

# The Influence of Exposure to Sexual Content on Television on Sexual Behaviour of the Youth in Technical Training Institutions in Kenya

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## Abstract

Research has revealed that in Kenya premarital sexual behaviour is manifested in the youth's high incidence of pregnancies, abortions, stress and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The effects of the media on behaviour have been observed in many aspects of social behaviour such as aggression, social stereotyping, pro-social behaviour and social attitudes. Messages with sexual content on TV can have both immediate and long term effects. The implication of this is that exposure to sexual content on television programmes may change a person's state by inducing arousal, leading to inhibition of impulses, or activating thoughts or associations. The research adopted a pragmatic philosophical approach in which it is believed that there is no value in absolute objectivity or absolute subjectivity, and thus neither is sufficient for the understanding of reality. A descriptive survey design was adopted to generate data from the respondents of the study. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews and participant observation were used to generate additional data for the purpose of validating and supplementing survey information. A total of 420 questionnaires were administered to the respondents selected through stratified random sampling technique. Majority of the respondents indicated that they thought their friends had engaged in sex. Majority of the respondents from the key informants also said youth from their institutions were sexually active. However, majority believed that sex for both gender should start after 18 years. It was further established that due to curiosity, most youths engage in sexual intercourse at an early age than usual. Most of the respondents said they used condoms when having sex. From the study findings, it was concluded that there exists a relationship between exposure to sexual content on television and the sexual behaviour of the youth. The study therefore recommends that media literacy as a skill needs to be improved to enable the youth to interpret media content correctly in order to avoid the possible effects that are sometimes not intended by the media practitioners.

**Keywords:** Influence, Exposure, Sexual Content, Television, Sexual Behaviour, Youth, Institutions, Kenya

## 1. Introduction

Studies have been conducted to determine the sexual behaviour of the youth (Kamaara, 2003; Murgor, 2004). Most of the studies concur that the youth are increasingly engaging in premarital and extramarital sexual behaviours and that majority have multiple sexual partners. To show how prevalent sexual behaviour has become, Dryfoos (1990) observes that sexual activity among the youth has become a normative behaviour and, therefore, interventions should focus on teaching responsible sexual behaviour and provide access to contraception.

Youth engage in a consistent progression of sexual behaviours (Delamater & MacCorquodale, 1979) with necking usually coming first, followed by petting. Next comes intercourse, or in some cases oral sexing. A study conducted in the United States of America among 452 youth aged 18-25 years who were asked about their sexual experiences (Fieldman *et al.*, 1999) has established that the progression of sexual behaviours occurred: kissing preceded petting, which preceded sexual intercourse and oral sex.

It has been established that youth sexual behaviour has changed over the years, especially among college going students. A review of college students' sexual practices in the United States revealed that the percentage of the youth who say they had sexual intercourse increased dramatically and that the number of female college students who reported that they had has sexual intercourse increased more rapidly than the males (Darling *et al.*, 1984). Furthermore, a study by Alan Guttmacher Institute (1994) in the USA established that sexual intercourse is uncommon in early adolescents but becomes more common in the high school and college years. The study also established the following:

- i. Eight in 10 girls and 7 in 10 boys are virgins at age 15.

- ii. The probability that adolescents will have sexual intercourse increases steadily with age, but 1 in 5 individuals have not yet had sex by age 19.
- iii. Initial sexual intercourse occurs in the mid to late adolescent years for the majority of teenagers, about 8 years before they marry; more than one half of seventeen year old have had sexual intercourse.
- iv. The majority of adolescent females' first voluntary sexual partners is younger, the same age, or more than 2 years older; 27 per cent are 3 or 4 years older, and 12 per cent are 5 or more years older.

Furthermore, a study by the CDC has estimated that 1 in 4 teen girls has at least one STD at any given time (CDC, 1997). Other countries have the same scenario like the US, as relates to youth sexual activity. In Jamaica, forty per cent of Jamaican young women have been pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20, and more than 80 per cent of adolescent pregnancies are not planned. Studies show that sexual activity begins at an early age for many Jamaicans. Among young people of age 15-17 who were surveyed in 1997 Reproductive Health Survey 38 per cent of females and 64 per cent of males reported having had sexual intercourse (Eggleston, *et al.*, 1999).

Kenya has similar scenarios with those of the rest of the countries in the world in issues relating to premarital sexual behaviour. In Kenya, it has been established that sexual activity starts early, that 42 per cent of girls aged 15-19 years having had sexual intercourse and 17 per cent being sexually active (CBS, 2004). The median age in Kenya for first sexual intercourse rose from 16.8 years in 1998 to 17.8 years in 2003 (CBS, 2004). In the 1998 survey, the difference between the median age at first sex and at first marriage was estimated at three years. The gap was found to be wider among boys compared to girls (Askew *et al.*, 2004).

In 2001, a study conducted in Kisumu established that by 14.5 years of age, a quarter of the boys and girls had already experienced sex while at 17 years; half of both sexes would already have had sex. The median age of first marriage was about 19.6 years for women and 25.5 years for men (Ferry, 2001). The implication of the wide gap between the age of sexual debut and the age of first marriage means that young people in Kenya may be exposed to long periods of premarital sexual behaviour.

Studies have revealed that despite the fact that the youth are engaging in premarital sexual behaviour and with multiple sexual partners, the use of contraceptives, including condoms is low (KDHS, 2003). Studies have indicated that although men may have knowledge about condom use and protection it offers against unwanted pregnancies and STIs including HIV/AIDS, male norms favouring sexual experience without condoms prevent them from using condoms correctly and consistently (Nzioka, 2001). The same studies have established that such norms emphasize sexual submissiveness and weaken young women's ability to negotiate the use of contraceptives (Magadi, 2003). It is as a result of these that unwanted pregnancies and abortions are reported to be prevalent among in-school girls.

A similar study conducted by Murgor (2004) among post secondary youth in Kenya within Eldoret Municipality has found out that youth are sexually active, with 59 per cent of them engaged in unprotected sex. It was also established in the study that 60 per cent of the youth did not perceive themselves as being perceptive to contracting HIV despite the fact that they were engaging in unprotected sex.

A study by the Centre for the Study of Adolescence (1994) has established that sexual activity among the youth is high as "is reflected in the incidence of pregnancy, abortion and STDS". A study conducted by the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) (1993) among female adolescents in various schools in Kenya found out that majority of the school going female adolescents are sexually active and some of them had multiple sexual partners. It is important to note that the most common means of transmission of HIV in Kenya is through unprotected sex with an infected person (Ministry of Health, 2001).

To prevent HIV/AIDS virus transmission, it is important that young people practice safe sex through the most advocated "ABC" methods (abstinence, being faithful to one uninfected partner and condom use). While this is the case, statistics indicate from the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2003) indicate that the percentage of young people who engage in high risk sex and the extent to which they use condoms in high risk encounters is worrying. For example, the survey revealed that the percentage of women and men who had engaged in high risk sex activity in the last 12 months preceding the study was 30 and 84 per cent respectively. The survey further revealed that 47 per cent of the men who engage in high risk sex (i.e. non-marital, no cohabiting partners) are

more likely to use condoms than men.

Further, a study by Kamaara (1996/1997) conducted in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya had similar findings with the other studies. According to the study, 51 per cent of the youth interviewed were sexually initiated before the age of twenty and about 65 per cent indicated that they were currently having sexual relationships with more than one partner. A similar study conducted by Mutua and Nyangweso (1995) on the sexual behaviour of university students has established that majority of the students are sexually active and mobile but they are ignorant of the consequences of their behaviour. The study further established that 60 per cent of the students interviewed were sexually active. A study by Otinda (1988) has had similar findings.

Research has revealed that, in Kenya, premarital sexual behaviour is manifested in the youth's high incidence of pregnancies, abortions, stress and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Research done in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the University of Nairobi, Centre for the Study of Adolescence (CSA) and the Family Planning private sector (FPPS) concurs that about 80 per cent of the youth between ages 15-25, are sexually active (CSA, 1994). Out of these, 4 per cent engage in sexual relations before the age of 10; about 55 per cent become pregnant by the age of 20 and 60 per cent of them have multiple sexual partners (Aggarwal & Mati, 1982).

The high incidence of premarital sexual behaviour is further manifested in the high number of youth being affected by HIV/AIDS. The Kenya National AIDS control council and the ministry of health in Kenya (NACC, 2010; Ministry of Health, 2001). They have established further that more than 75 per cent of the AIDS cases occur between ages of 15 and 45 years, with the peak for AIDS being 25-29 for females and 15-25 for males. The implication of this is that HIV infection is prevalent at the age group between 15-25 meaning that majority of the youth contract the virus when they are still in their adolescence.

From the findings of the various studies, it is clear that majority of the youth all over the world and in Kenya are sexually active and therefore sexual activity among the youth is a global issue of concern. Several studies have indicated that unprotected sexual activity can put the youth at risk of unwanted pregnancies, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and at worst death. It has been observed that although the youth continue to engage in premarital sexual activities limited research has been conducted to unravel the causes to enable stakeholders to put the necessary interventions in place to address the problem.

### ***1.1 Effect of Exposure to Sexual Content on TV on Sexual Behaviour of the Youth***

The effects of the media on behaviour have been observed in many aspects of social behaviour such as aggression, social stereotyping, prosocial behaviour and social attitudes. Most social scientists now agree that exposure to violence on television has a causal effect on aggressive behaviour (Huston *et al.*, 1992). On the other hand the effects of sexual content on television have received relatively little attention from social researchers, though studies show that there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that media may play a major role in the socialization of sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (Roberts, 1982).

The reasons Roberts (1982) thinks that the media may have effects are: "(1) the adult nature of most programming adolescents watch; (2) adolescents limited access to or experience with countervailing information or ideas; (3) the 'realism' with which roles, relationships and lifestyles are portrayed, and (4) the overwhelming consistency of the messages about sexuality that are communicated" (Roberts, 1982). Many social scientists have argued that the reason why they think mass media and especially television is important source for sexual information for the youth is because parents have been known to provide very little information while schools tend to focus their attention on biological approach with little attention to romance and interpersonal relationships (Strasburger, 1993). Courtright and Baran (1980) further in their study established that family variable exerted no influence on an individuals' self evaluation and that media and peers were significant influences.

The points raised by Roberts (1982) are more important now than in 1982 when the observations were made. This is because there is an overwhelming increase in the frequency and explicitness of sexual content on television. Young people also have access to a much wider range of media content including other entertainment media which they access simultaneously. Many of the portrayals in the media show glamorous, young adolescents with whom many adolescents are likely to identify and imitate. It is for this reason that young people in this age group often name media figures as the people who they would like to emulate.

Messages with sexual content on TV can have both immediate and long term effects. The implication of this is

that exposure to sexual content on television programmes may change a person's state by inducing arousal, leading to inhibition of impulses, or activating thoughts or associations (Santrock, 2001). It may contribute to enduring learned patterns of behaviour, cognitive scripts and schemas about sexual interactions, attitudes, and beliefs about the real world.

Zillman's arousal theory focuses on immediate effects. According to this theory, if television content produces emotional and physiological arousal, some type of behaviour is likely to follow. Whether or not the behaviour is "sexual" depends on both the personality of the viewer and the environmental (Zillman & Bryant, 1988). Since arousal is not specific, it can lead to aggression, altruism or other forms of behaviour if the conditions are conducive to those behaviours. The study did not focus on immediate effects because it proposes that television influence is long term and it starts at childhood and therefore the effects are accumulated for a long time.

Bandura's (1986) cognitive learning theory suggests that individuals will learn not only from mechanics of sexual behaviour but also the contexts, motives, and the consequences portrayed. He says that individuals will attend to and learn from models who are attractive, powerful, rewarded and similar to themselves. He concludes by saying that individuals do not act immediately on what they learn from television but instead they store the knowledge to be used when their own circumstance provide an opportunity to apply it.

Berkowitz and Rodgers (1986), in their cognitive neoassociationists theory, propose a way of understanding violent content but it can be applicable to sexual content. Though the theory is similar to cognitive learning theory in many aspects, it proposes that viewers' emotional responses are determined by learned media content and later behaviour. Huesmann (1986) argues that children learn social and sexual schemas (expectations) and scripts for sexual interactions from exposure to television. Scripts and schemas learned in childhood have particular importance because children do not have well developed ideas and understanding of sexuality. Content viewed may later modify such schemas or reinforce them, but will not have quite the "primacy" of what was initially learned. Cultivation theory (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990) similarly predicts that mass media convey images of socially normative behaviour and that children absorb impressions and assumptions about who, when, how often, under what circumstances sexual intercourse can occur.

All the theories concur that media "effects" are directional. Youth are not just recipients of media messages; they choose the content to which they are exposed, and they interpret the content within their own frames of reference. Some theories, however, give a lot of importance to the active nature of the viewers in selecting and using media. It is as a result of this that "effects" results from availability of content to serve different functions and from understanding the viewer's interaction with the media of communication.

A lot of research has revealed that there is a lot of sexual content on television and that the youth are sexually active with multiple sexual partners but little is known about its effects. There are two types of studies that have explored the effects of exposure to sexual content and sexual behaviour namely experimental studies and cross-sectional studies.

### ***1.2 Statement of the Problem***

There has been a growing concern over the influence that television may have on the sexual behaviour of the youth. Information from research has clearly shown that the youth have access to television and that they are exposed to sexual content on television (Kunkel *et al.*, 1999). The effect of this exposure has not been clearly established by previous research. Strouse and Buerkel-Rothfus (1993) observe that viewing of sexual content on television may affect attitudes towards sex. Ward (2002) also notes that endorsement of gender stereotypes was likely to promote sexual initiation and dissatisfaction with virginity as well as other perceptions regarding normative sexual behaviour.

The implication of this is that the issues concerning media influence that are peculiar to the Kenyan situation may not have been dressed by previous research, given the differences in social reality. Furthermore, research has been conducted to address the issue in technical training institutions in Kenya. Therefore, there is need for a study to be conducted to provide relevant scientific data which can be used for decision-making or putting interventions place when dealing with issues relating to youth sexual behaviour and attitudes among the youth in technical training institutes in Kenya.

### **1.3 Limitations of the Study**

First the findings were based on a sample of youths found in technical training institutions in Kenya, and therefore youth who did not attend technical training institutions were not part of the sample even if they were affected by the television sexual content. Secondly, the study only focused on television use though it is clear that youth have increasing sources of media available to them, such as the internet and thus the amount of television they watch and its role in their lives may be changing.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted in public technical training institutions in Kenya. At the time of conducting the study there were nineteen (19) technical training institutions and seventeen (17) institutes of technology (ITS). All the institutions, regardless of whether they were institutes of technology or technical training institutes, were referred to as technical training institutions. They are described as public because they are registered under the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology. They also receive government funding and are staffed by the Teachers Service Commission.

The study utilised a descriptive research design. This design describes the situation as it exists and then reports the findings. The target population for the study comprised all youth in Public technical training institutions in Kenya, whose total enrolment was 25,384 at the time the study was conducted. The top management staff of technical training institutions were interviewed as key informants because they were perceived to have important information in relation to the study objectives. They included the principals, deans of students and guidance and counselling coordinators of the sampled institutions who were eighteen (18) in total.

The author used multistage sampling to identify respondents for the study. The author used the existing administrative regions where institutions were organised according to the following regions: Western region, Mt. Kenya region, Nairobi region, North rift region and Coast. The method was used to select six technical training institutions and from the institutions a total of 70 respondents were selected through dividing the sample size of 70 by the number of institutions. Out of the total number of 25,384 students who were registered for various courses of study under the period of study, 14,042 were male while 11,566 were female.

To obtain primary data, the study utilized closed-ended questionnaires, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation methods. Secondary data was collected through the use of documents. The author requested for records from the offices of deans of the institutions under study to have an overview of the kind of cases that the dean deals with which are related to adolescent sexual behaviour like early pregnancy, dropping out of college, cases of STDs, HIV/AIDS and abortion.

The responses from the questionnaire were coded before data was analysed. The coded questionnaire was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. Chi-square was used to test all the hypotheses. The significance level of the stated hypothesis was at 0.05.

## **3. Results**

The study sought to explore the perceived and individual sexual behaviours of youths in public technical training institutions. This was determined by looking at the following variables: the best age for a girl and a boy to start having a sexual intercourse; number of respondent's friends that have had sexual intercourse, respondent's sexual partners; age in which respondent's best friends had sexual intercourse; the number of sexual partners that the respondents have, frequency of respondent's best friends engaging in sex; the frequency of sex engagement by the respondent, and the likelihood of the respondent having sexual intercourse in the next one year.

### **3.1 Sexual Activity**

The literature that was reviewed for the current study indicated that majority of youth in Kenya are sexually active and that a significant number have multiple sexual partners (Kamaara, 2003; Adaji *et al.*, 2001). The study sought to establish the sexual behaviour of the youth in technical training institutions. The respondents were asked to state whether they have ever engaged in sexual intercourse, it was established that majority (60.7%) said that they have engaged in sex while 39.3% have not. Since majority of the respondents were not married, then those who have engaged in sex have engaged in premarital sex. When the respondents were asked to state whether or not they thought their best friend had engaged in sexual activity 58.8% indicated that they thought their friends had engaged in sex while 30% said thought they have not while the rest were not sure.



From the findings, it is clear that both the respondents and their friends have engaged in sexual activity. It should be noted here that the numbers of those who have engaged in sexual activity would have been even higher but because sexual activity is a very sensitive issue most of the respondents do not give the correct accurate accounts.

These findings concerning sexual behaviour concurred with similar findings from key informants who informed the researcher that the youth were sexually active. Of the respondents, 94.4% from the key informants said youth from their institutions were sexually active. Table 1 shows the findings.

**Table 1: Youth's Sexual Activity**

<b>Opinion on Youth's Sexual Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
YES	17	94.4%
NO	1	5.6%

One of the key informants further explained why she thought the youth in her institution were sexually active by saying that according to the records maintained at the clinic, condom use was very high with an average of 5 packets being used by an individual student in a month. The same records, she says, indicate a high number of students seeking treatment for STD related diseases and thus reflecting high sexual activity among the students.

### **3.2 Best Age to Engage in Sex**

To determine whether the respondents had some age limits for engaging in sexual activity, they were asked to state the best age for which a girl or a boy should start having sexual intercourse, it was established that majority recommended that sex for both gender should start after 18 years. The results were as summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: The Best Age for a Girl and a Boy to Start Having Sexual Intercourse**

<b>The best age for a girl and a boy to start having sexual intercourse</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Below 10	5	1.3
15-18	45	11.7
Can't tell	102	26.6
Above 18 years	232	60.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 2 above, it is evident that majority (60.4% for girls and 54.9% for boys) of the respondents were of the opinion that one ought to engage in sex after s/he is above 18 years. The reason for this statement is that according to Kenyan constitution, one is only considered to be mature after s/he has reached the age of 18 years and therefore she/he can have a national identity card as well as getting married. However, 11.7% for both cases said that 15-18 years was the best age for both boys and girls to start having sex. In an interview with one respondent concerning this issue, said that 'once a child reaches adolescent stage, then s/he is mature enough and, therefore, there is no evil in having sex. This implies that it is very hard to point out the exact age for which one should start having sex. Contrary to some, other respondents argued that sex among individuals should only start when one is married: "It is only the married couples that are allowed to have sex", they said.

These findings concur with those of Kamaara (2003) who established that the youth expect boys and girls to engage in sexual intercourse at age 17 and 19 for girls respectively and the men ages of 25 and 22.5 for boys and girls respectively. It can be concluded from these findings that the youth are not consistent in their perception of premarital sexual behaviour. This lack of consistency is likely to result in majority of them being easily influenced to engage in premarital sexual behaviour since they lack a moral stand which they can use as self defence.

The study sought to establish further from focused group discussions on the expectations of the society on premarital sexual behaviour. The responses from the discussions indicated that society itself is not consistent on what is right and wrong concerning premarital sexual behaviour. The respondents revealed that there were no longer role models in the society and even in the institutions as far as sexual behaviour are concerned. They said

that majority of their friends were influenced to engage in sexual activity by male adults who should have been acting as role models. They even cited cases of lectures engaging in sexual activity with their students. From these findings it can be inferred that the youth are left in a vulnerable situation when the people they should be emulating as role models in matters on sexual activity are the ones engaging in the vice. It is in this confusion that the youth are likely to be influenced by exposure to sexual television content.

### 3.3 Number of Friends who have engaged in Sex

For those respondents who agreed that their friends had had sexual intercourse, they were further asked to identify the number of friends who have had sexual intercourse. As a result, it was established that majority (41.9%) said that most of their friends have had sexual intercourse, 20.1% said that a few of them while 10.7% said that all of their friends have had sexual intercourse. The aim of seeking to know how many of the friends the respondents thought have had sexual intercourse was because most studies have indicated that majority of the youth tend to overestimate the number of their friends who have had sexual intercourse so that they can justify their own sexual behaviours. It should be noted that it is difficult for youth to share their own sexual experiences honestly to enable their peers to give accurate accounts since sexual activity is treated as private and confidential.

**Table 3: The Number of Friends that have had Sexual Intercourse**

The number of friends that have had sexual intercourse	frequency	percent
None of the them	105	27.3
A few of them	77	20;.1
Most of them	161	41.9
All of them	41	10.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.4 Age of the Sexual Partners

The study sought to determine the age of the respondents' sexual partners. It was established that majority (57.3%) of the respondents said that their sexual partners were their age mates. This proves that most of the things like sexual intercourse are done under the influence of peer pressure. For instance, Bandura (1986) notes that from observing others one may form an idea of how new behaviours are performed and on later occasions this coded behaviour may serve as a guide for future action. Therefore, by observing what the age mates are doing, the individual will tend to do the same. It was also established that 25.3% of the respondent have both age mates and adults as their sexual partners. When some respondents were asked why they consider having adults as their sexual partners, they said that adult partners are more understanding and more so, they provide them with basic needs especially female students.

Furthermore, similar information was obtained when respondents were asked to state who their best friends' sexual partners were. It was established that 49.5% said that their sexual partners were age mates, 23.4% said that they were both age mates and adults while 23.7% claimed to know nothing in relation to their best friends' sexual partners. The implication of this finding is that the youth seem to share a lot in terms of sexual behaviour and as a result they are able to estimate the sexual activities of their perceived peers. It is important to note however that most of the time it is difficult because of the sensitive nature of the topic for youth to share information on the type of sexual partners. Therefore this response can only be taken as their own perception which coincidentally similar to theirs. This is shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Age of Respondents' Sexual Partners**

Respondent's best friends sexual partners	Frequency	Percent
Age mates	190	49.5
Both age mates and adults	90	23.4
None	13	3.4
Don't know	91	23.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **3.5 Age in which Respondent's Best Friends Had Sexual Intercourse**

The respondents were asked to state approximately the age in which they thought their friends had sex. From the results, 28.1 % of the respondents said their friends engaged in sexual intercourse at the age of 15-18 years. As explained earlier, this is the age bracket where an individual is in adolescent stage and therefore, she/he wants to experiment things on his/her own without being controlled by the parents. Out of curiosity, most youths engage in sexual intercourse at an early age than usual.

According to Elkind (1978), youths tend to have increased sense of self consciousness concerning their appearance, personal qualities and abilities and as a result, parental influence decreases as the impact of peer influence increases. However, from the findings, it was established that majority (53.1%) of the respondents did not have an answer because according to them, it was very hard to determine the age in which their friends had sexual intercourse since every individual has got his/her own background best known to him/herself. Moreover, they argued that some matters are private and confidential and their one's privacy ought to be respected. These findings contradict with an earlier finding where the respondents were able to state that majority of their friends have engaged in premarital sexual activity. One, therefore, wonders how they could easily tell that the majority had had premarital sexual intercourse and yet they would fail to tell the perceived age when these happened. What can be inferred here on the responses on sexual behaviour is lack of consistency most likely due to the nature of the study and the sensitivity of the topic under investigation.

### **3.6 Number of Sexual Partners**

Consequently, similar responses to the previous questions were elicited when respondents were asked to state the number of sexual partners that their friends have. Majority (45.1 %) said that they had no idea while 34.1% argued that their friends had only one partner while 11.5% said that friends had more than one partner.

On the other hand, when respondents were asked to state the number of their sexual partners, majority (45.3%) said that they have only one partner. Having one sexual partner and being faithful to him/her is very important following high HIV / AIDS prevalence rate together with other STIs and also it brings hope to students' future plans since they know that lives are safe. However, it is very dangerous for instance, for those respondents who said that they cannot tell the number of their sexual partners. This is because they seem to change sexual partners and therefore, becoming difficult for them to point out the exact number. Under this circumstance, it is very easy to contract sexually transmitted diseases.

### **3.7 Frequency of Respondents Engaging in Sex**

Heavy contents of sexual scenes on television may increase the frequency of engaging in sex. Following earlier findings that all respondents' best friends are exposed to television, the study therefore sought to establish the frequency of respondents' best friends engaging in sex.

The findings indicated that majority (39.1%) of the respondents said that they did not know how often their friends engage in sex due to what was termed as privacy. However, 20.8% said that their friends engage in sex at least once a month while few (2.1%) said that their friends engage in sex once per year. Although there was no absolute measurement for these acts, it is believed that the information provided by respondents were valid. According to Reiss (1967), perceptions of close friends' sexual attitudes were predictor of youths' own sexual attitudes than perception of their parent's sexual attitudes.

On the other hand, when respondents were asked to state the frequency of their sexual engagement, 24.2% said that they engage in sex once a month. However, 23.2% said that they cannot tell their frequency which can be as a result of having several sexual intercourses and therefore, the exact number cannot be predicted. From the literature reviewed, Kunkel *et al.* (1996) says that youths who are exposed to television with sexual contents are more likely to overestimate the frequency of some sexual behaviour, have more permissive attitudes towards premarital sex and they initiate sexual behaviour.

From the above findings, it can be deduced that the responses on the individual respondent and their perceived friends are almost similar on the frequency of engaging in premarital sexual activity. These findings concur with those from focus group discussions with youth and interviews with administrators of the institutions. According to the results of the focus group discussions, majority of the respondents said that premarital sexual activity was common more especially during the weekends and during discos. It was noted that it was mostly during discos which were held at least twice per term in most of the institutions that majority of the students were lured into engaging in sex. The respondents said that this could be evidenced by the number of condoms that could be found every morning after the disco in most of the institutions. In one institution it was revealed that the



management had started a training programme on proper disposal of condoms this was after the workers protested about the way used condoms would be found everywhere in the compound and most of the times they were forced to dispose them.

The interviews with administration staff concurred with those of the focused group discussions. While confirming that premarital sexual activity was rampant in most of the institutions, the administrators were equally alarmed at the number of condoms which were being used by the students. They said that if they were to go by the number of condoms they could say that everybody else was doing it. In fact one principal said that he was surprised to see condoms in some strange places like the pavilion. He wondered aloud why these students could not go to decent places if they had to engage in the vice.

The research also confirmed the allegations by the focused group discussions and those of interviews when she visited the halls of residence and saw the condom dispensers being refilled and by the following day there were no condoms. During one of the disco days the author also visited one of the institutions under investigation and saw used condoms in strange places like the playing fields. In conclusion it can be noted the frequency of sexual activity as reported by the respondents through the questionnaire is an underestimation which is expected because of the nature of the study. The real picture was painted by the accounts of the focused group discussions, interviews with administrators and observations by the researcher.

### ***3.8 Condom Use among the Youth***

The use of condoms in any sexual act is very important because it helps the affected party to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. As a result, the study sought to establish whether respondents' friends use condoms while having sex or not.

The findings from the study indicated that most respondents' used condoms when having sex. This is attested by 63.5% of the respondents who agrees to the statement. High condom use in public technical institutions may be as a result of government initiative of supplying free condoms to all institutions. This has therefore led to easy access of condoms. These findings concur with previous ones in the current study on the frequency of engaging in sexual activity. The observations that majority of the students engage in premarital sexual behaviour frequently is validated by the number of those using condoms. However, the study did not seek to determine the consistency of condom use as most studies have shown that youth do not use condoms consistently. Lack of consistency can lead to serious effects such as unwanted pregnancy, contraction of STDS and HIV/AIDS among others.

The findings from the key informant interviews attested to the fact that youth in text training institutions use condoms. From the analysis of the key informant interviews, majority 80% of the respondents said that the youth in the institutions use condoms. Some of them went as far giving the exact number that the youth consume in a month, saying that on average an individual would use up to 5 packets. According to the key informants the high use of condoms was not an indicator that the youth were protecting themselves but a pointer to the fact that majority of the youth are sexually active.

### ***3.9 Frequency of the Respondent engaging in Casual Sex***

Since from early findings it was established that respondents watched certain programmes on television which contain sexual contents that may affect their attitudes towards sex, respondents were asked to state the frequency of their sexual intercourse, physical flirting, passionate kissing and intimate touch with casual partners. Likert scale was used to analyse answers (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Always). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute. Table 5 below summarizes the findings.

**Table 5: Frequency of the Respondent Doing the Following Scenes with Casual Partners**

Frequency of the Respondent Doing the	Std.		
	Mean	Deviation	Rank
Following Scenes with Casual Partners			
Sexual Intercourse with a Casual Partner	1.68	1.27	1
Physical Flirting with a Casual Partner	1.72	1.27	2
Passionate Kissing with a Casual Partner	1.73	1.29	3
Intimate Touching with a Casual Partner	1.95	1.37	4

In relation to the above findings, sexual intercourse with a casual partner was ranked first (1.68), physical flirting with a casual partner was ranked second (1.72), passionate kissing with a casual partner was ranked third (1.73) while intimate touch with a casual partner was ranked fourth (1.95). From the above findings, it was established that respondents rarely engage in sexual intercourse, physical flirting, passionate kissing and intimate touching with casual partners. This is evidenced by the statements having means ranging from 1.68-1.95 respectively and which implies to 'Seldom' on the Likert scale. According to them, they had their formal relationships which they were committed to and therefore least did they engaged in the above mentioned scenes with their casual partners.

Furthermore, when they were asked to state whether their best friends engaged in the above-mentioned activities with casual partners, they elicited similar responses to theirs by saying that their friends also rarely engage in sexual intercourse, physical flirting, passionate kissing and intimate touching with casual partners. The findings indicated that youth sexual behaviour is not for commitment but for leisure. The dangers are that they are likely to suffer from the consequences of engaging in premarital sexual activity in the process of enjoying themselves.

### **3.10 Likelihood of having Sexual Intercourse in the next one Year**

When respondents were asked to state the likelihood of having sexual intercourse in the next one year, majority said that there were high chances of engaging in sex after one year. As a result, it was established that majority (43.8%) of the respondents were likely that they will engage in sexual intercourse after one year. According to the findings on respondents' bio data, it was established that majority (49.2%) were third year and therefore to majority, this was their last year in college. This therefore implies that after one year most of them will have completed college and therefore are free from school commitments hence the likelihood of engaging in sex being high. According to them, they said that college life is very difficult with a lot of tasks ranging from assignments to the final exam and therefore, after the final exam, they release away school related stress thus, engaging in sex.

On the other hand, 34.4% said that they can't tell while 21.9% said that it's is unlikely that they engage in sexual intercourse. This may be due to their future plans of pursuing high education before they involve in other activities. On the contrary, when respondents were asked the likelihood of having sex while in college, majority (42.9%) said that it was unlikely that they will have sex since they wanted to focus on their education; however, 28.6% said they could not tell whether they would have sex while in college or not while 28.4% said that, it was likely that they will have sex while in college.

It should be noted that the number that reported that they did not know were most likely to engage in premarital sexual activity more especially as a result of influence since they had not already made up their mind on the issue. One can infer that the youth have no consistent stand on whether to engage in premarital sexual activity in college or not. The few who said they were not likely were just reporting to conform to the expectations of the college administration or their guardians/parents or the society at large.

## **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the study findings, it is concluded that there exists a relationship between exposure to sexual content on television and the sexual behaviour of the youth. Social cognitive theorists demonstrated that imitation and identification are the products of two processes. The first is the observational learning where observers can acquire new behaviour simply by seeing those behaviours performed. The second is inhibitory effects where

seeing a movie character for instance being punished for a behaviour reduces the likelihood that the behaviour will be performed by the observer. The third method is disinhibitory effects where seeing a model rewarded for prohibited or threatening behaviour increases the likelihood that the observer that the behaviour will be performed. The cultivation theory by Gerbner *et al.* (1973), on the other hand, presupposes that those youth who are exposed television seem to develop attitudes and behaviours that are similar to those of the characters on television. They say that this is possible through the process called mainstreaming of reality where individuals are moved towards sharing televised created understanding of how things are supposed to be done. Cultivation analysis (Gerbner *et al.*, 1973) says that television "cultivates " or constructs reality of the world that, although possibly inaccurate, becomes accepted simply because the embers of a culture believe it to be true.

Baran (2004) observes that although many of people are quick to condemn the media for the influence on behaviour, they rarely question their own role in the mass communication process. He continues to observe that individuals always overlook their role because they participate in mass communication naturally without making any conscious effort and that they possess high level interpretive and comprehensive skills that make even the most sophisticated television show, movie or magazine story understandable and enjoyable. The implication of this observation is that sometimes individual participation in the mass communication process through interpreting media content may lead to interpretation of a meaning that was not the intended purpose.

The study therefore recommends that media literacy as a skill needs to be improved to enable the youth to interpret media content correctly in order to avoid the possible effects that are sometimes not intended by the media practitioners. To show how important media literacy is as a skill, Ewen (2000) has emphasized through comparing media literacy with traditional literacy that: Historically the links between literacy and democracy are inseparable from the notion of an informed populace, conversant with the issues that touch upon their lives, enabled with tools that allow them to participate actively in public deliberation and social change.... Literacy was about crossing the lines that had historically separated men of ideas from ordinary people, about the enfranchisement of those who had been excluded from the compensation of the citizenship" (p. 448).

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