

Intergenerational Sexual Relationships: The Voices of the Public

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Abstract

Encouraging intimate talk about sex on the radio is an unorthodox way of reaching research participants. However for this study it was the only viable option for eliciting information about a taboo topic-older men having sex with young girls. Two radio talk-back sessions were conducted in Gaborone-Botswana with the aim of gathering men's views on intergenerational sexual relationships. The callers were asked whether they thought intergenerational sexual relationships were prevalent in Botswana or not, they were asked to give reasons for such relationships and whether they think intergenerational sexual relationships could contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana. They were 56 callers, 38 men and 18 women. They called from all parts of Botswana. In the views of the public and not just those of men are reported. All the 56 callers said that intergenerational sexual relationships exist in Botswana. Financial and material gain, love and sexual satisfaction, stimulating sexual drive, the myth of self-cleansing, loss of religious beliefs and cultural values were cited as the drivers of intergenerational sexual relationships. The majority of callers indicated that the main reason why these sexual relationships could contribute to the spread of HIV is the lack of condom use. The lack of condom use was associated with the motives that drive older men and girls to engage in these sexual relationships. It is recommended that programmes that greatly increase the risk perception of young women and older men regarding involvement in intergenerational sexual relationships be launched. Legislation that takes a zero tolerance approach to exploitation and violence against women and girls should be reinforced.

Keywords: Intergenerational; self-cleansing; myth; stimulating; polygamy; condom

1. Introduction

In our culture a woman is never considered to be too young. I did not force her into our relationship. I proposed and she agreed. (Monei, M)

In view of the fact that sexual relationships are an inherently dyadic interaction the researcher felt that excluding men when studying the dynamics of sexual relationships would result in an unbalanced data set. However, because it was not easy to recruit older men who engaged in sexual relationships with schoolgirls in Botswana for reasons outlined in Nkosana (2006), radio talk-back was employed as an alternative approach. This study consisted of two radio talk-back sessions which were conducted with the aim of gathering men's views on intergenerational sexual relationships. However, the views of other members of the public were also welcomed. This paper reports the views of the general public and not just those of men.

Although the location of the study for the schoolgirls was Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana, the public called from all parts of Botswana. The different areas have been classified into two main groups, north and south and within each group there were callers from urban and rural areas. Most of the callers were from the south (urban south: 31; rural south: 8). Only eight called from urban north and nine from rural north. The majority (38) of the callers were men and 18 callers were women. The views of all 56 callers are reported in this paper.

2. Prevalence of intergenerational sexual relationships

Callers were asked whether they thought intergenerational sexual relationships were prevalent in Botswana or not. All callers said that these relationships exist in Botswana. Below are just a few of examples:

Yes, such relationships do exist. (Kgabo, M)

Sexual relationships between older men and schoolgirls do exist. (Nkwe, M)

Intergenerational sexual relationships are prevalent. (Boi, F)

Oh yes, these relationships are real. (Kemo, F)

These findings indicate that sexual relationships between older men and schoolgirls are acknowledged to exist in Botswana. This is consistent with the perceptions of the surveyed schoolgirls (reported in Nkosana, 2006) because when asked whether they had friends/relatives who were involved in intergenerational sexual relationships, almost two-thirds said that they had. However, only one-quarter stated they were involved in such sexual relationships themselves. The same trend emerges with the older men (reported in Nkosana, 2006 and Nkosana and Nkosana 2015). All the men who called said that intergenerational sexual relationships exist in Botswana but only seven admitted that they were in such relationships themselves. The self-report regarding intergenerational sexual relationships may be an underestimate because such sexual relationships are not

condoned in Botswana, and some of the men who engage in these relationships are married and may not have been willing to disclose their infidelity. Furthermore, many male callers may not have been willing to admit that they were involved in intergenerational sexual relationships even when they could do so anonymously. The same trend emerged in Longfield, Glick et al. (2004) study in which out of 28 men who participated in their study, only one man reported that he was in a sexual relationship with a teenage girl. There is some support for this view that under-reporting among the participants occurs in research on sexually related and sensitive topics (Lee 1993; Lessler and O'Reilly, 1997; Smith, 1992; Willis 1997).

3. Public perceptions of intergenerational sexual relationships

While the majority (45, 80.4%), including two-thirds of the men and all the women callers considered intergenerational sexual relationships as a problem, 11 men did not consider them as such within the Botswana context. Some of those who considered the relationships as a problem expressed themselves in the following words:

This is a major problem in our country. I have always been made to believe that it is a crime in Botswana for an older man to have sexual intercourse with a young girl, yet these things are happening and no action is taken. (Morwa, M)

We cannot turn a deaf ear to what is happening. This is happening and we cannot bury our heads into the sand. We should mention these people by names. Our school children are in trouble—they don't have freedom of movement because of these men. (Sego, F)

Some members of the public were concerned with what they considered to be the high prevalence of intergenerational sexual relationships and they wished the men involved could be prosecuted. There was no difference in opinions between rural and urban callers and from the various regions of the country such as south or north.

Those who did not consider intergenerational sexual relationships as a problem supported their position by saying that in Tswana culture a woman is never considered to be too young. The statements below reflect their views:

There is nothing wrong with these relationships because in our culture a woman is never considered to be too young..., at 70 you can still marry a 21-year-old woman. To my understanding I see these relationships as normal; therefore I cannot say we have a problem. (Monei, M)

I have a problem if it is put as if the girls are forced into these relationships. I know that they consent to it as well. If two people have agreed to have a sexual relationship, should some people come in and say what they are doing is not proper? I don't think so. In our culture it is a common thing to have a girlfriend who is much younger than oneself. (Bokete, M)

While it is true that when polygamy was still practiced in Botswana subsequent wives used to be much younger than their husbands, polygamy is no longer a common practice. In the past, polygamy was tolerated under the customary law but was supposed to be done after consultation between the concerned families. The first wife was usually also consulted although it is doubtful whether she had the power to stop her husband from marrying another woman (Molokomme, 1988). The position of these 11 men therefore could be influenced by this old practice, because as Schapera (1939:19) puts it "practices discarded by some continue to be observed by others". Six of these men called from the rural areas and five from urban, the rural and urban callers seem to hold the same view. The common practice in Botswana now is that the couples' age difference is narrow and some men even marry women who are older than themselves, something which was unheard of in the older generations when it was regarded a taboo for a man to marry a woman who was older than him.

4. Motivating factors

Callers were asked to give reasons why schoolgirls go out with older men. They provided both new reasons and some that were similar to those of the girls in the survey and those in intergenerational sexual relationships.

Similar reasons

Similar reasons were: provision of money (30 callers), clothes (10 callers) and/or cell-phones (mobile phones) (12 callers); being driven around in expensive cars (19 callers); being taken to distant places (5 callers); having fun (5 callers); and love and sexual satisfaction for both parties (11 callers).

4.1 Financial and material gain

Financial and material gain was reported as the main motivating factor for these relationships.

They entice young girls with their expensive cars and money. (Dingalo, M)

The girls want money, clothes, cell-phones and other gifts just for fun and enjoyment.

(Mogapi M)

The above statements were common among the callers and are consistent with those reported in Chapters four and five.

4.2 Services

Some of the callers indicated that the girls were motivated by some services they got from older men, like being driven around and taken for holidays to distant places.

These girls like to be driven around and taken to distant places like Capetown or Durban and have fun. (Tshego, F)

These services help girls enjoy an upscale lifestyle and look 'modern', as was also found by Meekers and Calves (1997a) as well as by Gage (1998) in relation to material gain.

4.3 Love and sexual satisfaction

Love and sexual satisfaction for both parties were mentioned by some of the community members as a driving force for these relationships.

Love and sexual satisfaction motivate these older men. Girls also enjoy sleeping with them, and so these are mutual beneficial relationships. (Bokete, M)

Some older men know how to handle these young girls and they satisfy them sexually. They know these things so they perform better than boys. (Same, F)

Love and sexual satisfaction for both girls and older men have been mentioned as motivating factors for these sexual relationships. Although intergenerational sexual relationships have been found to be multifaceted and the reasons or motivations for them complex, we cannot dismiss love as a motivation in these relationships. However, information on love as a motivating factor for intergenerational sexual relationships is limited in the available literature. The findings of this study relating to girls who were involved in intergenerational sexual relationships reported in Chapter five revealed that some girls engaged in such relationships for love and sexual satisfaction because they believe that older men have more sexual experience.

5. New Reasons

The new motivating factors which callers reported were: the myth of self-cleansing when you have sex with a virgin (11 callers); stimulating sexual drive (older man) (10 callers); the influence of alcohol (8 callers); the loss of religious beliefs (9 callers); and the loss of cultural values (7 callers).

5.1 Stimulating sexual drive (older man)

Those who reported that older men enter into sexual relationships with girls because they wanted to stimulate or rekindle their sexual drive had this to say:

These girls help older men to stimulate their sexual drives because sometimes when you get old you lose your sexual bearings so you need these young ones to wake you up. (Monei, M)

These young girls have not been in this game for a long time, they are still good so they are able to recharge these old folks sexually. (Tlou, M)

There is a belief among some African men that young girls have the power to make older men become aroused sexually even just by looking at their bodies.

The older folks want to be stimulated at the sight of a young body as it now takes time for them to be sexually aroused. They believe the beauty and firmness of breasts of young girls might recharge their sexual lives. They also know that some of these young girls are still virgins so they believe that will revitalize their 'weapons'. (Molora, M)

The above narrative indicates that some older men may seek girls and young women in the hope of regaining the sexual virility. This belief of being sexually rekindled or stimulated by a young woman was one of the factors which were behind polygamous marriages and now it is behind the tolerance of sexual infidelity among men (Molokomme, 1988; Schapera, 1970) which has become a common feature of married life in Botswana. Interestingly there was no female caller who mentioned the myth of stimulating sexual drive as a motivating factor.

5.2 The myth of self-cleansing

The myth of self-cleansing when you have sex with a virgin was mentioned as a factor which motivates older men to have sex with schoolgirls.

There are some irresponsible older men who believe in this myth of self-cleansing when one sleeps with a virgin and they want these young girls because they believe that one can get a virgin among them and by doing this they spread HIV around. (Phuti, M)

The myth of self-cleansing has contributed towards sexual relationships between older men and young girls. Some older men after discovering that they are infected with the HIV virus, they go to young people thinking that by sleeping with a virgin they would get cured. (Mpho, F)

The myth of cleansing oneself by having sex with a virgin was also reported in Leclerc-Madlala (2002) research among the Zulu people in South-Africa and also by Upton (2002) in Botswana. The belief in this myth has been associated with child sexual assault and rape in Southern Africa. The myth is that if a man who is infected with HIV has sex with a virgin, he will be cured of HIV/AIDS (Ferris and Kebaabetswe, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2002). This myth is considered by some callers, to be a motivation for some older men to engage in intergenerational sexual relationships. Since some men's purpose of having sex with girls and young women is to cleanse themselves, condoms are not usually used. This tendency for having unprotected sex can and does lead to unplanned pregnancies or sexual transmitted infections, including HIV.

5.3 They give girls alcohol

Some considered the use of alcohol as one of the factors that contribute to these relationships.

They [older men] give them [girls] alcohol so that they can take advantage of them when they are not in their right minds and this is mostly done by rich people. (Boi, F)
Older men know how to get what they want, they make these girls drunk and thereafter they get what they want. (Ngaka, M)

From the above accounts it is clear that some callers believe that older men use alcohol as a means of getting what they want from the girls. This observation is consistent with findings of other studies. For example, Abbey (2002) found that many men who have committed sexual assault realize that it is harder for women to resist sexual advances when intoxicated; thus they try to get their female companion drunk as a way of obtaining sex. Three-quarters of the college date rapists interviewed by Kanin (1985), reported in Abbey (2002) indicated that they purposely got a girl intoxicated to have sexual intercourse with her. Even though the girls did not report that their older boyfriends got them drunk in order to have sex with them, the fact that they reported that their older boyfriends took them out to restaurants and hotels indicates that the possibility of the girls being made drunk and then taken advantage of cannot be discounted. More especially that Abbey (2002) argues that alcohol makes it even easier for men to feel comfortable forcing sex because alcohol myopia helps them focus solely on their desire to have sex rather than on the woman's signs of refusal and pain.

5.4 Loss of religious beliefs

Lack of fear of God was mentioned as contributing to intergenerational sexual relationships.

People have left God so we have lost our moral values. More and more people are leaving God with the view of becoming more modernized. If we older people and our children can fear God there is no way we could be sleeping around with our 'children' and our 'fathers'. (Mokgalo, M)
We should go back to God. Without God we will behave like this because we don't understand our roles as mentors. (Molapo, M)

There are some people in Botswana who have strong Christian beliefs and who associate what they perceive as the loss of moral values to the progressive secularization of the society. The narratives above indicate that these callers view sexual relationships between girls and older men as a sign that people have lost their moral values because they have become secular. Believe in God was also seen as a possible solution to this problem as it was believed by some that this would restore peoples' moral values.

Until we go back to God and ask him to change our attitudes and behaviour we will continue to lose our morals. (Naledi, M)
If people do not know God it will be very difficult for them to obey another person. Let us go back to God otherwise our nation will perish. (Motswere, M)

5.5 Loss of cultural values

Some callers felt that the lack of respect for adults by young girls, which they saw as a reflection of the loss of moral values, was contributing to sexual relationships between older men and girls.

We have lost our culture and moral values. We have adopted the western culture and allowed our children to date how and who they like. (Mosetlha, M)
We have lost our morals, self-control is gone and even the cultural values that used to protect the society are considered backward and old fashioned and because of that we accept anything from the west and our children are no longer controllable. Nowadays young girls call men of their parents' age by their first names, something that is unheard of according to Tswana culture. No wonder they are not ashamed to have

sexual relationships with men who are as old as their own parents. (Kabo, M)

Some male callers felt that young people take older people as their age mates and that is why girls don't see anything wrong with engaging in sexual relationships with older men.

Our children are no longer controllable. They can argue with an older person without any remorse. They treat us as their age mates. These days young people answer back when they do not agree with you, we couldn't do that during our youth. They call this type of attitude 'civilisation'. Things have gone loose and there are no more boundaries.

That is the reason why they go out with older men of their parents' age. (Nkwe, M)

The callers in this group have a perception that Tswana cultural values which they believed were protective have been eroded and replaced by new ones. They associate the current behaviour of young people with the adoption of western norms and cultural values. Since Botswana was colonised by Britain, some Batswana think that a section of the society especially the young are adopting western culture which they learn from school which they consider to be influenced by British western ideas. Callers who hold the views that are reflected in the previous two narratives imply that girls are to blame for intergenerational sexual relationships. It is therefore worth exploring who the callers blame for these relationships in the next section.

Callers suggested the same motivating factors as schoolgirls, some of which were economic, religious and socio-cultural. They also reported additional motivating factors that the girls did not. These included the myth of self-cleansing by having sex with a virgin and the idea of older men rekindling their sexual life, concepts which are embedded in the Tswana culture. These findings from the public have shed more light on the complexity of the factors surrounding intergenerational sexual relationships.

6. Who is to blame for intergenerational sexual relationships?

Of the 18 female callers none blamed the girls for engaging in intergenerational sexual relationships. There was only one female caller who felt that both parties (older man and schoolgirl) were to blame.

Knowing my husband's positive HIV status I tried to warn this little girl and she did not heed my warning but instead she used to insult me over the phone....I also phoned my husband and cautioned him that he is putting that girl in danger, but he did not listen. I encouraged the girl to insist on condom use but she did not listen because she fell pregnant. Both are responsible for what happened. (Tsholo, F)

Ten male callers blamed the girls for being involved in sexual relationships with older men and they gave the following reasons:

They want money but sexual life which is controlled by money is so dangerous. The money will kill them. Selfishness and lack of self- appreciation and self-worth drive these girls into these dangerous sexual relationships. (Tuelo, M)

The love of money and lack of respect or awe for elders in our children is the main problem. (Nare, M)

The above accounts did not take into consideration that these relationships are dyadic interactions. Furthermore, in these relationships men are older than the girls and are more powerful. Callers who blame the young girls in such relationships ignore the fact that young women's sexual relationships do not occur in a vacuum, but in a context where norms, values and sexual practices that regard women as subordinate to men already exist (Machel, 2001). Studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that African men feel it is their right to have multiple sexual partners, and they prefer younger women, often students, as nonmarital partners (Barker and Rich, 1992; Orubuloye et al., 1992; Longfield et al., 2002). Such beliefs make it difficult for men to see anything wrong in older men having sexual relationships with girls. Some men do not want to take responsibility for their sexual behaviours; they would rather blame girls and women.

Six male callers blamed both the girls and the older men.

This is lack of discipline from both older men and girls. (Madi, M)

Older men and young girls are all responsible for these sexual relationships because girls consent as well; they are not forced into them. (Kgomo, M)

The fact that girls do consent to enter into sexual relationships with older men was raised as a reason that makes them responsible and accountable for their actions. They were seen as playing a part in these relationships. These accounts show a self-centred and self-serving belief system that 'excuses' the men because as already reported in Chapter five girls do not always consent. Some were forced into having sex with older men. Eight male callers blamed older men for engaging in sexual relationships with schoolgirls.

These sexual relationships are happening and they are done by 'big people', you know what I mean. ['Big people' here refers to people who hold high posts in the government and/or who run successful businesses]. They give the girls what they want (money, drives them around). (Dingalo, M)

I agree that some older men do have sexual relationships with schoolgirls. I personally

do not support men who do that but not all men are like that, we see only those who are big-bellied and rich, the ones with fat salaries and who drive posh cars being involved in such things. They are rich so they are able to attract these girls. (Koko, M)

In all the eight accounts none mentioned the issue of power and decision-making in these relationships. They talked only of young girls being attracted by money, cars and other services that these men can offer. The callers in this group did not explicitly consider the assets possessed by these men as a vehicle of manipulation. Female callers had a more nuanced view, as is shown below.

Eight female callers blamed older men for having schoolgirls as their sexual partners.

Older men who have sexual relationships with schoolgirls are irresponsible people. I am saying this because these older men use their money and their expensive cars to entice the girls. The fact that they are older enables them to control the girls. (Chomi, F)

Older men force girls into these sexual relationships by offering them a lot of money. Thereafter they make them their slaves and abuse them. I entirely blame older men for such relationships because they take advantage of these girls. (Kemo, F)

Women callers raised the concept of power, something that was lacking in their male counterparts' reports. They felt that the older men manipulate and forced girls to get into these sexual relationships by using their resources and social power. The men used their money and material gifts to control and abuse the girls. The girls in intergenerational sexual relationships share the same sentiment with the female callers. As reported in Chapter five the girls indicated that older men were deceitful in the sense that they gave them the impression that they were giving them money and gifts or offered them some services out of love while in actual sense they purchased sex from them. The same concern was raised by most of the girls who declined to have sex with older men (see Chapter six). Their concern was that the older men use their social and economic power to control their younger sexual partners.

7. Intergenerational sexual relationships and HIV/AIDS

Callers were also asked if they thought intergenerational sexual relationships could contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana. The majority (47) indicated that they could. The callers indicated that the main reason why these sexual relationships could contribute to the spread of HIV is lack of condom use. Their narratives associate lack of condom use with most of the motives that drive older men and girls to engage in these sexual relationships. Some men gave the reasons below:

It is a give and take type of a thing, so if I give much I will demand full sexual enjoyment, and that is sex without a condom. (Mogapi, M)

No ways, we cannot pay or give for nothing, we have to enjoy what we have paid for, and so condom is out of the question because of the type of relationship. (Kagelo, M)

We spent a lot of money, time and energy on these girls so we cannot budge; we want raw and plain sex without barriers, flesh to flesh is first class. (Thiba, M)

Some men who were involved in intergenerational sexual relationships considered these relationships to be transactional. Because they had paid for the services, they expected to get full enjoyment of that service, which they considered to be sex without a condom. Condoms were viewed as hindering the full enjoyment of something they had paid for.

To further explain how intergenerational sexual relationships could contribute to the spread of HIV some callers had this to say:

Older men and young girls are all the same when it comes to condom use. Older men say they do not have HIV/AIDS and girls do not assert themselves. (Kgomo, M)

It is hard to believe that condoms are used in these relationships because I believe it is difficult for these young women to stand for their rights if an older man insists on unprotected sex. (Tau M)

Some female callers associated girls' lack of assertiveness with the wide age difference between the partners in this type of relationship.

If there is such a wide age difference how do the partners negotiate their things without making the young one suffer. She is obliged to obey and to comply as well as to respect this older person. (Lesedi, F)

This group of callers associated the lack of condom use in intergenerational sexual relationships with the lack of assertiveness on the part of girls. Some acknowledged that it might be difficult for the girls to stand for their rights with regard to protected sex due to a wide age difference which demands the young person to respect and obey the adult. Gender inequality and cultural expectations were also shown to be a major challenge for the girls who are involved in intergenerational sexual relationships, as reported in the findings of the previous chapter. The social power that men have as shown by the results put the young women and girls at a disadvantage and renders them powerless in making- decisions concerning their sexual encounters. Some callers felt that condoms

were not used in these relationships because both parties involved chose not to use them.

I don't think they are forced into sex without condom, I believe it is an agreement between the two parties. (Bokete, M)

Both parties choose not to use condoms because they believe that the condom interferes with their sexual pleasure and the chance of reaching maximum satisfaction. (Nkwe, M)

These male callers justify the lack of condom use by claiming that the decision not to use a condom is a choice made by the partners involved when in fact the decision to use or not to use a condom is taken by the male partner alone as reported by most of the girls in Chapter five. This dominance of men when it comes to sexual matters is rooted in African culture that has already been discussed. The fact that no woman made this claim is indicative that this might be a cover-up. It seems that by saying that older men and young girls jointly choose not to use a condom is men's self-serving mechanism for easing their own consciences.

Some callers reported that older men do not use condoms because they are not used to them.

Older people don't use condom, we are not used to it. (Kwena, M)

I am an older person myself, we don't use condom because we adults are faithful. Condom is for young people because they are still sexually active and have many sexual partners. (Kgabo, M)

Older men do not use the condom as they say they cannot eat a sweet while it is covered by plastic wrap. They are used to their old practice of having unprotected sex. (Bogale, M)

Another reason raised by callers for lack of condom use is that condom promotion in Botswana targeted young people. Older people have therefore not only remained ignorant of how to use the condom but also of the purposes of its use.

I think the condom promotion strategy has serious short comings, as it only targets young people and leaves the older people out. So they know that the condom is for young people and not for them. They were not sensitized to the fact that we are living in an era where the condom should be used by everyone who is involved in casual sex. (Lesego, F)

Condom is not used. Talking from older people's perspective we don't know how to use these things. They only teach young people about how to use condoms so how are we expected to use them as the older generations. (Mokgalo, M)

The lack of knowledge on how to use a condom can pose a major challenge to a man and this might lead to the avoidance of its use as a way of circumventing embarrassment before a young girl.

Some of the callers associated lack of condom use in these sexual relationships with the use of alcohol.

Do you think that they can use condoms when they are so drunk? Forget it. I don't think so. (Pudi, M)

They sleep together being drunk and so there is no way condoms can be used. (Ngaka, M)

Sometimes they [older men] give them alcohol so that they [older men] have sex with them when they [the girls] cannot make sound decisions and they [older men] get away with what they [older men] want. (Morwalo M)

It has been established that decisions made by people under the influence of alcohol in sexual-related matters can have adverse outcomes. There is a significant association between alcohol consumption and high-risk sexual behaviour {Buchanan-Aruwafu, 2002; Fritz, Woelk et al., 2002; Mataure, McFarland et al., 2002; Morojele, Kachieng'a et al., 2004; Mnyika, Klepp et al., 1997}. For example people may sleep with strangers under the influence of alcohol without realizing it and engage in unprotected sex—thereby predisposing themselves to STIs, including HIV infection (Morojele, Kachieng'a et al., 2004).

Some callers reported that condom use in intergenerational sex is limited because these men have their own agendas. The hidden agenda was said to be three-fold. The first, as reported earlier, have to do with the myth of self-cleansing by having sexual intercourse with a young girl. Some callers had this to say concerning this issue:

They cannot use condoms as the purpose of sex is self-cleansing and condom use would stop that from occurring according to the beliefs of these old folks. (Mpho, F)

Older people do not protect themselves because the main aim of sleeping with the young girls is to cleanse themselves, they cleanse their blood. It won't make sense to do the cleansing while 'you are covered'. (Molora, M)

A condom is unlikely to be used if the aim is to cleanse oneself as culturally it is believed that during sexual intercourse the blood of the partners mix and that is how the blood of the sick person is thought to be cleansed by the blood of the person who is not sick. This belief is strongly embedded in Tswana culture as reflected in the words of an older man in a study by Upton (2002:110) which was conducted in Botswana.

"HIV is something that is not a traditional Tswana disease, so when a woman contracts

it, a man must seek certain methods to cure himself so that he will not become ill as well. This is why it is so important to be careful, to not rely upon condoms, because it will (weaken) your (immune) system...the only way then for a man to have a stronger blood, to be able to reproduce again and not be sick is to sleep with a young woman...someone who has not had sexual intercourse is the best” (emphasis supplied).

The concern of some male and female callers was that there might be men who still believe in this self-cleansing myth. Another hidden agenda relates to the belief, discussed earlier, that older men could be invigorated sexually by a young girl.

Condom will mess up everything because you want to be stirred up so if there is a barrier it won't work. (Monei, M)

We don't want to use condoms because as I have already stated earlier we have different agendas so the condom will prevent us from achieving our goals. Just imagine, if I want to be revitalised sexually condom will disturb, things would work better if it is flesh to flesh. (Madi, M)

Thirdly, and disturbingly, one male and two female callers believed that some of the older men want to spread HIV to others intentionally.

Some older men don't use condoms because they have their own hidden agenda. I believe that they purposely want to spread HIV so that they should not die alone. (Tsholo, F)

Some older men want to infect young women with HIV that is their main purpose of refusing to use a condom. Like in my case, even though I insisted on condom use, my older boyfriend achieved his agenda of infecting me by breaking the condom. It is scary how some people can be so cruel, but it happens, it happened to me and I believe it is happening to some other young people. (Kidi, F)

In exploring further how older men could purposely aim at spreading HIV the two female callers shared their stories to support their views.

Intergenerational sexual relationships exist and they are very dangerous. I would like to share with young people my personal experience. I am 24 years old and I dated an older man who was more than 70 years. He told me how he loved me and promised to do for me what ever I wanted. Indeed he was a man of his word; he kept his promise and helped me in all spheres of my life. The only problem was that he did not want to use a condom. I told him plainly that I cannot have sex with him without a condom because we did not know our HIV status. In fact I knew that I was negative but I did not know his and I did not have the guts to ask him about his status let alone asking him to go for screening. Knowing my status I insisted on condom use. Finally he compromised and we had sex and we used a condom. As I was the one who discarded the used condom in the morning, I was shocked to notice that it was snipped at the end and I suspected that he had purposely snipped the condom. I talked to him about it and he was very cross with me. (Kidi, F)

When she was asked if she got infected she responded this way:

Yes, I discovered later that the old man was HIV positive and it was clear that he purposely wanted to infect me. Indeed he infected me because I later tested positive. Older people do things which can shock you as a person. (Kidi, F)

A second female caller told this story:

I am 38 years old and my husband is 47 years old. He is HIV positive and I am negative. My husband dated a 20 year-old girl and, knowing my husband's status, I tried to warn this little girl and she did not heed my warning but instead she used to insult me over the phone. My husband was not staying home by then. I also phoned my husband and cautioned him that he is putting that girl in danger, but he did not listen. I encouraged the girl to insist on condom use but she did not listen because she fell pregnant. Both are responsible for what happened. (Tsholo, F)

When she was asked what she thought her husband was up to, she said:

These older men don't use condoms because they have their own hidden agenda. Right now the poor girl has remained with a child and is likely to be HIV positive and I believe my husband wanted to infect her. Why this is so I cannot tell. (Tsholo, F)

There seems to have been no sense of responsibility or accountability among the men who were involved with the girls in the above accounts.

Some cultural beliefs can promote unprotected intergenerational sex. When such beliefs are practiced in a country which has one of the highest HIV prevalence in the world they are likely to fuel the spread of HIV.

Furthermore, the situation can be exacerbated if some men set out to intentionally infect other people.

8. Discussion

All members of the public who called said that intergenerational sexual relationships exist in Botswana. This is consistent with other research which found that engaging in sexual relations with older partners was the norm for adolescent girls and young women in other parts of sub-Saharan region (Bagnol and Chamo, 2004; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2002; Luke, 2003; Machel, 2001; Nyanzi, Pool et al., 2000; McLean, 1995; Meekers and Calves, 1997a; Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001; Rivers and Aggleton, 2001).

Some men who participated in this study considered intergenerational sexual relationships as normal. In their view no woman in the context of Botswana and most sub-Sahara African cultures can be considered too young for any man. In the past men used to marry many women (Schapera, 1970) and the youngest wife could be the same age as her husband's older children. The findings of this study revealed that there are some Botswana men who still hold to this tradition. However, since polygamy is no longer common, intergenerational sexual relationships occur outside marriage and are mostly engaged in by married men. It is worth noting that in this study both married and unmarried men were involved in these sexual relationships. Most of the determinants of intergenerational sexual relationships were considered by the majority of the callers to be also associated with lack of condom use which contributes to the spread of HIV infection. Financial and material gain was found to be the motivating factor for engaging in these sexual relationships and this was not different from what other researchers in the region found. The findings from the radio talk-back sessions have shown that men were not willing to use condoms after they have given their young partners money, some valuable gifts and services. Those who were involved in intergenerational sexual relationships considered these sexual relationships as transactional, and therefore expected and demanded sexual satisfaction without the interference of a condom. The lack of condom use in intergenerational sex was also reported in most of the studies conducted in this region (Longfield, Glick et al., 2004; Luke and Kurz, 2002; Nyanzi, Pool et al., 2000; Rivers and Aggleton, 2001, Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001). This has been associated with high HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies among the adolescents in the region (UNDP, 2000; UNAIDS, 2000, 2001)

The findings also reveal gender differences in the way callers view sexual relationships between older men and schoolgirls. On the one hand because of the Botswana socio-cultural and economic situation of gender inequality that favours males and allow them to have many sexual partners (Schapera, 1970; Molokomme, 1984,1988), most male callers did not see anything wrong when older men use their socio-economic power to manipulate girls into getting into sexual relationships with them. Most of these male callers did not blame older men for engaging in sexual relationships with schoolgirls. Their argument was that these girls are not forced into these relationships as they are also willing parties. However, for men to pretend that intergenerational sexual relationships are relationships in which both partners have equal power of choice when they have much more power than the girls indicates a 'self-serving' attitude. Men generally take advantage of their privileged positions in society to exploit women and girls without any regret. Thus some male callers blame the schoolgirls for pursuing older men for their money instead of blaming the older men who use their money and power to exploit girls who are economically and socially disadvantaged. On the other hand, most female callers considered intergenerational sexual relationships as exploitative, oppressive and abusive due to the fact that older men use their social standing and financial power to entice schoolgirls into these relationships. These women regard men as irresponsible because, instead of being mentors to the girls, they coerced them into sexual encounters which sometimes spoil their futures by making them pregnant or infecting them with HIV.

Comments from two female callers shed light on the complex of the determinants of these sexual relationships. Although one of the 'victims' believed that her older boyfriend intentionally infected her with HIV it is hard to know the real intention of the man because he was not asked. There are two possible reasons why the two men acted as they did. The first one could be that indeed they were intentionally trying to infect the young women. The second one could be that the men believed in the myth of cleansing and were trying to cure themselves of HIV/AIDS. In both possibilities condom use is excluded and therefore the possibility of HIV infection is high. In fact one of the 'victims' who called reported that she was HIV infected. The other one was reported to have been made pregnant by the HIV positive older boyfriend and is therefore likely to have been infected too.

There is limited research in sub-Sahara Africa on people with HIV intentionally infecting others. What has been reported in the region was the myth of getting cured if one has sexual intercourse with a virgin (Ferrari, 2004; Ferris and Kebaabetswe, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 1996, 2002; Meel, 2003; Shell and Zeitlin, 2000; Upton, 2002). The myth was not associated with intentionally infecting another person but with getting cured. It is not clear if people who believe in this myth and act according to it are aware that in the process they might infect their victims. The findings have also revealed that men wanted to be sexually rejuvenated and condom use was not consistent with such an objective.

Alcohol drinking was mentioned as a means used by older men to get what they want from the girls. It

was reported that some older men make girls drunk and then have sex with them. This was consistent with what was reported by Kanin (1985) and Abbey (2002). In these sexual relationships condoms were rarely used. The lack of condom use in such relationships further fuels STI/HIV infections across generations. For instance, other studies in Africa also suggest that there is a link between alcohol use and the risk of contracting HIV infection. Studies conducted in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Central African Republic and Nigeria have found significant associations between alcohol consumption and high-risk sexual behaviour (Fritz, Woelk et al., 2002; Lawal, 2002; Mataure, McFarland et al., 2002; Mnyika, Klepp et al., 1997; Morojele, Kachieng'a et al., 2004; Ndinya-Achola, Ghee et al., 1997; Somse, Chapko et al., 1993; Woelk, 2001).

Some male callers indicated that they were not used to condoms because these were never part of their sexual lives. They also mentioned that they did not know how to use a condom because the campaign for safe sex was directed towards the youth and not to them.

The loss of religious beliefs and loss of cultural values were some of the new dimensions revealed by this study. Botswana is largely a Christian country and there are some Batswana Christians who strongly believe that if God's laws, as outlined in the Bible, are adhered to the moral values of Batswana would be good. That is why some callers asserted that intergenerational sexual relationships were caused by the fact that people have drifted away from God and that older people have therefore lost their responsibilities as teachers of moral values. As we have already established, intergenerational sexual relationships are viewed differently by members of the community; one group considers it as normal and the other as a problem. Those who thought these relationships were due to the loss of religious beliefs and the loss of cultural values accompanied by the lack of respect for adults viewed the relationships as a problem and they suggested that going back to God and keeping His commandments might be a solution to it.

The aspect of respect raised by some of the callers in this context is complex because it was clear from the community members that they associated lack of respect for adults with the fact that some young people were able to freely articulate their feelings and to respond if they do not share the same view with adults and that according to the older generation is lack of proper manners. It emerges that some callers are still holding to typical traditional Tswana cultural norms in which older people are venerated while young people are encouraged to assert themselves in all social and educational spheres. This situation reflects a clash of cultures; that of the traditionalists where veneration of older people by the young is an important virtue and that of the young where the ability to assert oneself is paramount.

Some members of the community associate what they consider to be young girls' lack of respect with the fact that some older men treat them as their sexual partners and not as children or schoolgirls.

This is an embarrassing situation, we see our children in school uniform with big men under trees, and being driven around in posh cars. It is very hard for such girls to respect us as their parents or as adults in the community as they consider us as potential sex partners. (Mosu, M)

This quote reflects the views of some callers to how they think intergenerational sexual relationships may breed lack of respect for adults on the part of the girls, which in turn further encourages intergenerational sexual relationships.

The findings in this chapter depict the current complex situation in Botswana where it is not easy to identify the typical traditional Tswana culture. On the one hand some callers appeal to the typical Tswana culture, in which marriage between older men and girls or young women was accepted and used to justify sexual relationships between older men and girls. For instance, some male callers felt that there was nothing wrong with intergenerational sexual relationships because in typical traditional Tswana culture a woman was never considered to be too young. On the other hand some callers felt that the loss of typical Tswana culture and values contributes to intergenerational sexual relationships because the young no longer venerate the old. The situation is so complex that some people tend to exploit this fluid cultural state of affairs. It is not uncommon in Botswana to meet a person who at one point supports his/her actions by appealing to the typical traditional Tswana culture and at another disregarding the same cultural expectations or requirements. There is always this mix between reliance on old cultural beliefs and the modern way of doing things.

It is important to indicate that there were some gender differences with regard to how the callers perceived intergenerational sexual relationships. All the female callers perceived such relationships as a problem and blamed men for their occurrences. They consider such sexual relationships to be exploitative and oppressive and associated them with men's abuse of social and economic power. Although not all male callers supported intergenerational sexual relationships they did not bring up the concepts of power and decision-making into contextual perspective. Some of their views showed that they have 'self-serving' attitudes as indicated by their claim that girls choose to enter those relationships, and that girls also have the choice of opting for condom use. There was no difference in views between urban and rural callers nor was there any between south and north. The possible reason why urban and rural callers share the same views about intergenerational sex might be due to the fact that in Botswana there is close interaction between urban and rural dwellers. Most urban dwellers

have an urban and a rural home and move between the two homes. Therefore these contacts make urban dwellers to value cultural practices and beliefs and might account for the similar views of the callers.

Finally it is recommended that programmes that greatly increase the risk to contracting HIV/AIDS perception of young women and older men regarding involvement in intergenerational sexual relationships be launched. Legislation that takes a zero tolerance approach to exploitation and violence against women and girls should be reinforced

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