (f): It is rare around here for a girl to approach a boy. In most cases if a girl thinks of that then obviously she has to go for a boy who is lower than her.

VSM: In terms of age?

MUNASHE: Obviously, either in terms of age or economic status... You may easily seduce him because of your possessions so he agrees. Because if he is a right-thinking person he will ask himself, "What is it with this girl?" (Learner, Interview)

RYAN (m): In the past we used to say it is the boy who initiates a relationship, but at times even girls these days...it is not an issue, because the way she loves me, I may also love her in the same way...It is not a problem at all. (Learner, Interview)

Age and superior economic status provide girls with some leverage, as indicated by Munashe, without which girls occupy a subordinate position. In contrast, the boys occupy a superior position simply by virtue of being male, although social expectations and understanding may change over time. Ryan recognises that both teenage boys and girls have embodied sexual selves (Tolman, 2016), making it not abnormal for girls to express their desires to boys. Female

subordination is further noted in the heterosexual relationships of teenagers, where girls tend to conform to the young men's plans regarding sexual activity as described by Faith.

FAITH (f): Even this issue of going to the forest, the boy might say let us go and meet there. So, going to the forest will make you do the wrong things.

VSM: Is it not possible for a girl to tell the boy that I do not want to go there with you?

FAITH: It all depends with the girl; it seems some have no self-control. Some will be asked to come to the forest because the boy might say, "If you do not want to have sex with me it is just as good as saying we are not in love." Maybe some girls are afraid of *kurambwa* (that the boy may end the relationship) so she will just go *worarwa* (and the boy sleeps with her).

VSM: Alright. Can't they still be in love even though they are not having sex?

FAITH: Ah it is better to be in love but focus more on your school work. (Learner, Interview)

Relationships of male dominance and female subordination in a heterosexual union are apparent, with young men exercising coercive power over female decision-making about their own sexuality by implicitly compelling them to take part in sexual activity when they would rather not (Allen, 2003). The girls are persuaded that love can only be expressed through sexual intercourse. Faith observes that while "*it is better to be in love but focus more on your school work*", the girls being perceived as lacking strength of mind to say 'no' to the sexual advances of boys. Boys define the boundaries of the relationship, while the girls become passive participants as they acquiesce for fear that the boy might end the relationship. Girls' diminished power is denoted by the passive form of the verbs used to denote their part in the relationship. The words *kurambwa* (to be spurned or rejected), *kurarwa* (literally to have someone sleeping on top of you) and 'she will just go', convey girls' perceived passivity and limited power in determining the course of the intimate relationship. However, where girls are represented as compliant they also have agency attributed to them at the same time (Allen, 2008), being expected to have a measure of self-control to offset male domination. Girls who comply with boys' demands for sex are considered to be lacking in self-control. This is an indication of the existence of sexual double standards in the community, which refers to the different ways in which male and female sexual actions are judged, with more tolerance for men's sexual adventures (Crawford & Popp, 2003). For instance, men face no moral recriminations for having multiple sexual partners, while girls are branded prostitutes for similar behaviour (Tolman, Davis, & Bowman, 2016; Allison & Risman, 2013).

Young girls also have to contend with conflicting gender customs that require them to simultaneously display both sexual innocence and attraction, although they are condemned for the latter (Duschinsky, 2013; Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013). There was a tacit understanding that once male sexual desire is aroused, even by seemingly innocent things, such as dressing, it would have to be satisfied, as boys lack the capacity for self-control. One learner alluded to this view.

FAITH (f): You may wear a little dress that might arouse the boys...it will cause the boys to follow you. If you do that there is nothing a boy can do [to control sexual feelings] because you will have shown them by your dressing that you are interested. (Learner, Interview)

Clothing is critical in an individual's creation and portrayal of their sexuality (Davis, 2015). It is acknowledged that girls may dress to excite the boys (Renold & Ringrose, 2008), and that sexual hints may be inferred from different attire (Fortenberry, 2014). Young women exercise mediated power in that they have restricted agency within male dominance (Allen, 2003), and must take into consideration possible male reaction when they make choices about their dressing.

Patriarchal values similarly permeated the cultural basis through which parents make sense of teenage sexuality in the study setting. According to Tamale (2006), sexuality is a significant site in prescribing and sustaining women's subordination in Africa. While the focus of this study was on teenage sexuality, it is evident that the pertinent instruction in the family takes place earlier than the teenage stage.

CHIPHERA (f): From the age of 10 years, girls are encouraged to learn about their bodies. At that stage we expect them to understand that they must take care of their body. Their breasts must not be touched by boys, or even any person for that matter. They should also be shy to expose their breasts. (Parent, Interview)

From an early age, a girl is urged to take responsibility for her body, as it is an object of male sexual desire, with heterosexual masculinity being partially recognised through sexual objectification of women (Liong & Chan, 2018; Calogero & Tylka, 2014). At the same time, cultural norms convey the message that men will pursue any possibility for sexual satisfaction (Jacques-Avino, et al., 2018), and that it is the girl's duty to resist and discourage male sexual advances (Leclerc-Mdlala, 2008). Self-policing is presented to girls as a crucial strategy in protecting themselves from negative consequences of succumbing to male sexual desire. Thus,

young girls learn that they are accountable for both the risks and outcomes of their sexuality. The operation of sexual double standards is salient in that boys are anticipated to be sexually irrepressible, whereas girls are made accountable for and expected to have the self-control to counteract male sexual advances. (Tolman, Davis, & Bowan, 2016). It appears that no such demands are placed on the boys in this situation. Boys who succumb to such advances are evaluated less negatively than girls who do the same, with cultural expectations tending to inform the outlook toward sexual behaviour, with gendered differences in these views (van der Geuglen, van Meijel, den Uyl, & de Vries, 2017; Crawford & Popp, 2003)

### **5.3 Teachers just want to stop you from enjoying yourself**

The learners indicated that the adults with whom they interact and regard as shaping their perception of sexuality are teachers at school and parents or guardians in the family setting. The learners appeared to have adopted adults' views on teen sexuality and articulated the dominant adults' position, which is a rejection of the notion of teenagers as sexual beings (Crossouard, Dunne, & Durrani, 2017; Holland, 2017; Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). As noted by other scholars, where teenage sexuality was acknowledged, it was generally viewed as problematic and risky (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015; Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013; Allen, 2012; Schalet, 2004; 2011; Bay-Cheng, 2003). Teachers were reported to be ambivalent about intimate relationships between male and female learners. This was evident from the learners' responses to the question of whether such relationships were allowed among them in school.

FAITH (f): They are allowed to talk to each other, but it is not allowed to have romantic relationships. (Learner, Interview)

KUNDAI (f): Yes, it is allowed but it is not allowed to misbehave (*misikanzwa*) and caress each other, you may be beaten or punished. (Learner, Interview)

JUNIOR JOKER (m): We are not allowed *kudanana* [to have intimate relationships]...It is possible that I might be in love with a form 2 girl, a form 6 boy might also be going out with the same girl. So, if we meet, that may result in fights in the school. (Learner, Interview)

The above responses indicated a lack of coherence on the school's position on the matter. While Faith notes that romantic relationships are not allowed, Kundai explains it is the public physical displays of affection that are not acceptable, not the relationship itself. The punishment following public displays of affection highlights adult rejection of the notion of teenagers as sexual beings. Another learner believed prohibition was meant to avoid violence in the school,

not because it was wrong to have romantic relationships with the girls. Boys fighting for the attention and affection of girls was depicted as a possible occurrence by the learners.

The rejection of teenage sexual agency is highlighted by teachers' reference to learners as 'children' who are vulnerable to sexual dangers. The age considerations that they revert to in expectation of sexual innocence among teenagers are emphasised.

MRS NYANDORO: The school discourages, because we say intimate relationships lead to those unwanted pregnancies...But when we have Guidance and Counselling lessons the learners say a lot of things; that they cannot stop getting into intimate relationships. It seems it is part of their life; we try to discourage it because it interferes with their learning. In most cases girls do well in Form 1, Form 2. When they get to Form 3 they have grown and developed a nice, attractive figure their performance starts going down. So, we will be trying to discourage them from having such relationships with boys pointing out the negative effect on their performance. But it is of little influence, the learners do not take that advice. (Teacher, Interview)

There are however contradictions through which teachers made sense of sexuality, with the school discouraging intimate relationships by stressing their dangers, such as the negative influence on teenage girls' academic performance. As stated by Mrs Nyandoro, they also acknowledge that teenagers are individuals with sexual needs that compel them to participate in unsafe sexual conduct detached from discourses of danger (Bhana, 2017a). Consequently, the teachers were rather tentative about intimate partner relationships between male and female learners. To the teachers' dismay, some parents actively encourage their teenage children to embrace their sexuality and accepted intimate relationships of those who are in school.

MR JIMALO: It's like some parents, they support even love activities...You have problems when for instance you try to punish a learner for love affairs. You see that they [parents] intervene and say that this is normal... I still remember it happening here. For instance, you say to the learner, "You have done this go home and bring your parents by this time." You see the parent coming here in anger [and saying], "Why this? This is normal we all passed through this stage, love is always there and the like." (Teacher, Interview)

MRS PRIDE: In my opinion, yes there are some [parents] who want to assist children not to do that. But there are some parents who say it is not an issue, because you find that in the community there may be a mother who approves of their daughter's boyfriend...he comes home, and she tells him that, "In case anything happens to my daughter, I know you are the one with her." So, she is the one who will be confusing the child. Such children then affect the others whose parents forbid them to have boyfriend/girlfriend relationships. (Teacher, Interview)

There appear to be variations and disagreements of adults' discourses concerning teenage intimate relationships among the teachers and parents. Some parents reportedly regard teenage intimate relationships as normal, a stance that has been found to decrease some of the complications related to young people's sexuality, such as unintended pregnancy (Santelli & Schalet, 2009; Schalet, 2004). On the contrary, the teachers try to stop such relations by not openly acknowledging their existence or by implementing punishment. This demonstrates some variation in adults' attitude toward teen sexuality, this inconsistency among the adults possibly confusing the teenagers about how they should view their sexuality. While their sexual agency is acknowledged, it is concurrently constrained by labelling it as 'naughty' (Bhana, 2007) and deserving of punishment, these ambiguities showing the falseness of sexual innocence discourse.

Some learners seem to indicate an acceptance of the prevailing discourse, whereby teen sexuality is considered problematic.

MUNASHE (f): Love affairs are not allowed at all...In my opinion, as school children one is coming here to get an education therefore what would one need a boyfriend for? I think that is why it is not allowed. If these were allowed schoolgirl marriages and drop-outs would increase. In the case of this school which does not have a fence, couples may just go away without anyone noticing...so if they just forbid affairs right from the start, that's alright. (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): That is not allowed at school, but school children are naughty. At times the headmaster asks us to write the names of all those having love affairs then they are punished. They (teachers) want to avoid cases of learners sleeping together or dodging lessons. For instance, a forest surrounds this school, they can just go there and have sex, or they may end up not being disciplined and not focusing on school work. (Learner, Interview)

In the excerpts above, romantic relationships are presented in stark contrast to what is considered the main duty of school children, that being getting an education (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015; Muhanguzi, Bennet, & Muhanguzi, 2011). A host of problems, including indiscipline, truancy, having sex, child marriages and school dropouts, are attributed to such relationships. As a result, the learners' viewpoint is that acknowledging and acting upon one's sexual feelings is detrimental to their educational achievement. Thus, a rejection of teenage sexual agency is considered necessary to focus on getting an education. While more of the girls

acquiesced with the teachers' stance, most boys resisted this repression of teenage sexuality. While they acknowledged it was forbidden to have intimate relationships within the school, they challenged this on biological grounds and found ways to circumvent this inhibition.

FRANK (m): That would be *misikanzwa* (misbehaving) on the part of pupils.

VSM: But it happens?

FRANK (m): Yes. As part of a person's life cycle, it is common among teenagers.

(Learner, Interview)

PANASHE (m): It is forbidden at school, but we see that it's part of nature. These things have always been there so individuals will continue doing so, but they try not to have it happening.

VSM: So, have you ever tried to tell the teachers that you are forbidding this, but this is just nature?

PANASHE (m): No, we do not do so because it is difficult. You will appear like one who is going against the regulations. It is wrong to do so. (Learner, Interview)

As indicated in previous studies (Bhana, 2016a; Sommer, Likindikoki, & Kaaya, 2015; Allen, 2012; Garcia, 2009), some learners contest and resist this denial of teenage sexual subjectivity by adults, and point out that it is normal for them to have sexual feelings (Tolman, 2016; Mollborn, 2015). However, by virtue of the teachers' position as adults with authority, their standpoint on teenage intimate relationship is accepted, albeit with some reservations. The learners are therefore not free to tell the teachers exactly how they feel, and covertly challenge their negative labelling and rejection of their identity as sexual beings with sexual desires.

VSM: You are not allowed to have intimate relationships here?

INNOCENT: Yes.

VSM: But do you have girlfriends?

INNOCENT: Ah yes, but it is illegal. (*Others laugh*).

VSM: You have them?

INNOCENT & ALESHA: Yes, we do.

VSM: Is it allowed then to walk home with them?

INNOCENT: No one sees us then.

MASTER L: We do so, not openly though

(Form 4 Boys FGD, Rufaro Secondary School)

STICKROD (m): ...not allowed because they say you may end up engaging in sex and eloping while still in school...you will be thinking that teachers just want to stop you from enjoying yourself. (Learner, Interview)

The ChiShona word, *misikanzwa*, is used to describe teenage intimate relationships, and means being naughty or misbehaving. It assigns a negative label to such relationships as something against the local socio-cultural norms and expectation, with the learners agreeing with this meaning and use. Adults have the power to label behaviour and indirectly influence the actions

of teenagers, with the boys in the FGD making use of the term '*illegal*', showing their own way of understanding the strength of elders' view against relationships. Such an outlook equates young people's sexuality with 'deviance' (Allen, 2004), hence learners actively engage in intimate relationships away from the adult gaze, justifying them as part of the normal developmental feelings they have as young people. By labelling teenage sex and relationships as wrong or unsafe, the teachers do not make a distinction between harmless and dangerous sexual acts (Schalet, 2011). It appears the learners recognise that sexual acts, such as caressing, are not harmful, as they have intimate relationships and probably caress away from the gaze of adults. Schools refute the sexual, and desexualise schooling interactions, resulting in the expression of sexual culture in spaces where there is less control or supervision by teachers (Allen, 2008), for instance on the way to and from school.

Nevertheless some teachers considered heterosexual intimate relationships as a normative aspect of growing up, necessary for teenagers to gain relationship skills among themselves.

MR HILLARY: Ah naturally it's quite difficult to put a stop on that one as teenagers. Yes, we might try to stop such things, but I think there are certain times when we feel that this is quite essential. We are supposed to go through a natural growing up of a human being, because if they skip some stages like this one, that's when we have challenges when somebody gets to a stage whereby they are supposed to marry. It's quite difficult for them to approach a lady and talk to her and they choose the easiest, and naturally the easiest are those prostitutes. So possibly if they exercise, get practice and they talk and that stuff. It's unfortunate there is no guarantee that you will be able to control them once they get out of the school, otherwise I wouldn't see anything bad with children, I would call them children...having their own affair, relationships among themselves. I think that would be an experience that is somehow necessary in their growing up. We don't really have a stand at this school... but we know that this one is having a relationship with this one, but we haven't seen.

VSM: You don't talk about it?

MR HILLARY: Not as such. So, it's not like we condone, like them to have relationships. But we don't have a firm standing when it comes to that, on having their own relationships as children. (Teacher, Interview)

The teachers frame the relevance of teenage intimate relationships in terms of anticipated roles of males in adult relationships. There is a reluctant acknowledgement that such relations among teenagers are normal, and provide a social context in which they gain knowledge and social skills necessary for their future roles in intimate and sexual associations (Hair, Jager, & Garrett, 2002). Gender delineates the social groups of women and men, by placing them in divergent

positions in all aspects of life, even the sexual (Jackson, 2006). Therefore, teenagers draw on these positionings in sexuality as they construct and demonstrate culturally constructed feminine and masculine identities (Allen, 2007a). In the study context, femininity and masculinity entail, among other attributes, indicating sexual interest in a person of the opposite sex. Hence gender and sexuality interrelate in heterosexuality, as an individual's gender identity can be engaged to regulate sexuality while their sexuality can influence how they are viewed in their gender (Jackson, 2006). Intimate heterosexual relationships are therefore an important sphere in which teenagers comprehend and produce masculine and feminine identities and practices in varied and intricate ways. Importantly, teachers ambiguously situated teenage sexuality as both innocent, future-oriented as well as deeply rooted in the expectation of heterosexuality.

#### **5.4 Girls, you need to be decent, do not get involved with boys.**

Teenage sexuality is characterised by protective discourses that ignore love and accentuate the danger and risk of sexuality particularly for the girls (Bhana, 2017a; Muhanguzi & Ninsiima, 2011). Teenage romantic relationships are a context within which teen sex might occur, the focus being on forbidding sexual encounters by reinforcing their consciousness of the inherent risk. The learners in the interviews were able to specify the perceived dangers of sexual intercourse such as unwanted pregnancy, early unplanned marriages, pregnancy complications and maternal death.

FRANK (m): We are school children; it may happen as a result of naughty behaviour, this sexual intercourse. But as school children we are not allowed, because you may end up facing challenges like pregnancy. This will result in marriages that I mentioned before. The girl will end up saying, "I can no longer stay at our home." Then she elopes to her boyfriend in the end. (Learner, Interview)

JUNIOR JOKER (m): People are educated that they should stop indulging in sex so as to prevent pregnancy. Because if you get pregnant while your bones are not yet strong you may give birth through Caesarean operation or die while giving birth. So you are told that it is better to abstain. (Learner, Interview)

Learners also noted the possible negative effect of teenage relationships and sex on academic performance.

FRANK (m): Even our parents tell us that when you are still going to school you should not engage in sex as this can affect your academic performance as you will focus on issues not concerned with your schoolwork. (Learner, Interview)

FAITH (f): If I have a boyfriend here my mind will no longer be on my school work, I will be thinking about him always. (Learner, Interview)

Teenage heterosexual relationships require young women to expend a substantial amount of time and passion in maintaining them (Allen, 2004). Once some girls get involved in an intimate relationship it seems to literally saturate their whole being, to the extent where they fail to concentrate on their school work. This could account for learners' accounts of teacher emphasis on the dangers of sex especially for the girls.

FAITH (f): Ah the teachers here, in the G and C lessons maybe they are shy to tell us in depth or what, I don't know. They only tell us issues like girls you have periods, girls do not sleep with boys you will get pregnant. That's all they tell us. (Learner, Interview)

RUTH (f): The teachers counsel us saying, "Girls you need to be decent do not get involved with boys as yet." (Learner, Interview)

As indicated by the learners, there is a focus on discourses of danger, where girls' sexuality is framed as problematic and sexual activity is linked with negative outcomes, such as pregnancy or STIs (Allen, 2007b). The message reinforces gender ideologies, where femininity is simultaneously associated with sexual self-control and accountability for boys' 'unmanageable' sexual desires (Schalet, *et al.*, 2014; Tolman, 2012). In this way, girls are blamed and made responsible for preventing the unpleasant consequences of teenage sexual activity.

Nonetheless, parents revealed that within the family context, girls are prepared for future marriage and male sexual pleasure before the onset of menstruation. Among the participants' ethnic group, this normally involves the elongation of the labia minora.

CHIPHERA (f): She is also taught how to prepare her private parts as this is what was done by our elders... she will continue... stretching the labia on her own... Our elders say that this child will not just stay, she will get married one day. When she gets married, most men especially in the past would return her to her people if she did not have [elongated labia] ...because they say our men are never satisfied. When he meets someone else with elongated labia, he would compare with what he has left at home. So, the man might end up having an extra-marital affair. (Parent interview)

Labia elongation is a fundamental characteristic of Shona womanhood in Zimbabwe (McKay, Dune, MacPhail, Mupedzahama, & Maple, 2014). It is similarly a part of a woman's identity among the Baganda of Uganda (Mwenda, 2006; Tamale, 2006). Elongated labia are largely intended to arouse the man sexually (McKay, Dune, MacPhail, Mupedzahama, & Maple, 2014; Mwenda, 2006), although some women state that their sexual feeling is also heightened (Tamale, 2006; Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003). Discourses on male sexual pleasure serve to give meaning to the practice of labia elongation, as it is perceived to safeguard male fidelity (McKay, Dune, MacPhail, Mupedzahama, & Maple, 2014) and legitimise men's extra-marital sexual activity if their expectations are not met (Venganai, 2017; Mwenda, 2006). This demonstrates how cultural heterosexual practices are biased in favour of male sexual pleasure (Connell, 2005). Those who do not go through the process of labia elongation are looked down upon and considered incomplete (Venganai, 2017). Ironically, as stated by the Shona women in Venganai's (2017) study who had elongated labia, they also felt incomplete when they had no power over their men's faithfulness. However, there is no mention of women's sexual pleasure or possible recourse if they do not experience sexual pleasure or fulfilment in marriage. The oversight on women's sexual pleasure is associated with situations where men's power over women is upheld by the dominant form of masculinity (Ratele, 2008). At the same time, an emphasised femininity conforming to women's subordinate status and focusing on obliging men's pleasure and needs (Connell, 1987) is held up as a model of good womanhood. Women are therefore mediators of sexual gratification (McKay, Dune, MacPhail, Mupedzahama, & Maple, 2014), while their own desire is neither acknowledged nor encouraged. Venganai (2017) concludes that labia elongation is also about deference to mature female and male power.

Gender inequalities in the domain of sexuality are further entrenched with the onset of menstruation. Earlier studies indicate that although menstruation is a normal female physiological process, it is associated with secrecy and to some extent shame (Mason, *et al.*, 2013; Burrows & Johnson, 2005).

REMEMBERANCE (f): When girls start having periods they must be decent. It should not be known by anyone else that today they are having a monthly period. They should always be having enough pads supplied by the parent. (Parent, Interview)

CHIPHERA (f): When she has her first menstrual period, a girl might be confused and afraid because it is something she would not have experienced before.

Therefore, she must be taught what to do, how to dress so that not everyone knows about it. (Parent, Interview)

The women's statements echo similar findings from South Africa, Kenya and Malawi, where the family provides girls with necessary details concerning puberty (Mkhwanazi, 2010) after menarche has occurred rather than before (Mason, *et al.*, 2013; Munthali & Zulu, 2007). While they help girls to deal with any anxieties in relation to menstruation, the emphasis on making sure no one else knows about it might serve to heighten girls' shame regarding a natural process. An element of parental panic also emerges around the onset of menstruation.

REMEMBERANCE (f): I should also advise her that now that you are having periods you will attract attention, but once you have sex then you will not go to school well. You may be made pregnant by a poor boy, which is not wise because then you will remain poor. Have self-discipline; do not play with boys because you will get pregnant. (Parent, Interview)

CHIGOGODA (f): As she grows I expect that around 13 years of age I must teach her certain things, usually that is when menstruation starts. Things like when you menstruate you must do this and that so that she is not confused and anxious. I also tell her that she must not rush into marriage because that is the biggest problem facing girls these days. (Parent, Interview)

Parents implied that sexual interest is awakened at menarche, a momentous bodily sign of movement toward adulthood, although at this stage she may still be a child and viewed as immature for sexual activity (Burrows & Johnson, 2005). Menstruation is discursively linked to sexual activity and pregnancy (Mason, *et al.*, 2013; Munthali & Zulu, 2007), with considerable effort being directed towards advising girls about its reproductive significance (Munthali & Zulu, 2007). In this rural setting, teenage premarital sex is discouraged and pregnancy often necessitates marriage, which heightens parents' panic and the need for surveillance of girls to avoid this, as their contact with boys is presumed to be inevitably sexual and risky (Bhana, 2015b). On the contrary, parents indicated that when boys reach puberty their sexual desire is acknowledged and they are prepared for when they have sex.

CHIPHERA (f): They [boys]... take traditional medicines for their backs *kana vaputudza* [reached puberty]. They are taught what they would do when they encounter a girl. (Parent, Interview)

Masculinity is not natural, it is socially constructed (Connell, 2005), which means that certain acts or behaviour constitute manhood in different cultures. From Chihera's statement, it can be construed that in this community sexual prowess is an expression of masculinity (Bhana, 2018). Culturally, males are supposed to have a strong 'spine' based on a perception that this is

necessary for sexual competence, hence the provision of relevant traditional medicine. Boys are taught what to do when they encounter a girl but girls are not provided with similar instruction, thereby producing and reinforcing male dominance and assertiveness in intimate relationships. Furthermore, whereas girls are warned against associating with boys for fear they might engage in sex, boys have the liberty to do so.

MANDEBVU (m): Yes, I encourage the boy that he must not have desire for many girls. Long ago it was better, but now in our schools we have children who have been affected, even when they are still young, by this disease that has come [HIV]. You see, we advise them to have self-discipline because once he can do that then he shall live well... as the father you tell your son that he must exercise restraint because there are diseases these days.

VSM: ...so it means the boy may not even be a virgin [when he gets married]?

MANDEBVU: Yes, it is not a problem. (Parent, Interview)

Sexual double standards exist when self-discipline for boys does not necessarily mean abstaining from sex altogether, but rather not having many sexual partners in the context of the HIV epidemic in the country. The sexual behaviour expectations for boys show that masculinity is part of a bigger relational structure co-existing with subordinated femininity (Connell, 2005). Heterosexuality, implied in the male sexual drive discourse and sexual double standards, is paramount to the construction of masculinity (Liong & Chan, 2018). Accordingly, provision of traditional medicines for teenage boys' backs can be understood in the broader cultural context of an active, desiring and capable male sexual subject. Conversely, girls are instructed on how to alter their bodies in line with cultural values (McKay, Dune, MacPhail, Mupedzahama, & Maple, 2014) to satisfy men's supposedly insatiable sexual desire, while their own desire is ignored. In this way, successive generations of women become complicit in their own subordination.

Learner understanding of teen relationships is influenced to some extent by the prevailing view that they are risky, resulting in adverse consequences such as pregnancy or declining educational performance. Despite with this awareness they get involved in such relationships.

PETER (m): No, it is not allowed but in real life it just happens that a boy will have his girlfriend. The age is a push factor, because some of these feelings you cannot control on your own, it just happens. But one should know when to stop. (Learner, Interview)

KUNDAI (f): Someone might say that is what I want to so there is no need to listen. Some will say I love my boyfriend all the same, so they cannot listen to the teachers. (Learner, Interview)

Peter and Kundai imply that teenage heterosexual relationships are a normal feature of their sexuality, and that some learners find themselves unable to control their sexual feelings. Owing to learners' sexual subjectivity, they believe they can consciously make decisions regarding sex (Tolman, 2012). Heterosexuality is socially conceived as the expected manifestation of sexuality and serves to establish one's identification within the peer group (Butler (1990) cited by Allen, 2004), with learners also alluding to the desire that they may have for their partners. According to Spencer, Doull and Shoveller (2014) this discourse of desire is largely missing from adult accounts of teenage relationships. Other scholars have similarly noted that female desire in particular is ignored within the school sexuality lessons, as they are usually presented as passive to the sexual requests of males (MacEntee, 2016; Garcia, 2009). However, the accounts of boys in the study present both boys and girls as having sexual agency.

VSM: So, when you are walking home with your girlfriends do you have physical contact with them?

MASTER L: Ah we caress them for a long time.

*Others laugh.*

VSM: So, you caress then abstain?

*The boys agree in unison.*

VSM: Are the girls willing to be caressed or you force them?

MASTER L: We will be in agreement.

MATT: In most cases the girls are the ones who start doing that to us.

MASTER L: They are the ones who arouse us.

VSM: So that is where it ends?

MASTER L: We just caress each other.

VSM: Alright, so that is what is not allowed at school?

ALESHA: At school they know that is what we do.

(Form 4 Boys FGD, Rufaro Secondary School)

The boys observe that teachers disapprove of teenage relationships while at the same time being aware that they have them. Discourses of danger prevail over those of desire and pleasure, thereby informing the school's view of teenage heterosexual relationships as problematic (Allen, 2004). The learners, however, resist this discourse and engage in sex for a variety of reasons, with sex for pleasure being the aim of most boys in relationships (Fortenberry, 2014), because of pressure from others.

RYAN (m): Let me say in many cases that is what's happening these days. It has to do with peer pressure because someone would have been told that it is pleasurable. In fact, then they forget other reasons for getting into a relationship. I would say in some cases it's a way of pleasing yourself using sex. That is the aim of the boys when getting into a relationship; all he would be interested in is

sleeping with the girl. In many cases, once he sleeps with the girl, he leaves her. (Learner, Interview)

Some girls consciously choose to engage in sex.

TEHILA (f): Some girls will be used to having sex. So, one may be interested in sleeping with whoever she will be going out with. In the end she may find herself pregnant. (Learner, Interview)

Others indulge in sex out of curiosity.

CONFLICT (m): In most instances when this happens someone would have been warned against it. Then he/she says, “That which am not allowed, how does it really feel? Let me experiment.” (Learner, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): In my opinion when people are forbidden from doing something, they want to experiment to find out why. (Learner, Interview)

It was also observed that boys gain prestige from having sex.

VSM: Why would someone want to sleep with someone whom he is not love with, while also not doing it for the money like you said?

RYAN (m): Peer pressure for one to be considered as ‘bad’ (*ndakaipa*), or to be seen as someone among many others. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): Then there is peer pressure among friends. One of them might be influencing others saying, “If you have a relationship with this one and you do not sleep with her then *hapana chawaita* (you have not done what is expected).” This happens especially among the boys so in the end due to this pressure someone [the girl] ends up pregnant. (Learner, Interview)

Sexual status amongst peers is important to teenage boys, with some indicating that they were unwillingly drawn into sexual relationships to avoid negative labelling by other boys. The boys relate having sex to the notion of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), in which sexual prowess must be confirmed. To demonstrate this esteemed form of manhood, sexual activity becomes a significant aspect of heterosexual relationships.

TADIWANASHE (m): At times we just pressure on one another to have a relationship with someone. Once we do that to someone, he now wants to satisfy our thoughts, “If I do not do what has been suggested by the boys, they will say I am a coward.” So, in the end he goes out with the person, but it is of no benefit to us. Er, it might be said that I am not a man. That is why we are doing it. (Learner, Interview)

Previous studies have also identified peer pressure as a significant factor in teenage males’ perception of sexual activity, even risky forms, as constitutive of masculinity (Boislard, van de Bongaratt, & Blais, 2016; Ngidi, Moyo, Zulu, Adam, & Krishna, 2016; Tolman & McClelland, 2011). The excerpts indicate a disagreement between adults and teenagers on constructs of

acceptable teenage sexuality, with the latter's active agency in sexual activities contrasting the former's wishes for innocence and delayed sex. Allen (2007c) cautions that programmes designed to thwart or control students' sexuality are more likely to counteract the intended outcomes, such as delaying sexual debut. As noted by Jewkes and Morrell (2012), girls also have sexual agency, although they are commonly portrayed as passively accommodating male sexual desire.

The teachers also deliberated the various motives for learners' involvement in sexual activities, and indicated that sexual relationships have become part of teenagers' identity and a source of pride. Intimate relationships among them confirm peer group standing and are representative of heterosexuality through which gender is constituted (Allen, 2004; Kehily, 2001; Mac an Ghail, 1995).

MR NDLOVU: As I said it's a question of pride. It's like it's an identity to them.

VSM: And if you are not doing it?

MR NDLOVU: You are looked down upon. (Teacher, Interview)

Heterosexuality is a major site through which gender is enacted (Sweeney, 2014; Allen 2007a), with masculinities being produced through valorisation of heterosexual prowess (Bhana, 2018; Kehily, 2001). While those not having sex may be looked down upon, as stated by the teacher, contrary to local cultural notions of acceptable female sexuality, teenage girls were perceived as gaining some inexplicable positive reputation from being known as sexually active.

MR NDLOVU: Ah honestly speaking, these girls I think they enjoy, it's like it gives you a status, even sleeping with a boy...Because like this fence that is being put around...The [school] head is trying to confine them, because they come here they go to the bushes there and every time they are caught, it's like they take pride in that...it can be a boy at this school or someone from outside, but they will go to a place where they will always be caught. So, it's like from the way I see it they take pride in being caught so that people can know that I can also do it.

VSM: Okay. So, are the boys taking pride in the same thing?

MR NDLOVU: Huh they are the same. Boys eh, but it's most rampant with girls, because you will find that it starts from these small ones Form 2, 3 and 4. So boys would also do it, it's something that is not taboo to them to be involved in sexual relations, they just feel it's something they have to do. (Teacher, Interview)

In a patriarchal setting, gender differences are normally expressed in terms of desire and practice in sexual relationships. While evidence of sexual prowess positively affirms a teenage boy's masculinity, femininity tends to be more characterised by a perceptible but self-controlled sexual interest in the opposite sex (Sweeney, 2014; Mathe, 2013; Allen, 2007a).

These cultural expectations regarding expression of sexuality serve to establish sexual reputations in gendered ways (Plante & Fine, 2017; Sanjakdar, 2011; Kehily, 2002). Sexual double standards are evident when sexual prowess gives girls a bad reputation but earns boys a positive one (Sweeney, 2014; Mathe, 2013; Schalet, Hunt, & Joe-Lander, 2003). Nevertheless the teacher indicated that these cultural expectations regarding female sexuality may be challenged by the teenage girls in the school, and that ensuring their indulgence in sex becomes public knowledge at the school, girls draw attention to their sexuality (Schippers 2007; Schalet, Hunt, & Joe-Lander, 2003). During interviews with both learners and teachers at Tariro High School, there was constant reference to the fence being erected around the school to physically restrict sexual activities of learners. The fence became a symbol of the school's surveillance and regulation of sex (Foucault, 1978), the learners supposedly resisted this control by deliberately being caught with their partners just outside the school, and reportedly pulling down the fence at some points even before it was completed. Both teenage boys and girls thus contested and resisted the innocence and protective discourses in the school.

## **5.5 They do not really tell us what to do if these feelings overcome you.**

Given that teenagers may engage in sex, as discussed in the previous section, there is anxiety with regards to their susceptibility to HIV and pregnancy (Bhana, 2017a). The learners highlighted that the adults in their lives advised them that abstaining from sex until marriage was the best way to manage the risks associated with sexual intercourse

KELVIN (m): It is said that it is important for individuals to start having sex after the wedding, when you are married. (Learner Interview)

Parents discouraged teenage premarital sexual activity, as teenage boys and girls are seen as children. The expectation is that they would have sex after marriage, and when they are adults, with parents nevertheless being aware that some unmarried teenagers were indulging in sex.

GETRUDE (f): I think that is the most important message... the right thing is to give children the message that they should not have sex until they are married. If only they can understand and respect that message. (Parent, Interview)

NYADZAI (f): We must emphasise that if children can listen and understand when we advise them that abstinence is best. But I believe 95% of our daughters are having sex before marriage. (Parent, Interview)

The concepts of 'child' and 'sexuality' are viewed as conflicting and irreconcilable (Renold, 2006), which draws attention to the contradiction between the adults' wishes for maintaining childhood innocence and delayed sexual activity, and the teenagers' active agency in sexual activity. In most of the individual interviews with learners, self-control as the starting point for abstinence was emphasised, particularly for the girls.

FAITH (f): My grandmother says a girl must have self-control. With reference to this problem of relationships with boys, she always tells me that it is okay to have a boyfriend but only at the right age. There are some girls who have sex when they have boyfriends. So, my grandmother says one should be humble and have self-control. (Learner, Interview)

NOBLE (m): Yes, we are taught. On Wednesdays we assemble, and we are taught about self-control...Even at home they tell us. At times, the people from the health department come to school and talk to us. They come and teach us.

VSM: What do they say you do to practise self-control?

NOBLE: For instance, if one has a boyfriend who is a *home defender* (school leaver) you should not agree to everything that he says, at times you should say no. If he says something bad you should approach your parent or guardian or come to school and say I do not like what my boyfriend asks me to do. Then you will receive some guidance and counselling on time.

VSM: So, are the girls coming to say that?

NOBLE: I have not heard of anyone who has done that. (Learner Interview)

VENUS (f): You can just tell the boy that you do not agree with what he has said. If you see him taking you to secluded places you should tell him, or just run away from him. (Interview)

VSM: Are the girls running away?

VENUS: Ah at times the girls will be interested because in most cases when a girl is in a relationship they view their boyfriend as the only one. (Learner Interview)

While the family and school's focal point is self-control, when confronted with the reality of teen sexuality, this fails to adequately address young people as actively invested in sex. Of note is the inference that boys are perpetrators of sexual activity, while girls are passive victims of boyfriends and simultaneously carry the burden of self-control. This indicates the gendered nature of such relationships, where girls are in a subordinate position but also appear to be invested with the power to work against male dominance in such situations, probably because they are not expected to be actively taking part in sex. However, as noted by Venus, the girls are equally interested in sex as the boys, thus the burden of self-control should logically be shared by both. This raises issues of internal divergence between impulse/cognition; boys/girls; youth/parents (Schalet, 2011). Adults perceive girls as more inclined to carry the burden of self-control for both, as their actions are assumed to be less likely to be influenced by impulses.

This finding echoes the assertion that it is such discourses about ‘sexualities’, ‘pleasures’ and ‘young people’ circulating in society that influence the school’s handling of learner sexuality (Allen, 2007c). The teachers tend to view the girls as more in need of sexuality and reproductive health education than the boys, as noted by the framing of potential problems in the form of the example given by Noble above. The teachers gave prominence to girls’ susceptibility, necessitating further sexuality education lessons for them, without comparable lessons for the boys as stated by one school head.

MR NGONI: At times we engage other specialists like, for instance reproductive health; we have a certain Mrs C for family planning and other issues. She comes in and she meets with the girls...For the boys, ah so far, we have not had anyone. (School Head, Interview)

This corroborates the finding by Iyer and Aggleton (2013) in their study of Ugandan schools, in which the sexual and reproductive health care of male learners is generally ignored. The feminisation of sexuality means that boys may not get the chance to learn to be accountable and considerate men in the community (Muhanguzi & Ninsiima, 2011). In addition, teenage boys are left vulnerable to harmful sexual and health consequences due to established discourses concerning masculinity. Moreover, one of the teachers was sceptical of the value of this continued focus on teenage girls’ sexuality, as it coincidentally handicaps them in terms of academic and career advice and aspirations.

MR DHADHIYA: The lady teachers...often meet with the girls dealing with social problems, but academically I haven’t seen the thrust where they talk to them in terms of performance in class...they sort of leave it to the subject teacher. Whereas if maybe we could encourage them, motivate them academically... the girls would know, “If I went to school and did this ‘n that I would get such and such a job like so and so did,” ...They simply look at the girl child not being abused. They look at the sex; they just want to prevent schoolgirl marriages, to protect the girls so that the girl passes through the system. She will pass like a robot. Motivate them academically so that they look forward to getting a job, a profession or something like that, that’s better. It’s like its left to the boys. (Teacher, Interview)

The persistent focus on girls’ sexuality is correlated to ideas of teenage girls’ biological fate as wives and mothers (Kehily., 2013). The teacher suggests that career guidance would be more meaningful in assisting teenage girls make professional choices in life. When coupled with cultural factors that promote marriage rather than education for girls, the focus on teenage girls’ sexuality in school inadvertently reinforces the notion that marriage is the pinnacle of a woman’s success.

Despite the prominence given to self-control, it is an ineffective strategy for some girls, as opportunities for self-control disappear in contexts where there are differences between the desires and interests of girls and their boyfriends.

VSM: Are the boyfriends not part of the class when you learn about self-control?

KUNDAI (f): Just a few girls have boyfriends who are students here. Most of them have boyfriends who are not in school. The out-of-school boyfriend will be thinking of getting married, while you may still want to continue with your education so there is that difference. (Learner Interview)

Self-control does not seem to be feasible when the boy is not in school, possibly older than the girl and focusing on marriage rather than education. Girls' agency is more likely to be inhibited, with the young man having power over many aspects of the relationship (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Popular discourses of heterosexuality posit that men's needs and desires are prioritised, which reflects inequitable gendered power relations (Allen, 2003), with a special emphasis on abstinence not effectively attending to learners' sexual realities, becoming irrelevant to their needs. In addition, teenagers are exposed to the risk of pregnancy and HIV/AIDS due to insufficient information on safer-sex practices (Guttmacher Institute, 2016), and may find it difficult to seek advice when they believe they will be blamed. In addition, there is little clarity on how to abstain from sex besides the emphasis on physical activity as a diversion.

VSM: You have said it is part of the life cycle and it is normal at this stage to have those (sexual feelings). Do you get information on what you can do when you have them?

FRANK (m): Yes, we are taught in G and C lessons where they say you should be able to control your body. They say if you are a boy and you experience such feelings do not let them get stronger. You can do exercises like running or find somewhere to go and relax, or even playing games like football.

VSM: If the feelings do not go away, what do they advise you to do?

FRANK: They do not really tell us what to do if these feelings overcome you. They say you should be able to control those feelings in the first place.

VSM: So, what do they say you should do to protect yourself from STIs, HIV and to prevent pregnancy?

FRANK: Abstinence (Learner, Interview)

While abstinence is presented as the corollary of self-control, there is no information on what to do if sexual desires overcome the learners. The learners note that the teachers are not satisfactorily addressing the practice of abstinence, as indicated by the circular explanation provided; you should abstain by controlling your feelings, when feelings overcome you, you should be able to control them. The explanation resorts to the Aristotelian conception that informative action suffers from the problem of incontinence (Clouser, 1968), which here refers to knowing what is right and wrong but doing what is wrong. The assumption is that a normal

person is expected to abstain, having been well-informed about the circumstances and consequences of their action. When they decide to do the wrong thing, they do so having knowledge of both right and wrong, with the one lacking self-control in relation to sexual desire being blamed. There were no diverse personal stories on how learners handle their feelings, besides restating that they abstain, as encouraged by their teachers and parents and aptly expressed by Bobby.

BOBBY (m): But so far, I have not had a sexual relationship, but some boys do. Not because my parents say no, but I feel that whatever I decide to do is what I want. So, you just remove yourself from the situation of looking at girls...I place a lot of value on a girl who is a virgin, I respect her... I expect great things from her. Even when she gets married, parents will charge meaningful amounts according to our culture. (Learner, Interview)

The value of abstinence is framed as a personal choice, as Bobby suggests, but while it is upheld, gendered expectations in sexual relations are produced in future relations and imaginations, as he idealises female virginity and confirms the cultural value placed on virginity status. More specifically, teenage girls' recognition of desire was frowned upon and considered as risky particularly by parents.

CHIPHERA (f): That is how women fail to value themselves as women. If you have those feelings but then keep telling yourself that you have the feelings, *unopedzisira wapoya*<sup>3</sup> [you will do the wrong thing in the end]. At times you have these feelings because you are the one who keeps thinking about it, that a man and a woman do this and that...Yes, when that time comes [marriage] then you can think about it. Yes, you may have [sexual] feelings but you must resist them, [tell yourself] that I should not lose control. It [sex] is good when you are with your husband. (Parent, Interview)

Marriage is presented as the safe and morally correct place for sex, with recognition of female sexual desire as normal and real before marriage being regarded as risky, as it would ultimately lead to one having sexual activity outside the marriage context. Chihera points out that sexual purity and restraint demonstrate respectable femininity, while premarital sex for teenage females is thought of as *kupoya*. Chihera uses the analogy of a fence to explain regulation of sexuality, wherein sexual desire is kept in check. Acting upon that desire before marriage is regarded as *kupoya*, going against the moral injunctions of culture and escaping through an undesignated point. The image of the fence and escape articulates the monitoring and surveillance that characterise female sexuality (Wynn & Hassanein, 2017; Kaivanara, 2015).

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<sup>3</sup> *unopedzisira wapoya*- literally one is fenced in but getting out by escaping through undesignated points

Teenage girls are made accountable for, and urged to steer clear of sex (Bhana, 2018). While it was clear that despite the teachers' and parents' overwhelming insistence on abstinence as vital in circumventing the dangers of teenage sex, they do not provide learners with comprehensive and pragmatic information concerning the practice.

CHIGOGODA (f): (*laughs*) Ah we have never talked about that... Probably that is where the problem is. (Parent, Interview)

GETRUDE (f): Ah, on that matter we wouldn't know if they are taught at school. But in the home, we just tell the child that as you grow you may have certain feelings but just ignore it they will pass. (Parent, Interview)

Parents disclosed that they did not adequately assist teenagers with information on how to remain abstinent while experiencing sexual desire, and passed on the responsibility of advising teenagers on abstinence in detail to the school. However, teachers appear not to be focusing on the issue in greater detail.

MRS NYANDORO: Truly it is difficult, personally I hadn't thought of it since I just thought self-control is good because can a person fail to control oneself? I am just saying this even though the learners have not been open with us on this issue. Maybe if you get sexual feelings, one need to consider moving from the area that he/she is in and go somewhere else, can you remain with those feelings? Not anymore. (Teacher, Interview)

MR NDLOVU: Huh of course it's not something you can say do this, but of course we always tell them to get themselves occupied with other things so that they don't think of that; and of course normally if you are someone who has not done it [had sex], you wouldn't know of such feelings... those feelings cannot just come when you are seated and think you want to sleep with a boy or whatever. So maybe it's because they have done it, maybe not slept with a boy, but maybe they have been touched or whatever such that the feelings come. (Teacher, Interview)

MRS LIFE: On that aspect, maybe it is just that some of us cannot tell them. For instance, in my case I know that the Bible does not condone masturbation. I just tell them that you should remove your mind from that and put yourself in another activity. Even just standing up and walking, by the time you get to the toilet such thoughts will be out of your mind... That's all I can tell them, I cannot tell them of other strategies employed by other people because they are not acceptable to me. (Teacher, Interview)

The adults' emphasis on abstinence as a prevention strategy against HIV and teenage pregnancy appears divorced from learners' lives on two levels. Firstly, it fails to acknowledge that some learners are already having sex, so abstaining may no longer be possible for them. Secondly, for those who wish to abstain, there is no clarity on how exactly to practise this. It is also

evident that teachers' personal opinions and considerations have an influence on what they teach (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Buston, Wight, & Scott, 2001) regarding abstinence. For instance, they were of the view that no one can really fail to have self-control, and that having sexual desire in the first place is an indication that girls have been touched in inappropriate ways, as indicated by Mr Ndlovu. . While abstinence is one of the many safer sex practices, it was apparent that it received excessive prominence in teachers' focus in the Guidance and Counselling lessons. A safer sex practice is an action that lessens the risk of acquiring or spreading a sexually transmitted infection. Besides having protected sex, other practices include abstinence, getting treated for an STI, becoming informed about healthy sexuality and STIs. There is superficial coverage of other safer sex practices by teachers and parents, while emphasis is placed on abstinence as the best way to prevent pregnancy and STIs. In the event of pregnancy, learners are advised to seek help rather than having an illegal abortion.

VSM: So, on protecting yourself from HIV and other STIs, what do they say you should do?

MUNASHE (f): It is the same, it not really talked about. They just say use condoms or even abstaining from sex, that's the best way. (Learner, Interview)

VSM: But are you taught that yes you might have sex, but you may prevent pregnancy this way?

GABRIEL (m): Yes, a bit, especially here at school they teach us what we call Guidance and Counselling. They teach us how to prevent pregnancies. They say that abstinence is the key, don't get involved in sex in the first place so that you do not get pregnant. Secondly if you are pregnant they advise us to tell someone close to you, even a friend so that you do not to think of aborting. (Learner, Interview)

PANASHE (m): Yes, we are taught here and there, because they do not really expect it as we are school children. So we are not taught much about that. (Learner, Interview)

KELVIN (m): That is not often talked about because they [teachers] say you are still school children we do not encourage you to do such things [having sex]. (Learner, Interview)

Learners believe that the scant coverage of safer-sex practices in school is premised on the view that school children are not really expected to be having sex in the first place. However, they noted that abstinence is difficult to practise.

TADIWANASHE (m): The method we should make use of is abstinence, stay away from sex...it protects 100%. Then it just has the disadvantage that it is difficult. (Learner, Interview)

While the adults have the power to decide what information to provide or withhold from both boys and girls, they do not provide in-depth coverage of safer-sex practices. This protective discourse leaves teens vulnerable to HIV and pregnancy, and influences how they understand their sexuality.

MUNASHE (f): Yes, we were taught [about safe sex] but given our age I think they will be thinking that it is a problem to tell us about contraceptive methods. We may start doing whatever we want because we know there are no chances of pregnancy. So, at our age they say you are not even allowed to sleep with a boy so there are few chances of being taught how to prevent pregnancy. That is because they know that if they teach about that, girls will start sleeping with boys. (Learner, Interview)

The powerful protective discourse is embraced by learners to the extent that they concur with the knowledge of safe sex might result in uncontrolled sexual activities among teens. There is dissonance between adults' protective discourse and learners lived sexual realities, as the learners indulge in sex, but at the risk of HIV and pregnancy due to a lack of knowledge.

OBVIOUS (m): They can abstain from sex until they get married or make use of condoms. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): If one fails to control sexual feelings, some do not have knowledge of how to use a condom.

VSM: Don't you have demonstrations of how to use them in class?

TADIWANASHE: They don't demonstrate because they say abstinence only. (Learner, Interview)

Besides lack of knowledge, learners note that condom use is couched in negative connotations.

STICKROD (m): Yes, they talk about them [safer-sex practices] but they will be saying don't even do it.

VSM: What of the issue of HIV, what do they say you should do to protect yourself?

STICKROD: They say *kana uchiti haunzwise* (if you consider yourself as one of those who finds it difficult to understand) you must use condoms... but if you have understood then don't do it. (Learner, Interview)

TINOTENDA (m): You must use condoms, but the best thing is abstinence. (Learner, Interview)

Use of condoms is prefixed with *kana uchiti haunzwise* (if you cannot understand simple things), the phrase also implying that one is unwisely daring to do that which is clearly dangerous. Therefore, it is deemed a method for those who are not capable of making wise decisions regarding their sexuality. As a result, condom use is unlikely in a context where societal attitudes deter it (Sommer, Likindikoki, & Kaaya, 2015), which results in a hierarchical

ordering of abstinence and other safer-sex practices by learners. The learners revealed that boys do practise safer sex when they have older married women in the village as partners.

TADIWANASHE (m): For those boys having relationships with married women, they may agree to practise safe sex because the woman would be afraid of getting pregnant while the husband is away. He will demand to know how this happened. So, they can plan...that is how the issue of protection comes in; so that when the husband comes he will think the wife is not doing anything. (Learner, Interview)

Married women encourage boys to practise safer sex to deceive the husband, with the boys in this situation losing the masculine power that they exercise over girls. The adult women, by their age and marital status, have power to determine aspects of safe sex in the relationship. While the boys might be protected from STIs in this context, it is not certain whether they get the correct information concerning safer-sex practices from these older women.

Much of the HIV and AIDS discourse centres on the adverse results of unprotected sex and promotion of abstinence (LaFont, 2010), with male and female condoms offering dual protection for HIV transmission and pregnancy. However, as noted by previous studies, promotion of condom use in school sexuality education is influenced by teacher convictions regarding the issue, informed in some instances by personal and religious factors (MacEntee, 2016; Francis & DePalma, 2014). One of the teachers explained how they decide on what to focus on in sexuality education lessons.

MR HILLARY: Yah we talk of condoms, but I wouldn't like to encourage kids to use condoms, because it's more like you would be giving them a green light to indulge. So, we try to emphasise on the need for abstinence. (Teacher, Interview)

Sexuality and HIV education in school settings has been found to be the nucleus of prevention strategies for teenage HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy (Haberland, 2015). Nevertheless, the teacher's statement is an indication that condom use is mentioned as part of the curriculum, but there may be no active support for it by teachers. This ambiguity probably feeds into learners' own beliefs concerning sex, thereby resulting in risky sexual encounters in terms of both pregnancy and HIV transmission. Teachers also note the lack of depth in the knowledge provided to learners.

MR JIMALO: Information is there but they lack the practical part, because they are taught that you have to use this and that, but they are not knowledgeable of how to use them. They don't know. (Teacher, Interview)

The teachers explained that they experienced a dilemma over which message to stress in sexuality education, as they accentuated the contradiction in teaching about abstinence and other safer-sex practices at the same time.

MR HILLARY: Yes...we just talk of contraceptives in passing, because we didn't want to create an impression that there is an alternative way of doing this while avoiding this. (Teacher, Interview)

This predicament has been noted in previous studies on sexuality lessons in South Africa (Ahmed, Flisher, Mathews, Mukoma, & Jansen, 2009), and it is acknowledged that solely highlighting abstinence and the perils of premarital sex may well not effectively relate to the authentic learners' sexual lives (Muhanguzi & Ninsiima, 2011). Paradoxically, while there is a realisation and grudging acceptance that the focus on abstinence until marriage is at variance with the learners' lived experiences, which leaves them vulnerable to STIs and unplanned pregnancy, other safer sexual practices receive less prominence in school.

MR NDLOVU: Yes, it is taught especially this area each teacher is always teaching that, because even people from NAC (National AIDS Council) and even the statistics show that there is a high prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS especially at the local business centre. So, we have tried, and the Head has tried to tell them even at assembly that this area is a high-risk area, but of course we try to teach abstinence rather than safe sex. Because they are young, if you talk of safe sex it's like you are encouraging, so normally we try and teach them, "Don't do it, just wait until you mature enough." (Teacher, Interview)

MR HILLARY: We usually do not want to talk of contraceptives to kids because the feeling is that when we talk of contraceptives we are saying prevent, but we are trying to give them a message to say stop...I mean we can't actually tell the pupils to prevent pregnancy, but we want them not to do it from the beginning. So that was the thrust, let's tell the kids to stop it. We can't tell kids that, "No if you do this, use this to be safe." So, it's more like you are saying you can do it as long as you are protected. So, it's much better to tell them not to do it, not tell them how to be safe when they do it. So that was the reason why the talk of contraceptives was low. But now we are awakening to the realisation that we need to tell them about the use of contraceptives. (Teacher, Interview)

The teachers regulate information available to teenagers because of their young age, thereby exposing them to sexual risks (Aggleton, Parker, & Thomas, 2015). It became apparent that opposing discourses of teenage sexuality are played out in school: innocent and in need of protection as opposed to active and knowing sexuality (Allen, 2007b; Kehily, 2004). The need for prioritising other safer sexual practices for teenagers, besides abstinence, is not readily accepted, as that would be contradictory to innocence and protectionist discourses that teachers tended to favour. Such messages are thought to promote early sexual debut (Tushabomwe &

Nashon, 2016) and uninhibited sexual activities (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Francis & DePalma, 2014; Cohen & Tate, 2006). Nevertheless, Francis and DePalma (2014) contest the notion that approaches promoting abstinence only, on the one hand, and comprehensive sexuality education on the other, cannot be reconciled in sexuality education. They argue that they can, and should be taught together to promote teenagers' sexual accountability. Teachers, as adults have the power to decide on the type and extent of material on sexuality that is made available to learners (Francis & DePalma, 2014; Iyer & Aggleton, 2013; Moore, 2013). There is an assumption that placing emphasis on the dangers of premarital sex is the better than educating them on safer sex procedures. Such an outlook runs the risk of not preparing them for the probability of unsafe sex, even in the context of marriage.

## 5.6 You do not eat a sweet while it is in its wrapper

Considering the limited information and other hindrances associated with safer sex, it was evident that there were factors supporting unsafe sexual conduct. From the learners' point of view, the issue of pleasure seems to be significant.

FAITH (f): The way I see it I do not think they are using them [condoms]...Ah I do not know (laughter). It is because there is a Shona saying which says '*sweet haidyirwe mupepa hanzi unobisa bepa wodya rakadaro* direct,' (You do not eat a sweet while it is in its wrapper. You remove the wrapping and eat the sweet directly). I think that is why young people are getting pregnant.

VSM: But they will be aware that if I eat a sweet without the wrapper I will get pregnant?

FAITH: Yes. (Learner, Interview)

Beliefs that sex becomes less pleasurable with condom use are juxtaposed with learners' understanding of the consequences of unsafe sex. Young people engage in sex for pleasure, as implied by the learner. One of the parents conceded that when they have discussions with teenage learners in their role as Community Field Officers, there is more clarity on the dissonance between parents and their children's views on the issue of sex for pleasure.

GRACE (f): When we talk to the children they say it is enjoyable. But the parents just tell them that it is not like that...there is no parent who will encourage their child saying sex is enjoyable before you are mature, and you have your own household. (Parent, Interview)

Parents felt that an intimate relationship should not be about experiencing sexual pleasure, but rather a precursor to marriage.

RUMBIDZAI (f): I really think when a child is still at school, whether a boy or a girl, there is no need to be having a boyfriend or girlfriend until they finish school. Even if one is not good in school, it is not the end of the world. These relationships; even a girl, how can she have a relationship with someone when she is not yet ready to get married? Why would she be doing it? They should not be part of those relationships. (Parent, Interview)

Thus, within the family, the parents focus on discourses of danger and protection while ignoring the pleasure when talking about sexuality to their children. In a way, this makes their advice irrelevant to the teenagers' sexual realities. Teenage boys and girls need to be addressed in terms of their feelings and understanding of sexuality, while teachers do not seem to be addressing the issue of pleasurable but safer sex.

MRS NYANDORO: We usually stress that sex is dangerous, because we consider the age of the children, so we can't tell them that it's pleasurable. We simply tell them to wait and highlight the dangers of indulging in sex at their age. That is what we emphasise, that you become a dropout, have a difficult life plus diseases and so on, such things. That is what they are told. (Teacher, Interview)

MR NDLOVU: We wouldn't want to talk about the pleasures; we normally talk of the danger especially when you are a school child. We advise them, maybe they will be taught that in science, but not when we are counselling...people die in the community and that is what we always tell them. (Teacher, Interview)

There is an emphasis on the discourses of danger, without a focus on the positive motivations for engaging in sex (Jolly, 2016; Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013; Allen, 2007b). Teachers' disapproval of sexual relationships among teenagers is implied by the emphasis on the dangers and no mention of the pleasures of sex (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Francis & DePalma, 2014), presumably based on the notion that it is more responsible, beneficial and appropriate for learners not to be acquainted with the latter (Tushabomwe & Nashon, 2016; Allen, 2007b). When pleasure is unspoken, silence develops into a vital component of discourse, operating in conjunction with the elements that are said (Foucault, 1978). The glaring silence on pleasure in Guidance and Counselling lessons, when it is something they do experience, may indirectly function to prompt learners to contest and resist danger discourses. This makes the lessons appear less pertinent to the learners (Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013), which could account for the divergence between what they do and what is taught in sexuality education (Allen, 2004). At the same time, as suggested by one of the teachers, sexual desire and pleasure is covered in the science class, albeit in a fashion not too different from the Guidance and Counselling class.

MR DHADHIYA: Personally, when I teach my Biology it's no holds barred, I have no limit. I tell them, although there are some Shona words I refuse to use, but I don't limit myself. I make sure I am not a pastor, I am a learning facilitator. I facilitate the learning of the child, so there is no way I can hide some delicate issues. If the child is well armed with knowledge she can navigate the dangers safely because she is aware of the dangers and even those pleasures. If you give the boy to touch your tits you are encouraging him to have premarital sex, because you end up not controlling yourselves. And boys must know that you must not touch girls in certain places it's actually a crime, she must be able to report. You can pat her shoulders but not her back, breasts. The moment you do that she must report, if she doesn't report she is most likely enjoying it. That's why they get raped by the brothers, the uncles, the relatives, because they think of enjoying when they are touched on those erotic places. (Teacher, Interview)

There is an interweaving of both sexual pleasure and danger in the science class, as the teacher rightly believes that forewarned is forearmed. Learners get information on the twofold nature of sexuality, that it can be pleasurable and risky at the same time. If presented in a non-judgemental way, such information would equip teenagers to successfully navigate the supposedly perilous terrain of teenage sexuality. However, the message is couched in terms that reinforce gender ideologies, where femininity is simultaneously associated with sexual self-control and accountability for boys' desires (Schalet, *et al.*, 2014). In this way, girls are made to understand that female sexuality is predominantly risky (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016), and they are blamed and made responsible for preventing the unpleasant consequences of teenage sexual activity.

Most young people commence sexual activity in the teenage period, their susceptibility to HIV and pregnancy being a cause for anxiety (Bhana, 2017a). Unfortunately in the study setting, it was apparent that the issue of living with HIV/AIDS was not openly talked about.

VSM: Now do you have any students, boys or girls who are living with or who are affected by HIV and AIDS?

MR NGONI: No. None have come to say (laughs) that they are affected.

VSM: And you also don't know about their parents? Maybe some have come to say they are affected, not themselves as such. Do you have some who have come?

MR NGONI: No. (School Head, Interview)

MRS MOYO: We have but they have not proclaimed, or they have not come in the open to say "we are HIV positive" but we know them. But eh the parents they don't say. In the end you just know about it. But some of them are strong, you don't even realise. But some of them of course they fall sick that's when you get to know. So we have about, those that I know, we have about 2 girls and 2 boys but they have not been open about it. So...the forms come to say how many

students are HIV positive? I simply say zero [males], zero [females], and zero [total]. So then they don't get any assistance. (School Head, Interview).

The learners' lack of openness regarding living with HIV and AIDS mirrors the secrecy surrounding the issue in the community to some extent. Throughout the period I spent in this community doing fieldwork, I noted that people rarely mentioned HIV and AIDS by name. They invariably referred to it using euphemisms such as, *chirwere* (illness, sickness or the disease), with an understanding that these words do not refer to any other disease. Regardless of the absence of public declarations by persons living with HIV and AIDS, learners were perceived to be aware of its existence and pervasiveness. In addition, there is realisation by the teachers that even with a focus on danger, learners ignore the risks as they seek to fulfil their desires.

MRS LIFE: They are aware, at this school we have students who are HIV positive and at times you see that this person is sick...Even in the villages you hear them say, "So and so is sick, this time he is really sick." But that fear is not in them, they do not think about tomorrow, they live for today. At times you observe that this one is going out with this one who is ill, still someone goes there and at times they exchange partners whether girls or boys. (Teacher, Interview)

MR DHADHIYA: Now you find that a girl from an affluent family may still go for unprotected sex with a boy from a much lower income family, much lower, simply for the love of sex. Their libido may overcome their wisdom and they simply go. (Teacher, Interview)

Mrs Life noted that there are learners who are HIV positive and assumes that with this awareness, other learners should then take heed and stay away from premarital sex, as there is that potential of getting infected. However, as alluded to earlier by the school heads, both parents and learners do not openly discuss their HIV status. Thus, opportunities for openness and clarity about living with HIV are lost within the school and community. Diverse discourses of innocence, normative sexuality and danger pertaining to teenage sexuality are available to learners. These may be accepted, opposed or modified as learners create sexual identities (Allen, 2007b; Foucault, 1978). Learners might resist the discourses that focus solely on danger without allowing for desire and pleasure as not representing their sexual realities. According to Allen (2007b), a danger discourse does not concede the intricate association between sexuality and danger, as desire might be heightened by danger. One of the teachers acknowledged that teenage boys have sex for pleasure and may sometimes have older partners for gratification of their sexual desire.

MR DHADHIYA: They may not [get material benefits], because women are generally not generating any meaningful income out there. Very few women are generating income enough to give a young boy. It's like the boy may find it difficult to have sex with a young girl, but the woman is giving herself free. For the boy because it's free rather than wasting time to persuade Plaxedes who is fortified by education to refuse, to say no to sex before marriage, he goes to that woman who is ready. I don't think the boys are gaining any monetary things; they are simply getting the pleasure... The women are not paid; they want the pleasure from the young boy. Maybe because they don't have a husband, the husband is dead, or the husband is away. Maybe in South Africa, Botswana or Harare, the woman feels like having sex. She targets the boys, she knows the boy will not say no since he is simply going to have [her] for free. (Teacher, Interview)

The male sexual drive discourse characterises one central construction of masculinity (Bhana, 2018; Sweeney, 2014), with an assumption that men have an unquenchable desire and urge for heterosexual sex (Beres, 2014; Hlavka, 2014; Mathe, 2013). Therefore, by turning to older women for sexual satisfaction when teenage girls are not willing, teenage boys simultaneously demonstrate their sexual prowess and masculinity.

Placing less emphasis on condom use puts teenage girls at greater risk of HIV infection and unintended pregnancy, as girls occupy a subordinate position in heterosexual relationships, often with older partners. However, while boys occupy a subordinate position when they have older partners, condom use is more likely in those contexts at the instigation of married women as revealed by the boys in this study. This finding supports the country statistics on HIV prevalence and condom use among young people aged 15-24 in Zimbabwe. Although HIV prevalence is high in the country, it is higher for young women (7.3%) compared to young men (3.6%). Condom use for high-risk sex is higher among young men (74%) compared to young women (48%) (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2012). Various explanations for girls' vulnerability were put forward, primarily their lack of power to negotiate for safe sex with gold panners in the community. The power disparities between the partners influence their ability to negotiate for safe sex in transactional sexual relationships (MacPherson, 2014).

RYAN (m): These children are at risk, they won't be protected at all because sometimes the gold panners have other girlfriends. Some go to bars where they meet prostitutes and get STIs from there... Yes, they may be aware of such things [condoms] but fail to talk about it because they will be more focused on their aim and they know if they talk about it then they will not be given the money. So, this is the only option to get what they want. They will not talk. (Learner, Interview)

MONALISA (f): Information might be adequate, but individuals tend to ignore it; then they forget the advice given. One might say, “They are mad, they want to stop me from getting spending money.” We now take the teacher as telling us useless stuff. (Learner, Interview)

When learners’ perception of risk is low (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008), they consciously choose not to bring up the issue of protected sex for fear of losing the anticipated money or other benefits. This resonates with findings from other studies in Africa, which show that age differences and lack of economic independence commonly affect young women’s power to discuss safer sex with their partners (Wamoyi, Wight, Plummer, Mshana, & Ross, 2010; Leclerc-Madlala, 2008). Teachers assumed that a positive upshot of the feminisation of sexuality in school is that girls are more educated on sexuality issues and therefore have a better chance of knowing about a wide spectrum of safer sexual behaviour.

MR DHADHIYA: This young boy going for the sugar mummy has very little room; he is blinded getting what he doesn’t deserve. So, he cannot sit on the negotiating table, has nothing to negotiate, he is being given something which is out of his reach. But the girl child is well educated, can negotiate for safe sex. Even against a sugar daddy or a boy her age. She can plead for, especially against the sugar daddy because the sugar daddy brings you money, goodies. So, the girl will actually plead for, not demand, because these men have got money, and have got clothes, food to give; she is a receiver. She can only plead for safe sex and if the giver says, “No, I am not going to wear condoms,” she has no option...Yes, they can negotiate but they negotiate from a losing position. (Teacher, Interview)

MR NDLOVU: I don’t think they [girls] are in a position to do that, I think that is why they are talking of quite a number of pregnancies. I think they will let the boy or the males to decide safe sex or not. Normally these girls I don’t think they have it in the minds that they can also decide. (Teacher, Interview)

While Mr Dhadhiya notes that girls can become better educated concerning safer sexual conduct, the two teachers acknowledge that girls do not have the power to determine safer sexual behaviour in heterosexual relationships. They conceded that both teenage boys and girls negotiate for protected sex from a weaker position due to the operation of power derived from age and/or gender. The concepts of gender and sexuality need to be related to issues of power. There is likely to be minimal focus on gender and power in the framing of teen sexuality in the Guidance and Counselling lessons, such that teenage girls are particularly vulnerable, not only in relationships with older partners but with their peers. Power is inherent in discourses on sexuality. Heterosexual norms highlight male power and female submissiveness (Budgeon, 2014), such gender power relations being drawn into sexual practices (Beres, 2014). Knowledge of safer-sex practices by the less dominant teenage girls does not automatically result in the adoption of safer sexual behaviours.

Unprotected sex in some instances occurred because sexual activity is spontaneous and the learners did not prepare beforehand for these encounters. Learners also noted the influence of drug abuse in promoting unsafe sex.

TADIWANASHE (m): So, when they have sex they don't cater for safe sex. Sometimes it just happens that they meet and from nowhere they have sex. No one would have prepared beforehand that she will meet her boyfriend and then do this and that. (Learner, Interview)

STICKROD (m): At times the boy might have taken drugs, and then he takes his girlfriend and goes to the forest. They may end up doing the wrong things, but they would not have planned to do so. (Learner, Interview)

One of the teachers also raised the possibility that young people have unprotected sex, not necessarily because of gender power inequalities, but due issues to do with time and unavailability of condoms.

MRS NYANDORO: ...it's like they are secretly and hurriedly doing this. So, they do not even have the time to put on a condom. I do not think that time is there because they will be just sneaking into the forest so it's difficult. Even those who really know that a condom can prevent pregnancy, they don't use them...Time or they are too shy to collect the condoms, they are there at the clinic. They are placed by the window, but a lot of people visit the clinic, so I think it becomes difficult for them to pick them from there (*laughs*)...Ah no, school toilets do not have. I know condoms were placed in the staffroom for teachers but even there it seems nobody takes them. (Teacher, Interview)

By teaching about condoms, but not providing them, the school produces a splintered student sexual identity; simultaneously a sexual subject and sexually innocent (Allen, 2007a). This ambiguity does little to equip the learner with sexual agency so that they actively choose options that would protect them from danger. While condoms appear to be freely and readily available at the local clinic, cultural norms regulating teenage sexuality inhibit learners from accessing them. Unmarried teenagers are culturally expected to be sexually innocent, making difficult for them to openly collect condoms from the clinic. The teacher's laughter may indicate her realisation that although condoms are said to be available at the clinic, teenagers cannot freely access them. In addition, it is culturally inappropriate to be open about one's sexual activity in general, even among adults or those in marriage. This could partly explain why even the condoms meant for teachers and their spouses are ignored in the staffroom.

Another important facet in promoting unsafe sex was learners' choice not to practise safer sex. Learners referred to situations that did not involve any form of open or subtle coercion to engage in unprotected sex.

FRANK (m): It has to do with *misikanzwa* (naughty behaviour) that's all. One will say, "Others are doing it and nothing bad has happened to them." (Learner, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): Still, some are just naughty, and they say what anyone can do to me if I do this. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): The main issue is poverty in the home; their quality of life may force the girl to think that as soon as she gets a boyfriend, if she gets pregnant she might have a better life when she goes to live with him. In some cases, some believe that having sex just once will not result in anything, but then some get pregnant as they experiment. (Learner, Interview)

Due to a lack of adequate information, there was some experimentation and a belief that there would be no adverse repercussions, with some girls deciding to become pregnant to get married in search of a better life. All the situations described above put the learners at risk of HIV infection. This could be a result of what Sommer, Likindikoki and Kaaya (2015) referred to as 'normalisation' of AIDS, a situation where communication highlighting the threat of HIV infection becomes ineffective. The girls seem to possess a transitory power in the course of actively seeking unprotected sex in the hopes of pregnancy and an ensuing marriage. However, both partners become vulnerable to HIV infection in these encounters.

It was also reported that in some cases, boys were intentionally making girls pregnant as a way of safeguarding the relationship. The boys expressed the view that if you love a girl it is in your best interests to make her pregnant.

BOWLINE (m): In the case of boys, they may be in love with a girl and so decide to make her pregnant.

VSM: So, one would be in love with the girl?

BOWLINE: Yes, because if you do not make her pregnant while at the same time you still love her, if she meets someone else that will be the end of your relationship. (Learner, Interview)

Boys' interests take precedence in these instances, with girls being regarded as objects of male desire. Their individual interests are not taken into consideration despite their being the ones who will bear much of the burden of an unplanned pregnancy and child care tasks (Haberland, 2015). In cases of pregnancy, girls are more likely to dropout of school than boys. In summary,

the findings point to the fact that unsafe sexual activities may be consciously sought after or the result of persuasion and coercion (Sommer, Likindikoki, & Kaaya, 2015).

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Gendered heterosexual hierarchies were articulated by both boys and girls. However, there is an urgent need for learners to be trained to recognise the power relations at play in such hierarchies and to downplay explanations that resort to 'nature'. Essentialist notions of gender, as expressed by the participants, might initiate a series of harm, according to Judith Butler in an interview with Ahmed (2016 p. 485). Butler says that despite our gender assignment and its effects on our lives, it is possible through performative action to refuse to be subject to it. This happens when 'the process of self-formation within and against the terms of gender' starts (Ahmed, 2016 p.485). An understanding of how power mediates gender and sexuality is key (Haberland, 2015) in the process of self-formation and refusing to be susceptible to the discursive effects of gender. This might open up possibilities for young men and women to critically assess how gendered power may expose them to pleasure and risks associated with sexuality, and thus make prudent choices.

It was also apparent that while concern is placed on girls as the subordinate group in heterosexual relationships, there is need for similar anxiety concerning the boys. When boys have sexual relationships with older women, they occupy a subordinate position due to their age. Unequal power in sexual relations is an important aspect in the occurrence of unsafe sex (van der Geuglen, van Meijel, den Uyl, & de Vries, 2017). While the boys reported that married women insist on protected sex, for fear of pregnancy, there is room for use of other contraceptive methods, not necessarily condoms. Boys might therefore also be at risk of engaging in unprotected sex and acquiring STI infections due to possible changes in the dynamics of such relationships.

The findings of the study indicate that to some extent, sexuality education in school emphasises the dangers and risks ensuing from sexual pleasure (Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013) to provide justification for condemning premarital sex and regulating teen sexuality. Most learners embraced this view, but resisted the denial of their sexual subjectivity. As a result of the

prevailing age hierarchy, learners felt they could not openly challenge the dominant childhood innocence discourse espoused by teachers and parents. Divergence between idealised teenage sexuality and the lived realities of teenage premarital sex entail that issues pertinent to them may not be adequately addressed in the school or at home (Le Mat, 2017). This calls for a fresh understanding of teenage sexuality by adults, to ensure that young men and women are equipped to make the right choices and deal competently with the sexuality-related dangers and risks which confront them. That foundation and knowledge is indispensable for young people in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe.

Teenage sexuality is controlled by the predominant discourses of sexual innocence that is epitomised by its negative framing. Teachers and parents try to dissuade learners from sexual activity by stressing the dangers, and highlighting the significance of local cultural understandings of teenage sexuality. Their construction of sexuality is embedded within socio-cultural positions that expose their children to the risks of teenage sexuality. Ultimately, this understanding is relevant for appreciating teenagers' lived sexual realities (Sennott & Mojola, 2017). Young people's understanding and experience of sexuality is mediated by both culture and context. For instance, due to changing contexts, young people are not practising abstinence, despite cultural expectations, and as noted, females are actively interested in sexual activities. It becomes imperative for the school and parents to approach this 'resistance' by young people from the standpoint of cultural dynamism. There is a need to change the adult response to teenage sexuality from problematic to normative. In this way, young men and women may ask for and receive the support they need to experience their sexuality, in line with contemporary socio-cultural contexts.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Virginitv, culture and gender inequalities**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter relates to the second research question: In what ways do cultural norms shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe? Given the significance of gender and cultural norms in producing meanings about sexuality underlined by asymmetrical relations of power, I address the ways in which rural teenagers, teachers and parents give meaning to virginitv and the social processes through which it is produced. Control of sexuality has social consequences for the lives of both males and females (Bhana, 2018). Dominant discourses around virginitv and cultural norms stand in direct contradiction to teenage sexual well-being, albeit with contradictions. Attention to cultural processes through which relations of power are manifest is important in safeguarding young people's sexual health especially in the context of HIV.

In this chapter, I focus on the cultural valorisation of virginitv as it shapes, and is deployed by teenagers and adults in the way that they express meaning of sexuality and gender. As noted in other research in Southern Africa, virginitv has historical significance (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001; Wickstrom, 2010; Hunter, 2010). Female virginitv is used as a chief bargaining tool in bride wealth negotiations involving cattle, although cash has in some places replaced cattle (Wickstrom 2010; Hunter 2010). In Zimbabwe, female virginitv is valued based on gender asymmetrical relations of power and is supported by kinship systems and family values.

This chapter considers perceptions of teenage learners, teachers and parents regarding the virginitv discourse prevalent in their community. I highlight the complex and multivalent dimensions of gender dynamics, and argue that while teenagers are not simply dupes of cultural norms, they actively invest in and use virginitv as a marker of status. Integral to teenage experience of, and ideals around virginitv, there is a significant ambivalence where girls' virginitv is expected, while the same is unexpected for teenage boys. I also argue that conformity with, rather than resistance to cultural norms may contradictorily and simultaneously subordinate and empower teenage girls. The main theme and sub-themes that are the focus of this chapter are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Main theme 2: Virginit, culture and gender inequalities

Sub-themes	Sub-Theme headings
1. Virginit and culture	1. Girls, you must maintain your virginit
2. Virginit, marriage and HIV infection	2. If you maintain your virginit you will enjoy your marriage
3. Contesting the virginit discourse	3. My virginit is very significant to me

## 6.2 Girls, you must maintain your virginit

Teenagers said they were familiar with the concepts of *humhandara* (virginit with reference to females) and *hujaya* (virginit with reference to males), these being discussed in the family setting, school and in the community. They voiced gendered differences in the meaning and value of virginit, with prominence given to females, as noted in other studies (Bhana, 2015a; Cinthio, 2015). Most of them conceptualised virginit as sexual innocence, with its loss moralised within a heteronormative marriage discourse:

OBVIOUS (m): An individual *asati aziva murume* (who has not yet known a man). (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): Maintaining *humhandara* has to do with a girl not being with a boy who is not her husband. She must sleep with a boy when she gets married, that is how I understand it. (Learner, Interview)

In addition to the concept of sexual innocence, learners equated female virginit with maturation and development during adolescence as well as identity.

RUBY (f): A girl will be referred to as *mhandara* because she would have reached that age when she starts developing breasts...*Mhandara* basically means a girl *akazara* (whole, a virgin). When you no longer have *humhandara*, you are no longer a whole girl (*akazara*). (Learner, Interview)

TARIRO (f): It is said if you sleep with a boy just once, you lose *humhandara*, it is gone. Here it is valued because once you have wasted yourself like that, it is over. You are no longer a girl. (Learner, Interview)

Although a girl is born with a hymen, she is not referred to as *mhandara* until she reaches puberty, at which stage, it apparently assumes social significance in that it becomes a marker of identity. Females can claim the identity of ‘girl’ only for as long as the hymen remains intact. As a result, virginit was also taken as a symbol of a woman’s purity and dignity with reference

to *akazara* as ‘whole’, but loss of virginity is associated with being ‘wasted’. Power is thus accorded to female virginity and the reference to ‘wasted’ reinforces the policing and regulation around virginity. These narratives are adopted by teenage girls, as they reinforce and are complicit in their own subordination, taking on dominant ideals around virginity and female purity. The loss of *humhandara* outside the marriage context is shown to have negative implications for a girl.

FAITH (f): My grandmother...she says maintaining *humhandara* has to do with *kuzvibata*, *kuzvidzikamisa* (self-control, being decent) ... [She]says when we girls start having periods we will start having strong feelings towards boys, but as an individual you should be decent and bring such feelings under control. But if you choose to see yourself as a grown-up when you start having your periods and you give in to your feelings, you will be destroying yourself. (Learner, Interview)

The meaning of *humhandara* is based on sexual innocence, being closely interwoven with gender expectations and female purity. Thus, while puberty is a sign of maturation, the girls are not expected to consider themselves as ‘grown-up’. The loss of a girl’s virginity outside marriage is conceptualised as having calamitous consequences for social status, as indicated by using the phrases ‘no longer a girl’, ‘destroying yourself’ and ‘wasted yourself’. Nevertheless, as Faith suggests, virginity is a choice, which is indicative of girls’ power, although it is highly regulated. Faith moralises female virginity weaving into the moral logic concerning the power of virginity and the negative effects of losing it (Bachechi & Hall, 2015). Teenagers’ understanding of sexuality is subject to the current discourses and concomitant power (Allen, 2007b). The view that a girl possesses the ability to choose whether to maintain or lose her virginity entails that *humhandara* becomes an affirmation of female power and agency, but contradictorily this agency, is located in the very discourses that regulate female sexuality (King, 2014). It is apparent there exists a stringent moral code about female sexuality in the community that is communicated through the virginity discourse. This discourse generates a social reality (Foucault, 2002) that paradoxically embodies yet rebuffs girls’ sexuality. The emphasis on *humhandara* comes to the fore when teachers reproduce gender binaries, where the preservation of virginity is linked to female respectability.

TEHILA (f): It [girls’ virginity] is talked about even at school during assembly. The teacher on duty might tell us that, “Girls you must maintain your virginity, do not get involved with other people’s husbands and do not sleep with boys.” (Learner, Interview)

Having sex is framed within a moralistic discourse that is seen as inappropriate, especially where younger girls are framed as ‘sleeping’ with husbands. There is no concomitant emphasis on maintenance of *hujaya*, which works to reinforce and approve of male premarital sexual experience.

Male virginity was not talked about as much as female virginity, as some teenagers were not aware of any discussions of male virginity in the community.

PETER (m): Ah I do not think so, maybe in the churches. I often hear here and there that there are churches which mention that. (Learner, Interview)

SHARMAINE (f): I have not yet heard if boys are encouraged because boys often go to bars and they cannot be told what to do. (Learner, Interview)

The lack of emphasis on the concept of male virginity is consistent with other studies that confirm the highly regulatory ways in which female sexuality is considered, while for boys and men, sexual expression and activity is positively affirmed for the making of heterosexual masculinity (Sweet, 2017; Cinthio, 2015; Wamoyi, Wight, & Remes, 2015). Furthermore, both male and female learners could not easily delineate the meaning of male virginity. Their understanding of it was either not having sex until marriage, or abstinence until one leaves school or becomes mature.

FRANK (m): As boys we should maintain *hujaya*... There is a rule that one should not have sexual intercourse with girls. (Learner, Interview)

BRIAN (m): They say you should have self-control until you are in your twenties. (Learner, Interview)

RASHID (m): It’s not that I will wait until I get married. When I finish school... and I will be having a job. I will know then that even if I sleep with a girl and she gets pregnant, I will be in a position to take care of her and the baby. (Learner, Interview)

Discourses of sexual innocence are related to age and gender relations, although there was not much expectation that male virginity should be maintained until marriage, as is the case for *humhandara*. Flexibility is largely based on male power within sexual relations. Age, however, does impact when teenage boys talked about sexual intercourse. The focus appears to be more on waiting until one is mature or has some economic stability, with sexuality, age and provider masculinity being thus interconnected. Provider masculinity, as Hunter (2010) notes, is aligned

with male economic power. Sexual relations are thus not biologically defined for men and boys, but hinge on age and the ability to achieve provider status.

Flexibility on the meaning of *hujaya* might be a sign of minimal regulation of male sexuality. Another teenage boy thought male virginity was an insignificant matter altogether.

NOBLE (m): No, *hujaya* does not operate that way. Even if you sleep with someone it is not usually evident. (Learner, Interview)

Noble referenced the link between *humhandara* and the presence of the hymen, which is taken as evidence of a girl's virginity. On the contrary, the lack of a clear hymen among males gives boys the latitude to engage in premarital sex. The gendered difference in expectations of virginity brings to light that girls' virginity is more prominent in the discourse (Vengeyi, 2016). According to Connell (1987), sexuality is a social construction in which sexual difference is assumed. The teenagers articulate a difference in the meaning and connotation of virginity for boys and girls. However, power comes into play as the two are not only different, but also unequal (Connell, 1987). Teenagers thus reinforce, albeit with some resistance, the naturalness of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity. Such views and beliefs reproduce unequal gender relations, and may lead to endorsement of girls' subordinate position in the community.

Significantly, patriarchal values mediated the abstinence message within families, with parents depicting sexual double standards by emphasising abstinence until marriage, mainly for girls.

RUMBIDZAI (f): Yes, we talk about that because once you lose your virginity you are now an *nzenza* [loose woman]. Even the man who marries you will look down upon you, but if one preserves their virginity they can expect to live well in the future. (Parent, Interview)

GRACE (f): Girls' virginity is emphasised because they are the ones who have a bigger problem... getting married *wava mvana*, [no longer a virgin]. If your husband sees you talking to another man even when he is not your boyfriend, the husband will think that because I found you that way then you must be in love with him. Then you will find that the husband is always on your back, whatever you do he will be suspecting you...no one [does that to boys]. (Parent, Interview)

Decency is narrowed to sexual innocence, while sexually active girls are regarded as loose (Chiweshe, 2016). Disparaging terms such as *nzenza* and *mvana* are directed towards girls who have premarital sex but not boys who do the same. The culturally constructed difference between men and women result in gender differentials in power and acceptable behaviour

(Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Parents probably make sense of teenage sexuality in relation to broader social disparities (Elliot, 2010), as expressed in sexual double standards (Bhana, 2018; 2016; Museka & Machingura, 2014).

The operation of sexual double standards was apparent regarding the cultural value attached to virginity by the teenagers. This is different for males and females, with much significance placed on *humhandara* in marriage by most learners. They noted that it is extremely important for girls to remain virgins until marriage, as one who is not a virgin may find it difficult to get married or may be returned to her people if it was discovered after marriage.

NOBLE (m): Maintaining *humhandara* is important...When you get married the aunts will spread a white sheet, so that they see if the girl is truly still a virgin. If they discover that you are not, it is said that the girl may be returned to her people. (Learner, Interview)

RUTH (f): It is important to remain a virgin because you might sleep with a boy then he does not marry you. The one who eventually wants to marry you will say he wants a virgin. Then you may not find someone to marry you at all. (Learner, Interview)

Despite engaging in premarital sex, young men still have the power to demand that a potential spouse should be a virgin. Similar cultural veneration and expectations of female virginity, as one of the important markers of suitability for marriage, have been noted among male teenagers in South Africa, regardless of their own premarital sexual experience (Bhana, 2016b; 2015a). Girls may also want the same, but they are powerless to carry out actions to back their demands.

SHARMAINE (f): ...boys do not want a girl who has slept with others before. They want one who is fresh...Most boys will not be [virgins]...Ah, boys have many affairs; it is difficult...We also demand that but eish, boys are difficult because some of them get into bars, so a lot of things happen in the bars. (Learner, Interview)

STICKROD (m): If a boy sleeps with someone he might even tell others that he slept with that girl, such that a lot of boys will end up knowing about it. Now it becomes a problem for another boy to go and marry such a girl who is said to have slept with others...I have never come across boys having such a problem. (Learner, Interview)

Both boys and girls stated the importance of *humhandara*, mainly in terms of its perceived value to a husband. The meanings and value attached to female virginity intertwine with gender inequalities characteristic of gender relations in the community. Young women's sexual

innocence indirectly promotes the ego of potential future husbands, notwithstanding the fact that there are no similar expectations for the young men. The boys believe they will not knowingly marry a girl who is said to have slept with others. On the contrary, beliefs concerning the male sexual drive around the heterosexual production of masculinity are accepted without contestation (Bachechi & Hall, 2015), as articulated by Sharmaine. The sexual double standard is the foundation of the customs and values that produce and uphold acceptable teenage sexuality for boys and girls (Tolman, 2016). The sexual double standard instigates and supports sexual experience in male teenagers but condemns it in teenage girls (Zaikman & Marks, 2016; Schalet, *et al.*, 2014; Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). On the contrary, teenage boys tend to increase their peer status by indulging and making public their sexual forays (Museka & Machingura, 2014; Schalet, *et al.*, 2014). This is probably due to traditional gender ideologies that often construct masculinity, partly in terms of heterosexual sexual activity, sexual instigation and the absence of emotional attachment (Ganle, 2016).

According to Ahmadi (2016), women's sexuality is usually controlled through entrenched cultural discourse and practices. This was evident in the study where parents and learners highlighted the cultural symbols linked to *humhandara* and family honour, with no parallel for *hujaya*.

CHIPHERA (f): Earlier we said the girl is taught to value her body, not to allow boys to touch her and all that. When she has successfully maintained her virginity and gets married the husband pays a cow [*mombe yechimanda*], acknowledging that he found her *akazara* [whole, a virgin]. (Parent, Interview)

FRANK (m): Nothing [for a male virgin] ...the boy is the one who pays a cow which goes to the girl's family...Ah no you do not get any payment (laughter), it is your own business. (Learner, Interview)

SHARMAINE (f): Being a virgin is important especially when you get married. It is said when they bring *jira remasungiro* (fabric to make the mother of the bride's clothing). Your in-laws burn a hole in the middle if you were found not a virgin. Then the *jira* is of no use because it will be burnt in the middle. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): It is valued because they say there is some payment to the parents in respect of virginity when one gets married. The parents do not receive this payment if you are no longer a virgin. (Learner, Interview)

Patriarchal regulation of female sexuality is demonstrated by the celebration of the virgin bride through payment of a cow to her family. The husband pays a cow, *mombe yechimanda*, to the wife's parents in appreciation of their effort to ensure their daughter was a virgin until she was married. Gender and power inequalities are maintained through cultural practices, ostensibly celebrating female virginity and honouring the bride and her parents. These cultural practices and symbols serve to regulate female sexuality and maintain sexual double standards that give men power over women (Bhana, 2016b). Boys are not held responsible for their supposedly irrepressible sexual desires, while it is considered vital to control similar feelings among girls (Tolman, 2016). Cultural practices supportive of the virginity discourse accentuate the relationship between discourse and socially entrenched systems of power (Foucault, 2002; Allen, 2007b).

The discourse on male and female sexuality is not neutral, as it is closely interwoven with gendered relations of power. The fact that it is the husband who pays in lieu of the wife's virginity, and never the other way round, indirectly reinforces men's power and control over women's sexuality. Sexual purity and restraint demonstrate respectable femininity in the community. Matswetu and Bhana (2018) observe that the cultural practice of paying *mombe yechimanda*, presumably appreciating female virginity and giving credit to the bride and her parents, sustains gender and power imbalances. There is no concomitant cultural practice for male virginity, thereby implicitly endorsing male premarital sexual activity (Chiweshe, 2016). In this way, hegemonic masculinity instigates and validates men's domination of women (Connell, 1987). Learners intimated that the value of *hujaya* was not similarly constructed as *humhandara*, nor is it intricately linked with one's identity as a teenage boy.

TADIWANASHE (m): Male virginity is less valued; these days we are being naughty, plus as far as boys are concerned it cannot be found out that one was no longer a virgin. (Learner, Interview)

RUTH (f): A boy's virginity is less valued compared to that of the girl... a girl may not find someone to marry her (if she is no longer a virgin). They will be saying, "We are through with that one, she is useless now." The one who would have taken away your virginity might even go around telling others about it. (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): Rarely (laughs). It is difficult to understand boys; some value it but quite few. Others just think that virginity has to do with girls only. So, they believe that it is not important for them as boys. (Learner, Interview)

Boys' virginity is not as cherished or policed by society as female virginity. The absence of clear motivation for maintaining male virginity may be a result of the sexual double standard or that it is not constantly mentioned in the community's virginity discourse. The higher status accorded to *humhandara* in the marriage context creates the notion of the good/bad girl dichotomy, which is not equally applicable to boys (Dunn & Vik, 2014; Cinthio, 2015), as indicated by the teenagers.

MUNASHE (f): Obviously, even if you get married to someone of your choice, but if you have misunderstandings and he knows you were not a virgin you will have big problems. (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): It is valuable because when you get married your husband will trouble you if you had done something before (*misikanzwa*) or engaged in *zveupfambi* (prostitution). So, it can lead to problems in the marriage. (Learner, Interview)

RYAN (m): ...it seems there is a stronger bond when you marry *akakwana* (a virgin), than in a case where she is not a virgin. In addition, if we have marital problems I cannot scold her using obscene words like 'prostitute' or whatever; because I would be aware that I found her *akakwana*. Even if we have problems, we will be able to solve them in a good way. (Learner, Interview)

A girl's virginity is presumed to enhance marital bonding between the spouses, while engaging in premarital sex is regarded as misbehaving and equated with prostitution. Ryan even refers to a virgin by use of the word *akakwana*, meaning wholesomeness and therefore good. By implication, the girl who has sex before marriage is bad. Constructing normative sexualities makes gender and sexual differences fundamental and valid, thereby upholding gender and sexual inequity (Bay-Cheng, 2015; Renold, 2006). While girls are made to value their virginity, it is only so that males have power over them when they choose who to marry, providing justification for leaving some girls on the pretext that they are of loose morals (Cinthio, 2015). According to Foucault (2002), discourse influences the meaning and activities presented and accessible to actors. Within virginity discourse, female sexuality is regulated while male sexual drive is essentialised, with boys' premarital sexual activity not being viewed in a negative light. Although *humhandara* is seen as an affirmation of female agency, it does not inherently provide young women with any leverage in similarly insisting on virginity in potential husbands in this context.

### 6.3 If you maintain your virginity you will enjoy your marriage

Learners indicated that there is a turn to cultural beliefs and myths regarding the health of boys and girls engaging in premarital sex in a bid to dissuade girls from losing their virginity.

KUNDAI (f): I hear about it [the issue of *humhandara*] here and there in the village. They say you should not sleep with a boy...they say once you do that while you are still young your body will not be strong anymore. They [boys] are told not to sleep with girls because they might impregnate them. (Learner, Interview)

As boys' bodies are not believed to lose their strength in the same way as girls, they can engage in sexual activity while taking care not to make the girl pregnant, as Venus explains:

VENUS (f): Yes, they are told that they should put on a condom when they are going to sleep with someone... They say the best thing to do [for girls] is to say no [to sex]. (Learner, Interview)

The excerpts above point towards the use of condoms primarily for contraception rather than as protection from sexually transmitted infections, while girls are expected to abstain from sex. Teenagers consider virginity status to be crucial in apportioning blame in the event of HIV infection of spouses.

OBVIOUS (m): The one who was not a virgin will be blamed for instance in cases of *chirwere* (illness/disease/HIV). It will be said you are the one who was not a virgin when you came here, and you can't deny that. (Learner, Interview)

RYAN (m): Getting married to a woman *asati ambozivikanwa nemumwe murume* (who has not had sex with another man) builds trust. Just knowing that your wife was faithful in the past; means that she can be faithful now you are with her. Even when I pay at her home, I will pay without any doubts that this is my partner. Even in terms of *chirwere*, if she was not born with it she is still safe. (Learner, Interview)

Fidelity is assumed to be guaranteed in marriage if the wife is a virgin, and is also linked to issues of trust regarding HIV infection. This is assumed to be vital in clearing one from suspicion of bringing HIV into the union, with young woman becoming powerless to deny such accusations if she is not a virgin bride. Besides bringing to light the misconception that marital sex is always safe, the teenagers also draw attention to how gender and power informs their understanding of, and response to, HIV infection. The sexual double standard marginalises young women but does not sanction young men for pre- and extra-marital sex. It gives men power to hold females responsible for HIV infection in the marital union merely for not having been virgins at the time of marriage. These young people's misconceptions portray how

discourses of power generate knowledge and truth in particular social milieu (Foucault, 2002; Allen, 2007b). The virginity discourse has convinced boys and girls to accept as true the erroneous assertions on the relationship between virginity status and HIV infection. The patriarchal ideology permeating the virginity discourse indirectly buttresses the truth effects of such gender-biased ‘knowledge’. It does not matter if one partner is a virgin if the other is not, as the virgin can be infected if the other partner is already infected. Consequently, parents discouraged contraception because it is inconsistent with the virginity discourse and marriage ideal as it permits premarital sex. They are more inclined to recommend sexual morality rather than safer-sex practices that prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Elliot, 2010).

CHIMHODZI (m): We see it that way, if we teach them about preventing it is like we have given him or her a key. Such that whenever they feel like it they do so. They are still school children.

VSM: So, it is better not to talk about it?

CHIMHODZI: Yes. (Parent, Interview)

NYADZAI (f): I do not think that is proper, because if I allow my child to be in such kind of relationships, sleeping with a man who might not be the one who marries her in the end. When she later finds someone, who wants to marry her, and she has already known a man, or maybe she has already been infected. That would be a difficult situation...Especially saying that children must use tablets or get some injections to prevent pregnancy, I do not think that is alright. That is not good for our children. (Parent, Interview)

MOLLINE (f): It [virginity] is an important issue because once a child sleeps with a boy and loses virginity, she is no longer afraid, she will sleep with any boy who comes along. What will be there to be afraid of? Her virginity is lost. But if she is preserving herself she will be afraid that once I lose this, when I get married they will bring *jira remasungiro* with a hole thus embarrassing my mother, to have a daughter who got married as *mvana*. (Parent, Interview)

Providing teenagers with information and services on protected sex is considered as risky and wrong. Parents are deeply concerned about the later marriage of the daughters (Hunter, 2004; Ansell, 2001), and will not readily approve anything that goes against the cultural standards of an ideal prospective wife. Teachers similarly voiced the importance of virginity in relation to issues of trust in marriage, but highlighted learners’ scepticism

MRS NYANDORO: Er, in most cases we tell them that abstinence is the best protector, plus that if you maintain your virginity you will enjoy your marriage because you will have a lot of trust as spouses unlike the one who married when no longer a virgin... They laugh and say, “What is this you are telling us? Madam you must be lying.” One learner said to me, “Madam you understand these

things, you have been through it. Did you not fall in love with many others before you got married?" A child, saying that!

VSM: So why not just be in love without indulging in sex?

MRS NYANDORO: They say then what are you in love for? (Teacher, Interview)

MR HILLARY: There are many times when you speak to them and they seem very attentive and when you give them your back they laugh at you, "What was he saying?" You get to hear of such comments from these youngsters, like some us who *get along* with them. You will find them laughing at you saying, "*Mudhara makasara*" (Sir, you are old-fashioned). (Teacher, Interview)

As noted by Allen (2004), there is some recognition that learners are losing interest in sexuality lessons as a result of the gap between the abstinence message being promoted in school and their sexual realities. This could be because teachers tend to lay emphasis on learners' vulnerabilities in relation to sexuality while ignoring love and pleasure (Bhana, 2017a; Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013), which are important motivations for having sex among teenagers. The need for love is a human longing that also prompts sexual desire and provides significance to sexuality (Grow, 2018).

While parents felt strongly that teenage girls should wait until marriage before having sex, they were also cognisant of girls' agency and the limitations of parental regulation of sexuality.

GRACE (f): Older people are the ones who value *humhandara* [virginity]. They advise young people that if you get married while still a virgin you preserve your marriage. But the young people do not pay attention to that. (Parent, Interview)

CHPO (f): We might teach our children but it all depends on them as individuals. We might advise them but there are those who say, "What is this you are telling us, didn't you go through this stage? Isn't it you also fell in love with my father, so what is so surprising about my relationships?" So, it depends on the child and how she is responding to the message, does she say my mother is mad? ... It is difficult for one to really protect the child. As it is I may go away to attend a funeral maybe for three days. She remains alone here. I do not know what she will do then. Therefore, this issue of protecting a child, it is the child who should do that herself. I can just advise her not to do this and that but it's up to her to have the determination to have a good life through paying attention to my advice. (Parent, Interview)

Discourses function by means of individuals who might resist and contest them (Elliot, 2010). Wherever there is an exercise of power, there is a possibility of resistance as individuals have agency, as they develop their sexual subjectivity while dealing with power relations (Moon,

2008). Power functions productively through discourse to nurture a particular kind of person as individuals accept, contest or resist some discourses (Foucault, 1978). Learners are against an understanding of premarital sex as risky, as they do not have similar views as their parents and teachers on virginity (Iyer & Aggleton, 2014). They attach importance and meaning to pleasure in their lives that is not recognised by adults (Allen, 2007b). As is becoming clear to the teachers, if sexuality education is divorced from teenagers' reality they can become detached from its facts on sexual dangers (Allen, 2007a). At the same time, parents and teachers endorse the safety of sex in matrimony, while they are silent on its intrinsic sexual dangers, such as the possibility of HIV infection (Allen, 2007a; Cohen & Tate, 2006). The fallacy of virginity as the dominant weapon against HIV infection is illustrated in Gona and DeMarco's (2015) study among some Shona women living with advanced HIV. The women felt the injustice of being infected by HIV as they were 'good' women who had married as virgins, as required in their culture (Gona & DeMarco, 2015). Parents and teachers nevertheless maintained that it was in the girls' best interests to take the advice being offered, as the patriarchal society values female virginity and sanctions male premarital activity. Hence, it is through considering this broader cultural context that discourses of danger and regulation of female sexuality should be understood.

#### **6.4 My virginity is very significant to me**

While it was clear that the learners were cognisant of male privilege intrinsic in the virginity discourse, some of the boys challenged the sexual double standard in the connotation of virginity.

RYAN (m): It [*hujaya*] is very important but... not much emphasis on boys' virginity ...however I think it should be 50/50. What is done by the females should also be done by males. If I cannot maintain my virginity how can I expect somebody to maintain hers when I am failing to do so? So, it starts with me, if you want to be a leader you lead by example. (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): But as boys we must value *hujaya*...such that when you marry your wife she can clear you of bringing STIs into the marriage because she would have found you a virgin. (Learner, Interview)

RASHID (m): Male virginity is not easy... As for me, my virginity is very significant to me. Just the knowledge that I have not yet slept with a girl makes

me proud. I have not yet had sex, and I do not have *chirwere*, that is very important for me. (Learner, Interview)

By emphasising that there should be similar expectations for males and females, the boys are resisting the prevalent inequitable discourse on virginity. They draw attention to the view that masculinity is not inflexible and that young men can also be accountable for their sexuality. In addition, they underscore the role of males as partners in the fight for gender equality. This brings to light the multiplicity of discourses that can co-operate to create social reality in a community. Subjects negotiate, question and create their own meaning of these contending discourses (Allen, 2007a). While the virginity discourse contends that privileged male sexuality appears to dominate the culture, there is room for it to take another form (Foucault, 2002), promoting similar meanings and experiences of male and female sexuality. As noted by Tolman (2016), there is need for recognition that girls have real sexual feelings like those of boys for the double standard to transform.

Although virginity was largely framed more in relation to females who bear the responsibility for maintaining it and dealing with the outcomes of virginity loss, teenage girls' rationalisations for maintaining virginity go beyond the social value and requirements by a prospective husband. Teenage girls illustrate that it is also their way of delaying sexual intercourse and its potential problems.

MUNASHE (f): ...if you are no longer a virgin, you are no longer able to make a choice regarding the man you want to get married to, maybe you will just accept anyone because *hapana zvaunenge uchiri* (you are no longer someone of importance). (Learner, Interview)

TASHIA (f): If you maintain your virginity you grow in good health... You will be someone who fully understands what to do in life because you will not have been disturbed in the past. Once you lose your virginity you will accept whatever happens in your life even if that is not what you wanted. (Learner, Interview)

The girls' observations concerning the impact of virginity loss on their self-identity and life choices demonstrate that sexuality does have significance on one's existence (Murphy, 2012). Although this gendered framing places the girls in a subordinate position relative to the boys, they are aware of the agency that is bestowed on them at the same time.

FAITH (f): ...If I do not maintain my virginity now and I get pregnant I will not be in a position to do anything because once a boy knows he has made you pregnant,

he may end the relationship. That is what the boys do; he may even go around telling people that I made so-and-so pregnant. (Learner, Interview)

SHEKAINAH (f): Each person makes a personal decision on how long they will preserve virginity. (Learner, Interview)

MONALISA (f): A girl should not allow her body to be touched or have things done to it [by boys]. You need to think about your future, so there is need to protect yourself. (Learner, Interview)

On the issues of virginity and female regulation, the girls' statements support the contention that even within constrained circumstances, as noted by Jewkes and Morrell (2012), teenage girls have sexual agency. According to Averett, Benson and Vaillancourt (2008), sexual agency is indicated when one reflects on a specific state of affairs and resolves to abstain for the reason that assenting to sex neither promotes their interests nor desires. As noted above, girls have some sense of autonomy and can determine how long to preserve their virginity. According to Cense (2019), sexual agency is associated with the notion of strategic negotiation, which entails locating themselves, their families and their reproductive choices in a broader social setting. Girls demonstrate that they are not dupes of culture, but agentic beings once they assert self-directed choices in relation to abstinence or participation in sexual activity and the ensuing consequences (Cense, 2019; Averett, Benson & Vaillancourt, 2008). While these girls support the dominant discourse that prioritises virginity, they appropriate the concept by giving meaning to safeguarding of *humhandara* on their own terms and informed by their prospects, and thus gain power from an essentially constraining social system. The motivations and rational thoughts that result in abstinence are what define whether an individual has agency in making that choice (Averett, Benson, & Vaillancourt, 2008). The girls are thus actively embracing the sexual double standard for the benefit of their educational and employment prospects. Virginity maintenance may be the route to educational success and economic independence from men. The girls make a direct link between losing virginity and pregnancy, as contraceptive use is not encouraged among unmarried youth in Zimbabwe (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014), making them cognisant of the possibility of getting pregnant from the first sexual intercourse

The girls connect the loss of female virginity to pregnancy and its culmination in humiliation and loss of economic opportunities in the future. In Zimbabwe, young people's sexual activity

and child-bearing outside of marriage is denounced (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014), thus pregnancy due to premarital sex usually leads to the couple having to get married. However, this often leaves teenage girls at a disadvantage in cases where the young man is not willing to do so. Brian explains young men's reluctance as follows:

BRIAN (m): You should not rush to start a family when you are still young. If you do so the union may not last due to various reasons or you may just fail to understand each other. (Learner, Interview)

The traditional gender ideologies that celebrate female virginity until marriage, and indirectly sanction male sexual experience, reinforce inequalities in gendered power relations. Therefore, girls have much to lose when they engage in premarital sex, as the virginity discourse makes them responsible for negative outcomes of virginity loss (Bachechi & Hall, 2015). Hence, the girls conform to the cultural norms that subordinate them as a way of resisting patriarchal power and achieving power over their own future (Bachechi & Hall, 2015; Renold & Ringrose, 2008).

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Cultural ideals concerning sexuality may wield powerful control of teenagers' sexual decision-making, hence this study focused on teenage views of cultural norms associated with virginity. Such analyses of social and cultural norms may be used to strengthen efforts to address the ways in which gender inequalities, sexual double standards and girls' vulnerable position is produced. This will be helpful in increasing our knowledge and supporting advocacy efforts for education policy and broader approaches to shape and change social and cultural norms based on gender inequalities.

Parents demonstrated the pervasive influence of cultural values, even when they are aware of both teenagers' vulnerability to, and modern ways of moderating the dangers of sexuality. Informed by the predominant patriarchal ideology in the community, parents were inclined to replicate and strengthen gender disparities, as they discuss sexuality with their children (Elliot, 2010). The traditional significance of girls' virginity and marriage in the community apparently provided justification for opposing both premarital and protected sex for teenage girls. Parental acquiescence with the provision of information and services on safer sex to teenage girls would

have been more useful in preventing teenage pregnancy and HIV infection. This resonates with the observation that successful HIV and AIDS education needs to be familiar with the cultural environments in which people acquire information on sex and sexuality (Aggleton, et al., 2018).

Feminisation of sexuality means young people's choices regarding sexual activities are influenced by cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity located in gendered power relations, with girls bearing more responsibility for premarital virginity loss. The self-preserving stance adopted by the girls brings to light the teenagers' unmet need for contraceptives, which needs to be addressed. Sexually active unmarried teenagers in Zimbabwe have the most unmet need for contraception (62%) when compared to their married counterparts (19%) (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014). This unmet need has more consequences for girls, as it usually results in pregnancy, school dropout and fewer job prospects, thereby perpetuating poverty and dependence on a male breadwinner.

Virginity may be an important cultural ideal through which teenagers anchor sexuality. The findings also point to the influence of culturally instigated and supported sexual double standards on teenagers' understanding and valorisation of virginity. The emphasis on the virginity ideal as indicative of respectable femininity may constrain young women's choices in relation to their sexuality and legitimise gender inequalities. While female chastity is policed and celebrated, cultural ideologies on masculinity often mean that males' risky sexual activities are not questioned, although they do play a role in the spread of HIV. The study findings highlight that teenagers' misconceptions and gendered understanding of HIV infection are to some extent influenced by the prevailing norms around virginity. Contrasting notions of female virginity vis-a-vis male prerogative for multiple premarital sexual partners are not problematised or contested by some young people regarding beliefs and attitudes towards HIV. This adds force to a misleading notion that holds women responsible for the spread of HIV (MacEntee, 2016). In this respect, gender inequalities promote the spread of HIV by not holding males responsible for their sexuality.

Nonetheless, cultural scripts do not merely constrain girls, they foster agency in relation to their bodies and sexuality. By consciously conforming to dominant cultural norms on virginity,

rather than openly attacking them, girls seem to be subordinated but are empowered at the same time. In an unsupportive cultural environment regarding female premarital sexual activity and where contraception is not readily available or encouraged, adopting a self-preserving and self-advancing stance might be one of the available options enabling girls to complete school and become economically independent. The traditional ideology on female virginity thus evolves from a form of patriarchal control of female sexuality, to girls' recognition of power over their own sexuality and sexual vulnerability. Redefining masculinity was also evident, with a few males also valuing their virginity, taking responsibility for their sexuality and questioning the double standards embedded in the virginity norms. While this is not widespread, schools can build on such sentiments as a preliminary stage to long-term social transformation of teenage sexual behaviour and well-being.

Teachers are well placed to stimulate the debate on cultural norms informing teenage sexuality. This has implications for the role of the school in supporting teenagers to interrogate and challenge the prevailing virginity discourse. The gendered power inherent therein needs to be understood and questioned by both male and female teenagers, as an effort to dismantle some aspects of the gendered relations of power. The idea of valuing oneself and recognising one's own power to effect change in one's life and relationships needs to be highlighted in the virginity discourse. Teachers need to build on teenagers' agency and reframing of virginity so that it becomes a matter of personal choice aligned to one's power over sexuality. There is a need to draw on teenagers' experiences and viewpoints on sexuality to promote a critical assessment of how culture, gender and power operate in the virginity discourse in particular, and male and female sexuality in general.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: Poverty, teenage sexuality and restricted choices

## 7.1 Introduction

RYAN (m): At school here in subjects like Guidance and Counselling they talk of...reasons for getting into a relationship. But we then get into a relationship for completely different reasons. They say one may get into a relationship as a way of getting someone to assist them in stressful situations and sometimes with a view to marriage. But we put aside all these reasons and remain with only two: money and sex. It is like we are selling our bodies in a way. (Learner, Interview)

This chapter addresses the third research question: How is teenage sexuality negotiated and regulated in the context of poverty in a rural setting? It focuses on participants' perceptions and attitudes towards teenage sexuality in a context of poverty and gendered economic inequalities. The above quotation from one of the male participants gives the context within which teenage boys' and girls' intimate relationships occur in the study setting. Regardless of the protective discourse that characterises adults' views of teen sexuality, teenagers are interested in experiencing sex and the economic benefits of sexual relations. Ryan clearly enunciates that within cultural limits, young people have agency. Although adults urge young people to ignore the normative sexual aspect of heterosexual relationships, this is actively resisted for emotional or instrumental reasons. While boys indicated that they mainly engage in sex for pleasure or to attain a higher status among peers, the poor economic position of most families also predisposed both boys and girls to transactional sexual relationships. Traditional gender norms indirectly promote girls' vulnerability to forced sex and violence in intimate relationships and the family. Conservative values concerning masculinity and the provider status were a common feature in discussions of forced sex, sexual abuse and girls' choices to get involved in sexual relationships as a ploy to force a man into marriage.

Understanding the basis for young people's sexual choices and behaviour is imperative in equipping them to make the most beneficial choices. I present the argument that gender and poverty mediate and restrict boys' and girls' choices and experiences of sexuality. The main theme and sub-themes that are the focus of this chapter are shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Main theme 3: Poverty and restricted choices

Sub-themes	Sub-theme headings
1. Provider masculinity and transactional sexual relationships	1. What about my money which I spent on you?
2. Sexual abuse and child marriage	2. Getting the culprit arrested or to get the culprit to marry?
3. Surveillance of teenage girls	3. Go back to your boyfriend, you can't live here anymore
4. Teen parenthood and school dropout	4. You start seeing yourself as a parent

## 7.2 What about my money which I spent on you?

The male provider role (Hunter, 2009) was emphasised by parents as an important element of masculinity and adulthood. The training of teenagers in terms of their competence in specific tasks is highly gendered. This produces the binary between men and women and thus the economic basis supports gender ideologies through which masculinity and femininity are made relevant.

ZUZE (m): When he grows up he does farming and herds the cattle. That is the work that a boy must be able to do. (Parent, Interview)

CHIMODZI (m): Eh we teach them [boys] that in our community our lives depend on farming. That is how we survive. So, they must understand that when they grow up they should be well mannered and be able to do farming. That is the main source of our livelihood. We might do anything else, but farming is the main activity for survival. (Parent, Interview)

Rural livelihoods are based on agricultural activities, and it is therefore significant that ability in these activities is crucial for boys due to their anticipated breadwinner status in the family. Alternatively, parents expect teenage girls to be capable of chores that are useful in maintaining a household, with training beginning very early in life.

NYADZAI (f): Girls should be able to cook, wash clothes, fetch firewood and work in the fields. (Parent, Interview)

CHIGOGODA (f): When she gets to 6 years, I may start teaching her how to cook *sadza* in a small pot and how to cut vegetables. (Parent, Interview)

Connell (1987) contends that the sexual division of labour has implications in other gender arrangements in society as males exploit this positioning. Some parents explained that they taught their children both stereotypically masculine and feminine chores, although this was an exception rather than the norm.

NYADZAI (f): Even handling the [ox-drawn] plough as well because you never know when she gets married, there may be no one to assist her with that. So, she must know about all that for the sake of her household in future. (Parent, Interview)

GETRUDE (f): Nowadays we say even boys are taught all household chores as well... As in my case, I have more sons than daughters. So, as they grew up I taught them all chores. (Parent, Interview)

Women might have to do the ploughing in the fields due to various circumstances, hence they also learn this masculine task. Boys are also taught feminine duties in the context of a family where there are more sons than daughters. With the restricted economic opportunities in the study setting, learners identified gold panning as a lucrative but dangerous activity offering immediate returns.

GABRIEL (m): Boys are affected to a greater extent [by poverty]. Some of them they end up leaving school going to the mines in search of money to assist their families. (Learner, Interview)

PETER (m): Gold panning is not easy because it carries a lot of risks...you spend the whole weekend in a mine. Two, you can get injured or you may die in the mine. So, girls have this fear that they can't do such work. (Learner, Interview)

As noted by Gabriel, some boys from poor families may decide to leave school to assist in providing for the family, this being done by the male family members as gold panning is a dangerous job and thus stereotyped as masculine. Social stereotypes associate masculinity with risk taking and physical power (Lindsey, 2016). Poverty may be prevalent in the area, but it affects boys and girls differently.

NOBLE (m): I get my pocket money from doing piece jobs in our neighbourhood. Jobs that are available include building cattle kraals and drying stalls for plates. When someone asks you to assist them, you just go...Most [girls] say they cannot do this. (Learner, Interview)

While boys have opportunities to earn some money from informal activities, girls were perceived as unwilling to do the same, as they tend to depend on a male breadwinner. One of the teachers highlighted that poverty affects boys and girls differently, leading to gendered vulnerabilities.

MR DHADHIYA: They can source for funds through gold panning. There is a lot of gold around; they are actually seated on gold. During the weekend they [boys] go and pan, they go into small scale mines and work there. They get a few grams of gold; they exchange that for US dollars. On Monday the pocket is full. It is difficult for the girls to leave the household chores and go out. Nowadays there was no water for gold panning. Gold panning is for this season that we are going

into, summer season. So, the boys were advantaged as they would go and join the small-scale miners [doing] reef, not alluvial, mining. Alluvial is popular during the rainy season. During the rainy season the girls can source for funds. But remember it will be during the holidays. Most of our rainy season, the greater part of it will be during the holidays. So, boys have got an advantage, it is all seasons. Whether it rains, or it doesn't, they can make money. (Teacher, Interview)

The sexual division of labour has repercussions on the position and relations of men and women in society. Girls are restricted from equal participation in the informal gold extraction activity for two reasons: either they have household chores to attend to or they cannot take part in reef mining, which has been stereotyped as masculine. This becomes part of a “*gendered system of production, consumption and distribution*” (Connell, 1987 p.103). Women and men occupy different positions in the relations of production. Teenage boys have more time to engage in gold panning and exclusive male access to reef mining, which puts them in a better position to accumulate more money compared to teenage girls.

The sexual division of labour described by the parents is linked to the cultural construction of provider masculinity as indicative of adulthood. This conflicts with the legal concept of adulthood, which is based on chronological age. The Legal Age of Majority Act (1982) sets the age of majority at 18 years for both men and women. Consequently, those who are still economically dependent on parents cannot claim to be an adult, as explained by Musa.

MUSA (m): Eh it is said that when a child gets to 18 years, he will be independent and no longer under control of the parent. But we must consider that when he turns 18 he would still be a child who has nothing, still living with the parents maybe for two more years with nothing. Therefore, if he is still staying with the parents, he owns nothing he is still a child. When he is 19 years he will be saying I am now an adult but still he does not own anything. So that is one issue which may lead him to disobey parents by claiming his rights saying I am now an adult. (Parent, Interview)

Power disparities between men can be based on age, thereby resulting in a hierarchy of masculinities, with older men at the top of the pecking order (Connell, 2005). Movement towards adulthood by teenage boys is not guaranteed in terms of age (Swartz, 2017), but rather financial autonomy (Sennott & Mojola, 2017; Ratele, 2015). The process of becoming a man is frequently challenged by the young who wish to be regarded as men before older men are ready to acknowledge them as such (Morrell, 2006). As observed by Ratele (2015), in Africa,

financial independence is important in the construction of adulthood among males. The conception of adulthood has implications, as parents confine sexuality to the domain of adults. This creates tension, as the legal understanding of adulthood has consequences for teenage sexual expression and activity. Some parents contend that teenagers' uninhibited sexual activities are a result of their awareness of this law.

MANDINEMA (f): Now our children are saying that the law says once you are 18 years you can make decisions about your life. They are not thinking of anything else except that, "I am now in charge of my life," they no longer think about their education. They must have self-discipline. (Parent, Interview)

Parents do not only restrict sexual activity to marriage, as explained earlier, but also link it to an individual's ability to economically support oneself (Elliot, 2010) and the household. Their disapproval of the concept of rights could be viewed as a determination to maintain the age hierarchy (Hunter, 2005), and thereby regulate teenage sexuality. The insistence that turning 18 years of age does not make one an adult but economically independent interweaves patriarchal notions of provider masculinity with age (Elliot, 2010; Hunter, 2009). This sets the stage for generational conflict regarding what it means to be an adult and a man (Hunter, 2004). Significantly, economic independence is framed in relation to males, this being evident when parents elaborated their expectations and aspirations for teenage boys and girls.

RUMBIDZAI (f): We encourage them [boys] to go to school and do well, to lead the country in future and to look after the family when parents have passed on... usually expect them [girls] not to get involved in sexual activity but to focus on school so that they can take care of themselves in future. When they are older they should then look for husbands who will look after them not those who are unfaithful, go to beerhalls or smoke. We do not want them to go out into the streets to look for boyfriends, but to look forward to having their own homes and families so that they have a good life. Those who would have gone on with school, we want them to pass and get jobs. (Parent, Interview)

Ratele (2015) asserts that the capacity to make a living is considered vital for both boys and girls, but more prominently for the boys, who will be heads of households in future. The male hierarchy of power is accentuated when boys are expected to be leaders of the country in the future. This is also reflective of the situation in Zimbabwe, where men occupy most of the leadership and decision-making positions in both the government and private sector. Connell (1987) suggests that the epicentre of the power structure is the widespread connection of authority with masculinity. Men's authority over women gives them opportunities to create and circulate ideas that replicate the relations of domination and subordination. Surprisingly,

nothing is suggested about ‘looking’ for wives in the same manner as this is spelt out for the girls. Teenage girls are encouraged to focus on education and avoid sexual activity, primarily to get married as virgins and thus secure their future in a happy marriage. The patriarchal notion of endorsing the primacy of the wife/mother role for girls and women over individual interests and career development serves to sustain men’s dominance over them. The expected life course for boys and girls, and later men and women, is highly gendered, and reproduces relations of male domination and female subordination.

Male sexual privilege is often imbedded in the provider status (Choudhry, Ostergren, Ambresin, Kyagaba, & Agardh, 2014), with provider masculinity and intimate relationships being connected, as teenage boys’ economic advantage in poor communities drives gender inequalities in the affective domain.

ZUZE (m): The boys here... some do jobs and get some money. The boys have no problem, the girls are the ones in danger. (Parent, Interview)

RUMBIDZAI (f): In this community people do gold panning, schoolboys do that over the weekend, so they have an advantage when it comes to getting some money.

VSM: What about the girls?

RUMBIDZAI (f): What happens is that a woman expects to get married to a man who will look after her, as should be the case. Therefore, she will think that since I am in a relationship with this boy, he must please me by giving me money. She might work to get some money but not putting as much effort as a man. (Parent, Interview)

Financial favours are a vital cog in supporting heterosexual intimate relationships (Hunter, 2006; 2002), as notions of love are enmeshed with males’ provider role in difficult economic conditions (Hunter, 2009). Gift-giving in the form of money and other material presents is an accepted feature of loving heterosexual relationships in the study context. Girls were reported to have multiple boyfriends to maximise the monetary benefits from such associations.

JUNIOR JOKER (m): Ah at times I may not be giving her money and the one might be giving her, so she may end up with many boyfriends, because these girls are only interested in money. (Learner, Interview)

These findings echo those of a study on young women’s perceptions of transactional sex in rural South Africa by Ranganathan *et al.* (2017), who note that traditionally women expect economic provisions from men. Therefore, the male teenagers’ expression of masculinity is intimately linked with the ability to provide their girlfriends with money. As a result, they are

anxious to fulfil this masculine expectation, while at the same time negatively stereotyping girls as more concerned with the economic benefits of relationships. They bring up the provider status in rationalising the gold panners' better chances for romantic relationships with schoolgirls. Consequently, they aspire to attain this status for which they seek affirmation from girls. Thus teenage girls make strategic choices to engage in affairs with gold panners, or to have concurrent relationships with learners and gold panners. This is akin to Leclerc-Madlala's (2008) assertion that young women usually determine the nature of their partners as well as the form of the relationships.

It was generally expected that boys would spend money buying snacks for their girlfriends rather than the other way around. The boys took their provider status seriously, trying to provide their girlfriends with money by any means necessary.

CONFLICT (m): You have to buy your girlfriend some snacks...Some [girls] buy, but very rarely. (Learner, Interview)

RYAN (m): At times you hear that a boy has stolen money from home, or he goes around hustling to give his girlfriend some money. (Learner, Interview)

FRANK (m): It depends on the mine. If you are working in a mine where there is a lot of gold you may get 2 grams or more (per day) ...worth US\$60<sup>4</sup> [2g of gold] ...That's when you now have boys being cheated by those girls who have out-of-school boyfriends, they now pretend to love the schoolboys. They come and give such girls money. (Learner, Interview).

The depressed economic condition in the community shaped teenagers' perceptions of their sexuality, primarily the nature of the sexual relationships in which they engaged. Transactional sex refers to a situation whereby money or gifts are received in return for sex, in relationships that are separate from sex work or prostitution (Stoebenau, *et al.*, 2011). Girls in turn made strategic choices of boyfriends depending on how much they measured up to this provider status.

BRIAN (m): They [Girls] think they [gold panners] are the ones with all the money... we are regarded as mere schoolboys who spend their time at school...Some girls have phones bought for them, but as schoolboys we cannot

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of the study Zimbabwe did not have its own currency due to economic problems. A multi-currency system was in place, but most transactions were in United States dollars. The South African Rand was also used though mostly for change and small purchases since American cents were not available. One South African rand was considered equivalent to 10 US cents. Therefore, one rand is also referred to as 10 cents

afford to do that. That is why they get involved with someone who can afford to buy a phone. (Learner, Interview)

MUNASHE (f): That is where the issue of background comes in. Sometimes you may be living with a stepmother or a grandmother, maybe they will be giving you inadequate things. So someone will think that if I have a romantic relationship with a schoolboy he will not give me anything; teachers and policemen are people who reason such that if I say I want \$10 he will start asking me why I need it. So eventually they say it is better to have a relationship with a gold panner because he does not even know what to do with his money, he will just give you...Where would he have got it [money] from when he is just a school boy? (Learner, Interview)

Girls demonstrate agency in their choice of partner as they look for economic support from boyfriends (Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017; Stoebenau, *et al.*, 2013). While they do consider potential partners' earning capacity, they go further to assess the extent to which they can exploit some types of boyfriends. The girls may profit from the imprudent gold panners, possibly due to their low educational levels coupled with opportunities for making various amounts of money daily from the sale of gold to local middlemen. This contrasts with the girls in a Tanzanian study who preferred civil servants and businessmen with high, stable salaries or returns (Wamoyi, Wight, Plummer, Mshana, & Ross, 2010). While the gold panners in this context have erratic earnings, they usually have more disposable income compared to civil servants and are 'careless' in their spending due to the lack of long-term plans, as noted by Munashe. Therefore, schoolboys and civil servants are not regarded as worthwhile boyfriend, as the former do not have money while the latter are considered too cautious with it. Teenage boys concede that they cannot compete with full-time gold panners in terms of earnings, which often results in them losing potential girlfriends to the gold panners.

CONFLICT (m): ...there is a difference because you might go [to the mines] over the weekend and get, let's say \$3. The others [school leavers] go there the whole week, and over the weekend as well. (Learner, Interview)

STICKROD (m): The main issue is that girls want money, so he [the gold panner] may be able to give his girlfriend \$5 everyday...It is difficult to get money, at times I may be able to provide just 2 rand or 10 cents per day. The girl will now say it is not worthwhile to get 10 cents, let me go for the \$5. (Learner, Interview)

However, provision of money or gifts is often regarded as part and parcel of a relationship (Elmes, *et al.*, 2017). This may result in girls accepting money from their boyfriends without feeling obliged to reciprocate with sexual favours.

KUNDAI (f): At times when word gets out that there has been a rich gold discovery at some mine, the girl will know that this boy has money and therefore starts a

relationship with him. At times she is just shown money, and he starts buying stuff for the girl and she is lured bit by bit. Then at the end he will say, 'I love you'...Nothing expensive really, mostly *Jiggies* (snacks) which cost 50 cents...Some boys believe that if someone accepts my gifts, it means she already loves me...You will be thinking he is just someone I *get along* with, maybe he just likes me, so you accept. So, when he says he loves you, when you try to reject him he will say, "What about my money which I spent on you?" In this case you may never have been in love with him... (*Laughter*) They say I want my money right now. (Learner, Interview)

Girls end up having sex as their choices in response to the gold panners' demands are restricted once they have received gifts from them. The sexual agency of girls is curtailed in transactional sexual relationships, whereby males have power based on their position as the benefactor (Luke, Goldberg, Mberu, & Zulu, 2011; Stoebenau, *et al.*, 2011). Although girls exercise agency in choosing partners, this dwindles when they get into a relationship underscored by giving and receiving of money and gifts (Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017). Both boys and girls clearly articulated the link between acceptance of gifts and girls' decreased sexual agency.

PETER (m): In our area the problem is that people love money and phones. So once someone is given \$10, she will agree to do anything. She will agree to do anything. You see now phones are allowed in school...So issues to do with money and phones are affecting the girls. (Learner, Interview)

FAITH (f): Yes, the love of money. Once they see money they will not refuse [to have sex]. (Learner, Interview)

Reduced sexual agency leaves girls vulnerable to STI and HIV infection (Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017; Leclerc-Madlala, 2008) and unplanned pregnancy, as they are less likely to negotiate for safer sex.

TEHILA (f): One will be having money and the girl is given a lot of things. So, when he says he wants to sleep with you, you cannot refuse. The girl will say, "Let me just sleep with him". That is how she might end up pregnant. (Learner, Interview)

CONFLICT (m): It's obvious she will not reject that person. They will start sleeping together while she is given money until she becomes pregnant. (Learner, Interview)

VSM: Why can't girls say even if they have accepted gifts from the man, they will have protected sex...What is the problem?

KUNDAI (f): Some are forced...they are just forced to do that. (Learner, Interview)

Teachers and parents also noted girls' vulnerability, particularly in transactional sexual relationships involving 'migratory males' (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016), especially the gold panners who flock to this community.

MR HILLARY: When the gold panners come to pan, some of them leave their families like in their areas. Unfortunately, in this area there are not plenty of girls who are a bit mature, and when the girls finish school they leave the area. So, there are very few girls, so their target becomes the school children... They are even getting into these affairs at primary level, because the girls are in need of those provisions they tend to favour the outsiders...this one is a typical rural area and you know exposure is lacking as well. Some of the things they wish for are so simple and sometimes so stupid. You can be pained when you consider the things they want to buy. So, they are material things but simple, phones and other stuff. Once they get the money they always submit. (Teacher, Interview)

VSM: Is it not possible for them to say even though I have been given \$10 but I must prevent pregnancy when I sleep with this man?

NYADZAI: What happens now is that let us say together with my husband we might be HIV positive. At the clinic we are advised to have protected sex. He might then say I cannot eat a sweet in its wrapper, refusing to use a condom. So, this is what happens even to the young women and they get pregnant.

VSM: Can they not insist and say that if the man is not using a condom then nothing will happen?

NYADZAI: She cannot refuse because she has already been given money.

VSM: But getting pregnant in the process?

NYADZAI: Yes, it now becomes my problem as the parent to look after my daughter and her baby. Only a few men accept to use protection. (Parent, Interview)

According to this view, few men agree to use condoms with their wives in the home. In this setting, Nyadzai explains that these men are most likely not having protected extra-marital sex, as evidenced by the unplanned pregnancies among their teenage partners. Although young women do have a certain degree of agency in the formation of transactional sexual relationships, men usually have control over the sexual encounters, which may occur at times even without the girl's consent. Financial support from the boyfriend has been found to induce the girl to consent to unprotected sex if he demands it (Wamoyi, Wight, Plummer, Mshana, & Ross, 2010). As a result, transactional sex has often been reported to result in unwanted pregnancy (Selepe, Ngwenya, Albers, & Jankeu, 2017), and is closely related to HIV infection (Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017; Zembe, Townsend, Thorson, & Ekstrom, 2013; Luke, Goldberg, Mberu, & Zulu, 2011). Other scholars have identified the role of multiple sexual partners as significant in HIV transmission (Bhana, 2017a; Fleming, DiClemente, & Brighton, 2016; Gona

& DeMarco, 2015; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes & Morell, 2010, Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Hunter, 2004).

Predominant customs and masculine beliefs in sub-Saharan Africa allow men to be sexually self-confident and control sexual relationships (Koster, Bruinderink, & Janssens, 2015; Ratele, 2008). Connell (2005) argues that power is significant in explaining masculinity and related behaviours. Power inequality in relationships predisposes women to heightened risk of acquiring HIV (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Men's position as the benefactor permits them to control women and determine contraceptive use, regardless of women's bodily autonomy (Hunter, 2006; 2002). Male coercion is evident both in marital and transactional sexual relationships (Aggleton, *et al.*, 2018; Hunter, 2004), as they force their partners into unprotected sex, believing it to be more gratifying (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). Gona and DeMarco (2015) report similar findings in their study on Zimbabwean women living with HIV. Due to cultural acceptance of male risky sexual activities, the women did not insist on consistent condom use, even when they were aware of their husbands' concurrent sexual partners (Gona & DeMarco, 2015). According to Bhana (2015b), cultural norms, gender, poverty and male sexual prerogatives merge and limit females' capacity in safer-sex negotiations.

Despite learners' awareness of the negative outcomes of transactional sexual relationships, it was evident that this was a prevalent practice among them. As I listened to the learners during the interviews, I was struck by the trivial things that girls get in exchange for sex, as indicated by Faith.

FAITH (m): *Jiggies* that are sold at school... (*Laughs*) 10 cents for one small packet...Some are given [10 cents by their parents], but some are not. (Learner, Interview)

It is not clear how much of girls' involvement in these relationships has to do with gifts received versus what an offer of a gift represents. Gifts are how romantic parties communicate love and affection. Perhaps this is what girls are after, so the actual gift itself becomes secondary, such that even a small packet of *Jiggies* is meaningful. However, most parents insisted that such relationships are not about affection but purely transactional in nature.

ZUZE (m): No there is no love. Money. Once they see someone with money they stick with him. (Parent, Interview)

MAIPIRWA (f): In most cases the men are not truly in love, they just want to use the girls. This is because the gold panner would have come from somewhere else, later he shall go back to his family and the girl remains behind after being used. Some people are evil, it is necessary for the girl to value her life and understand that this should not be done. Most of them [gold panners] are married people, some having come from as far as Chiredzi [about 560km away] to mine for gold here. They are here because they need to work and provide for their families. (Parent, Interview)

MOLLINE (f): Schoolboys can be asked by the gold panners to source girlfriends amongst schoolgirls for them. The gold panner pays them for that. (Parent, Interview)

Due to the cultural norm of the male provider, the woman normally receives money or gifts from the man (Hunter, 2006). However, Hunter (2009) cautions that such seemingly transactional sexual relationships are not an indication of lack of love. Therefore, Maipirwa's reference to girls as being 'used' may not be suitable, but it expresses how these intimate relationships are generally viewed in the community.

Writing on the nature of transactional relationships in South Africa, Van der Heijden and Swartz (2014) argue that an appreciation of the various circumstances in which transactional sex transpires is crucial. Some scholars assert that basic survival or consumption needs may prompt women to engage in transactional sex (Choudhry, Ostergren, Ambresin, Kyagaba, & Agardh, 2014; Stoebenau, *et al.*, 2011). They might get involved in transactional sex to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, sanitary requirements or clothing. Consumption needs have more to do with non-essential items, such as designer clothing or beauty products. Parents attributed teenage girls' involvement in transactional sex to both consumption and survival.

GRACE (f): A few [girls] do gold panning, they see [transactional sex] as better I suppose. (Parent, Interview)

ZVAMAITA (m): This area is bad because of this gold panning, these gold panners can have a lot of money. If he buys *Zapnax* (a tasty corn snack) and other tasty foods, the young girl loses perspective and thinks this is all there is to life. They are lured by money because at times they will be poor in their family. So, this appears like a profitable relationship to her. (Learner, Interview)

ZUZE (m): Yes, some just leave home in the morning without eating anything, not even porridge. Now if she comes across a young man who gives her a dollar, she will accept! (Parent, Interview)

NYADZAI (f): ...these days I think there is a problem among some parents. When a child disobeys the parent or refuses to do some work some parents think they

should discipline them by denying them food. When this happens, the child might go and steal, or if it is a girl she turns to prostitution. All that is because they want to satisfy their hunger. (Parent, Interview)

Gendered economic inequalities and cultural norms of provider masculinity give rise to transactional sexual relations (Aggleton, *et al.*, 2018; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Hunter, 2002). For girls from poor families who come to school hungry, such a relationship may be a matter of survival (Hunter, 2009; 2002). To a limited extent, girls demonstrate agency in procuring food items that are not readily unavailable in their homes. Grace suggests that girls view involvement in sexual relationships with gold panners as more lucrative than panning for gold themselves. However, given the poverty in some families and the gender inequality in opportunities for gold panning discussed earlier, teenage girls are left with few options for acquiring food, hence the turn to transactional sexual relationships.

Various reasons for involvement in transactional sexual relationships were put forward by the learners, with a mentioning basic survival needs as a motivations, the main ones were getting cash for snacks at school, gaining prestige among others and peer pressure.

NOBLE (m): They just want to buy cheap things like *Jiggies* and *Stumbo* (sweets) at school, just happy to show off...Yes, we buy, but the way girls buy is different...they want to show off and show one another that my boyfriend has more money than yours (Learner, Interview)

TADIWANASHE (m): At times some think they will get prestige and respect when they have affairs with gold panners... she will be having a lot of money and getting picked from school by car and others will say, "Did you see her, she has gone by car." That is what the girls want. (Learner, Interview)

PETER (m): Girls lack vision, no understanding of how to use money from their boyfriends...they never think of doing meaningful things. For instance, to say that let me buy a small chicken for rearing. It's all about showing off. So that others see that, "I am the one with money here." That's all they need the money for. (Learner, Interview)

Peter articulates that conspicuous consumption sustained by sexual relationships with gold panners allows girls to gain the respect of their fellows. Girls also become careless with money as noted by Peter, as they fail to develop meaningful long-term plans, just like the gold panners, as explained by Munashe earlier. This agrees with findings of a study among tertiary students in Botswana, where it was noted that young women engage in transactional sex to show off the cars and cash of their partners (Selepe, Ngwenya, Albers, & Jankeu, 2017). It was noted that having an intimate relationship, even multiple ones, is prestigious for both girls and boys.

OBVIOUS (m): Some just want the prestige of having a relationship with someone or so many girls or many boys. Some want to be known for spending their boyfriends' money. (Learner, Interview)

While girls do not gain prestige from sleeping with many partners, they do so from spending their money. The issue of multiple concurrent partners is therefore ignored or downplayed in relation to girls. However, such encounters place them at risk of contracting STIs, including HIV. Additionally, being in an intimate heterosexual relationship and having a good time is part of being a teenager. Enjoying music at the business centre, probably with a partner, may be an important aspect of teenage identity, particularly in an area where no other recreational facilities are available.

NYADZAI (f): They are not in need of anything as such, I would say it is just a habit among the girls, they are just desiring delicious food. Plus, these [musical] bands, she may even sneak away from her bedroom to attend a band show at Chimeso. You cannot even tell when she sneaks back to sleep. (Parent, Interview)

The generational conflict may result in teenage girls having to sneak away without informing the parent. Teenage boys were said to mostly get into intimate relationships to have sex, while schoolgirls' focus was said to be on money, which the young boys could not provide.

MUNASHE (f): Sometimes these boys, especially those in Forms 4 to 6, do so [have sex with single mothers] because at times they go the bars at night and get prostitutes. Eventually they run out of money. But they say now to go out with a schoolgirl she will not allow me to sleep with her every day or whenever I want to. So, he sees that it is better to have a relationship with someone who already has a child because she will allow him to have sex whenever he wants to.

VSM: The schoolgirls cannot have sex with the boys often?

MUNASHE: No. In that case it will be just like you are now his wife. (Learner, Interview)

According to the study, girls express agency when they refuse to have sexual relations on the boys' terms. Having sex without any exchange of money or gifts was taken to mean that you are now just like someone's wife, a role that the girls are not willing to take up. The difference in boys' and girls' motivation for taking part in sexual relations appears to contribute to their preference for older partners. In sub-Saharan Africa, intimate relationships involving older women and teenage boys are not as prevalent as those involving teenage girls and older men (Zembe, Townsend, Thorson, & Ekstrom, 2013). Likewise, during the interviews, it was stated that this practice existed, though it was not widespread among the schoolboys. Some boys were lured by good food by some older women. Ironically, the learners believed these women were intent on spreading HIV to young boys.

PANASHE (m): We hear of few such cases. Someone might be said to have been attracted by a single mother, that she cooks good food for him that is all.

Otherwise at times the woman might be having the disease and she just wants to give it to you. (Learner Interview)

RYAN (m): That is what I have said before that the reason is that the boy just wants to have sex with that person, not that he is in search of true love. The young mother might give the boy some money just like what the girls get from gold panners. There are some women who also provide money. (Learner Interview)

Both schoolboys and older women are perceived as providing each other with opportunities to experience sexual satisfaction, with some boys getting incidental benefits, such as money and good food from such liaisons. Older women assume the role of sponsors in sexual interactions with young men (Zembe, Townsend, Thorson, & Ekstrom, 2013). Although there is a tendency to disregard male susceptibility to sexual manipulation (Mitchell, et al., 2017), the study findings show that they could be just as open to the risk and outcomes of transactional sex as the girls (Choudhry, Ostergren, Ambresin, Kyagaba, & Agardh, 2014).

Some scholars have noted that transactional sexual relations do not necessarily involve only the exchange of money (Selepe, Ngwenya, Albers, & Jankeu, 2017; Masvawure, 2015). Access to better quality food, in comparison to low quality food for basic survival available to the others, sets one on a pedestal (Masvawure, 2015). In the context of low incomes in most families, both older women and gold panners use good food to entice young people to have sexual relationships with them. As noted earlier, in many cases, girls spend the money they get from gold panners on food to show off at school. Consequently, food gets to define their status among peers, and becomes an important feature in transactional sex. In her study of young women at a Zimbabwean university, Masvawure (2015) noted that the prestige value of relationships is an important consideration for young women. This resonates with the findings of this study, whereby the teenage boys stated that having affairs with older women boosted their self-esteem.

GABRIEL (m): Mostly in case of boys who will be doing that they will be saying we are the ones *vane skiri stereki* [with so much skill], so let's have affairs with those who are older than us. They will also come and have affairs with young girls, but this usually ends in pregnancy.

VSM: What skills are these?

GABRIEL: That I am the one who has a higher position than all of you because I have a sexual relationship with an older person. That is the *skiri* they will be referring to. (Interview)

From their study of transactional sex among South African youth, Van der Heijden and Swartz (2014) argue that transactional relationships and sexual choices are located not only within

young people's consumption needs, but also standards of peer status. These relationships offered some schoolboys an opportunity to demonstrate their masculinity to other boys. Given the fluidity of masculinity, Sweet (2017) asserts that some males affirm their manhood by way of triumph over women. Local cultural norms dictate that a man can have multiple female sexual partners, ideally younger than him. By having both older women and schoolgirls as sexual partners, the teenagers accommodate and depict the notion of irrepressible male sexual desire and virility. In the process they also challenge the customary age and gender hierarchy that espouses the ideal of the older, sexually experienced male in heterosexual intimate relationships. Ultimately, these boys demonstrate that *vane skiri sitereki* and thereby gain a higher social status among their peers.

The role of dysfunctional families in fuelling transactional sexual relationships was also highlighted. Learners believed parental infidelity and the influence of other family members may cause girls to have sexual relationships with gold panners.

TADIWANASHE (m): Sometimes the parents' lifestyle may cause one to have affairs with gold panners. If the mother brings in boyfriends into the home when the father is away, she cannot tell her daughter to stop going out with gold panners. (Learner, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): It may start from the home, there could be some sisters going out with gold panners. So, she will think that is how to get money...people are different some may be genuinely in love, while for others it is all about money. (Learner, Interview)

Dysfunctional families and negative role models, as far as sexual relationships are concerned, might lead to teenagers making allowances for transactional sex. Parents lose their power over children if they behave in non-normative ways. While there is some degree of poverty in the area, the gold-panning ventures transformed the local economic situation in ways similarly noted in the Chiadzwa area in eastern Zimbabwe during the period of unrestricted diamond panning (Elmes, *et al.*, 2017). In an effort to maximise economic benefits from the changed economic circumstances, women engage in transactional sex (Elmes, *et al.*, 2017). Individuals become prone to involvement in multiple concurrent relationships and the associated risks due to some structural and contextual features of the community. For instance, the imbalance between males and females in the local population is alleged to be exposing teenagers to negative role models for sexual behaviour.

MR HILLARY: So, it's one of the issues...the community has more men than girls. So, you may see affairs between married women and married men, young boy

and married woman. Here it is not surprising to have a situation where one is in love with someone's wife...It's more of acceptable.

VSM: If the husband is away?

MR HILLARY: Some of the husbands will be there, then...it's all about timing, when the man goes to the mines then...That's the painful part of it, like I said if the parents can accept falling in love with a married woman something that is common here, there is no room for counselling here. How can they tell their children the right things to do when the children are aware that their mother is having an affair with so and so? So, it's quite difficult... it becomes difficult for them to tell the kids, to tell them this is bad. (Teacher, Interview)

MRS LIFE: I also got information that some parents send their children to deliver messages to their extra-marital partners about where they will meet... What we say is morally wrong maybe acceptable among them because they may even accept that a child has a boyfriend. (Teacher, Interview)

In the study context, even some parents of the learners became involved in transactional sexual relationships, thus losing their power to monitor the girls' sexuality. Lack of sexual regulation within families (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Iyer & Aggleton, 2013) is recognised as leading to learners' risky sexual behaviour. In addition to setting an unacceptable model for sexual behaviour, some parents were said to be condoning their children's transactional relationships as they seek material benefits.

MR HILLARY: So, when it comes to those financial gains I was saying there are certain instances where those girls bring things to their parents and they take those things...so it's quite a challenge. This society is run by money. Just have a few dollars, you can do anything. (Teacher, Interview)

As learners get into transactional sexual relationships for material benefits with the approval of their parents, they are likely to end up in multiple concurrent relationships seeking to maximise the benefits. As alluded to by the teachers, young girls in intergenerational sexual relationships become part of the gold panners' sexual networks involving teenage girls, their parents and prostitutes. Gold panners undertake the male provider role with multiple partners, placing all those in their sexual networks at risk of HIV infection.

While poverty has a powerful impact on sexuality and how it is performed (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, & Ngabaza, 2010), both teachers and parents emphasised that parental guidance on this aspect is crucial.

MRS MOYO: The major problem that I noted was that there is very little education in the family, in the community. There is very little education and most of them are orphans, quite a number...More than half the school are orphans. Some are staying with grandparents who are very old, they don't notice anything. They

are very old or the students themselves are in charge of themselves. So, they just do anything and it's very normal for girls to marry at 13 or 14 and so on. (School Head, Interview)

MR JIMALO: I just want to say that for all this that the parent has to play his or her part, that is the most important thing. If a parent brings up a well-disciplined child giving good advice, the child will be motivated to do well. Then when they come to school, we just build on what the parents started, but if we are to start from scratch it is difficult because we would be trying to change everything they got from their parents. Then the children will compare and say, "What is so special about you [the teacher]." (Teacher, Interview)

ZUZE (m): The issue of children stopping naughty *misikanzwa*, you must teach him at home. You and your wife need to really talk to your child at home so that he or she is decent. Even when they come [children] come to the teacher, the teacher is just reinforcing what you taught them *zvinhu zvese zvinofamba square square* (then all will be well). (Parents FGD, Rufaror Secondary School)

The vulnerability of orphaned girls is consistent with other research findings, with most orphaned children not completing school and getting married as a result of abuse (Luseno, *et al.*, 2017). Support from the family and community with regards to sexuality education is lacking, as stressed by the female school head, although the expectation is that learners would also get relevant and age-appropriate information from there. Without this knowledge from the family, it becomes more imperative for the school to provide comprehensive information so that teenagers can make suitable sexual decisions (Luseno, *et al.*, 2017; Ahmed *et al.*, 2009).

### **7.3 Getting the culprit arrested or to get the culprit to marry?**

Unplanned pregnancy is one of the risks often mentioned in relation to teenage sexuality, with Zimbabwean youths being no an exception. Cultural norms in Zimbabwe dictate that a pregnant girl should be taken to the family of the boy responsible for the pregnancy. As a result, Zimbabwe is one of the 41 countries in the world with many cases of young people forced into marriage by parents or guardians (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2016). Mashonaland Central Province has the highest percentage (50%) of child marriages compared to other provinces, which range from 18%-42%. Furthermore, legislators have noted that the presence of gold panners in Shamva accounts for the high rate of child marriages in the district (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2016). It is recognised that most child marriages are not registered or one may be misled about the girl's age, thus making it difficult to have precise information on the magnitude of this phenomenon (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Sibanda, 2011).

One of the outcomes of transactional sexual relationships in the study area is the sexual abuse of young girls. The legal age of consent for consensual sex in Zimbabwe is 16 years, with the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act Chapter 9:23 Section 70 outlawing sexual activity with a young person (under 16), and a minor (under 12) being considered as unable to consent to sexual intercourse or a sexual act (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). Despite the legal provisions in place, girls rarely get the necessary assistance and relief. It was reported that cases of this nature were rarely reported to the relevant authorities.

MUNASHE (f): Of course, that is what the law says but I have not heard of such a case that has been taken to the police. When I heard of this law, I thought of course it might work but not to end child marriages because in some cases young girls will be having sexual relationships with their families fully aware of it. In most cases that is so with grandmothers because mothers will not leave you to do that. So, if the boyfriend is known in the family they won't have him arrested. (Learner, Interview)

It was highlighted that reporting cases to the police largely depended on family and community response sexual abuse.

PANASHE (m): It all depends on how the family views the issue. At times there is not much the school authorities can do if the family has not done anything about it. It becomes a problem because some families will be saying she should get married. There may be poverty in the family, so they will be saying that *poto yatodzikira* (it is one less mouth to feed). (Learner, Interview)

TEHILA (f): Ah that is not common, cases that get reported are those that involve the girl running into some problems at home and the parents take it upon themselves to report. No steps are taken if the girl elopes or if one gets pregnant while at school. Once you hear that a girl is pregnant, you will eventually hear that she has eloped and that is the end of the issue. (Learner, Interview)

As noted in an earlier chapter, elopement before payment of *roora* is regarded as a step towards customary marriage in circumstances of premarital sex or pregnancy (Chisi, 2018), with such events not being a criminal offence per se in Zimbabwe. However, as elopement portends a child marriage in the context highlighted by Tehila, ideally it ought to be reported to the police. Yet this is rarely done, as marriage legitimates sexual activity, even where it involves a minor. One of the teachers explained the dilemma that communities face when they encounter such cases.

MR DHADHIYA: Cabinet has come up with a very strict law. About 2 years ago or something, It is strictly prohibited for any girl less than 18, it used to be 16, any girl below 18 is not supposed to be married by anybody under what circumstances. According to cabinet 18 years is a school going age...The girls are getting impregnated before getting 18, and then the options: getting the culprit arrested or to get the culprit to marry? So it's like the community at the moment is still not pushing to have the culprits arrested, they are considering the family of the girl is poor, so if we get the culprit arrested we are making it worse for the girl as well as her family. So it is better the girl goes with the man and it is kept quiet, the community is supposed to report those issues to the police but if the community looks at the situation they decide to keep quiet. For the sake of the girl and her family they keep quiet...communities are keeping mum because of er, they call it humanitarian consideration when we feel pity for the girl and her family and decide to keep quiet. (Teacher, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): As far as I know, only a few report...the issue is that there is gold in this community, so they eventually pay the parents, who then misinform the school that the girl has transferred. She will be going to the husband. (Learner, Interview)

Economic considerations seem to be the chief determinant of whether cases of sexual abuse get reported or not. Some families choose to marry off the pregnant minor rather than report the offence to the police. As noted by McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons and Klugman (2015), family decisions in favour of marriage are usually influenced by social customs and financial limitations. When reports are made to the police, arrests are seldom made or, if arrested, the perpetrators are released with advice that both families must discuss and come to a settlement.

TEHILA (f): If the parents get actively involved that is when the case gets to the police. I know of some who were arrested...it is usually settled through talks; then they say he should pay some money or cows. People do not get each other arrested and sent to jail. If the case goes to the Chief, it is usually discussed and agreed that the culprit should pay *zvemasungiro*<sup>5</sup>. (Learner, Interview)

In some cases, the chief's court focuses on moral issues relating to the girl rather than the crime.

MR NDLOVU: Aaah we have one case that I still remember which was reported, but it was discovered that the girl he had slept with she was below 16, but it was discovered that she had slept with quite a number. Yes, so I don't know if it went to the police, but at the chief's court the chief said there is nothing they can do, it means it's her character and it's like they were having a dispute, she was saying this one is responsible and he was saying no she had slept with so and so, and she admitted to having slept with all those other men...So I don't think the cases are reported. And even as I said the community just accept it. (Teacher, Interview)

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<sup>5</sup> Customary fabric, goat and money paid to the bride's parents when she is returned to her family to await the birth of the first child

The chief's court is largely a patriarchal institution that does not seem to serve the interests of girls and women, with the good girl/bad girl dichotomy anchored in sexual double standards being invoked. The morality of the girl takes centre stage, and in this way, the criminal conduct of boys and men is normalised. In the end, the victim is blamed while the perpetrator is not castigated and arrested. The teachers also noted the interweaving of legal and cultural responses to child sexual abuse that tend to handicap the school in seeking justice for the learner. Thus most cases of sexual abuse of learners are not settled satisfactorily.

MR HILLARY: That's a major challenge now when girls from our school get married or rather they are impregnated. For us to skip those [parents] and say this is abuse or this is whatever and we are going to do one or two things, we will be inviting trouble to ourselves. We can't jump that stage, we have got to invite the parents first and we try to tell them how bad it is. But unfortunately many times no action is taken because the parents would have negotiated outside there, reached a settlement. So in the end we just say if the parent is okay with it let it be. (Teacher, Interview)

MRS MOYO: But we have tried, there was one case of abuse because the child was below 16 and then we tried to support that one but we failed. Why we fail usually it's because the community is not supportive. They actually support the wrongdoer, that's what they do. Like in this case the person who made the girl pregnant was a relative of the girl's stepfather. Like this girl is being kept by her mother living with a stepfather. And then this person who made her pregnant is a stepfather's sister's child. So they are staying in the same compound. When the girl goes to Shamva to visit some relatives, he follows there. And then she was pregnant. We tried to say "please let's report this," and when we got to the police they said the complainant should come to report. Even with this fighting if you go to report on behalf they don't accept. They say "the complainant, the person who was beaten should come to report".

VSM: So in this case, the pregnant girl herself?

MRS MOYO: Yes or the parents because she is still a minor. But the parents, this parent is one we thought she would support the child because she was in the SDC. She seemed to understand issues but she did not. We said we should report this, they continued to cover it. They said "we have made an agreement as a family, that the father will support the child, they will do this, they will do that, they will pay this, they will pay that". So they refused and it just ends like that. And just recently, because the child was supposed to be in Form 4 this year, so she was made pregnant when she was in Form 3 which is 2014. And then only in 2015 they realised that those people were lying. They did not give anything to the child, then she went to report for maintenance. And then there was also misunderstanding in the family. Why she was reporting for maintenance and so on. (School Head, Interview)

The objective of traditional solutions in most cases is to uphold family honour by compensating the girl's father or escaping trial by marrying the girl (Njovana & Watts, 1996). In Zimbabwe,

the law does not criminalise sexual relations with a minor in the context of marriage (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The families and the police seem to be resorting to traditional methods of resolving cases of a criminal nature. Zimbabwean legislators have bemoaned the deplorable investigation or indifference to child marriage cases by police and the light sentences set for those found guilty of sexual activity with minors. For instance, a fine of US\$100 or community service is the penalty for sexual relations with 13-year-old girls (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2016).

It appears that knowledge of the legal provisions on sexual abuse, rape or underage pregnancy is superseded by cultural and economic considerations in informing parental response. This finding is similar to that of Shipman (2016), who explored local understanding of child sexual abuse in informal settlements of Nairobi. The girls' interests are rarely considered, as the adults make decisions on where and how to seek justice on behalf of the girl (Shipman, 2016). It is clear that in most instances, the objective is not justice for the girl but rather serving the interests of the parents or guardians. Marriage seems to be considered as the best way to solve the problem of sexual abuse in the interests of both families by preventing defamation (Crossouard, Dunne, & Durrani, 2019). Writing on the practice of child marriage in Zimbabwe, Sibanda (2011) argues that where the victim of abuse is married off to the perpetrator, sexual abuse of girls and young women is perceived as right and proper. Girls' exposure to abuse thrives because of such gender-biased traditional practices and unsatisfactory legal systems, which has a bearing on their reactions to abuse (Haffejee & Theron, 2017). The girls who are forced to have sex without consent do not report it to the police, as explained by Kundai.

KUNDAI (f): You will just hear that so and so is pregnant and has eloped. I am not sure why they do not go [to the police], maybe they would also be interested, or they love their boyfriend. So now it becomes difficult to report. I think it is difficult. (Learner, Interview)

The girls are perceived as no longer seeing sexual violence within an intimate relationship as an offence. As marriage is used to legitimise instances of sexual abuse in the community, the girls do not feel entitled to report cases of forced sex, and fail to recognise that love should not be used to overlook acts of sexual violence. However, some boys do acknowledge the impact of the law on their perception of sexual relationships with minors.

GABRIEL (m): It is slowly coming to an end because now people have this fear that if you have a sexual relationship with a young girl you might end up at the [police] cells.

The fear of arrest may result in some boys and men desisting from sexual relations with young people. The local culture also needs to evolve its response so that men do not feel they can always resort to a gender-biased traditional resolution of sexual abuse cases.

#### **7.4 Go back to your boyfriend, you can't live here anymore**

The sexual double standard is implicated in the gender differences in regulating teenage sexuality. Teenage girls' sexual behaviour is closely monitored (Sennott & Mojola, 2017), as emphasis is placed on the risks in terms of sexually transmitted infection, reputation and their life chances. Generally, the parents viewed teenage sexuality as dangerous, but riskier for girls than boys.

ZVAMAITA (m): Girls are the ones who need a lot of attention... as soon as they start seeing themselves as grown up. Once they reach puberty we see that more effort is required in monitoring them. They end up having relationships with boys, so they need more guidance. Especially at secondary [school] level there is need for more monitoring. (Parent, Interview)

Connell (2005) maintains that a sexual double standard validates men's sexual liberty, and is implicated in control of teenage sexuality. Stringent monitoring is viewed as necessary for girls but not for boys, who ironically might be having relationships with these same girls. Moreover, premarital sex is a danger to a girl's moral and social standing, as she is the one who remains with the mark of such transgressions.

RUMBIDZAI (f): The girl is the one who must be very decent because she will be labelled *nzenza* [loose]... as she will end up with a child...the father of the child will abandon the girl. The one who remains with the baby or pregnancy is considered the loose one. (Parent, Interview)

Premarital pregnancy and motherhood have a negative effect on a girl's social standing. Her reputation is tarnished, as she would have violated cultural expectations regarding sexual purity and ideal femininity (Sennott & Mojola, 2017). This contrasts with Sennott and Mojola's (2017) findings in rural Mpumalanga Province in South Africa, where premarital motherhood does not exclude women from realising the status of upright womanhood in the community. In addition, parents' apprehension regarding teenage girls' sexuality was framed in respect of their marital and economic prospects.

CHIGOGODA (f): ...getting pregnant while still at school. When she gives birth, it is now the parents' problem to look after both. The boy usually ends the relationship when he realises that he is not yet ready to be a father and head of a household. So, the family survives in difficult circumstances. (Parent, Interview)

Bhana (2015b) observes that cultural standards of masculinity and fatherhood are linked in the expectation of providing for one's family. In the context of a largely depressed national economy, many fathers abdicate their fatherhood roles (Morrell, 2006). The girl's family does not appreciate taking up this role as they are equally struggling economically. Premarital pregnancy after schooling, when they have matured, is viewed as a better option in terms of ability to fend for the family.

RUMBIDZAI (f): These relationships while one is still in school lead to elopement. If they finish schooling first then even when they have a boyfriend and elope, they will be mature and able to fend for their family. If one is still at school how do they provide for the family? It is best not having these relationships. (Parent, Interview)

Parents' statements illustrate what Elliot (2010) saw as anxiety about teenage girls' marital and economic prospects once they engage in premarital sex. It appears they are more vulnerable to risk, as boys could abandon both the baby and the teenage mother. As a result, parents expected that girls should actively mitigate these risks.

GETRUDE (f): So that is the encouragement we give our children, which is you should start having boyfriends when you have completed schooling. And when you have a boyfriend you should not go with him to secluded places, you should go with him to open places until you are married. (Parent, Interview)

GRACE (f): ...so now we advise that if you are playing together, a girl should know the boundaries and place a lot of value on education... My advice is that they should not sleep with boys; they must focus on their books. (Parent, Interview)

Parents believe that schooling and sex should be mutually exclusive, as the latter can place educational success in danger. Contradictorily girls are made responsible for setting the boundaries in intimate relationships (Schalet, *et al.*, 2014), against the background of cultural standards upholding male domination of females. In these circumstances, the ability of teenage girls to control the course of a heterosexual intimate relationship is limited

Owing to the value placed on a girl having a good marriage, there is intense monitoring of teenage girls' movements, a union becoming an option as parents try to uphold notions of respectable femininity.

CHIPO (f): To wait [for *roora* to be paid] while still in their family becomes difficult. For example, if I go to bed before my daughter gets home; 12, 1am then you hear her opening the door, where would she be coming from? If the

father is there he will order her to go back to wherever she was, so she will elope to her boyfriend. That is not the right time to get home.

VSM: What time are they normally expected to be home?

CHIPO (f): A decent girl must be home by 5 o'clock'. If there is a gate like in towns then it must have been locked by 6 o'clock, the child must be at home. So, if a child gets home around 8pm that is the time they will engage in naughty deeds.

VSM: Alright. What time are boys expected to get home?

CHIPO (f): It is difficult with boys, since these days there are film shows in bars at Chimeso or it may be the soccer season. You cannot forbid him if it is said the match screening starts at 10pm and you do not know when the match will end. In most cases you are not too worried about a son because he does not get pregnant you see. It is different with the daughter, if she moves at night and is raped, then she gets pregnant or acquires diseases. So that is why we maintain that girls must be home by 5 o'clock because bad things happen in the dark usually around 8, 9pm. (Parent, Interview)

Discourses of danger are paramount when parents refer to teenage girls' sexuality. The threat of rape makes surveillance of teenage girls about both regulation and protection, this finding corresponds to those of Black parents reported in a South African study by Bhana (2015b), who stressed the urgency of talking about danger and abuse to children on the topic of sexuality. Teenage boys, on the other hand, benefit from the patriarchal dividend, as males are not believed to be in such danger.

Although teenage boys participated in risky behaviour as they enacted masculinity, this was not viewed as problematic.

ZUZE (m): The boys no, the boys here just think of gold panning. They get some money and look for *mbanje* (marijuana). Huh once they get some money they buy alcohol or *mbanje*, a boy here has no trouble madam. These madams, the girls, are the ones in danger. Those with daughters must be very strict. (Parent, Interview)

Drinking is significant in the construction of masculinity (Dempster, 2011), with teenage boys drinking beer and smoking marijuana, which is illegal substances in Zimbabwe, and strangely viewed as 'no trouble'. This falls in with discourses of masculinity as bold and risk-taking (Sweet, 2017; Fleming, DiClemente, & Brighton, 2016). Unfortunately, this feeds into the parents' tolerance of teenage boys' pre-marital and probably unsafe sexual conduct, which is in stark contrast to the strict monitoring of girls' sexuality. One parent explained the dangers of boys drinking beer and smoking *mbanje* as follows:

RUMBIDZAI (f): Usually we advise the boys to avoid drinking beer and smoking. These destroy their future as it encourages them to steal as they would not be

thinking properly. Beer makes them desire women too much without looking at how they will be affected... There are some prostitutes who are not of their age but when they are drunk they will not know which ones are of their age. That is caused by drinking beer, so we must show them that it is not right. (Parent, Interview)

Intoxication through alcohol or marijuana was blamed for teenage boys' stealing and involvement with prostitutes not within their age range. The implication could be that boys are otherwise sensible and would normally avoid these hazards through self-control. Commonly held patriarchal beliefs of men's rationality (Lyons & Gough, 2017; Connell, 2005) are used to diminish boys' accountability in problematic behaviour. The position that when drunk they would not know which prostitutes are of their age draws attention to tolerance of teenage boys' premarital sexual activity, even with prostitutes, if the partners are not much older than them. This differs from the strict controlling of teenage female sexuality. Teenage boys' involvement with older prostitutes was viewed by some parents as partly responsible for their acceptance of the cultural practice involving the inheritance of widows.

MAIPIRWA (f): Because you may find that a widow who has six children can be inherited by a young man who has never been married. It means that growing up, the young man has never been uneasy [about sexual relationships with older women]. (Parent, Interview)

Age-disparate relationships place the younger partner at risk of HIV infection. However, most research has paid attention to teenage girls and young women with older male partners and their increased chances of acquiring HIV (Schaefer, *et al.*, 2017; Maughan-Brown, Evans, & George, 2016; Leclerc-Mdlala, 2008; Gregson, *et al.*, 2002). The danger of infection is heightened by factors that include higher frequency of sex, erratic condom use, higher HIV prevalence among older men, men's provider role and unequal power relations (Beauclair, Doshoff, & Wim, 2018; Lince-Deroche, *et al.*, 2018; Maughan-Brown, Evans, & George, 2016; Sievers, Hasen, & Kazadi, 2016). Although girls are more vulnerable in age-disparate relationships, recent research indicates that boys with older partners have higher chances of acquiring HIV than those with partners who are younger (Beauclair, Helleringer, Hans, & Delva, 2016). Therefore, teenage boys' vulnerability to HIV infection is an ever present danger, in their enactment of masculinity through relationships with older women.

Although parents did not regulate teenage boys' sexuality in the same manner, they were cognisant of the dangers that they were exposed to.

NYADZAI (f): As a parent I would not know what he was up to, whether he spent the night in the bar or he was with someone. Most of those at Chimeso have illnesses [STIs]. So, you will know that when your son eventually starts a family, the first thing is that the baby might die, all because of this naughty behaviour. (Interview)

MANDEBVU (m): We do not want to teach our children to feel that they can do whatever they want, [that] there will be no consequences because they are taking family planning pills. That is not right; children must be told to have self-control. They may feel that is what they want to do madam, even though that is not what they were told by the parents. If a boy feels like that then he should tell his father that he wants to get married.

VSM: What if the boy is still in school, let's say form 4, should he get married?

MANDEBVU (m): If I have the bride wealth and agree with the girl's parents. I think I would want my son to continue going to school even if he has married early. Even his wife, once she has given birth, should go back to school. Life nowadays is different from the life we had all along... I do not want a child's life to be destroyed just because she got pregnant, that's bad. (Parent, Interview)

The observation that sex and schooling are not necessarily mutually exclusive differs from what most other parents stated. Mandebvu emphasises that it is important to accept that teenagers do have sexual desires, and to assist them to channel that desire in the culturally sanctioned institution of marriage. In the study setting, marriage primarily entails paying *roora*, as explained previously. At the same time, elopement as an antecedent to payment of *roora* is acceptable where premarital sexual activity has occurred. Hence, the insistence on marriage limits sex to the domain of marriage and indirectly to adults. This view of teenage sexuality as normative is similar in some respects to Schalet's (2004) study in the Netherlands, this option having proven to reduce problems associated with teenage sexuality. The Netherlands is a different cultural context, as sexual activity does not necessarily need to be predicated on marriage for it to be acceptable in society. However, the view of acceptable teenage sexual activity within marriage in the rural Shona cultural context contrasts with national policies and laws informed by global understandings of childhood and rights in general, and consequently child marriage.

Despite teenagers' acute awareness of problems associated with child marriages, they underscored that although some girls are forced, others willingly go into these marriages. The cultural expectation concerning time in respect of girls' movements is one of the ways of policing female sexuality in the community. Learners and teachers described how girls are compelled to elope if they arrive home later than expected.

OBVIOUS (m): Some girls may be delayed by their boyfriends and are afraid of their father, mother or brothers. So, she may decide to elope to go with the boyfriend. Some brothers may have caught her with the boy and they tell her to go to her boyfriend's home. (Learner, Interview)

MONALISA (f): Some elope because they would have arrived home late and parents say, "Where were you until this time? Go back to wherever you were." So, she goes back and that is how one elopes...around 6pm if you are really late...Mothers, especially, are not worried about the boys, they are concerned about the girls. (Learner, Interview)

MRS DUBE: Sometimes the communities share in the girls' plight. Why? Because you find that some of the girls they are chased from homes. Why? Because the parent would have seen that the girl is in love with so and so a person. In Shona they call it *kutizira*, *kunzi akaendeswa* (has been sent away). She is not pregnant, nothing. Yet they just have to counsel the child and send the child back to school but they promote those child marriages sometimes. (Teacher, Interview)

Gendered power relations characteristic of Shona families give boys authority over girls (Francis-Chizororo, 2010), being permitted to chase a girl away from the family homestead if they have reason to suspect that she may be engaging in premarital sex, arriving home late might possibly giving rise to this suspicion. However, parents are reported to be unconcerned about controlling boys' movements in a similar manner. This corroborates research findings among South African teenagers, establishing the existence of disciplinary reactions to girls' sexuality in the school or community (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). Therefore, families might perceive forced marriage as a way of precluding a girl's involvement in immoral behaviour (Mulumeoderhwa, 2016).

Ill-treatment of girls both within intimate relationships and within the home was reported to result in child marriage, in some cases.

KUNDAI (f): Some elope because they want to while others may have been forced to have sex by the boyfriend and she becomes pregnant. Still others are ill-treated within the family. Others are just naughty and arrive home late, so they are told, "Go back to your boyfriend, you can't live here anymore." Since the girl will be afraid of being beaten she decides to go back to the boyfriend. (Learner, Interview)

Previous studies in South Africa and Zimbabwe indicate that girls are victims of forced sexual intercourse perpetrated by intimate partners leading to unintended pregnancy and marriage (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015; Shamu, Abrahams, Temmerman, Sheffer, & Zarowsky, 2012), which expose them to HIV infection (Shefer & Ngabaza, 2015). Unfortunately, parents and guardians usually expect a girl to marry the man responsible for the pregnancy, regardless of

whether she had consented to sex or not. According to Raniga and Mathe (2011), the family is the central safeguard if they face the misfortune of an unplanned pregnancy. On the contrary, in this context the family is at the forefront of thrusting girls into an uncertain future without a firm educational foundation. Girls are shown to be prone to violence both within the family and intimate relationships. Ironically, violence, whether in the family or in intimate relationships, propels them into child marriage. When they are victims of forced sex, their families force them into marriage, and when they are ill-treated or face the possibility of physical violence in the home, they seek refuge in marriage.

Nevertheless some boys and girls choose to enter into marriage without obvious impetus from parents or guardians.

TEHILA (f): When we say a girl *atizira* (has eloped) we mean: One, she may not be pregnant but in agreement with the boyfriend, she simply goes to live with him without any payment of *roora* (bride wealth); Two, they may be in love, the girl gets pregnant and tells the boyfriend who accepts responsibility. Then they just go and start living together. (Learner, Interview)

Teenage sexual relations outside marriage are condemned in Zimbabwe (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014), with some young people feeling the need to elope and cohabit as a way of legitimising their sexual activity. If a girl has engaged in premarital sex and remains at their homestead she may be viewed as disrespectful. The learners revealed that some girls choose to elope even if they are not pregnant.

TEHILA (f): The boy might be poor, or the girl may just want to be with him for fear that he may be taken by some other girl. (Learner, Interview)

MONALISA (f): Some believe that they have found themselves a *German* (another term for gold panner) with money so once they elope he will take care of them. What they do not know is that he may stop giving you large amounts of cash once you get married. (Learner, Interview)

FAITH (f): Girls are different. Some might be interested in money while others will have seen that it is better to elope... Some girls are not interested in school. Since we started form one, some have already eloped, and so by the time we get to Form 4 a lot more will have gone. (Learner, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): Others may be pregnant, and others may just decide to elope if their friend has done so. (Learner, Interview)

Although girls may be compelled to elope in the circumstances discussed earlier, in the cases described above, it is clear that teenage girls can also make a conscious decision to elope. What is striking are the reasons given for such agency, as they claim that they may lose their partners

to other girls, want to safeguard their relationship with a male provider or that they are not likely to make it in school. The girls position themselves strategically, and not as powerless victims in these encounters.

There is little material benefit for parents from child marriage, this having more to do with the value or premium placed on marriage by both parents and teenage girls.

MRS LIFE: I think they just feel that as a woman, I must have my own household, they admire the married women. Just that, “I must have my own home, so I must get married.” Among the Form 4 girls, maybe it is a joke but there is a saying, “We have already packed our bags,” meaning that as soon as they finish writing the [ZIMSEC Ordinary Level] examinations, they will go [and get married]. They see marriage as very important; just being called Mrs. That identity to identify with a man is what they rush for. (Teacher, Interview)

MRS PRIDE: The parents do not get any financial benefits from the marriage of their young children. We would expect that they get some money but no, just the name, the title Mrs is very important to them. You will hear the child being referred to as Mrs So-and-so. If the child gets into the environment around the school, she is not even ashamed. She will start seeing herself as having acquired a higher status than others of her age just because she is now a Mrs So-and-so. (Teacher, Interview)

Similar focus on men and relationships rather than education and employment was noted among some African-American female teenagers (Akella & Jordan, 2011). It was observed that the girls appear to think that they cannot have an identity outside matrimony.

MR DHADHIYA: Girls, “My sister is married to so and so, that other sister is married to so and so.” She doesn’t see herself as anything else... To say, “I don’t even need that husband. I can do things on my own...” People always ask, “Why is she doing it on her own, why doesn’t she have a husband? She is a prostitute, where is she getting er... Love...her sex life.” People will always think she must have a husband to fulfil that aspect of being a woman. Those who are educated usually don’t want to tie themselves to a husband because they know husbands can be er, they harass. They expect you to do what they want every day. (Teacher, Interview)

While marriage supposedly elevated the status of the teenage girl, it appears that the legitimacy that marriage confers on sexual activity is important for females who are not economically independent. This independence, through education and a career, appears to liberate them from this constraint, thus enabling them to obtain sexual satisfaction in circumstances of their choice (Kehily, 2013).

## 7.5 You start seeing yourself as a parent

Unintended pregnancy usually results in a girl having to drop out of school (Raniga & Mathe, 2011), and as abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe, teenagers who become pregnant often give birth and leave school to take care of the baby. The learners stated that the burden of unplanned pregnancy and childcare often falls disproportionately on the girl.

MUNASHE (f): These issues affect you the girl, you will be a school dropout, plus if you are made pregnant while still young the baby might die. Plus, there won't be anyone in a position to pay school fees for you to go back to school because they will be saying your mind is now just like that of a parent at home, so you start seeing yourself as a parent. The boys are not affected that much because he may continue coming to school if he wishes. (Learner, Interview)

PANASHE (m): Some of those who engage in early childbearing may get ill, some die in childbirth because they would be too young. Plus, in most cases the boys do not stay married to the young girl for long, in some cases they do not even reach 3 years together. They will be regretting. (Learner, Interview)

FAITH (f): Their life is greatly affected because they would have rushed into this without getting an opportunity to get employment. One should get the chance to work, do something for yourself and then get married at a later stage. (Learner, Interview)

The learners rightly pointed out the negative outcomes of teen pregnancy and parenthood, which included school dropout, lack of employment opportunities, illness, maternal mortality and marriage breakdown, these being framed more in relation to girls rather than boys. Teenage fatherhood among learners was not common, probably because the gold panners and other young men not in school were often responsible for schoolgirl pregnancies. Nevertheless, the learners noted that some schoolboys made girls pregnant but continued coming to school.

TEHILA (f): Such cases are few, but it happened last year. A girl in Form 4 eloped to a boy who was in Form 3. You know parents of the boy and girl can agree that since they are both still in school, some payments are made, and the girl goes back to her parents...the boy continued coming to school. The girl's parents were given two cows and she went back to her family. So, he continued with his education. (Learner, Interview)

BOWLINE (m): If a girl has a baby, then she stops coming to school though a few might come. But in the case of boys they keep on coming [to school]. (Learner, Interview)

Other boys noted that they are also affected by unplanned pregnancy and teenage parenthood.

OBVIOUS (m): If a schoolboy has a wife and child, life may become difficult for him. The teenage mother can continue coming to school while the young man has to look for money. Now it becomes difficult for the young man to come to school unless there are parents who can provide school fees for him. Plus, even

if he comes, his performance may go down because of the burden that he will be carrying. (Learner, Interview)

FRANK (m): At this school one boy had that challenge. It's last year towards exam time, he was in form 4. His sister-in-law's younger sister eloped to him...She was not a pupil here, she was not going to school...He accepted her...He did not come to school anymore, he did not write the exams [Ordinary Level national examinations], but the parents had paid exam fees. (Learner, Interview)

Contrary to the widespread focus on girls as victims of unplanned pregnancy and marriage (Sibanda, 2011), the boys in the study highlight that they are also affected to a certain extent. The teen fathers' anxiety to fulfil expectations to do with the male provider status makes it difficult for them to concentrate in school, sometimes leading to them leaving school altogether to fend for the family. As stated by Mulumeoderhwa (2016), the father is responsible for the upkeep of his child in patriarchal cultures. Findings from the study suggest that learners regard the roles of learner and parent to be mutually exclusive, with simultaneous performance of both roles to some extent being inconsistent with their notions of learner and parent. This could partly explain why pregnant girls often have to drop out of school. Likewise some teenage fathers dropped out of school to concentrate on the provider role, an important aspect of fatherhood. The notion of parenthood was associated more with the girl rather than the boys, and probably clarifies why teenage fathers could continue with education while the mothers had to stay at home.

Pregnant girls fail to continue with their education despite government policy stating that they are free to do so. The effect of male power over females manifests in harassing pregnant girls by boys in school, and the eventual decision to continue with their education or drop out. School boys do not assist in creating a conducive learning environment for pregnant girls who wish to keep on coming to school.

THULANI (m): So, they will be ashamed of being amongst their friends. They will think that, "By the time I complete Form 2 my stomach will be huge, and others will laugh at me." But if she is in form four, close to writing end of year national examinations, she may keep coming to school. (Learner, Interview)

MASTER L (m): I laugh at such girls...It's like when we have lessons especially G & C the girls are told to be careful, so I will be saying to them, "You are naughty, and you do not take the teachers' advice." (Boys FGD, Rufaro Secondary School)

Reflections on sexuality has moralistic insinuations (Crossouard, Dunne, & Durrani, 2019), which result in pregnant girls being despised and branded as promiscuous (Mollborn, 2015). The boys did not see anything wrong with mocking the girls, thereby prohibiting them from

exercising their right to education in a friendly environment. Gender-based intimidation occurs within wide-ranging social values and power relations characterising gender and sexuality (Holland, 2017).

Teachers and parents corroborated the issue of harassment of pregnant learners in school.

MR HILLARY: But we never know if she would be comfortable with coming to school. Because like I said the boys would be saying things and laughing. (Teacher, Interview)

MR NGONI: Aah uum. It's a bit difficult because you see some they laugh at them like outcasts. At the end of the day for those that would have registered for ZIMSEC, normally they come back and sit for their exams.

VSM: How about those who fall pregnant maybe in Form 3, there is no ZIMSEC examination, do they also continue?

MR NGONI: Aah they drop out. (School Head, Interview)

However, the parents pointed out that it is the teachers who harass pregnant learners.

MOLLINE (f): If we look at the issue of a pregnant schoolgirl, continuing with school depends on what she decides. A parent might say that his/her daughter is brilliant in school so one will encourage her to go to school without feeling ashamed. But now I would call upon the teachers to treat her as if she is not pregnant just like other learners in school. There maybe cases where a pregnant learner fails to pay attention and provides a wrong answer then the teacher says something like, "You better stay at home with your pregnancy". In such circumstances the child might decide to drop out because of humiliation even if she might have been interested in school. In addition, we often hear that teachers shame learners who are rumoured to be sexually active saying, "You are now troublesome in school because you are now men and women. You have slept with men so now you are grown up women that is why you are no longer disciplined in school". Imagine teachers saying that to a schoolchild? How do you think that child feels? What about the pregnant one hearing that being said about those who are not even pregnant? Most likely she will decide to drop out of school because she will ask herself. "If the teachers can say this to one who is just believed to be sexually active, what will they say to me, I am actually pregnant?" So the relationship between the child and the teacher needs to be considered so that the pregnant learner will feel free to come back to school after giving birth. We have some girls who persevered and they are now Matrons in hospitals, it [continuing with education after delivery] is helpful. I would want a situation where there is a good relationship among the parents, pregnant learner and the teachers so that the child will go on with her education. (Parents FGD, Rufaro Secondary School)

The parent explains how teachers make the learning environment hostile to pregnant learners and those who are perceived to be sexually active, as their conduct opposes discourses of sexual innocence promoted in school. The sentiments expressed by the teacher and parent in the

excerpts echo the findings of comparable studies of pregnant learners in South African schools. Bhana (2017a) and Matlala, Nolte and Temane (2014) similarly discovered that pregnant or parenting girls may face difficulties continuing with education, as they are verbally abused by boys and teachers due to stigmatisation of pregnancy in school spaces. According to Ntinda, Twala and Dlamini (2016), teachers' attitudes determine whether or not they will support pregnant learners. Earlier studies in Tanzania and Kenya revealed that when sexual activity is seen as inconsistent with the schoolgirl role (Pinock, 2018), the school might be unaccommodating of pregnant learners or young mothers (Undie, Birungi, Odwe, & Obare, 2015). There are also some misgivings concerning the readmission policy, as pointed out by one of the participants.

MR NGONI: Only that maybe being a policy, it might be a prescription. A bitter pill to swallow anyway. They [teachers] just have to accept. We cannot fight government policy. (School Head, Interview)

Akin to the feelings of teachers in a South African study by Bhana, Clowes, Morrell and Shefer (2008), the school head implied that this policy was imposed on the schools by the government. That feeling of ownership and enthusiastic support for the policy was noticeably lacking in his demeanor as he referred to it. This school head's indifferent attitude toward readmission of pregnant learners is in stark contrast to that of the female school head at Rufaro Secondary School.

MRS MOYO: We have tried to support them but they resist I could say. They resist support, they are not used to it. I think maybe it's a problem of the home, or country am not sure. But I think it applies to all of Zimbabwe. To say these rules are new; to say if a student is pregnant the student should remain at school, should continue to come to school should write exam; it's still new to many people. And the students know that if they get pregnant they have done something which was not expected of them. They want to move out of the community of the school that is. That is what they do, no matter how much you do to try to keep them in. They want to pull themselves out because maybe the others are laughing at them. (School Head, Interview)

Mrs Moyo indicated that while the school plays a significant role in getting the policy implemented on the ground, pregnant girls rarely continue with school. This trend has been observed in related studies in other African countries, such as South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Kenya, despite policies allowing them to continue attending school (Timaeus & Moultrie, 2015; Matlala, Nolte, & Temane, 2014; Orako, *et al.*, 2015; Undie, Birungi, Odwe, & Obare, 2015; Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, & Ngabaza, 2010; Makiwane, 2010). While this trend may suggest shortcoming of policies, Mrs Moyo emphasised that pregnant learners are not

keen to continue schooling when they have deviated from expectations that teenage learners should not be sexually active, as also noted by Chase (2017), with such girls being regarded failures. Teen mothers are therefore stigmatised on traditional and moral basis (Watson & Vogel, 2017; Makiwane, 2010).

MONALISA (f): Once you elope and drop out school...the one who used to buy *Jiggies* for you will no longer treat you like he used to when you were still a girl. Now you will be living with a husband, he will not have had enough of women, so he may become promiscuous while you suffer at home. (Learner, Interview)

Besides ill-treating the young wives, the husbands determine whether a teenage mother can go back to school. Learners stated that most of those who marry teenage girls are not in school, and were referred to as 'outsiders' or 'home defenders'.

OBVIOUS (m): Some may come back to school, it all depends on the man who has married her, whether he wants her to continue or not. Some men may have dropped out school, others might have failed at form four, while others never went to secondary school in the first place. So, they believe that if the girl goes to school she will look down upon the husband in the future. Therefore, they will say it is better if we remain the same. (Learner, Interview)

VSM: What about those who agree that she continues with school? (Learner, Interview)

OBVIOUS (m): Basically, we see things differently. They say that if the wife goes to school, in future she will assist the husband financially in the home. Other men might be educated so they will say they cannot stay with someone who is not educated. At times the parents of the girl might be interested in sending their daughter to school. (Learner, Interview)

Male interests take precedence over the girls' choices regarding whether to continue with education, as an educated wife is considered a threat to the masculinity of an uneducated man. At the same time, the possibility of getting assistance for the male breadwinner role from an educated wife compels some uneducated men to support the girls who want to continue with school. The parental influence on education for the pregnant girl is emphasised by Obvious and Tehila.

TEHILA (f): That is not common, once someone elopes she won't be coming to school anymore. If she elopes due to pregnancy she may continue with her education after childbirth, but at a different school. At times in cases of separation from her husband, the parents will tell her to go back to school. It is quite rare to go on with schooling while she is living with the husband. (Learner, Interview)

In all the scenarios that result in the girl either continuing or ending her education, she probably does not make an autonomous decision, and points to a situation in which girls' choices are ignored or virtually non-existent. Consequently, their right to education is not secure, but rather

dependent on the inclination of spouses or parents. In the case of support for remaining in school or taking it up after separation, this seems to be consistent with serving the interests of others, such as economic capacity either to assist the husband or to relieve parents who would otherwise be responsible for the upkeep of the single mother. Nevertheless, girls' education is particularly important in the context of HIV and AIDS. A review of studies in developing countries by Hargreaves and Glynn (2002) highlighted that trends in new HIV infection indicate more infections among the less educated groups and decreases among those who are more educated, with longer periods of schooling for girls having been reported to lower their risk of HIV infection (Sperling, Winthrop, & Kwak, 2016; Jukes, Simmons, & Bundy, 2008)

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Boys and girls are affected by poverty, although girls are further disadvantaged by gender and unequal economic opportunities. Boys are better placed as they have an opportunity to earn some money through gold panning, which is stereotyped as masculine as it is hard and risky work. Teenage boys engage in such a risky venture to live up to the masculine ideal of the provider in the family and in heterosexual relationships. Generally, adult participants tended to focus on the economic vulnerability of girls. However, findings of the study indicate that both boys and girls are vulnerable and in need of poverty-alleviating interventions in the context of limited safe earning opportunities for teenage learners.

The economic dependency of females on a male provider is one of the drivers of transactional sexual relationships between girls and gold panners. The more common understanding of transactional sex as involving a subservient female beneficiary and a dominant male benefactor was challenged in two ways. Firstly, girls are not always powerless pawns in these encounters, as they actively seek partners whom they can manipulate for financial gain. Secondly, although not yet widespread, there is evidence that teenage boys also engage in transactional relationships with older women. Therefore, there is need for schools, families and communities to address the vulnerabilities of both boys and girls to transactional sexual relationships. Within the limits of a challenging economic and social environment, young people need to be empowered to practise safe sexual relations effectively (Van der Heijden & Swartz, 2014).

While abstinence is a safe option in light of sexual risks, awareness of the risk and personal determination to abstain are mediated by economic situation and perceived 'needs'. Teenage boys and girls frame money and sex as 'needs' that they have to satisfy. Additional limitations of abstinence as an option for learners that have been identified in other studies include peer pressure, uncontrollable sexual urges, a view of sex as normative (Ganle, 2016), difficulty in practising it and that it is a strategy foisted on young people by adults (Marindo, Pearson, & Casterline, 2003). It is therefore important that teenagers are provided with the necessary knowledge and support that they need to successfully practise abstinence. Given the dangers that learners may encounter in sexual relationships, it becomes essential for adults not to construe teenage sexuality as problematic (Lamb, 2010), but as a genuine, normative facet of teenage development (Tolman & McClelland, 2011; Lamb, 2010).

It is important for boys to recognise that there are other ways of asserting masculinity rather than through sexual intercourse so that they are less prone to succumbing to peer pressure to engage in sex, including risky sex. It is also apparent that providing essentials may not be the answer to dissuade youths from risky transactional sexual relationships. Such relationships were avenues of attainment of higher status among other learners rather than simply a way to access basic goods. There is therefore a need to assist them to identify and focus on alternative ways of earning status among peers.

Child marriage in the Zimbabwean context is largely interpreted as poverty-driven (Mutambirwa, 2017) and characterised by adult intimidation and lack of young people's assent (Sibanda, 2011). Findings of this research show that this is not always the case, as there are also personal motivations for willingly entering into such unions. Framing child marriage in the context of parent or guardian coercion misses these understated reasons, which probably require a different type of approach and understanding. Reinforcing legal and policy structures is one approach to address the issue of child marriages (McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015). Criminalising the marrying off of girls below 18 years of age, which is the current thrust in government policy, may not address the peculiar gender and sexual realities of teenagers' lives, and also need to be addressed in the fight against child marriages. For instance, girls need to be equipped with skills to respond appropriately to violence within the family and in sexual relationships so that they are not driven into child marriages. Community groups have been found to produce social spaces for dialogue and settings for enhancing

solidarity that increases members' self-confidence, social skills and perceived ability to deal with challenges that they are confronted with (Gregson, et al., 2011). Therefore girls' empowerment clubs in the community or as part of co-curricular activities in school could be useful in helping them acquire skills to deal with violence.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT:       Adults’ anxiety regarding school-based sexuality education**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the fourth research question: How do adults view school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools? Schools are sites for the production of sexual identities, with discourses and routines in schools producing and regulating learners’ sexual identities (Kehily, 2013; Allen, 2007a). Diverse discourses relating to sexuality co-exist with the formal sexuality education in school. The way individuals will understand sexuality is subject to discourses that are communicated in a particular period concerning awareness and beliefs about it. Social arrangements, circumstances and practices shape sexuality within socio-cultural contexts. Divergent discourses on sexuality are located in schools (Kehily, 2004), creating room for individuals to develop certain identities and behaviours (Beres, 2014). Common perceptions of childhood sexual innocence are challenged (Moore, 2013; Nkani & Bhana, 2010) as learners exercise sexual independence and agency (Kehily, 2009). Alternatively, teenagers’ sexual agency is suppressed by adults in school (Kehily, 2009), as they tend to characterise teenage sexuality primarily as problematic and risky. The views of teachers and parents regarding school-based sexuality education will be discussed in this chapter. I argue that learners are not sufficiently prepared to confront both the dangers and pleasures of sexuality due to teachers’ and parents’ conservative attitude and anxieties regarding sexuality education. The main theme and sub-themes that are the focus of this chapter are shown in Table 8.1.

*Table 8.1 Main theme 4: Anxiety regarding school-based sexuality education*

<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Sub-theme headings</b>
1. The status of sexuality education in school	1. Sexuality education: Not getting the time it deserves
2. Sexual innocence and protective discourses	2. Why do they want to teach them that?
3. Morality	3. They must have morals

### **8.2 Sexuality education: Not getting the time it deserves**

School-based sexuality education for learners in Zimbabwean schools takes place formally in Guidance and Counselling lessons, although teenagers also learn about sexuality from other sources. Previous studies reveal that personal experiences, peers, parents, media, siblings,

books and religious organisations also provide guidance in sexuality matters (Robinson, Smith, & Davies, 2017; de Looze, Constatine, Jerman, Vermeulen-Smit, & ter Bogt, 2015; Kehily, 2001). School-based sexuality education is set out in the official programme of study from the responsible education ministry. Nevertheless, the actual form and content of sexuality education in school may be influenced somewhat by teachers and broader societal discourses. Teachers' opinions and discourses about teenage sexuality (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Huaynoca, Chandra-Mouli, Yaqub, & Denno, 2014; Iyer & Aggleton, 2013) and individual history and experiences (Kehily, 2002) have a noteworthy influence on what is covered. In some instances, regardless of their willingness to implement the curriculum, teachers may adapt the sexuality curriculum in response to the cultural, legal and religious discourses in society (Vanwesenbeeck, Westeneng, de Boer, Reinders, & van Zorge, 2016; Helleve, Flisher, Onya, Mukoma, & Klepp, 2009).

Time is also an important consideration in the teaching of sexuality issues in school, with teachers who participated in the study stating that they barely have time to give adequate attention to Guidance and Counselling lessons.

MR HILLARY: The unfortunate part possibly is that topics like these are not getting enough time to be addressed fully...sometimes the load would be too much, such that we end up sacrificing lessons like G and C. You will see that maybe out of 26 lessons per term of G and C, we might find ourselves attending only 12, 10; we are trying to use that time to cover up (in other subjects) ... We don't really have much time for G and C. And I can see right now that it's a subject that is very vital...Yes, it's so important to have somebody who is coming specifically for G and C...honestly, I don't think it's getting the time it deserves. (Teacher, Interview)

When they eventually do have time for sexuality education, teachers noted that the learners seem to have more knowledge on the basic bio-medical information than that provided in the school.

MRS PRIDE: The personnel from PSI [Population Services International] come here at times and teach the learners. Then we have G and C lessons where we look at how to use a condom, how to use [contraceptive] pills and when to use them. And most of the time they are well advanced, more than us who are teaching them... Maybe they tell each other at the borehole, or in the village. Maybe that's how they get the information. (Teacher, Interview)

The fact that Guidance and Counselling is not an examinable subject could mean that it is easily side-lined as teachers focus on other subjects (Gudyanga, Wadesango, Manzira, & Gudyanga, 2015; Buston, Wight, & Scott, 2001), with the school curriculum classifying subjects taught according to the mind/body split (Allen, 2013; Carlson, 2012; Paechter, 2004). The school's main preoccupation is considered to be that of teaching academic subjects to do with the mind (Allen, 2013; Carlson, 2012), such as mathematics, which is perceived to be 'rational, abstract and objective' (Mendick, 2005, p. 162). The content of sexuality education is centred on the body, with lesser status being conferred on subjects to do with learners' bodies, and sexuality often being ignored (Allen, 2013; 2008; Paechter, 2004). This unequal prioritisation manifests in the allocation of time, materials and teachers to these subjects (Gudyanga, Wadesango, Manzira, & Gudyanga, 2015; Allen, 2013). The inadequate time and lack of teachers hired to teach Guidance and Counselling specifically is evidence of the low status assigned to sexuality education in the school. The learners are disadvantaged, as teachers feel that they are already weighed down with other subjects (Ahmed *et al*, 2009; Buston, Wight, & Scott, 2001). The quality of sexuality education availed to learners in this setting is therefore partly affected by the insufficient time allocated to the subject in school.

### **8.3 Why do they want to teach them that?**

Despite little time allocated to sexuality education, learners' sexuality was a key issue in the schools' everyday activities. Teachers mainly espoused sexual innocence and protectionist discourses (Rubin, 2007) with regards to the learners' sexuality, and tended to view sexuality as a danger from which the boys and girls in school needed to be protected. One way of protecting the learners and maintaining their sexual innocence is regulating sexuality information (Robinson, 2012). Knowledge concerning sexuality among learners was considered dangerous and talking about sex seen as inappropriate.

MRS PRIDE: *Akatizira* (she eloped), but not that she went to one who deals in gold. She went to an ordinary person because their [peer] group was notorious for always discussing *nyaya dzemudzimba* (sexual matters). This is the first one to go, so we expect the rest of the group to go as well. (Teacher, Interview)

As noted by Garcia (2009), learners who demonstrate familiarity concerning sexuality are suspected to be sexually active, while others are regarded as innocent (Bhana, 2007). Mrs Pride stated as much with regards to a schoolgirl who had eloped. She explains that the girl in this instance did not elope because of the perceived favourable financial status of a gold panner, as

is now common in the area, but because her peer group were too knowledgeable of sexual matters. According to Kehily and Montgomery (2009), sexuality is typically classified as appropriate for adults, although children are cognisant of sexuality early on in life. Some may even be sexually active, thus sexual innocence is not the reality for children, but the ideal espoused by adults (Kehily & Montgomery, 2009; Bhana, 2007).

The phrase *nyaya dzemudzimba* refers to private (in this case, sexual) issues in the home that are appropriate for adults. While most of the teachers purported that they openly talked about such matters in the Guidance and Counselling lessons, it is apparent that, at the same time, they do not expect learners to be conversant with the topic, as indicated by the assumed unfortunate consequences. Therefore, sexuality may be considered as “everywhere and nowhere” in educational settings (Allen, 2013, p. 348). This refers to the way in which sexuality is ever-present in the daily interactions of learners and teachers in school, being nevertheless rejected and very much policed in this environment (Allen, 2013). Ironically, the suppressive discourse adopted in relation to sexuality in effect draws attention to sex (Foucault, 1978), as learners continually defy teachers’ control of sexual awareness and understanding (Robinson, 2012).

The teachers appeared to simultaneously acknowledge and disregard learners’ sexuality, and grudgingly accepted that learners have some knowledge on issues to do with sexuality, although they would rather have them ignorant of such matters altogether.

MRS MOYO: There is a G and C lesson every week. But to say they are learning? Of course, there is a fraction that is learning, but the others seem to think because you are saying it then it is normal. That it is something that people should do. (School Head, Interview)

MRS PRIDE: On issues to do with sex, they know. The information is there, it is openly talked about. The issue is now that it is talked about, and now our children want to experiment on those things. (Teacher, Interview)

Mrs Moyo emphasised that learning in the context of the sexuality education provided in the school, should ideally lead to knowing about sex, not to engaging in it. Teachers appear to be striving to protect the perceived sexual innocence of learners whom they refer to as ‘children’, or to shield them from the risk of their own sexual inquisitiveness (Garcia, 2009). There is a conviction that learning about sex taints innocent ‘children’ and encourages experimentation in sexual activities (Muhanguzi & Ninsiima, 2011; Sanjakdar, 2011).

Although some teachers accepted that learners have sexual feelings and were acting upon them, there were also intense undercurrents where they did not actually expect young people to have such feelings in the first place, and that they should not normalise sexual activity.

MR HILLARY: So, when it came to the issues like sex, that's why I think the elders did not want the youngsters to indulge in sex, it's addictive... So once they start having sexual relationships, I think it starts getting difficult for them to stop. At that tender age they are not really able to deal with the feelings that come. So of course, we might say stop, but the majority will just go on. (Teacher, Interview)

These excerpts bring to light the contradictions between teenage indulgence in sexual activity and adults' expectations of sexual innocence. The prevailing discourse characterising teenagers' intimate relationships is that they are primarily motivated by a need to take part in sexual activity (Allen, 2004). This is brought to the fore when teachers believe that teenagers focus on experiencing sex in relationships. Sexuality encompasses all erotically important features of life, such as desires, customs, interactions and identities (Jackson, 2006). Intimate relationships are also about passion, excitement and being together, as well as loyalty, emotional intimacy, concern, protection and hope (Bhana, 2018). However, teachers and parents tend to expunge this broader facet and focus narrowly on the sex act (Bhana, 2017b; Robinson & Davies, 2008). Mr Hillary adopts an essentialist notion of sexuality as intrinsic and determined by hormonal and physiological processes (Allen, 2007a; Vance, 1989). For if *'at that tender age they are not really able to deal with the feelings that come'*, it means sexuality is partly a biological process and therefore having sexual feelings is natural. Bhana (2017b) contends that because sexuality is a component of life, children are not asexual, and that teachers would rather have an asexual learner (Allen, 2007a). The concept of pedagogization of children's sex (Foucault, 1978), sheds light on teachers' insistence on the protective discourse. According to Foucault (1978), this notion involves recognition and understanding by adults that engaging in sex is natural among children, although such behaviour is concurrently pointed as unnatural.

Parents acknowledged that sexual activity exposes teenagers to the danger of HIV infection.

CHIGOGODA (f) ...maybe it has to do with phones. There is too much technology among children. If you tell her that this is bad she doesn't understand you,

because she will be more interested in other things that she thinks she must enjoy. But she will regret when she gets into trouble. (Parent, Interview)

GRACE (f): Plus, as they grow up we also advise them of the way we grew up... These days children have televisions which were not there that time... there is HIV. Some children are getting it while still young and are already on the [ART] programme. So, I tell her that she must be careful not to be naughty with the boys as she can get infected unawares. I teach her that you cannot tell just by looking that this one does not have the disease. (Parent, Interview)

MANDEBVU (m): I want to think of what I have seen. We were not taught about sex when we went to school. Now you see the Biology book that they are using to teach at this school? Now children want to see how it all happens, the books show this thing goes like this. Now children want to experiment, such a book must not be in schools, it should be for those who are doing such a course. Mature people, not these young people. Why do they want to teach them that? This is what promotes this issue [teenage sex]. Parent, Interview

VSM: So, you think they would not do that if they are not taught about it in school?

MANDEBVU (m): How would they even know about it? (Parent, Interview)

Parents assume that access to books, technology and suggestive content heightens both sexual awareness and exposure to STIs if one is not careful. According to Liong and Chan (2018), a firm insistence on abstinence might not be practical in a situation where individuals are exposed to sexualised content through books or technology. Revealingly, parents frame the risk of HIV infection in terms of girls' susceptibility, which tends to downplay boys' exposure to infection, normalise boys' sexual freedom and reinforces the sexual double standard.

Another way of maintaining teenagers' sexual innocence emphasised by teachers was encouraging intimate relationships among learners themselves.

VSM: So, when it is said it is better to have relationships amongst themselves as learners, what is the rationale?

MRS NYANDORO: That is because once they have relationships with those who are not in school it's even worse. Learners may just have relationships and it ends with just talking to each other, but if the partner is older, what else does an older person want from a child? Obviously, it's sex, so we try to discourage relationships involving older people and learners. Learners only may just go as far as sharing stories, maybe just those sweet words (*laughs*). But out there we believe it's even more dangerous. (Teacher, Interview)

Regardless of teachers' awareness of learners' inclination towards sexual activity, contradictorily, there is a conviction that they will only have nonsexual relationships among themselves, as they are just 'children', such denial placing the teenagers at risk. As noted in

previous studies, rejection of teenagers' sexual subjectivity denies them the vital facts that assist them in averting HIV infection (Iyer & Aggleton, 2013; Cohen & Tate, 2006).

#### **8.4 They must have morals**

Teenage sexuality appears to be characterised by uncertainties, this being evident even in the conflicting feelings and opinion of one of the teachers, who had earlier in the interview emphatically stated that learners should make their mistakes from an informed position.

MR DHADHIYA: It's very tricky...So my position is not to give them that protection, because you are giving them the licence to go and do it. Not all contraceptives protect against diseases, they can prevent pregnancies, but what about the diseases. She might contract HIV, STIs when she is protected against pregnancies. So, they must have morals. (Teacher, Interview)

Moral issues are infused into the safer-sex debate with the view that morality offers the best protection from dangers of engaging in sex, such views being grounded in conservative principles (Iyer & Aggleton, 2013). According to Foucault (1990), morality refers to behaviour with regards to the conventions and values that are suggested by various regulatory groups, such as the family, religious and educational institutions. Christian beliefs are that sex is essentially sinful if not within marriage (Rubin, 2007). Zimbabwe is a predominantly Christian country, with Christian beliefs and practices exerting an influence on morality. Several religious sects in Zimbabwe strongly reject programmes for young people, and articulate other possibilities besides abstinence until marriage (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014).

MR DHADHIYA: At one time it was debated, schools may just be given permission to supply, but then the churches; there was an outcry to the extent that there was no way to make schools supply contraceptives. So, we tried to disseminate information to them [learners], we were advised by the G and C department to tell it as it is, so that they make their mistakes knowing fully well that they are making mistakes. Rather than making mistakes out of ignorance...the school must chip in. We don't have to ask the parents. Whether the parent says, "my child is from the apostolic faith, she must not know about contraceptives." We will tell them. That's what she is going to know (*knocking on the table*). (Teacher, Interview)

Some teachers felt they had to go against parents' religious beliefs regarding contraceptives, given that abstinence is not necessarily about the youth, but functions to uphold the goals of conservative sections of society (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016). Moral values offer guidelines for behaviour, but can be ignored or resisted (Foucault, 1990). The teachers' view partly

contests the church's understanding of young people as sexually virtuous and underscores the need to recognise their sexual agency (Francis & DePalma, 2014). However, the teachers had agreed simply to give learners information on contraceptives, as they are legally not allowed to provide contraceptives in school.

At the same time, moral values can be adopted without contestation. One of the teachers who made her strong Christian beliefs known to the researcher during the study also showed how these influence her support for morality concerns in sexuality education.

MRS LIFE: We also encourage them to go to church where they can learn about morals. They can learn that while some things may be acceptable in the community, but they are not acceptable to God. (Teacher, Interview)

From a moralistic point of view, pre- or extra-marital sex is prohibited (Bhana, Clowes, Morell & Shefer, 2008). The comprehensive sexuality education that teachers are expected to provide in Guidance and Counselling lessons acknowledges that learners need to be well-equipped with appropriate information and skills when they become involved in sexual relations (Francis & DePalma, 2014), which might occur before marriage. It may be assumed that the moralistic stance adopted by some teachers resulted in them being somewhat unrealistic in how they address teenage sexuality in the context of HIV and AIDS.

MR DHADHIYA: Huh, as a teacher I can only conclude that the lives of these youngsters are in the hands of God. Parents may do their bit, the school may do its bit, the aunts, but the message must come from God. They must attend church services and get born again, maybe that way they might be untouchable because as it is they are exposed. You can't beat them for having sex, so God will take matters into his own hands. (Teacher, Interview)

MR NDLOVU: ...we encourage abstinence rather than safe sex. (Teacher, Interview)

The religious influence in dealing with the 'problem' of teenage sexuality was also underscored as one of the teachers literally resigned them to God's protection. The teachers' view of teenage sexuality is informed by the abstinence-only-until-marriage paradigm, in which sex before marriage is perceived as immoral and destructive (Abbott, Ellis, & Abbott, 2016; Schalet, 2011). Acceptance of teenage sexuality as normative rather than a problem to be managed is more in sync with their sexual realities (Allen, 2007a).

Material and socio-cultural processes have a significant effect on the way teenagers experience their sexuality (Bhana, 2017b). Some teachers noted that the focus on abstinence fails to consider the impact of structural issues such as gender and poverty, the latter predisposing some teenage girls to sexual activity and unintended pregnancy.

MR DHADHIYA: Poverty is number one. Although of course we have these girls who have everything at home, an affluent family, who still go for sex before marriage. Those are very rare occasions. Most of the girls who fall pregnant before marriage are from poor families... Because even school fees are not paid on time which means there is no pocket money to speak of. If she looks at how other girls dress she feels down upon herself. Without any hope at home she will most likely fall prey to these sugar daddies so that maybe she gets some few dollars for some jeans, stockings, pair of shoes and even cell phone. They get pregnant that way...she may not have enough knowledge about protection, prevention of pregnancies. (Teacher, Interview)

The sexual health consequences of teenagers are determined by circumstances such as gender and poverty (Bhana, 2017a), with previous research findings pointing to an association among poverty, limited choices and teenage pregnancy (Pinock, 2018; Akella & Jordan, 2011). In addition, there is need to recognise that some learners make a choice not to abstain, while others are forced by circumstances to become sexually active (Chase, 2017; Iyer & Aggleton, 2014). This recognition should enable teachers to take account of teenagers' context, so that abstinence together with other protective strategies are presented as valid and acceptable options for preventing unplanned pregnancies and STIs (Chase, 2017; Iyer & Aggleton, 2014). This presents a considerable challenge to teachers in the study, as moralism seems to permeate their conception of sexuality education and their role in regulating teenage sexuality, as discussed earlier. Furthermore, the Zimbabwean socio-cultural environment in general appears to be less tolerant of the sexually active teenager and unsupportive of providing contraceptives or condoms to young people. As recently as 2017, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development delivered this impassioned plea in the Zimbabwean Parliament: "*We are not saying this is a licence for promiscuous behaviour, but all we are concerned about is children falling pregnant and giving birth to children also*" (Mbanje, 2017).

Parents were similarly aware that regardless of the stress they placed on abstinence, some of their children were involved in sexual activities, which could be consensual or coerced in transactional sexual relationships. Thus, abstinence was no longer feasible for some teenagers,

although parents still believed it to be the best path for their children. Most parents restricted sexual activity to the domain of adults and marriage, the cultural expectation being either one of abstinence or getting married to provide acceptability to sexual activity.

MANDEBVU (m): No, if you have sexual desires then get married... just that. If you see that you are an adult, get married. (Parent, Interview)

Although the parents are aware that the teenagers are having sex, protection, which would allow them to prevent pregnancy and STIs, was not acceptable.

GETRUDE (f): Yes, we have heard that children should be given (contraceptive) pills but that is a non-starter because those are still children who would be having sex and it results in diseases. The good thing is for children to be taught that they should abstain until marriage. If only they can understand that. Because this issue of preventing pregnancy, what of disease? So, the best advice is that they must abstain. (Parent, Interview)

CHPO (f): It all depends on how free the mother is, some mothers tell their children how to use them. But I do not see it as a good move, telling a child that, "if you want to engage in prostitution then use a condom". You will be teaching her that she can continue with prostitution, but I think a child just needs to be constantly told, not in a harsh manner, that to have a bright future one needs to go to school without getting involved in naughty behaviour then they will pass. (Parent, Interview)

Parents paradoxically refuse material that empowers teenagers to prevent pregnancy (Chikovore, 2004), with fears that they may be driven to sexual activity without anxiety about the outcome (Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003). This contrasts with the liberal sexual culture in the Netherlands, where parents are more likely to advise and prepare their sexually active child for protected sex (de Looze, Constatine, Jerman, Vermeulen-Smit, & ter Bogt, 2015). Therefore, culture has a significant influence on how parents make sense of teenage sexuality. In addition, the spectre of HIV and AIDS calls upon parents to strike a delicate balance between innocence and recognising the sexual agency of their children (Bhana, 2015b).

Nevertheless, cultural norms regarding right and wrong do have an impact on how parents respond to their children's sexual agency.

CHIGOGODA (f): Yes, we are assisted by health workers who say it is good for a girl to keep condoms to prevent pregnancy. So that she can keep going to school for the sake of her future. But now our culture, as adults we are not happy with our children being told such things, because the child will not know the right

thing when she starts taking part in sexual activity at a young age... Yes, the child will be afraid that if the parents come across them [condoms] she will be beaten. So, she cannot keep them. (Learner, Interview)

According to this view, parents are more likely to respond with violence to teenage girls' sexual agency, with the option of having protected sex remaining open to boys. A similar study in another Zimbabwean province also noted the issue of parental violence on unmarried teenage girls who had sex, mentioned contraceptives or used them (Chikovore, Nystrom, Lindmark, & Ahlberg, 2013). Teenage girls' contraception may not be acceptable to parents, as it disconnects sex from pregnancy (Hunter, 2009), thus giving room for premarital sex. As has been noted, culture and setting impose influential restrictions on what HIV and AIDS education might accomplish (Aggleton, et al., 2018). While the assumption that if relevant education is provided an individual has the ultimate power to effect behaviour change is questioned (Chikovore, 2004), there is also the cultural influence to contend with. In the study setting, the 'right thing' for girls is abstinence rather than acquiring knowledge about how to prevent pregnancy and protect themselves from HIV before and after marriage.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

Teenage sexuality in the study setting is shaped by multifaceted socio-cultural, economic and religious influences. The main concern of teachers and parents seemed to be a denial of young people's sexual subjectivity, and where teenage sexuality was acknowledged, it was generally viewed as problematic. Although teachers did accept that learners had sexual feelings and were acting upon them, there were also intense undercurrents that they did not actually expect young people to have or express such feelings in the first place. These contradictions and ambiguities, based on age and moral considerations, were also apparent in teachers' self-reported focus in the sexuality education lessons they offered to learners.

Adults regard teenagers as both sexual beings and pre-sexual individuals who should be protected from sexualisation at the same time (Paechter, 2017; Allen, 2008). To deal with this scenario, Allen (2008) notes that schools tend to stress sexual risk and the need to adopt safer-sex practices, albeit without giving them the techniques to do so. This is similar to this study setting, where, in a bid to restrain teenage sexual activity, the teaching about safer-sex practices is not as pronounced as the dangers of sexual activity.

There is some recognition that learners are losing interest in sexuality lessons due to the gap between the abstinence message being promoted in school and their sexual realities. There is a need for acknowledging the sexual activities of learners, as they would rather be addressed in terms of their sexual realities and agency. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes undermine safer-sex information, even when it is in the syllabus. Therefore, the quality of sexuality education availed to learners in this setting is influenced by various factors, including educators' feelings on sexuality education, insufficient time allocated to the subject and the teenagers' own lived experiences. Various factors, besides teenagers' sexual desires, militate against both abstinence and adopting other safer sexual behaviours. Personal choices are often strongly determined by social and economic factors, such as gender, power, poverty or abuse (Chase, 2017). It becomes essential for the school to step in and provide comprehensive information so that teenagers can make suitable sexual decisions (Ahmed *et al*, 2009).

Similarly, parents' views on sexuality education were largely divergent from the interests of their teenage children and inconsistent with safer-sex information disseminated by health personnel in the community. Aggleton *et al.* (2018) maintain that the potential of community mobilisation and learning should be acknowledged. The parents who participated in the study were a group of Community Field Officers engaged by a non-governmental organisation championing, among others, child rights. They acted as link personnel among teenage learners, parents and teachers, which could be exploited and include other stakeholders, such as health and religious institutions to ensure that there are logical and consistent messages on teenage sexuality.

Given the sexually liberal views and practices among teenagers as reported by the parents, it is essential to consider local, contextual and culturally relevant responses to the 'problem' of teenage sexuality. While sanctioning marriage involving teenage learners appears too radical and a backward step in the fight for child and women's rights, there remains the need for objective debate and improvement on such responses. The value of localised solutions, even to apparently global challenges, can neither be underestimated nor ignored.



## CHAPTER NINE: Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

Teenage sexuality is a cause for concern among teachers and parents in Zimbabwe. Teenagers' susceptibility to HIV infection and unplanned pregnancy is often highlighted, as are ensuing issues such as risky abortion, teen parenthood, school dropout, low educational achievement and limited employment prospects. While regulating teenage sexual activity is generally accepted as the answer to the dangers of sexuality, the statistics indicate that their susceptibility to these dangers is on an upward trend, while knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health is on a downward trend. Although socio-cultural factors are influential in how a person understands and negotiates competing discourses of sexuality, Schatz and Dzvimbo (2001) noted that many formal HIV and AIDS prevention communications focus on increasing knowledge, and regard cultural issues to be superficial. Meaningful appreciation of teenage sexuality demands taking account of individual understandings and the social-cultural context. The aim of this study was therefore to understand how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated within Shona culture in rural Zimbabwe. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. In what ways does gender shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
2. In what ways do cultural norms shape teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe?
3. How is teenage sexuality negotiated and regulated in the context of poverty in a rural setting?
4. How do adults view school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools?

To achieve the aim, focus group discussions and interviews were held with teenage learners, their parents and teachers. Six focus group discussions and 49 in-depth individual interviews were held with teenage learners at two rural secondary schools. Ten parents who were members of the School Development Committees participated in two focus group discussions, while 19 were interviewed individually. Interviews were held with eight teachers, and one each with the school heads of the two schools. The first interviews with teachers and focus group discussions focused on getting the context of the phenomenon under study. This was followed by individual interviews with all participants, as well as the second interviews with teachers, which concentrated on in-depth issues to do with culture, gender, sexuality and schooling. These generated rich data on how learners, teachers and parents make sense of teenage

sexuality in this particular setting. Gender and cultural values produced notions of teenage sexuality as risky and premarital sex as wrong, mainly for girls. The parents and teachers were determined to repress teenagers' sexuality to avert negative outcomes. Abstinence-focused sexuality education in school, coupled with silence on pertinent topics by adults, subtly conveys the values and norms that regulate teenage learners' sexuality. In turn, teenage learners' experience and negotiation of sexuality is influenced by gender and Shona cultural values and norms. Although teenagers espouse these norms, they resist regulation of their sexuality. Reflections on the rationale for specific sexual behaviours and expectations need to be done in the context of Shona cultural values as well as conceptions of teenage sexuality.

This chapter describes the study findings in relation to the research questions, and is organised into three main sections. The main findings of the study with respect to the study questions are presented first. It then details the implications for educational practice and provides recommendations for further research.

## **9.2 Main findings**

The findings highlight the interaction of gender, culture and sexuality, with teenage learners revealing how they negotiate sexuality constrained by adult expectations of innocence. The teenagers disclosed that discourses of innocence do not resonate with their sexual realities, with both conformity and contestation characterising their responses to cultural norms concerning childhood innocence, virginity and marriage. There were no significant differences between teachers' and parents' views on values pertaining to teenage sexuality. Adults exhibited conservative values in relation to teenage sexuality, the recurrent themes being sexual dangers, sexual silence and the need for regulating teenage sexuality. These issues are entrenched in cultural values and influence various facets of sexuality, as indicated in the following sections. The main findings are presented in relation to the four research questions guiding the study although it is acknowledged that the issues interweave and overlap.

### **9.3.1 Gender and teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe**

#### ***Gender, sexual desire and pleasure***

Teenage constructions of gender and sexuality are embedded within wider social discourses of male dominance, with male sexuality being inclined to teenage boys' perception of

themselves as superior to girls. Nature and religious beliefs were used to explain and justify male dominance in intimate relationships. Both boys and girls police one another's gender conformity, and accentuated boys' leading role in initiating intimate relationships and sexual activities. Teenage boys subordinate females as a demonstration of masculinity, to the extent that girls who initiate intimate relationships face rejection, shaming and ridicule. However, there existed an alternative, though not widespread, view that such restrictions on female initiative were in the past, and should now be viewed as a normal expression of feelings that both boys and girls can have for a person of the opposite sex.

Teenagers recognised an interest in an intimate heterosexual relationship as normal for both girls and boys. However, they generally framed boys as actively desiring sexual beings and girls as passive and objects of male sexual desire. These expectations stopped some girls from being confident and firm in intimate relationships such that they could be coerced into unwanted sexual activity. Menstruation is believed to awaken sexual desire in teenage girls, but its link to reproduction was emphasised in relation to the risk of premarital pregnancy. The gendered risk made it essential for girls to resist their sexual desires and the advances of boys. Furthermore, patriarchal control of girls' sexuality through cultural concepts of *pwanyaruzhowa* and *mombe yechimanda* serves to refute the sexual desire of girls.

Nevertheless, teenage boys and girls acknowledge pleasure as an important aspect of sexual activity. Condoms were believed to undermine sexual pleasure, with some boys opting for unprotected sex, with teachers and parents confirming the silence related to pleasure when they communicate with teenagers. This corroborates other studies that refer to pleasure as generally missing in many situations involving the teaching of young people (Hirst, 2013). Such an omission makes teenagers susceptible to intimidation and bullying in sexual relationships where pleasure for girls is ignored. For instance, learners reported that girls in both transactional and intimate relationships have limited agency, and could be coerced into sexual activity for fear of losing the monetary benefits or being rejected.

### ***Gender and construction of vulnerability***

Both teachers and parents were inclined to overlook boys with respect to the dangers of sexuality, this being an arena in which teenage masculinity is shaped and endorsed (Allen,

2005; Connell, 2005). The study findings suggest that there is less focus on how gender and culture make teenage boys vulnerable as they enact masculinity. Adults tended to disregard teenage boys' vulnerability in situations such as parenthood, intergenerational intimate relationships, alcohol and drug abuse, and dangerous gold panning activities.

Participants framed teenage boys' criminal behaviour, such as smoking marijuana, as part and parcel of masculinity. Boys' relationships with prostitutes did not elicit the same panic and parental surveillance as girls' involvement with gold panners, and they are not viewed as prone to sexual risks at the same scale as girls. This belief manifests in sustained surveillance and extra sexuality lessons for girls and frees boys from being accountable in their sexual activities, which leaves them open to the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned teenage parenthood.

Boys' responsibilities as teenage fathers were largely unnoticed, as most participants highlighted the drawbacks of teenage motherhood. The findings show that fatherhood also has a negative impact on teenage learners' schooling, as they may drop out of school to concentrate on fending for their new family. Many studies focus on the effects of teenage motherhood on schooling and reveal that intervention initiatives are mainly directed towards assisting girls to succeed (Malindi, 2018; Neill-Weston & Morgan, 2017; Watson & Vogel, 2017; Runhare, Dzimiri, Mulaudzi, & Vandeyar, 2014). Nevertheless, the findings of this study show that teenage parenthood affects both boys' and girls' schooling.

### **9.3.2 Cultural norms shaping teenage learners' sexuality in rural Zimbabwe**

#### ***Gender, virginity and culture***

While sexual restraint and abstinence until marriage are highly regarded traits in Shona culture, there are gendered differences in what constitutes moral behaviour for boys and girls. According to Butler (1988), the social expectations for male and female bodies vary, the study findings revealing that Shona culture puts pride and value on female virginity, *humhandara*. The virginity discourse demonstrated sexual double standards and reinforced the sexuality dangers that girls have to contend with. Apprehension and reprimand characterise girls' sexuality, while boys are viewed as incapable of controlling their sexual drive. A girl's virginity status is not a private individual matter, it is owned communally by the family and community.

*Humhandara* is publicly proclaimed and celebrated through *jira remasungiro* and *mombe yechimanda*, which both have cultural significance. Communal pride in a girl's virginity is not associated only with peasants in rural areas, it is even among the Shona elite class. This is exemplified by the Former First Lady, Grace Mugabe's joyful announcement at a women's church conference of the virginity status of her 24-year-old daughter who had just got married. The news was received with delight by thousands of women at the conference who hailed her as an example of how girls must behave (Mbanje, 2013).

*Humhandara* is therefore about a girl's respect for herself and the family, with parents thus justifying gendered variances in regulating teenage sexuality and family concern towards girls. Conversely, most parents subscribe to the male sexual drive discourse and encourage sexual restraint rather than abstinence among teenage boys. Moral values for teenage boys entailed either having few sexual partners or those who are not older than him. In line with the male sexual drive discourse, premarital sex enhanced teenage boys' status among their peers. Some learners reported that they felt pressured to prove their masculinity by getting involved in intimate relationships and engaging in sexual activity to avoid negative labelling by their peers.

In an effort to instil moral values among teenage learners, adults adopt discourses of danger with respect to sexuality. They associated intimate relationships with the sexual act and its risks, thus providing justification for policing teenage sexuality. Self-control was highlighted as a way to protect oneself, with particular emphasis being put on teenage girls' ability to resist their own sexual desires as well as the sexual advances of boys and men. Girls are blamed for negative outcomes of sexual activity, making it their responsibility to be motivated to exercise self-control to avoid 'destroying and wasting' themselves. Teenagers expressed the view that desire for an intimate heterosexual relationship is normal for both girls and boys. Their perception that love can only be expressed through sexual intercourse contrasted with parents' conception of moral values pertaining to girls. However, teenagers did not display familiarity with other ways of expressing love.

Teenage boys and girls actively contest the cultural moral values in various ways, with teenage boys gaining prestige for challenging the customary age and gender hierarchy in intimate relationships by having older female partners. Culturally, the male partner is supposed to be

older and more sexually experienced than the female, with relationships between teenage boys and older women not being widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and not as visible in studies of inter-generational intimate relationships (Adjei & Saewyc, 2017; Masenya, 2017; Schaefer, *et al.*, 2017; Leclerc-Mdlala, 2008; Gregson, *et al.*, 2002). The findings of this study show that this phenomenon exists without financial obligations on either party, and becomes an important aspect of teenage sexuality that needs to be addressed.

Some teenage girls resisted the good girl/bad girl dichotomy characterising female sexuality in the community, with teachers and parents associating virginity with female respectability. Generally, girls get a bad reputation in the community for premarital sexual activities. As noted by Foucault (1978), individuals continually contest long-standing, rigid identities. The girls intentionally made their premarital sexual activities known in the school, and actively sought to gain status among their peers by enacting behaviour that is culturally associated with masculinity. Nevertheless, it remained clear that an emphasised femininity (Connell, 1987), characterised by sexual purity, remains a highly ranked form of femininity in the community. In this way, moral values ensure that the emphasised femininity is confirmed as the hegemonic form of femininity (Schippers, 2007).

Teenage girls sought to identify with virginity as a marker of status as a good girl and a befitting potential spouse. Girls draw on the Shona cultural moral discourse when they choose to maintain their virginity to fulfil sexual norms, and adopt that moral discourse to forge a new account of virginity, one that prioritises individual interests above family and community expectations. Most studies identify the virginity discourse as reinforcing patriarchal control and female subordination (Mulumeoderhwa, 2018; Wynn & Hassanein, 2017; Kaivanara, 2015; Mahadeen, 2013; Mbanje, 2013), while this study indicates that this is not always the case, as some girls actively embrace the virginity discourse for individual benefits. Conformity as a self-preserving stance empowers teenage girls to complete their schooling, while averting the risks of sexuality, such as pregnancy and teenage motherhood, which can end a girls' education. While male virginity is not equally valued and expected, some teenage boys questioned the gendered moral principles informing the virginity discourse, and personally valued male virginity in the context of trust, and risk of acquiring HIV and other STIs.

### **9.3.3 Negotiation and regulation of teenage sexuality in a context of poverty in rural Zimbabwe**

#### ***Gender, poverty and transactional relationships***

Moral values exist within a socio-economic context that can influence individuals' commitment and ability to uphold them. The study findings show that adherence to moral sexual behaviour in the context of poverty and gender inequality is difficult for some learners. Similar to findings of previous studies, the boys mostly engaged in intimate relationships for pleasure, while for girls it had more to do with monetary or material benefits (Madzivire, 2015; Bhana & Anderson, 2013; Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Gender and economic inequalities influence and limit the sexual options for some girls and boys.

Masculinity was aligned with physical power and risk-taking, which resulted in many teenage boys taking part in risky and strenuous gold panning activities to attain the male provider status within families and intimate relationships. Some girls engaged in transactional sexual relationships mainly for consumption, often being depicted as having limited agency in transactional relationships as they are reliant on male benefactors. A suitable male provider is often presented as anyone with monetary and material goods to offer the girl. The experience of the teenage girls in the study demonstrates that even in a context of debilitating poverty, they retain a degree of agency and power in choosing their partners. Girls make strategic choices by adding another dimension to earning capacity of prospective partners; the extent to which a partner is imprudent and therefore acceptable. The impetuous decision-making and low levels of education among gold panners should rationally make them an unlikely choice of intimate partner in a society where education is highly valued. However, as the teenage girls indicate, it is these very attributes, coupled with their conspicuous consumption patterns, which make them preferred intimate partners. This finding contributes to new ways of understanding how teenage sexual choices challenge the gendered norms in a culturally conservative community.

#### ***Cultural construction of childhood and adulthood***

A recurring theme was the fluidity of the concepts of childhood and adulthood, with people becoming adults on reaching 18 years of age, according to the legal institution in Zimbabwe. However, the findings indicate that Shona cultural norms allow for attainment of adult status

through economic independence, parenthood or marriage, even when a person is below 18 years of age. Thus teenage girls can move into adulthood once they are married, while an economically dependent adult may be regarded as a child, regardless of their actual age. This contradicts the legal definition, given that culturally, one who is legally a child can be an adult, while one who is legally an adult is viewed as a child.

These contradictions in the socio-cultural context have implications for teenage sexuality in diverse ways. The age of consent to sex in Zimbabwe is 16 years old, with cultural norms having the effect of condoning sexual intercourse with someone below the age of consent if this occurs in a marriage, while condemning sexually active unmarried teenagers' access to contraceptives. Additionally, the apparent child-adult ambiguity partly offers an explanation for school dropout as a result of teenage parenthood. Culturally, the roles of adult/parent and child/learner are quite distinct. Failure to reconcile these supposedly conflicting roles may result in teenage mothers having to drop out of school, despite the educational policy stating that they can, and should, remain in school. Once someone has a child, they are primarily seen as a parent, and therefore an adult, yet the school is perceived as a space for children/learners and adults/teachers. This new identity of parent/adult/child/learner does not fit into this space and this manifests in shaming and a lack of encouragement or support for teenage mothers to remain in school. For the teenage mother, once 'you start seeing yourself as a parent', dropping out of school becomes a logical step.

In the case of teenage fatherhood, the parent/adult identity has consequences for the male provider status, which becomes a significant part of masculinity and parenthood. This has an impact on teenage boys in two main ways, the first being that they are wary of teenage fatherhood in the context of poverty, thus concentrating on their schooling, as revealed in the study. However, there is a possibility they could then see intimate relationships with married or single older women as an attractive option, as they are not called upon to enact provider masculinity. Second, the findings show that fatherhood also has a negative impact on teenage learners' schooling, as they may drop out of school to concentrate on fending for their new family. Many studies focus on the effects of teenage motherhood on schooling, with intervention initiatives being mainly directed towards assisting girls to succeed in school (Malindi, 2018; Neill-Weston & Morgan, 2017; Watson & Vogel, 2017; Runhare, Dzimir, 2018).

Mulaudzi, & Vandeyar, 2014). Nevertheless, the study findings show that teenage parenthood affects both boys' and girls' schooling.

### *Child marriage*

Marriage is still a very important institution among the Shona people, with the findings revealing that when adults implore teenage girls to avoid 'destroying and wasting' themselves through premarital sex, they are focusing on their marriage prospects. *Humhandara* is a key aspect of Shona female respectability, with a suitable marriage partner being one who has preserved it. Marriage is highly regarded, as it bestows honour on a woman and her family, with *humhandara*, respectability and marriage interweaving in Shona culture to shape teenage sexuality in an intricate manner.

Child marriage is an aspect of teenage sexuality that has received much focus in Zimbabwe, with Mashonaland Central Province having the highest rate of child marriages in the country at 50% (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2016). The concept of child marriage is not distinct within Shona culture, with adulthood not necessarily being about age, and that marriage can in fact confer adult status on a teenager less than 18 years old. Teenage girls are generally portrayed as lacking agency, entering into such unions as a result of poverty and adult coercion (Mhlanga, 2018; Muchacha & Matsika, 2018; Hanzi, 2006). The findings of the study concur with adult coercion but this is less poverty driven. Parents specified that they monitor girls' movements with respect to time because of the threat of rape or consensual premarital sex, which can result in pregnancy. They believed boys are not at risk so there was no strict policing of their movements. As a result, they admitted to compelling girls into marriage to preclude their involvement in premarital sex, which is culturally immoral for girls. The law is often disregarded, as cultural considerations of female respectability result in child marriage being preferable to having a daughter labelled *nzenza*, loose woman.

Marriage is culturally constructed as the proper sphere for sexual activity, with premarital sex tainting a girl's reputation and limiting her prospects of a good marriage. Cognisant of the centrality of marriage to a woman's identity and honour among the Shona, marriage becomes expedient for both the teenage girl and her parents. The girl gets married to gain cultural approval of sexual activity. When a girl gets a bad reputation, it extends to the family, the

parents in particular, with the family therefore having a vested interest in regulating teenage girls' sexuality. The father receives payment for damages in respect of premarital sex, *pwanyaruzhowa* (Meekers, 1993), and while on the surface it might appear as financial gain, culturally it is a veiled indictment on the parents' role in the upbringing of their daughter. Hence by making a son-in-law pay *pwanyaruzhowa*, the girl's family is publicly declaring that they have taken note of it and do not approve of premarital sexual activity (Chisi, 2018).

Payment of both *pwanyaruzhowa* and *mombe yechimanda* highlight family proprietorship of a girl's sexuality. As the findings of the study show, violence may be used in the family to safeguard girls' sexual reputation, and the threat of violence may drive a girl into marriage. This reality cannot be ignored, but it does not appear to be the main process through which girls get involved in child marriages. The forced child marriage narrative deprives teenage girls of their agency. The learners who participated in the study show that teenagers often exercise considerable agency and make personal decisions to get married. A complex interplay of factors was highlighted, these being a lack of interest or competence in school; elopement for fear that the boyfriend might be taken by another; mutual love; pregnancy as a result of unprotected sex with the intention to get married; and to legitimise their sexual activity. Considering this variety of reasons, it is clear that in some cases, marriage involving teenagers may be framed as a personal choice. Ironically, at times it is a choice between honour in marriage or being branded a *nzenza*, thereby diminishing one's chances of a good marriage in future.

#### **9.3.4 Adults' view of school-based sexuality education for teenage learners in rural Zimbabwean schools**

##### ***Sexual danger and sexual silence***

Both teenagers and adults agreed that information on sexuality is not adequately discussed with teenage learners, with traditional values restricting access to knowledge about sex for unmarried people. The concept of *nyaya dzemudzimba* signifies private, sexual matters that should be confined to adults, with information regarding sex, desire, pleasure and contraceptives falling into that category. The teachers stressed abstinence until marriage for both boys and girls, and were distrustful of learners who displayed interest or familiarity with *nyaya dzemudzimba*. In the family, these matters are traditionally discussed when bride wealth has been paid and it becomes relevant information. Marriage is culturally perceived as a rite

of passage into adulthood, so discussing *nyaya dzemudzimba* then becomes appropriate. As explained earlier in the previous chapter, school-based sexuality education for learners in Zimbabwean schools takes place formally in what teachers and learners generally refer to as Guidance and Counselling (G and C) lessons. The teachers are expected to provide pupils with age appropriate, culturally acceptable and comprehensive knowledge on life skills, sexuality, HIV and AIDS education (MOESAC, 2012). Comprehensive school-based sexuality education is akin to *nyaya dzemudzimba*, which is only culturally relevant when someone is married. Parents were generally cynical of intimate relationships whose aim was not marriage, and intimacy among learners does not necessarily lead to that eventuality. Parents discouraged them on this basis and therefore do not see the need to provide teenagers with what they considered as irrelevant knowledge.

Childhood is associated with immaturity, hence adults use discourses of innocence and protection in regulating teenage sexuality. Teenage learners were frequently referred to as ‘children’ by both teachers and parents. Adulthood and sexuality were intertwined, hence in-depth information on teenage love, desire, pleasure or protected sex was largely missing from both the school and the home. The discourse of sexuality as dangerous for ‘children’ was pervasive, with stress put on risks amid injunctions to ‘wait until you are mature’. As a reluctant acknowledgment of teenagers as sexual beings, teachers preferred intimate relationships among the learners themselves in the belief that they are young and would not engage in sexual activity.

An issue in comprehensive sexuality education that parents were totally opposed to is the teaching of safer-sex practices beyond abstinence. Protected premarital sexual activity is at variance with moral values represented by cultural ideals of *humhandara*, respectable femininity and marriage, wherein premarital sex cannot be condoned. Cultural reservations on premarital sexual activity apparently influence adults’ responses to teenage sexuality, regardless of the facts presented before them. Teachers and parents were knowledgeable of teenagers’ vulnerability to STIs and unplanned pregnancy, and the methods to mitigate sexual risks, such protected sex, but maintained the primacy of cultural values. As a result, moral concerns clouded the issue of safer-sex practices, with parents being silent about these to their children while others responded with violence.

There was superficial coverage of other safer-sex practices in school, with condoms presented as being for those not wise enough to make the decision to abstain. The manifest intention of comprehensive sexuality education is to provide pertinent information to equip teenagers for both the dangers and pleasures of sexuality. However, it is also clear that teachers are conflicted, as the teaching guide from the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture qualifies that the CSE needs to be culturally relevant (MOESAC, 2012). It becomes problematic as comprehensive information on safer-sex practices conflicts with cultural values and therefore becomes untenable. While access to contraceptives and condoms can be viewed as the right of any sexually active person, in the Shona culture it is a moral issue. Thus, it cannot easily be reconciled with morally wrong premarital sex, particularly if it involves ‘children’. Thus, sexuality education was more of an instrument to control teenage sexuality by focusing on the dangers of sex. Adults passed on values aimed at regulating learners sexuality rather than empowering them to explore their sexuality safely and fully.

Contradictorily, while abstinence was regarded as the best protection from the dangers of sexuality, a recurring issue was that of inadequate practical knowledge on how to remain abstinent. Moreover, teenagers revealed that abstinence is difficult to practise, with adults providing no helpful information on what to do if abstinence fails, besides stating that a person should be in control of their feelings and actions. Teenagers demonstrated that they need to learn how to respond to their natural sexual urges, but did not have access to helpful information in this regard. Teenagers cherished the culturally sanctioned age hierarchy characterised by respect for elders, and stated that asking for clarification or more information beyond what was offered would be disrespectful. Therefore, silence is maintained on aspects that are relevant to their sexual realities, which accentuates the mystery about intimacy and sex, with teenage learners responding in respectful silence and risky sexual behaviour.

#### **9.4 Contribution of thesis**

The findings of my study contribute to the empirical literature on teenage sexuality in rural communities by providing other viewpoints on gender, culture schooling and teenage sexuality. Much of the existing research on teenage sexuality highlights discourses that foreground teenage sexuality, as understood through the lens of disease and danger, with calls for regulation of such young sexualities, particularly in schools. The main findings in this study

confirm what other scholars in the field have found. A modest contribution to new knowledge in this field is how the study found teenagers conforming to gender and cultural discourse of girl and womanhood in this cultural context, while simultaneously harnessing these very same discourses and expectations to contest and resist complete regulation. The agency expressed by the teenage girls in conforming to cultural expectations of virginity interrogates the prevalent interpretation of this practice as oppressive and patriarchal.

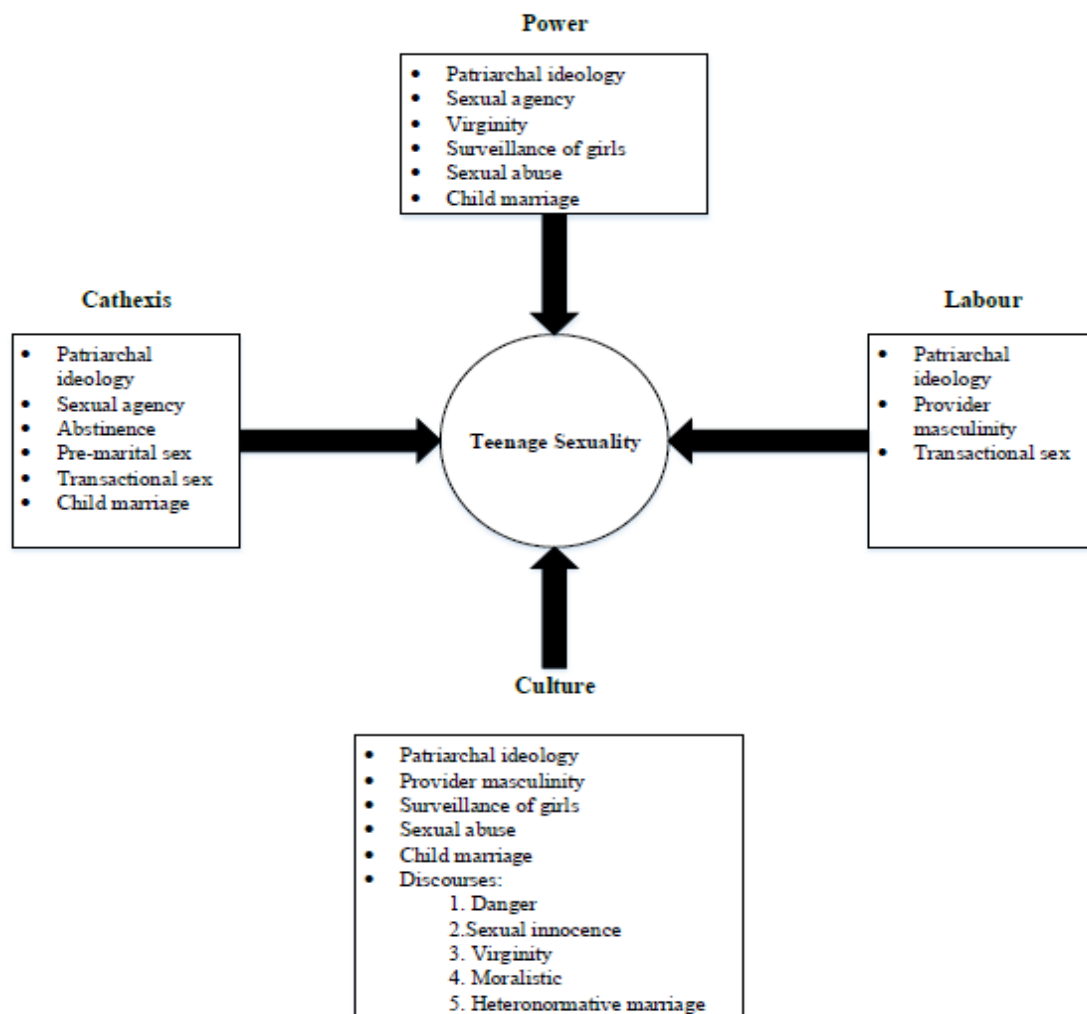
The taken-for-granted understanding of child marriage as being forced is confirmed by some findings of this study, while it also provides a reinterpretation that focuses on girls' agency and broadens an understanding of the phenomenon. Elopement characterised by mutual consent is a culturally recognised process of getting married in this context, through which teenagers resist 'sexual damage' as they elope to the homes of their partners. Teenage girls do exercise considerable agency in harnessing cultural practices that help to maintain their respectability in cases of culturally condemned premarital sex.

## **9.5 Implications**

A number of factors place the two schools in Shamva at the epicentre of a perfect storm, as the province has the highest percentage of child marriages; gold panners in the district involve learners in their sexual networks; and the local business centre has been identified as a hotspot for HIV infection. Furthermore, the two schools are situated in a national context of high HIV prevalence of 14%, being twice as high for young women as young men. Additionally, family networks are disintegrating, resulting in the loss of opportunities for sexuality education at family level in a situation where parents are finding it difficult to keep up with socio-cultural changes. These national and local realities impact strongly on teenage sexuality, and inadequate sexual education exacerbates these problems and costs lives. Therefore, providing sexuality education, which helps to break the cycle of contemporary problems that teenage learners face, is urgent required at the family, school and community levels. This study puts a spotlight on the social and cultural constructions of gender and sexuality, which should be prominent in discussions of sexuality with teenagers. Incorporating components of Connell's Gender and Power Theory in school-based sexuality education and informal engagements with teenagers may provide opportunities for multifaceted perspectives on important issues, such as

teenage sexual agency, pregnancy, child marriage and the growing problem of HIV and AIDS among young people.

Figure 9.1 illustrates the possible integration of components of Gender and Power Theory into sexuality education for teenage learners.



*Figure 9.1 Potential integration of components of Gender and Power theory into sexuality education*

The study findings suggest that the aspects shown under each of the four components of the theory in Figure 9.1 are relevant to understanding the phenomenon of teenage sexuality in the Shona cultural context in Zimbabwe. It then becomes important for teachers, or other personnel in supporting organisations, to engage teenagers on these issues for an in-depth sexuality education programme. For instance, the issue of virginity can be regarded as an aspect of

culture, while also deliberating how this is connected to the structure of power for a more nuanced understanding of teenage sexuality. The interweaving of these aspects within and across the four components needs to be underscored to enable learners and teachers to generate a more germane, up-to-date form of sexuality education that may interest teenage learners.

## **9.6 Strengths of the study**

This study reiterates the findings of previous studies (Schatz & Dzvimbo, 2001; Moyo & Zvoushe, 2013; Mutanana & Mutara, 2015; Moyo & Rusinga, 2017; Mangeya, 2019), in which discussion of sexuality is reported to be problematic in Zimbabwe, with restrictions on what can be said in the family, school, family and society. This emphasises the persistent silence on a significant feature of human life, and highlights the urgent need for open and meaningful communication with young people on this issue, at a time when they are exposed to increased risk of HIV infection, unintended teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

This research builds on previous studies through a qualitative case study by simultaneously listening to key contributors to teenage sexuality. Focussing on their experience and perspectives provides a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study, and accentuates the cultural and socio-economic environment shaping sexuality in rural Zimbabwe. An in-depth examination of this issue in a specific socio-cultural context provides a better sense of how teenage learners' sexuality is defined, regulated and negotiated within Shona culture in Zimbabwe, and will enable informed interventions to be put in place for this group.

## **9.7 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made regarding research as well as initiatives to address issues raised by the findings in this study at different levels.

### **a) Individual and family level**

- Teenage boys and girls have to be assisted to identify and focus on alternative ways of earning status among peers rather than risky sexual relationships.
- More effective communication between parents and teenagers on sexuality is necessary, as most teenagers are opposed to the expectation of abstinence until marriage, which is inconsistent with their sexual realities, and makes it essential for adults to approach

teenage sexuality as normative. This would stimulate meaningful dialogue between adults and teenagers in the family on *nyaya dzemudzimba* well before the point at which they are married. Thus teenagers can have the information and support they need to negotiate their sexuality and to make safe sexual choices. Silence or restricting information on issues to do with contraceptives, condoms and practical aspects of abstaining leaves them vulnerable to the same risks that they are ostensibly being protected from.

#### **b) School and societal level**

- Teachers and parents need to acknowledge that teenagers are sexual beings who may be persuaded to take part in unsafe sexual practices detached from discourses of danger. It is clear that within cultural limits, young people have agency, and that they actively resist discourses of childhood innocence and danger for emotional or instrumental reasons. The prestige value of heterosexual relationships is an important consideration for teenagers.
- Parents and teachers need to find a common approach to provide both contraceptive information and services to teenage learners in the Shona cultural environment. The self-preserving stance adopted by some learners, points to teenagers' unmet need for contraceptives that ought to be addressed. This substantiates national statistical data, showing that sexually active unmarried teenagers have the most unmet need for contraception (62%), in comparison to teenagers in a marital union (19%) (Remez, Woog, & Mhloyi, 2014). This may lead to unplanned pregnancy, teenage parenthood, school dropout and reduced employment opportunities.
- School-based sexuality education should make a non-judgemental connection to the contraceptive services available at local healthcare facilities. The discourse of sexuality as dangerous for 'children' is pervasive in schools, with the teenagers emphasising that information on sexuality is not adequately discussed in the G & C lessons. There is superficial coverage of other safer-sex practices in school, with condoms presented as being for those not wise enough to make the decision to abstain. The school needs to accept teenagers' sexuality and support them as they learn about sex as a normative aspect of life.
- Schools and families need to instigate unbiased gender and cultural norms around teenage sexuality. Shona cultural values relating to *humhandara* need to be adapted to the national socio-cultural milieu in which gender-based inequalities are being challenged.

- Virginity needs to be promoted in a way that prioritises individual choice and self-esteem of both boys and girls, and a gender-neutral discourse on virginity can then be fused into discussions of sexuality in school and family contexts. Adults could build on girls' self-preserving stance on virginity by placing less weight on the dangers of premarital virginity loss. *Humhandara* needs to be reconstituted with a focus on girls' personal motivation and goals, while boys' active questioning of double standards embedded in the virginity discourse could also be harnessed as one aspect of dismantling sexual and gender inequalities.
- School-based sexuality education needs to consider the local gender and cultural reality. Lacey (2017) cautioned that general programmes designed to raise awareness of sexual health issues are inadequate in communities whose socio-cultural environments heighten their susceptibility to HIV infection.
- Sexuality education must include discussions of power to allow learners to distinguish the power relations at play in such hierarchies. Most learners subscribed to essentialist and cultural notions of gender in justifying gendered heterosexual hierarchies, with an understanding of how power mediates gender and sexuality being essential (Haberland, 2015) to enable teenage boys and girls to evaluate how gendered power exposes them to sexuality risks. That awareness might assist them to make insightful choices.
- Adults need to come to an understanding of how some cultural principles leave teenagers vulnerable to sexual risks. The existing system of Community Field Officers (CFOs) could be adapted to mobilise parents, teachers, teenagers and the health sector to discuss the reality of teenage sexual lives in the context of HIV infection and suggest acceptable initiatives in their community. Zimbabwe can take a leaf from the modern *senga* initiative in Ugandan rural areas (Tamale, 2006; Muyinda, Nakuya, Whitworth, & Pool, 2003).
- The role of the CFOs could be expanded after they are trained in health related issues relevant to teenagers, in light of Shona cultural values, to provide both teenagers and parents with opportunities for knowledgeable, substantial, truthful, and if there is need, to provide private discussions on sexuality. These discussions could result in increased awareness and critical discussions of ideas shaping teenage sexuality locally.

### **c) Policy and government implementation level**

- Moral values that indirectly compel girls and their families to opt for honour and acceptance in marriage need to be part of the national discourse on marriage and teenage sexuality. Child marriage is a regressive practice in the context of national policies for children and women's rights, making it essential to deliberate on this practice and develop more appropriate approaches for dealing with teenage pregnancy. Additionally, criminalisation might address some cases, but it does not account for those teenage girls who make that decision willingly. The law states that they cannot consent to marriage as they are not mature enough to make an informed decision (Muchacha & Matsika, 2018), making it necessary for programmes to be developed to assist them before they even see marriage as a viable option.
- National response to the problem of child marriage needs to be enlightened by cultural circumstances so that the issue is handled competently. The current government thrust of criminalising child marriage focuses on the result rather than the cause, and may not adequately address the peculiar gender and cultural reality of teenage sexuality. It misses the significance of marriage as a culturally informed reaction to socially unacceptable sex, pregnancy and motherhood outside of a marital union. Simply labelling the practice as criminal does not recognise the influence of the socio-cultural context of sexuality and the choices individuals make.
- Teenage fatherhood also needs to be recognised as negatively affecting learners, and avenues of assisting boys to remain in school and excel should be sought. The focus on economic and educational challenges of girls and concomitant interventions neglects the plight of boys, who are similarly vulnerable and in need of assistance. Economic ventures for learners, or better livelihood options for parents, would be useful in turning away both teenage girls and boys from dangerous transactional sexual relationships and gold panning activities.

### **d) Suggestions for further studies**

- As this study was carried out among the Zezuru tribe of the Shona ethnic group in rural Zimbabwe, further studies are needed to establish the influence of culture on teenage sexuality in other tribes among the Shona. Detailed study of the association between socio-cultural context and individuals' sexual choices and behaviour may enhance our

understanding and response to the complex phenomenon of teenage sexuality in other communities.

- Learners, teachers and parents can be powerful agents of change with respect to culture, gender and sexuality. Studies exploring strategies to empower them to modify gendered cultural values in the home and school could be conducted. Teenagers' experiences and viewpoints on sexuality can promote critical assessment of how culture might be evolving to empower them.

## **9.8 Conclusion**

Sexuality cannot be understood separately from the socio-economic and cultural context in which it is entrenched. An appreciation of how this context shapes sexuality is important for meaningful engagement with teenagers in this respect within the family and at school. Shona cultural norms influence teenage sexuality in myriad ways, and while adults are more inclined to view teenagers as innocent and in need of protection, the teenage learners in the study highlighted that they need more information to enhance their understanding of their own sexuality. Dismissing teenagers' interest as misplaced is problematic, as it blocks the prospects for in-depth consideration of their sexual choices and behaviour. Adults need to view teenagers as sexually knowing individuals in need of more detailed information. Provision of meaningful information should take account of the socio-cultural context in which the individuals exist.

In the context of poverty and unemployment, while being exposed to modern ideas and growing rights associated with gender equality, governments, schools and parents need to prepare their youth for a changing world, in which social justice and freedom of choice are going to eventually find their way into the consciousness of young women in particular, as has happened elsewhere in the world. A failure of all levels of society to plan for such eventualities will result in social conflict, and a disconnection between cultural values and human rights. As future mothers and leaders, young girls need to have access to information that will enable them to not only make the best decisions about their own lives, but also about the quality of life of future generations.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Ethical Clearance – Zimbabwe

All communications should be addressed to  
"The Secretary for Primary and Secondary  
Education"  
Telephone: 799914 and 705153  
Telegraphic address : "EDUCATION"  
Fax: 791923



**Reference:** C/426/3 Mash Central  
Ministry of Primary and  
Secondary Education  
P.O Box CY 121  
Causeway  
**ZIMBABWE**

11 September 2015

Vimbai Sharon Matswetu  
School of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
P. O. Box X54001  
Durban  
**Republic of South Africa**

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE:**

Reference is made to your application to carry out a research in the above mentioned schools in Mashonaland Central Province on the research title:

**"TEACHERS' AND PUPILS' UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF GENDER EQUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE OF ZIMBABWE"**

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director Mashonaland Central, who is responsible for the schools which you want to involve in your research.

You are required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education by December 2017.

  
E. Chinyowa  
**Acting Director:** Policy Planning, Research and Development  
For: **SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**  
Ccc: PED- Mashonaland Central Province

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## Appendix B: Ethical Clearance UKZN



14 October 2015

Ms Vimbai S Matswetu (215079435)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Matswetu,

Protocol Reference Number : HSS/0492/015D

Project title: Teachers' and pupils understanding and practice of gender equality : A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

With regards to your response received on 21 September 2015 to our letter of 31 August 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/ms

Cc: Supervisor: Professor Deevia Bhana  
cc. Academic Leader: Professor P Morojele  
cc. School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

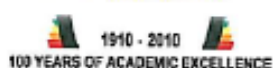
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4809 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymann@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymann@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville



(If the motivation exceeds the space allowed, please attached the written motivation to this form)

DATE: 30/08/2018

STUDENT SIGNATURE:



DATE: 30/08/2018

SUPERVISOR:



DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CO-SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Participant - School Head**

School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.....,

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Vimbai Sharon Matswetu I am an Education, PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

This is a formal invitation to you to participate in the research project titled: Teachers' and pupils' understanding and practice of gender equality: A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe

The main question that this study asks is 'How do teachers and pupils interpret the concept of gender equality, and what are the implications on practices to foster gender equality in the school environment and society at large?' Such research is essential in Zimbabwe given that gender issues have been on the global agenda for development, and education in particular, for many decades now. However, achievement of equality in education and in society more broadly remains a challenge for most countries including Zimbabwe. All the same, gendered cultures of schools and gender inequalities impact severely on the experience of schooling. There is need to understand the social and educational conditions that maintain or reduce gender inequalities. This study intends to find out: how teachers and pupils conceptualise gender equality in relation to local contexts; and how their conceptions inform their practice in

the secondary schools. It is envisaged that findings of this study may provide some insights as to how schools can play a transformative role in gender relations in the school and society.

Your school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interviews may last for about 20 minutes each. I intend to conduct a series of interviews with you for detailed discussion of pertinent issues that may arise during the course of the study.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at: Email: [matswetuv@gmail.com](mailto:matswetuv@gmail.com) Cell: +263 (0) 772 584 838

<p>My supervisor's contact details:</p> <p>Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD</p> <p>School of Education</p> <p>College of Humanities</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Private Bag X03</p>	<p>You may also contact the Research Office through</p> <p>Mariette Snyman</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Research Office: Ethics (HSS)</p> <p>Govan Mbeki Building</p> <p>Private Bag X54001</p>
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Cnr Marianhill & Richmond Roads	Durban
Ashwood	4000
3605	
South Africa	Tel: +27 31 260 8350
Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603	Fax: + 27 31 260 4609
Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793	Email: <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a>
email: <a href="mailto:bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za">bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za</a>	

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

#### DECLARATION

**I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.**

**I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **Appendix E: Informed Consent Participant - Teacher**

School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.....,

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Vimbai Sharon Matswetu I am an Education, PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus.

This is a formal invitation to you to participate in the research project titled: Teachers' and pupils' understanding and practice of gender equality: A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe

The main question that this study asks is 'How do teachers and pupils interpret the concept of gender equality, and what are the implications on practices to foster gender equality in the school environment and society at large?' Such research is essential in Zimbabwe given that gender issues have been on the global agenda for development, and education in particular, for many decades now. However, achievement of equality in education and in society more broadly remains a challenge for most countries including Zimbabwe. All the same, gendered cultures of schools and gender inequalities impact severely on the experience of schooling. There is need to understand the social and educational conditions that maintain or reduce gender inequalities. This study intends to find out: how teachers and pupils conceptualise gender equality in relation to local contexts; and how their conceptions inform their practice in the secondary schools. It is envisaged that findings of this study may provide some insights as to how schools can play a transformative role in gender relations in the school and society.

I am studying cases from Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe. Your school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions and observing you while teaching your usual classes.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interviews may last for about 20 minutes each. I intend to conduct a series of interviews with you for detailed discussion of pertinent issues that may arise during observations or focus group discussions with pupils.
- I intend to observe at least two of your lessons each week over a period of three months.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at: Email: [matswetuv@gmail.com](mailto:matswetuv@gmail.com) Cell: +263 (0) 772 584 838

<p>My supervisor's contact details:</p> <p>Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD</p> <p>School of Education</p> <p>College of Humanities</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Private Bag X03</p> <p>Cnr Marianhill &amp; Richmond Roads</p> <p>Ashwood</p> <p>3605</p> <p>South Africa</p>	<p>You may also contact the Research Office through</p> <p>Mariette Snyman</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Research Office: Ethics (HSS)</p> <p>Govan Mbeki Building</p> <p>Private Bag X54001</p> <p>Durban</p> <p>4000</p> <p>Tel: +27 31 260 8350</p>
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Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603	Fax: + 27 31 260 4609
Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793	Email: <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a>
email: <a href="mailto:bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za">bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za</a>	

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **Appendix F: Informed consent- parent/guardian for Learner FGD**

School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Parent or Guardian of .....,

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

My name is Vimbai Sharon Matswetu I am an Education, PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

I am writing to request your permission to allow your child/ward to participate in a research project titled: Teachers' and pupils' understanding and practice of gender equality: A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe.

The main question that this study asks is 'How do teachers and pupils interpret the concept of gender equality, and what are the implications on practices to foster gender equality in the school environment and society at large?' Such research is essential in Zimbabwe given that gender issues have been on the global agenda for development, and education in particular, for many decades now. However, achievement of equality in education and in society more broadly remains a challenge for most countries including Zimbabwe. All the same, gendered cultures of schools and gender inequalities impact severely on the experience of schooling. There is need to understand the social and educational conditions that maintain or reduce gender inequalities. This study intends to find out: how teachers and pupils conceptualise gender equality in relation to local contexts; and how their conceptions inform their practice in the secondary schools. It is envisaged that the findings of this study may provide some insights as to how schools can play a transformative role in gender relations in the school and society.

Your son/daughter's school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking your son/daughter some questions. I would like your son/daughter to participate in Focus group Discussions with other pupils that will be done as part of the research.

Please note that:

- Your son/daughter's confidentiality is guaranteed. His/her name and that of the school will be replaced by a pseudonym in all of the data.

- He/she will take part in focus group discussions (FGDs) with at least seven other pupils of the same sex at school, during lunch time at school.
- Each FGD will take approximately 30 minutes and your child will participate in four such FGDs.
- The FGDs will be done once in three or four weeks.
- Any information given by your child cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Your child has a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. They will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Their involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you allow your child to participate in the FGDs, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the FGD to be recorded by the following equipment:

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at: Email: [matswetuv@gmail.com](mailto:matswetuv@gmail.com) Cell: +263 (0) 772 584 838

<p>My supervisor's contact details:</p> <p>Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD</p> <p>School of Education</p> <p>College of Humanities</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Private Bag X03</p> <p>Cnr Marianhill &amp; Richmond Roads</p> <p>Ashwood</p> <p>3605</p> <p>South Africa</p> <p>Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603</p> <p>Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793</p>	<p>You may also contact the Research Office through</p> <p>Mariette Snyman</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Research Office: Ethics (HSS)</p> <p>Govan Mbeki Building</p> <p>Private Bag X54001</p> <p>Durban</p> <p>4000</p> <p>Tel: +27 31 260 8350</p> <p>Fax: + 27 31 260 4609</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a></p>
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email: <a href="mailto:bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za">bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za</a>	
---	--

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**DECLARATION**

**I..... (Full names of parent/guardian) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I grant my son/daughter permission to participate in the research project.**

**I understand that my son/daughter is at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should he/she so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN**

**DATE**

.....

.....

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **Appendix G: Informed consent- parent/guardian for Learner Interview**

School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.....,

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER- Parent/Guardian**

My name is Vimbai Sharon Matswetu I am an Education, PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

I am writing to request your permission to allow your child/ward to participate in a research project titled: Teachers' and pupils' understanding and practice of gender equality: A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe

The main question that this study asks is 'How do teachers and pupils interpret the concept of gender equality, and what are the implications on practices to foster gender equality in the school environment and society at large?' Such research is essential in Zimbabwe given that gender issues have been on the global agenda for development, and education in particular, for many decades now. However, achievement of equality in education and in society more broadly remains a challenge for most countries including Zimbabwe. All the same, gendered cultures of schools and gender inequalities impact severely on the experience of schooling. There is need to understand the social and educational conditions that maintain or reduce gender inequalities. This study intends to find out: how teachers and pupils conceptualise gender equality in relation to local contexts; and how their conceptions inform their practice in the secondary schools. It is envisaged that the findings of this study may provide some insights as to how schools can play a transformative role in gender relations in the school and society.

Your son/daughter's school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking your son/daughter some questions. I would like your son/daughter to participate in an interview as part of the research.

Please note that:

- Your son/daughter's confidentiality is guaranteed. His/her name and that of the school will be replaced by a pseudonym in all of the data.
- He/she will take part in one interview at school which will take about 15 minutes.
- Any information given by your child cannot be used against them, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Your child has a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. They will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Their involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you allow your child to participate in the interview, please indicate by signing below.

I can be contacted at: Email: matswetuv@gmail.com Cell: +263 (0) 772 584 838

<p>My supervisor's contact details:</p> <p>Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD</p> <p>School of Education</p> <p>College of Humanities</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Private Bag X03</p> <p>Cnr Marianhill &amp; Richmond Roads</p> <p>Ashwood</p> <p>3605</p> <p>South Africa</p> <p>Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603</p> <p>Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793</p> <p>email: <a href="mailto:bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za">bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za</a></p>	<p>You may also contact the Research Office through</p> <p>Mariette Snyman</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Research Office: Ethics (HSS)</p> <p>Govan Mbeki Building</p> <p>Private Bag X54001</p> <p>Durban</p> <p>4000</p> <p>Tel: +27 31 260 8350</p> <p>Fax: + 27 31 260 4609</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a></p>
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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**DECLARATION**

**I..... (Full names of parent/guardian) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I grant my son/daughter permission to participate in the research project.**

**I understand that my son/daughter is at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should he/she so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN**

**DATE**

.....

.....

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT (Child)**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **Appendix H: Informed consent: Participant- parent/guardian**

School of Education,  
College of Humanities,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.....,

### **INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Vimbai Sharon Matswetu I am an Education, PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus.

This is a formal invitation to you to participate in the research project titled: Teachers' and pupils' understanding and practice of gender equality: A case study of two schools in Mashonaland Central province of Zimbabwe

The main question that this study asks is 'How do teachers and pupils interpret the concept of gender equality, and what are the implications on practices to foster gender equality in the school environment and society at large?' Such research is essential in Zimbabwe given that gender issues have been on the global agenda for development, and education in particular, for many decades now. However, achievement of equality in education and in society more broadly remains a challenge for most countries including Zimbabwe. All the same, gendered cultures of schools and gender inequalities impact severely on the experience of schooling. There is need to understand the social and educational conditions that maintain or reduce gender inequalities. This study intends to find out: how teachers and pupils conceptualise gender equality in relation to local contexts; and how their conceptions inform their practice in the secondary schools. It is envisaged that the findings of this study may provide some insights as to how schools can play a transformative role in gender relations in the school and society.

I am studying cases from Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe. Your son/daughter's school is one of my case studies. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions. I would like you to participate in an interview that will be done as part of the research, together with other parents in the school.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview will take approximately 20 minutes.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

I can be contacted at:

Email : matswetuv@gmail.com

Cell : +263 (0) 772 584 838

<p>My supervisor's contact details:</p> <p>Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD</p> <p>School of Education</p> <p>College of Humanities</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Private Bag X03</p> <p>Cnr Marianhill &amp; Richmond Roads</p> <p>Ashwood</p> <p>3605</p> <p>South Africa</p> <p>Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603</p>	<p>You may also contact the Research Office through</p> <p>Mariette Snyman</p> <p>University of KwaZulu-Natal</p> <p>Research Office: Ethics (HSS)</p> <p>Govan Mbeki Building</p> <p>Private Bag X54001</p> <p>Durban</p> <p>4000</p> <p>Tel: +27 31 260 8350</p> <p>Fax : + 27 31 260 4609</p> <p>Email : <a href="mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za">snymanm@ukzn.ac.za</a></p>
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Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793

email: [bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

.....

.....

## **Appendix I: Interview Guide- School Head**

(Adapted from: UNESCO (2009). *Gender in Education Network in Asia-Pacific (GENIA) Toolkit promoting gender equality in education*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok)

### **Security and Health Issues**

- 1 Is the school close enough for all school-age boys and girls to walk to?
- 2 Can both boys and girls be safe on their way to school? Are services provided to ensure their safety, such as transportation?
- 3 In the school and on the way to/from school, do girls and boys feel safe from: bullying? Discrimination? Sexual harassment?
- 4 Are girls who get pregnant supported by the school, and do they feel free to continue schooling? Is there a clear policy on reproductive health? Are teachers and school officials aware of existing laws on this matter?
- 5 Are boys or girls who are living with/affected by HIV/AIDS (or other diseases) supported equally by the school? What kind of support do boys and girls receive, if any? Is there any special provision to reduce stigma/discrimination that girls and boys may face? Is it different between boys and girls?

### **School and Classroom Facilities**

1. Are there well-maintained and adequate number of functional latrines for both girls and boys?
2. Is there clean drinking water in school available and accessible for all students, including girls and boys?
3. Are there enough seats and seating space for both girl and boy students?
4. Does seating arrangement give an equal opportunity for both boys and girls to participate in class and interact with the teacher and other students?

### **Curriculum**

1. Does the curriculum reflect the needs and life experiences of both boys and girls?
2. Do both boys and girls feel confident in making subject choices that may not be traditionally male or female subjects?
3. Do girls participate and achieve equally with boys in maths and sciences, and boys in disciplines such as literature and history?

4. Does the curriculum promote peace and equality for boys and girls regardless of their race, class, caste, disability, religion or ethnic background?
5. Do curricular/extracurricular activities equally attract the participation of both boys and girls?
6. Are there activities to counter existing social stereotypes about boys and girls?
7. Are there activities (such as sports, cultural events, etc.) organized by teachers and/or students that intend to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote fair and mutually supportive gender-friendly culture in the school?

### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

1. Does each boy and girl have essential schoolbooks and other learning materials?
2. Do teaching and learning materials portray girls and boys of varying socio-economic and religious background, including those with disabilities, with equal prominence, potential and respect?
3. Are the materials and resources used by the students free from gender stereotypes?

### **Student Participation in Decision-Making**

1. Do students take part in deciding the school's rules?
2. Does the school decision-making body listen to the voices of both girl and boy students? If yes, how?
3. Does the school encourage both boys and girls to express their opinions, needs and concerns freely?
4. Do both boys and girls have equal opportunities to participate in all school and classroom activities? What kind of activities are boys and girls offered or assigned by teachers?
5. Are both boys and girls given equal opportunity in the management and leadership of school clubs, teams and associations? Is there a class or activity leader/leader team? Is the leader a boy or a girl? How is the leader's team composed?

### **Guidance and Counselling**

1. Does the school have guidance/counselling programmes and facilities? What kind of aspects do these services include? Does it include sexuality/reproductive health/specific subject choice? Can both girls and boys have equal access to these programmes?

### **Teachers**

2. What is the ratio of male teachers to female teachers?
3. Do community leaders and parents value female and male teachers equally? Does it translate into formal recognition?
4. Does the school head (male or female) treat both male and female teachers equally? Are they given equal responsibilities and opportunities?
5. Do teachers encourage girls and boys to speak and contribute equally?
6. Do teachers value the views of boys and girls equally?
7. Have the teachers and the school head participated in gender training courses?
8. Do both male and female teachers have relevant training to support both girls and boys on reproductive health issues?

### **Community Members and Parents**

1. Are community leaders and parents equally supportive of both boys and girls to attend school?
2. Are community women and men with special knowledge or skills brought into the class as resource persons?

## **Appendix J: Interview Guide (1) - Teachers**

1. How would you define 'gender equality'?
2. What do you regard as the indicators of gender equality in education?
3. What do you think are the causes of gender inequality in society and the education system?
4. Do you think the school has a role to play in promoting gender equality in society?
5. Do you think the teacher has a role to play in promoting gender equality in the school?
6. Describe any gender related issues/problems/challenges that you have encountered during the course of work in school?
7. How have you resolved the challenges?
8. What assistance or support do you get from other teachers in the school in dealing with such challenges?
9. What is your pupils' perception of gender equality?
10. How do you ensure that the learning environment is conducive for all the pupils in your class?
11. Do boys and girls have different learning needs? If so, how do you cater for this?
12. Are the materials and resources used by the pupils free from gender stereotypes?
13. How is the learning of both boys and girls enhanced or impeded by their families?
14. Are there activities (such as sports, cultural events, etc.) organized by teachers and/or students that intend to eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote fair and mutually supportive gender-friendly culture in the school?

## **Appendix K: Focus Group Discussion Guide - Learners**

(Adapted from: UNESCO (2009). *Gender in Education Network in Asia-Pacific (GENIA) Toolkit promoting gender equality in education*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok)

### **Security and Health Issues**

1. Is the school close enough for all school-age boys and girls to walk to?
2. Can both boys and girls be safe on their way to school? Are services provided to ensure their safety, such as transportation?
3. In the school and on the way to/from school, do girls and boys feel safe from: bullying? Discrimination? Sexual harassment?
4. Are girls who get pregnant supported by the school, and do they feel free to continue schooling?

### **School and Classroom Facilities**

1. Are there well-maintained and adequate number of functional latrines for both girls and boys?
2. Is there clean drinking water in school available and accessible for all students, including girls and boys?
3. Are there enough seats and seating space for both girl and boy students?
4. Where do you sit in your classroom? Do you like sitting there?
5. Does seating arrangement give an equal opportunity for both boys and girls to participate in class and interact with the teacher and other students?

### **Curriculum**

1. What is your favourite subject?
2. What is the subject you like the least?
3. Do both boys and girls feel confident in making subject choices that may not be traditionally male or female subjects?
4. Do you often participate in the class (talking with the teacher and classmates, and going to the chalk board)?
5. Do you like to go to school and to be in your classroom? Why or why not?
6. Does the curriculum reflect the needs and life experiences of both boys and girls?
7. Do girls participate and achieve equally with boys in maths and sciences, and boys in disciplines such as literature and history?

8. How much education do you hope to receive? (Lower secondary, upper secondary, university or other)? Up to which grade do you think you can study?
9. What kind of work do you want to do when you finish school?
10. Do curricular/extracurricular activities equally attract the participation of both boys and girls?

### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

1. Does each boy and girl have essential schoolbooks and other learning materials?
2. Do teaching and learning materials portray girls and boys of varying socio-economic and religious background, including those with disabilities, with equal prominence, potential and respect?
3. Are the materials and resources used by the pupils free from gender stereotypes?

### **Student Participation in Decision-Making**

1. How are the class leaders chosen?
2. Who is the class leader (monitor) in this class? (Girl or boy)
3. What are her/his duties?
4. Who is the assistant class leader (monitor) in your class? (Girl or boy)
5. What are her/his duties?
6. How are the school leaders (leader/assistant leader) chosen?
7. What are her/his duties?
8. Do students take part in deciding the school's rules?
9. Does the school decision-making body listen to the voices of both girl and boy students? If yes, how?
10. Does the school encourage both boys and girls to express their opinions, needs and concerns freely?
11. Do both boys and girls have equal opportunities to participate in all school and classroom activities? What kind of activities are boys and girls offered or assigned by teachers?
12. Are both boys and girls given equal opportunity in the management and leadership of school clubs, teams and associations? Is there a class or activity leader/leader team? Is the leader a boy or a girl? How is the leader's team composed?

### **Guidance and Counselling**

1. Does the school have guidance/counselling programmes and facilities? What kind of aspects do these services include? Does it include sexuality/reproductive health/specific subject choice? Can both girls and boys have equal access to these programmes?
2. What do you understand by term gender equality?
3. What kind of work should girls/women do? Why?
4. What kind of work should boys/men do? Why?

### **Teachers**

1. Do teachers encourage girls and boys to speak and contribute equally?
2. Do teachers value the views of boys and girls equally?

### **Community Members and Parents**

1. Are community leaders and parents equally supportive of both boys and girls to attend school?
2. Are community women and men with special knowledge or skills brought into the class as resource persons?

## **Appendix L: Focus Group Discussion Guide - Parents**

1. How would you define 'gender equality'?
2. How would you define gender inequality?
3. What do you think are the causes of gender inequality in a) society and b) education system?
4. What do you regard as the indicators of gender equality in a) society; b) school?
5. Is gender equality a desirable situation in a) society; b) school?
6. Do you think the school should promote gender equality?
7. Do you think the family has a role to play in promoting gender equality in a) the school; b) society?
8. Describe any gender related issues/problems/challenges that you have encountered in your duties at school?
9. How have you resolved the challenges?
10. What assistance or support do you get from the school in dealing with such challenges?
11. What do you think should be done to ensure that the learning environment is conducive for all the pupils in the school?
12. How is the learning of both boys and girls enhanced or impeded by their families?
13. Are parents equally supportive of both boys and girls to attend school?
14. Are parents with special knowledge or skills brought into the class as resource persons?

## Appendix M: Interview questions-learners

**This is a guide of the issues to be covered in the interview. The actual questions to be asked will vary depending on the interviewee's responses**

- Upbringing of boys and girls in the family and home.
  - Who do you live with?
  - What kind of work does each person in the family do?
  - Who spends most time at home? Why do you think this is so?
  - Who contributes the most to paying for school, food and clothes?
  - Who makes most of the decisions? Why do you think this so?
- Constructs of masculinity- what is considered as the proper behaviour /attitudes/feelings/aspirations of boys in the school/home?
- Constructs of femininity- what is considered as the proper behaviour/attitudes/feelings/aspirations of girls in the school/home?
- Do you plan to get married sometime in the future?
- What factors would you consider as important when choosing a marriage partner?
- *Roora* as a central component of marriage
- What does it signify?
- What is paid?
- Do you think it is a good idea to pay or receive *roora*?

### 7. *Kutizira* (eloping)

- Why do some young people do this? What does it involve?
- Are there some who are forced by parents to do this?
- What is your view on the tradition of *kutiziswa/kutizira*?

8 Do you think there are any difference/similarities between marriage in town and marriage in the village?

9 Does the school allow boys and girls to talk to each other freely all the time?

10 Initiating romantic relationships- Roles of boyfriends and girlfriends.

11 Why do girls have unprotected sex which ultimately leads to teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school?

12 Gold panners- what items do girls need that are bought by gold panners?

13. What could be done to keep girls in school?

14 Are cases of underage teenage pregnancy and marriage reported to the police?

15 What impact can teenage parenthood have on the opportunities available to the affected teenagers? Both male and female

16 Do you get any information on making decisions related to sexual issues e.g. self-control, abstinence, protection from STIs and preventing pregnancy? Where do you get such information?

17 Do you think this information is appropriate and adequate? How can it be improved?

18. *Humhandara* (virginity)

- What do you know about issues to with maintaining one's status of *humhandara*?
- How does society frame male and female virginity?
- What is the value placed on maintaining *humhandara* by the society?
- Controlling sexual urges-desire, self-control and chastity

## Appendix N: Interview guide-parents

**This is a guide of the issues to be covered in the interview. The actual questions to be asked will vary depending on the interviewee's responses**

1. Upbringing of boys and girls in the family and home → male/female position in the family, roles.
2. Constructs of masculinity-understanding of manhood e.g. what a man is and how he should be treated.
3. Constructs of femininity-understanding of womanhood
4. Daughter/father or son/father communication and vice versa
5. The Head of the family (*Muridzi wemusha*)
  - What does it mean?
  - What does it entail?
  - Who can/cannot be '*muridzi wemusha*'? Why?
- 6 Are there any changes in terms of authority in the family and the community?
7. Which ways do local people make use of to reinforce gendered power/ and to challenge gendered power?
- 8 How do males and females interact in the community-is there respect for M/F views.
9. Hierarchies of gender- decision making, primary caregivers, control over household expenditure, mobility and freedom. What are the key determinants on these issues?
  
- 10 Men and women's views of potential marriage partners for their children
11. What is the role of parents in the marriage of their children?
12. *Roora* as a central component of marriage
  - What does it signify?
  - What is paid?
  - Status of man who has paid *roora*, and of the woman for whom *roora* has been paid.
13. *Kutizira*-traditional-social context
  - What does it involve?
  - Parental attitudes towards *kutiziswa/kutizira*
  - Whether or not supportive of the practice
14. Does marriage in the rural areas work the same way as in the towns?
- 15 What leads to equal relations in marriage?

### Gender and sexuality

16. *Humhandara* (virginity)

- How society frames male and female virginity
- What is the value placed on maintaining humhandara by the society?
- Controlling sexual urges

17. Why do girls have unprotected sex which ultimately leads to teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school?

18. Gold panners- what items do girls need that are bought by gold panners?

19 What could be done to keep girls in school?

20. Are cases of underage teenage pregnancy and marriage reported to the police?

21. What impact can teenage parenthood have on the opportunities available to the affected teenagers? Both male and female

22. In your opinion, what would be the ideal relationship between teenage BF/GF? And what is the reality now?

23 Do young people in school get any information on making decisions related to sexual issues e.g. desire and self-control, abstinence, protection from STIs and preventing pregnancy? Where do they get such information?

24. Do you think this information is appropriate and adequate? How can it be improved?

25. Culture of silence/openness that surrounds sex.

## **Appendix O: Interview Guide (2) – Teachers**

**This is a guide of the issues to be covered in the interview. The actual questions to be asked will vary depending on the interviewee's responses**

1. Constructs of masculinity-understanding of manhood e.g. what a man is and how he should be treated.
2. Constructs of femininity-understanding of womanhood
3. How do learners establish themselves as appropriately feminine or masculine in the school?
4. Social context of teenage pregnancy and early marriage-Why do girls have unprotected sex which ultimately leads to teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school.
5. Reporting cases of teenage pregnancy and marriage to the police
6. Benefits from early marriages? Who, what, why?
7. Family and community influences in relation to gender and sexuality
8. Roles of boyfriends and girlfriends-what is the normal relationship between BF/GF and what would be ideal?
9. Culture of silence/openness that surrounds sex.
10. Context and dynamics influencing the behaviour of young men and women.
11. Teenagers' decisions (or lack of decisions) around sex.
12. Views on teenage parenthood
13. Views on sexuality education. How can it be improved?
14. Which messages influence sexual decision-making of girls/boys from school and family
15. Does the sexuality knowledge from home and school address the teenagers' lived sexual experience?
16. Feminisation of sexuality knowledge

## Appendix P: Turnitin Report

PhD Thesis

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