

“I don’t agree with the church, I agree with the Bible”: Roman Catholic Teenage Girls’ Perceptions on Premarital Sex and Contraceptive Use in the Contemporary Rural Busia, Kenya.

Presented by

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DECLARATION

I, CONCILENCE ALFIN OJIAMBO, hereby declare that this is my original work and any borrowed information has been duly acknowledged by referencing. Besides, I declare that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my beloved mother and friend Mrs. Donatt Auma Odipo who has always supported me tirelessly through my education. I wouldn't have had a better mum than you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

“I don’t agree with the church, I agree with the Bible. The church dwells on human reasoning which may not be present in the Bible”. These are words from one of my respondents that fascinates me. I do not put the stress on the courage she had but, on her sincerity, as she uttered them. Why would one choose to agree with the Bible and not the church? Are the two disconnected? Does the church not entirely rely on the Bible for its teachings? Are there some teachings and traditions spelt out by the church that are not present in the Bible? In this case, is one obliged to follow the church teachings? The human reasoning within the church, does it treat all,- the young and the old, males and females, married and unmarried, heterosexuals and homosexuals-, the same? Are church teachings biased? Are they altered with human reasoning? These questions and many more linger in my head as I focus on teenage girls within the *Luhya* culture and belonging to the Roman Catholic tradition. Teenage girls within these two institutions battle with issues of inferiority. They battle with issues of their sexuality. In the *Luhya* culture, for instance, women are socialized to behave in a manner that venerates and relates their inferiority to men to an extent that erodes their dignity. Does the church do the same to women? Focusing on issues of their sexuality, girls are made to follow the dictates of the *Luhya* culture and the church. Where is their voice? On issues not addressed in the Bible, do teenage girls’ voices matter? I believe that many teenage girls hold similar views as my respondent. This extends to how they view their sexuality. To bring their voices onboard, I seek their views on premarital sex and contraceptive use, aspects of women’s sexuality not tolerated by the church and *Luhya* culture.

1.2 Background of the study

Teenage pregnancy with teenage seen to begin from 10-19 years can be said to be an issue that existed both in the past and contemporary times. Many current studies record it as a phenomenon that continues to affect many parts of the globe.¹ The teenage is a vulnerable phase of human development where one transits from being a child to adulthood by developing psychological and emotional maturity. At this stage, one has to learn and develop knowledge and skills of addressing

¹ Siniša Franjić, “Adolescent Pregnancy is a Serious Social Problem.” *J. Gynecol. Res. Obstet* 4 (2018): 005.

various elements of one's health and development.² In 2018, the teenage birth rate stood globally at 44 births per 1000 girls with ages between 15 and 19. In the west and central Africa, the rate was 115 births per 1000 births, hence the highest regional rate in the world. Pregnancies occurring before the age of 15 seem to be declining but it is also true that teenage pregnancy among older teenagers, that is, aged 15-18 remain on the same scale hence posing the same challenges.³ The World Health Organization records that around 12 million girls aged 15-19 and 777.000 girls under the age of 15 give birth each year in developing countries. As such, this explains that the leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 years is related to complications from pregnancy and childbirth.⁴ Teen pregnancy occurs both in developing and developed countries and its causes are varied and diverse. In her article on "Adolescent pregnancy is a serious social problem", Sinisa Franjic notes that on one hand, some cases of teenage pregnancy can be planned and wanted especially in societies where girls are faced with the pressure to marry. On the other hand, teenage girls may be sexually harassed by men and this may result in unwanted pregnancies as in most cases the coerced sex is always unprotected. Sadly, societies on matters of sexuality have developed norms that favor men and in cases of sexual abuse, they put up with the injustices meted against women.⁵ At this point, teenage pregnancies can be said to be intended as well as unintended. In cases of child marriages, sexual abuse, and violence meted against teenage girls, pregnancy cannot be said to be an intended outcome. It is true that "some sexual activity occurs in the context of human rights violations such as child marriage, coerced sex or sexual abuse."⁶ But not all cases of teenage pregnancies arise from child molesting and rape, some arise from teenage girls' willingness to engage in sexual activities with their mates or older men. In a study done in Kenya to examine the timing of sexual initiation and contraceptive use among adolescents, Lawrence Ikamar and Rose Towett write that "the majority of the sexually experienced adolescents reported that they had never given or received money or gift or favors in exchange for sex. These results suggest that financial transactions do not characterize much of the sexual activity among

² UNICEF, Early Childbearing, 2019 <https://www.data.org/topic/child-health/adolescent-health> (accessed February 05, 2021)

³ Ibid., n.p.

⁴ WHO, Adolescents: Health Risks and Solutions: World Health Organization; 2017. <https://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheet/fs345/en/> (accessed February 05,2021)

⁵ Franjic, "Adolescent Pregnancy is a Serious Social Problem.", 005.

⁶ Jacqueline E. Darroch et al., "Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents." *Guttmacher Institute* (2016): 5.

the adolescents.”⁷ To follow up on this, it is important to look at sexual activity among teenagers as intended and teenage pregnancy as unintended. The underlying factor in the phenomena of teenage pregnancies is that there exists active sexual activity among teenage girls, that may have diverse effects on teenage girls and the society at large.

Jacqueline Darroch and colleagues rightly point out,

“Becoming pregnant during adolescence can greatly alter young women’s life prospects and those of their children. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading cause of death among 15 to 19-year-old women, and babies born to adolescent mothers face greater health risks than those born to older women. Moreover, adolescent childbearing is associated with lower educational attainment, and it can perpetuate a cycle of poverty from one generation to the next. Thus, helping young women avoid unintended pregnancies can have far-reaching benefits for them, their children, and societies as a whole.”⁸

Besides, diverse studies indicate that there exists an increase in issues of sexual activity among teenagers in developing countries and the need for modern contraception remains unmet. Jacqueline Darroch and colleagues note that of 252 million teenagers in developing countries, around 38 million engage in sexual activities and are not ready to have children in the next two years. Of the 38 million sexually active teenagers, only 15 million use modern contraceptives and the remaining 23 million have an unmet need for modern contraceptives and unwanted pregnancies.⁹ In Kenya, issues of sexual activity and health needs are not elaborated on freely but still, studies show that there exist a number of teenagers- both girls and boys - who are involved in premarital sexual activities with the first sexual activity starting around the age of 12-13 and 13-16 for boys and girls respectively. Rural teenagers are more likely to be sexually active and experienced than their counterparts in urban areas.¹⁰ For this reason, Karungari Kiragu and Laurie Zabin think that there is a need to look into reproductive health issues of teenagers including

⁷ Lawrence Ikamari and Rose Towett, “Sexual initiation and contraceptive use among female adolescents in Kenya.” *African Journal of Health Sciences* 14, no. 1 (2007): 10.

⁸ Darroch et al., “Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents.”, 3. For more information on negative effects of unintended teenage pregnancies in Africa, see Getachew Mullu Kassa et al., “Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis.” *Reproductive health* 15, no. 1 (2018): 2-9.

⁹ Darroch et al., “Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents.”, 1.

¹⁰ Karungari Kiragu, and Laurie S. Zabin, “The correlates of premarital sexual activity among school-age adolescents in Kenya.” *International Family Planning Perspectives* (1993): 92-97.

abstinence, contraceptive use, pregnancy, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.¹¹ Barbara Mensch and colleagues concur that premarital sexual activity has increased in Kenya but contraceptive use remains low among sexually active women. Only around 10% of sexually active teenage girls report using a modern method of contraception and that leaves 90% of sexually active teenagers at risk of unwanted pregnancy.¹² How do we then curb this menace of teenage pregnancy?

1.3 Statement of the problem

In their article, “Challenges of school re-entry among teenage mothers in primary schools in Muhoroni District, Western Kenya”, George Onyango and colleagues note that “in most of African communities, pregnancy finds its right context in marriage. Premarital pregnancies are therefore often met with disapproval and stigmatization. . . . teenage mothers are viewed as ‘adults’ who have no business remaining in school. Many of the teenage mothers are pushed into early marriage by this notion.”¹³ Similarly, Dennis Hollinger notes that the Roman Catholic Church teachings render sex as a means to carry out divine procreation responsibility and as a way to cement the union between the married couple; man and woman.¹⁴ Based on their argument, it is fair to state that in African societies and the Roman Catholic Church, the proper context of engaging in sexual activity and getting pregnant is marriage. To become pregnant before marriage is countered with ridicule, rejection, stigmatization, and disapproval both from many African societies as well as from the church as the two enhance each other in informing the morality of the teenagers and the society at large. According to the church and the contemporary Kenyan societies, chastity must be upheld. In the same article, George Onyango and colleagues write that even though many young people have less information on contraceptive use, many use abstinence to avoid teenage pregnancy.¹⁵ Likewise, Kassa and colleagues observe that programs on abstinence that focus on educating teenagers on their sexuality have helped prevent adolescent pregnancy.¹⁶ From their observations,

¹¹ Ibid., 96.

¹² Barbara Mensch et al., “Premarital sex and school dropout in Kenya: Can schools make a difference?” *Policy Research Division Working Paper* no. 124 (1999): 4.

¹³ George Onyango, Felix Ngunzo Kioli, and Erick Nyambedha. “Challenges of school re-entry among teenage mothers in primary schools in Muhoroni District, Western Kenya.” (January 8, 2015) (2015): 2.

¹⁴ Dennis P. Hollinger, “The ethics of contraception: A theological assessment.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (2013): 687.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Kassa et al., “Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa”, 11.

it is true to say that to some teenagers, abstinence, stressed on by the church and Kenyan society works. It is also logical to argue that the presence of premarital teenage pregnancies challenges abstinence preached by society and the church. Continued cases of teen pregnancy indicate a violation of the abstinence doctrine and to dwell on this will not be far-reaching. It is therefore important to find a way of preventing teenage pregnancy among the non-conformists of the abstinence doctrine.

Many studies point to modern contraceptive use among teenagers as a way to eradicate teenage pregnancies. Darroch and colleagues note that “the most effective way for sexually active women to prevent pregnancy is to use a modern contraceptive method.”¹⁷ Likewise, Kassa and colleagues recommend that “better access to contraceptive information and the use of contraceptive methods by adolescent girls to avoid unwanted pregnancy should be encouraged.”¹⁸ Focusing on rural western Kenya, Tereza Omoro et al., highlight that the “use of family planning methods is important for sexually active teenage girls who want to avoid pregnancy.”¹⁹ Despite the emphasis on the use of contraceptive use as a way to curb the menace of teenage pregnancies, its utilization among teenage girls remains low. In a study carried out by Maureen Were to find out determinants of teenage pregnancies in Busia county, for instance, “only 18% of the adolescents interviewed were using modern contraceptives”.²⁰ It is important to note that lack of adequate and correct knowledge on contraceptives and societal and church restrictions hinder the access and use of contraceptive use. In an article on WHO guidelines on preventing early pregnancy among teenage girls especially in developing countries, Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli and colleagues rightly write that “adolescents in many places do not know how to obtain or use contraceptives. They also have many misconceptions about contraception. Further, community norms hinder the provision of contraceptives to unmarried adolescents.”²¹ To them, the main problem is that “adolescents do not seek contraceptive information and services because they are afraid of social stigma and judgment

¹⁷ Darroch et al., “Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents.”, 6.

¹⁸ Kassa et al., “Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa”, 14.

¹⁹ Tereza Omoro, et al., “Teen pregnancy in rural western Kenya: a public health issue.” *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 23, no. 4 (2018): 405.

²⁰ Maureen Were, “Determinants of teenage pregnancies: The case of Busia District in Kenya.” *Economics & Human Biology* 5, no. 2 (2007): 332.

²¹ Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli, Alma Virginia Camacho, and Pierre-André Michaud. “WHO guidelines on preventing early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes among adolescents in developing countries.” *Journal of adolescent health* 52, no. 5 (2013): 518.

of health workers. Health services must be made “youth-friendly” to enable adolescents to obtain contraceptive services.”²² Other barriers to contraceptive access among teenage girls include; enacted laws and policies that hinder teenagers from accessing contraceptive information and services as well as financial problems since contraceptives are costly for teenagers, an issue that should be looked into by the policymakers.²³ Indeed, the society in which an individual, and in this case a teenage girl lives plays a central role in as far as the acquisition of contraceptives is concerned. The socially constructed norms, belief systems, and values hinder the use of modern contraceptives among teenage girls and married women alike.²⁴ This has not been delved into by the advocates of contraceptives. They, on the other hand, just state this occurrence but fail to venture into these institutions whose norms and values hinder the access and use of contraceptives. They fail to uncover these norms and values in detail, hence creating a gap that needs to be addressed.

It is worth noting that teenagers have decisions to make about their sexuality, with sexuality defined as more than sexual orientation and including what it means to have a particular gender,

²² Ibid., 518.

Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli, et al., write that, in cases where restrictive laws are lacking, health workers deny teenagers contraceptives since premarital sexual activity is not approved. On the other hand, in cases where teenagers can access contraception, social pressure prevents their usage. To suggest the use of condoms or to have one per se can lead one to be considered as ‘loose’, especially teenage girls. See, Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli, et al., “Contraception for adolescents in low and middle income countries: needs, barriers, and access.” *Reproductive health* 11, no. 1 (2014): 4.

Similarly, Mbadu Fidèle Muanda and colleagues writing on the barriers to modern contraceptive use in rural areas in DRC note that; “negative attitudes towards family planning were based on several factors, including the belief that the use of contraceptives encourages prostitution, hinders families from having a lot of children if they so desire and causes sterility or bleeding. Even women who used contraceptives themselves felt that the practice was regarded unfavorably by their communities.” See, Mbadu Fidèle Muanda, et al., “Barriers to modern contraceptive use in rural areas in DRC.” *Culture, health & sexuality* 19, no. 9 (2017): 1016.

From the above footnotes, I would like to conclude that in some communities, negative connotations are attached to contraceptive use. Prostitution and being ‘loose’ are some of these. I also conclude that teenage girls are aware of the negative connotations. Besides, health workers are part of the society and are therefore informed by societal norms and values. This put together, makes teenage girls afraid of accessing contraceptives.

²³ Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli, “WHO guidelines on preventing early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes among adolescents in developing countries.”, 519.

On more barriers to contraceptive use among teenagers, see Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli, et al., “Contraception for adolescents in low and middle income countries: needs, barriers, and access.” *Reproductive health* 11, no. 1 (2014): 4., Franjić, “Adolescent Pregnancy is a Serious Social Problem.”, 005.

²⁴ For more information on how the societal belief systems restrict women from accessing and using contraceptive use in Uganda and DRC respectively, see Allen Kabagenyi, et al., “Socio-cultural inhibitors to use of modern contraceptive techniques in rural Uganda: a qualitative study.” *The Pan African Medical Journal* 25 (2016): 8., Mbadu Fidèle Muanda, et al., “Barriers to modern contraceptive use in rural areas in DRC.” *Culture, health & sexuality* 19, no. 9 (2017): 1016.

how to express themselves through their bodies, appearance, and how to behave in intimate relationships.²⁵ Anastasia Gage writes that “as communities undergo a rapid transformation and as a result of the juxtaposition of traditional and modern values, adolescents often find themselves with conflicting definitions of their rights and responsibilities and their sex roles and gender expectations”.²⁶ For this study, I assume that the above-mentioned quote, illustrates the social environment of my study group, that is, Roman Catholic first-year university teenage girls aged 18-19 years from Busia county. Roman Catholic teenage girls, therefore, find themselves at a crossroad having been socialized in church, schools, and at home to behave in a manner that aligns with societal and church norms and moreover, as they have come into contact with western culture through media, directly or indirectly their view of sexuality is influenced. With diverse ideas to be embraced by teenage girls, it remains unknown what they hold as their views on matters of their sexuality. It is for this reason that I want to find out how they view their sexuality and in particular, how they see premarital sex and contraceptive use as a way of preventing teenage pregnancy. Assuming that their social environment influences how they view their sexuality, this study, in turn, seeks to answer the following central research question:

In what ways do societal and Catholic church teachings on women’s sexuality influence the views of Luhya Roman Catholic first-year university teenage girls aged 18-19 years on premarital sex and contraceptive use in the contemporary rural Busia, Kenya?

1.3.1 Sub questions

- i. What are the teachings of the Kenyan society on women and teenage girls’ sexuality?
- ii. What is the point of convergence between the Kenyan Society and Roman Catholic Church teachings on women’s and teenage girls’ sexuality?
- iii. What are the views of Roman Catholic university first-year teenage girls aged 18-19 years on premarital sex and contraceptive use?
- iv. To what extent do the societal and church teachings on women’s sexuality influence teenage girls’ views on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

²⁵ Franjić, “Adolescent Pregnancy is a Serious Social Problem.”, 006.

²⁶ Anastasia J. Gage, “Sexual activity and contraceptive use: the components of the decision-making process.” *Studies in family planning* (1998): 156.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

A discussion on women's sexuality occurs within the context of many discourses. First, it occurs within the conflicting discourse of the traditional view and liberal view on sexuality. The former which finds relevance with the church and African cultures view sex as legitimate within a marriage setting and for purposes of procreation. The latter on the other hand advocates for women's autonomy to own their bodies and direct their sexuality. Many feminist theologians, whose ideas inform this thesis, find relevance with the liberal view. Tina Beattie writes that "in the 1980s feminists began to raise questions of sexuality and reproduction in the context of human rights, motivated by a range of concerns to do with unsafe abortion, access to family planning, and the perceived need for women to have autonomy concerning their reproductive choices."²⁷ Women becoming subjects of their sexuality, "require(s) overcoming a range of cultural, social and health-service challenges."²⁸ This directly confronts and contradicts the traditional teachings of society and the Church on women's sexuality, aspects that will be discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis. I assume that my 'researched' are at crossroads between these two perspectives on their sexuality. Positive responses to contraceptives might suggest that teenage girls are more inclined to the human rights perspective. On the other hand, negative perceptions on modern contraceptives might imply that teenage girls conform to the teachings of the Church on their sexuality but again violate its teachings as cases of teenage pregnancies and premarital sexual activity continue to be reported. In the above two scenarios, there is a gap, either in the teenage girls' understandings of their sexuality and the church teachings on teenage girls' sexuality or in the perception and reception of the church teachings on teenage girls' sexuality and the actual practices of teenage girls that define their sexuality.

Secondly, understanding of women's sexuality can be situated within the anthropological view that culture and religion have the potential to inform people's perceptions. In his book *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World*, Emmanuel Lartey writes, "humans are communal creatures formed and shaped in community. Human care even when it is practiced by and with an individual is set within communities of faith, practice, and culture. Thus, any examination of the caring activities of human communities necessarily includes individual, interpersonal and communal

²⁷ Tina Beattie, "Whose Rights, Which Rights? –The United Nations, the Vatican, Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Rights." *The Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 6 (2014): 2.

²⁸ Darroch et al., "Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents.", 3.

aspects.”²⁹ Thus, it is key to situate teenage girls’ views within the context of institutions that have the potential of informing them as persons and likewise, their views. In the same book, arguing that context influences all knowledge, Lartey notes that “as human beings, we are culturally and historically bound, and are socially and psychologically conditioned to interpret reality in accordance to these limitations... careful contextual analysis, whether it is of social, cultural, economic or political circumstances, enables pastoral theological work to be more in touch with real-life experience and thus to be more relevant and ‘true’.”³⁰ Buying his idea, I choose to focus on the *Luhya* culture, a culture within African cultures that is well known to the researcher. Though African culture may be considered a religion, I choose to focus on Christianity and in particular the Roman Catholic church. I assume that the church teachings on women’s sexuality play important roles in informing the lives of my ‘researched’. Clifford Geertz had rightly asserted that “a religion is: a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”³¹ Therefore, a discussion on how my ‘researched’ perceive their sexuality remains unfruitful without venturing into the role of religion in their lives. How does religion motivate them concerning their sexuality? To what extent, do they buy church teachings when it comes to their sexuality?

Thirdly, a study on women’s sexuality can be situated within a practical theological discourse. Practical theology is defined as “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”³² Practical theology accomplishes this by taking human experience seriously not as a divine revelation but as a means of examining the consequences of the notion that faith is a performative and embodied act and that the gospel is not only something to be believed in but also lived out.³³ Understanding teenage girls’ perspectives and experiences regarding their sexuality, calls the researcher to be more an insider

²⁹ Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, (2013): 17-18.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

³¹ Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. London: Hutchinson, (1975): 90.

³² John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. SCM press, (2016): 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

than an outsider hence the choice for qualitative research. Jaco Dreyer had rightly asserted that “only through “entering into” the lifeworld of the researched as an insider, could the researcher hope to gain understanding of meaning.”³⁴ To achieve this, the ‘researched’ shouldn’t be regarded “as mere objects of information, but as subjects of communication”³⁵. Qualitative research, therefore, is “a process of careful, rigorous enquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world and therefore comprises knowledge that is practically useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world.”³⁶ This study falls under empirical and contextual theology, as it aims at “the description and analysis of the (broadly conceived) praxis of lived religion”³⁷, “allows for subjective voices of the marginalized, and aims at emancipation or liberation.”³⁸ In turn, this is a practical empirical theological study where practical theology is defined as “the theological study of the praxis of lived religion.”³⁹ Put differently, this study focuses on the practices and experiences of teenage girls. It aims at analyzing their views on premarital sex and contraceptive use. In turn, it seeks to bring the voices of teenage girls on board as far as the discussion of women’s sexuality is concerned. Listening to their voices, I believe, is a step towards their liberation. With the assumption that religion influences my ‘researched’, it should be noted that teenage girls’ views are theologically informed, as they borrow from the church teachings on matters of their sexuality.

To critically review church teachings on women’s sexuality, this study borrows from works of renowned feminist theologians like Teresia Mbari Hinga, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Susan Rakoczy, and Margret Farley. They delve into theological notions of *imago Dei*, human dignity, and justice. I see these notions as interlinked. To

³⁴ Jaco S. Dreyer, “The researcher: Engaged participant or detached observer?” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 11, no. 2 (1998): 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 30.

Similarly, Jennifer Mason writes that qualitative research is concerned with how the social reality is perceived, grasped, encountered, created and its data analysis methods are both flexible and sensitive to the sociocultural settings in which data are generated. Its methods of analysis and justification require understandings of sophistication, detail, and context hence based on rich, complex, and comprehensive data, it seeks to generate tangible and situational interpretations. For more information, see Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*. 3rd ed. London: Sage (2018): 3.

³⁷R. Ruard Ganzevoort, and Johan Roeland. “Lived religion: The praxis of practical theology.” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 18, no. 1 (2014): 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

be born human, one has a value that it is to be respected by others. To have the image of God frees one from oppression by others who view them as less a people. It assures and legitimizes persons' human dignity. In turn, this seeks to ensure that persons are treated with fairness and not trampled upon. In a space where my researched voices are missing, these notions create an avenue for them to be viewed and heard as humans independent of gender biases. They also ensure that my 'researched' are treated as autonomous persons whose decisions ought to be respected especially with regards to their sexuality. To enhance interaction between the Catholic church teachings, the Kenyan society views, and teenage girls' views on sexuality, this study employed Clare Watkins model of four voices namely: an operant voice which is the theology in the actual practices of a people or a group; espoused voice which represents theology in people's theological articulation of their practices; normative voice which refers to theology that is found in the established Christian tradition, understanding of the scriptures, church teachings, creeds, liturgy among others and lastly, the formal voice which includes the theology of other theologians and insights from other disciplines.⁴⁰ In analyzing teenage girls' views on their sexuality, these voices were brought into a conversation with each having the authority to influence the other hence an interaction. To analyze sexual activities among teenage girls, this study incorporated Margret Farley's concept of 'just sex', characterized by specific norms for contemporary human and Christian sexual ethics which include; doing no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice.⁴¹ To Farley, these ensure freedom and relationality; compulsory features that ground a sexual ethic.⁴² Working with keywords like sexuality, premarital sexual activity, contraceptive use, the Catholic church, and Kenyan society, this study involved the study of existing works of literature in an attempt to answer the first and the second research sub-questions. Building up from the literature review as a source of existing knowledge on church and society's teachings on women's sexuality, this study focused on finding out teenage girls' views on their sexuality and the extent to which the church influences their views. In turn, this helped answer the third and fourth research sub-questions of this study. This study, therefore, contributes to debates on African women's sexuality especially on contraceptive use within the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴⁰ Clare Watkins, *Disclosing Church: An Ecclesiology Learned from Conversations in Practice*. London and New York: Routledge, (2019): 39.

⁴¹ Margaret Farley, *Just Love: A framework for Christian sexual ethics*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, (2008):216-230.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 214.

1.5 Research Methodology

To collect the data, purposive sampling was used. To Swinton and Mowat, purposive sampling is a type of sampling “where the sample is specifically chosen because it offers the best chance of answering the question.”⁴³ Twelve girls aged 18-19 years first-year university students, *Luhyas*, belonging to the Roman Catholic tradition and from rural Busia county were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used to enable probing which in turn enabled the researcher to explore the thoughts of the interviewees. Because of the sensitivity of the topic under discussion and the existing geographical distance between the researcher and the researched at the time of research, interviews were carried out via internet-based means mainly WhatsApp Messenger. This platform is end-to-end encrypted and familiar to the researched. At the end of each interview, an interviewee was requested to respond to eight theses. This was used by the researcher to detect biases in the responses of the interviewees and also to estimate to what degree an interviewee held a particular opinion. These theses containing normative statements within the church and scholarly fields on aspects of women’s sexuality; were used during the analysis to uncover the views of conservative teenage girls on their sexuality. Since the Kenyan law recognizes 18 and above year-olds as adults who can give their consent,⁴⁴ the researcher sought the consent of the interviewees ahead of and before the interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviewees were allocated fictitious names. These transcribed interviews have been attached to this thesis as an appendix. The process of data collection was faced with challenges that included poor network connectivity and distractions from family members. To maneuver through, the responses were set to be brief and straight to the point. In turn, this makes the transcribed interviews brief.

1.6 Data analysis techniques

Swinton and Mowat define data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process.... Analysis is a process of breaking down the data and thematizing it in ways that draw out the meanings hidden within the text.”⁴⁵ To them, data analysis begins at the genesis of data

⁴³ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 65.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Gunthorp, “Age of Consent: Legal Review Kenya Country Report”, SRHR Africa Trust, (2018): 3, <https://www.satregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Age-of-consent-Kenya.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2021).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

collection.⁴⁶ Building upon this, the collected data were transcribed and transcripts labeled both manually and with the help of *DocTools*. In an attempt to answer the third and fourth sub-questions, the data were sorted and read interpretively and reflexively to understand the reasons behind the interviewees' views and to situate oneself as part of the generated data, respectively. Since the researcher is always involved in data generation and interpretation, Mason writes that reflexivity plays an important role as it enables a researcher to situate herself as part of the generated data and helps in finding out the role and position of a researcher in the data generation and interpretation processes.⁴⁷ Reflexivity, therefore, "is a mode of knowing that accepts the impossibility of the researcher standing outside of the research field and seeks to incorporate that knowledge creatively and effectively."⁴⁸ In light of this, the researcher acknowledged her assumptions, paid attention to the social context of the researched, and brought their voices into a discussion with each other. This way, a more impartial analysis was achieved. Besides, a thematic analysis approach was used. The sorted data were labeled into indexes, categorized into sub-themes, and merged into themes.

1.7 Justification of the study

Several studies have focused on teenage pregnancies, contraceptive use, and premarital sex from a sociological and public health perspective. This research addresses these aspects of women's sexuality from a practical theological perspective. It locates teenage girls' views and practices within institutions that inform them of their sexuality. Besides, previous studies have aimed at recording the extent to which sexual activity is carried out, the age of sexual partners, and the knowledge on the use of modern contraception methods. Many have failed to realize that many teenagers who have not ventured into sexual activity might be on the verge of getting involved in premarital teenage sexual activity sooner or later.⁴⁹ This study, on the other hand, seeks to understand the reasons behind teenage girls' practices. As much as researchers have noted that there exists a possibility of religious beliefs influencing teenagers from accessing contraceptives and proposed that modern contraception methods should be used to address the problem of teenage pregnancy, almost none has focused on finding out the perceptions of religious teenage girls on the use of contraceptives as a proposed way to prevent teenage pregnancy. This study, therefore,

⁴⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁷ Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 149.

⁴⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 57.

⁴⁹ Mensch et al., "Premarital sex and school dropout in Kenya: Can schools make a difference?", 8.

aims at creating space for religious teenage girls; sexually active, and sexually inactive to participate in the ongoing debate on contraceptive use.

Kassa and colleagues note that there exists a likelihood that teenage pregnancies in rural areas are higher than in urban areas hence a need to focus on rural areas.⁵⁰ To listen to the voice of the teenagers in rural areas is a step in filling this void created by the previous researches. Hearing the voices of teenage girls will be important to the Kenyan parents, guardians, and teachers hence easier to work in unison in eradicating the problem of teenage pregnancy. The results of this study will inform the teachings and the summons of the religious leaders, either to reinforce or to adopt flexibility in addressing teenage sexual activities in contemporary rural Kenya. Besides, this study will be of importance to policymakers in Kenya who would use the views of the teenagers in implementing the policies in the health care sector. This will ensure consideration of teenage girls' needs hence inclusion. This study also remains of importance to teenage girls as giving their opinions stands a chance of their views being considered. Lastly, the findings of this study are of importance to practical theologians and especially those involved in pastoral care on the question of where God meets the concerns of contemporary persons.

1.8 Chapter Outline

This study consists of five chapters. This chapter has aimed at giving a background to the study, theoretical framework, justification, and research methodology. The second and third chapters attempt to answer the first and second sub-questions respectively employing a literature study. To understand how women's sexuality is viewed in the Luhya culture, I choose to look at the larger African cultures. This is because in contemporary times with improved infrastructure and technology, countries in Africa continue to borrow cultural information from each other. Though not on a large scale, this occurrence existed too in the African past. Looking back at African history, the exchange of cultural ideas and values can be traced back to the Bantu Migration, "a massive migration of people across Africa about 2,000 years ago. The Bantu Migration ...had an enormous impact on Africa's economic, cultural, and political practices. Bantu migrants introduced many new skills into the communities they interacted with, including sophisticated

⁵⁰ Kassa et al., "Prevalence and determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Africa", 11.

farming and industry.”⁵¹ Chapter four will involve the presentation, analysis, and discussion of data. In turn, it will aim at answering the third and fourth research sub-questions. To achieve this, Watkins’ model of four voices, Farley’s concept of ‘Just sex’, Geertz’s understanding of religion, and Beattie’s ‘human rights perspective’ will be employed. Lastly, the fifth chapter will entail a summary of the five chapters and recommendations. Aiming at bringing girl’s views onboard, the researcher will build on their voices to give recommendations to the church.

⁵¹ “Africa: Human Geography”, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/africa-human-geography/> (accessed at March 05, 2021 at 1423 hours).

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN AND GIRLS' SEXUALITY IN THE KENYAN SOCIETY (*LUHYA COMMUNITY*)

2.1 Introduction

This study focuses on teenage pregnancy and contraceptive use, aspects that fall under the larger scope of women's sexuality with a special focus on young women, the 18-19-year-olds teenage girls. To understand the views of teenage girls on their sexuality in contemporary Luhya culture, it is important to look at how women's sexuality- including the named teenagers, is viewed in institutions responsible for the socialization processes of teenage girls. These include; the Roman Catholic Church and the Kenyan society. I realize that looking at these institutions responsible for shaping teenage girls' views on sexuality, in the past and contemporary, is vital. To understand how girls' sexuality is viewed in the contemporary *Luhya* culture, it is necessary to understand how sexuality in the larger African cultures was and continues to be viewed in order to give a grounding to this study. This is with the understanding that the *Luhya* culture exists within the framework of other cultures and in turn, enhances the exchange of cultural values, practices, and ideas. Thus, to find out how teenage girls perceive their sexuality in the contemporary *Luhya* community, it is worthy to analyze how 'others', that is, the church and society view their sexuality and whether there exist similarities between these two institutions. At this point, it is important to ask; what does the understanding of sexuality entail?

2.2 Defining sexuality

Sexuality is a complex social construct that involves varied dimensions, employed by researchers to identify what sexuality is. The World Health Organization defines sexuality as:

“...a central aspect ...[that] encompasses sex, gender identities, and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships. ... Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.”⁵²

⁵² Ashly Macleod and Marita P. McCabe. “Defining sexuality in later life: A systematic review.” *Australasian journal on ageing* 39 (2020): 6.

Lee Ridner and colleagues add that “Individuals can be identified by their sexual activity, sexual orientation, and/or sexual identity”⁵³ where ..., “sexual activity is defined as “behavior that seeks eroticism and is synonymous to sexual behavior.” ... Sexual activity focuses on the gender (male/female) with whom an individual currently is and/or previously has engaged in sexual contact. In comparison, sexual orientation is “the organization of an individual’s eroticism and/or emotional attachment regarding the sex and gender of the partner involved in sexual activity”.”⁵⁴

Sexuality extends beyond the sense of sexual desires, emotions, feelings, and relations. It is a social and historic construct of a people and a culture that varies from one person to another, one religion to another, a culture to the other, and through time.⁵⁵ Sexuality- often linked with power, either, individuals exercising power over each other, or society over individuals- involves many elements that stretch from emotions, the language of communication, diverse aims and goals, and can be used to serve different purposes. In her book titled *Just Love*, Margret Farley notes that sexuality can be expressed in multiple ways, it involves emotions that include love, desire for pleasure, pain, or attachment that enhances a union between persons. To her, although in the past, sex and sexuality were attached to the aspect of procreation and solidifying a union between a man and a woman, sex plays other different functions that include; sustaining marriages, expressing love as well as being associated with pleasure.⁵⁶ Though a contested issue in many fields, the aspects of sexuality are to be analyzed with attention given to specific contexts. This is because sexuality can only be experienced within a particular culture.⁵⁷

For this study, I choose to view sexuality in terms of sexual activity and sexual orientation by assuming that there exists sexual activity within heterosexual relationships which leads to a possibility of teenage pregnancy and that contraceptive use may be a way out to prevent unwanted and unplanned pregnancies. With the same assumption, I seek to find out how women’s sexuality is viewed in African cultures and the Catholic Church. Though not separate entities, I discuss these institutions in different chapters. I see them as intertwined structures that aim at enhancing the

⁵³ Lee Ridner, Robert Topp, and Karen L. Frost. "Methodological issues in identifying sexuality for research." *American journal of men's health* 1, no. 1 (2007): 87.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵⁵ Farley, *Just Love: A framework for Christian sexual ethics*, 159-160.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 161-164.

⁵⁷ Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso, “Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality” in *Women, religion, and sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. Jeanne Becher (WCC Publications, Geneva, 1991): 193-194.

same course. I choose to start with the African cultures because I bear the understanding that one is always an African before becoming a Christian. This should not be mistaken to imply that being African is elevated above being a Christian, the two play an equal role in the socialization process of my 'researched'.

2.3 Women and sexuality in Africa

Understanding my researched views on their sexuality invites me to review the understanding of women's sexuality within African cultures. It is important to find out what the place of a woman was in a society that had its cultures and religions fused making it difficult to distinguish between the two. Talking of African cultures, I note that they are varied and diverse hence cannot be generalized into one culture. Of course, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an African feminist theologian from Ghana, in her article "Christianity and African culture" unveils this when she writes that, "looking at contemporary Africa, one cannot use the word culture in the singular. Not even in pre-colonial Africa would such a use have been appropriate, for the communal way of life had a variety of manifestations on the continent. . . ., They all created specific ways of life and were undergirded by beliefs and worldviews that were reflected in the religion."⁵⁸ However, I argue that these cultures had similar elements that united them. An example would be the role of religion within the African ways of life. Religion was a central aspect in the lives of African persons, men, and women alike. For this thesis, I choose to focus on women. Religion regulated all spheres of life including women's sexuality, through rituals. Oduyoye rightly observes, "African rituals have an import that is at once psychological, spiritual, political and social. Africans operate with an integrated worldview that assigns a major place to religious factors and beliefs"⁵⁹. Rituals in African religion have both positive and negative effects. They have the potential to hinder and/or establish women's growth and development. Rosemary Edet, a feminist theologian from Nigeria writes that "on the positive side, childbirth rituals are occasions of thanksgiving, joy and celebration, as the prayers during the rites indicate. This aspect of the ritual gives the mother a sense of accomplishment and inclusiveness. The mystery of giving birth... amounts to a religious

⁵⁸ Mercy Amba Oduyoye "Christianity and African culture." *International Review of Mission* 84, no. 332-3 (1995): 78-79.

⁵⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye "Women and Ritual in Africa." In *The Will to Arise: Women, tradition, and the Church in Africa*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1992): 9.

experience untranslatable in terms of masculine experience.”⁶⁰ Elsewhere talking of widowhood rituals, she laments that “the death of a husband heralds a period of imprisonment and hostility to the wife or wives. This treatment may or may not be out of malice, but in all cases, women suffer and are subjected to rituals that are health hazards and heart-rending.”⁶¹ For this paper, I want to argue that religion contains rites and rituals whose logic lies hidden in taboos. In African cultures, these taboos govern and reinforce traditions and customs especially with regards to women’s sexuality for the benefit of men. African cultures are dominated by male authorities who aim at keeping women within the patriarchal bondage that affects them more negatively than it does positively. According to me, the place of a woman is dictated by men through taboos that reinforce male domination. To explain this stand, I discuss below the aspect of polygyny and its effects on women, and other customs which leave women with no power to take charge of their sexuality. I will also argue that men have devised mechanisms that make women enemies of each other, making them less united to uncover and fight against injustices meted against them. To me, male domination especially in the sphere of sexuality depicts the aspect of gender inequality within the African patriarchal cultures. At this point, it is supreme to unfold the aspect of patriarchy within the African cultures.

2.4 Patriarchy and Women in Traditional African Cultures

As an African woman, I view patriarchy as a challenge that prevents African women from realizing their full potential as human beings. Women are always pressured to conform to the dictates of cultures that favor men. Patriarchy, spells out loud that women are inferiors of men and ought to be governed by them even in matters regarding their sexuality. Is this not what Maureen Kambarani in her article “Femininity, sexuality, and culture: Patriarchy & female Subordination in Zimbabwe” explains, thereby borrowing the ideas of radical feminism: “culture imprisons women leading to their subordination because of the patriarchal nature of society where patriarchy is defined as a social system in which men appropriate all social roles and keep women in subordinate

⁶⁰ Rosemary N. Edet, “Christianity and African women’s rituals.” In *The will to arise: Women, tradition, and the church in Africa*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1992): 32-33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Similarly, Oduyoye notes that “For most African women, mourning is an extremely intense period. The separation ritual to free the widow from her deceased husband is marked by purification rites that may involve acts like carrying hot coals to a stream for a pre-dawn ritual birth.” See, Mercy Amba Oduyoye “Women and Ritual in Africa.” In *The Will to Arise: Women, tradition, and the Church in Africa*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1992): 15.

positions?”⁶² Indeed, I choose to agree with Kambarani’s view. Apart from my opinion, there exist different interpretations of patriarchy in African cultures. African writers look at it from both extreme ends. It is safe therefore at this juncture to say that patriarchy should be leveled on both negative and positive terms depending on culture and time frame. Taiwo Oseni Afisi for instance, in his article, “Power and womanhood in Africa: An introductory evaluation”, writes, “...in spite of the activities, roles, responsibilities and positions women held in traditional Africa, the man in pre-colonial Africa was still the head of the family as well as leader of the society; society was purely patriarchal in nature. ... women played supporting roles to the men, and the roles of women were complimentary to men.”⁶³ To him, “each gender had its traditional role in the development of the society. ... There was the non-existent of gender inequality. Each role, regardless of who performed it was considered equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of community survival.”⁶⁴ Similarly, Niara Sudarkasa in her article “The Status of Women” in *Indigenous African Societies*”, argues that within human associations, the seniors -the aspect of seniority determined by order of birth, regardless of their gender were respected. Women held leadership roles and were not excluded from political spheres. There, existed interdependence and the female gender was not undermined by the male gender. Women and men had distinct roles that were harmonized and, through this mutual exchange was realized.⁶⁵ Here I want to believe that there existed a thin line between social, cultural, political and, religious aspects in traditional African societies, if not, they were all intertwined. Sudarkasa notes however that in contemporary Africa, the way women relate to men can be explained in hierarchical terms.⁶⁶ Afisi and Sudarkasa portray a positive view of patriarchy in the traditional African cultures, an aspect that seems to be lacking in contemporary African cultures. I am prompted to ask, what were then the roots of negative patriarchy in African cultures? Of course, the two concur that colonialism and capitalism are to blame for creating class differences between the two genders. Afisi writes that “indigenous people in Africa were confronted and interacting with a society that had markedly different moral

⁶² Maureen Kambarani, “Femininity, sexuality, and culture: Patriarchy & female Subordination in Zimbabwe”, *South Africa: African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre*, 2006.

⁶³ Oseni Taiwo Afisi, “Power and womanhood in Africa: An introductory evaluation.” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, no. 6 (2010): 232.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁶⁵ Niara Sudarkasa, “The Status of Women” in *Indigenous African Societies.*” *Feminist Studies* 12, no. 1 (1986): 95-101.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

and value systems from their own... One of the consequences of the advent of colonialism is the erosion of gender equality which characterized traditional African society.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Sudarkasa concludes that “the changes that occurred with the onset of colonialism (and capitalism, its economic corrolate) ...created hierarchical relations between the sexes.”⁶⁸ Does this imply that African cultures are not to blame for gender inequality? Mercy Oduyoye, an African feminist theologian, argues otherwise. To her,

“...the real roots of the impoverishment of women, socially and economically are to be found in the materialistic western culture with its androcentric laws and perspectives, for these reinforce African ones and together suppress and often eliminate women’s welfare from their provisions.”⁶⁹

To her, the African governments, African cultures, and religions including Christianity punish women for being mothers.⁷⁰ Much information concerning developments including development in women’s health is restrained from women’s access, their efforts and opinions are not taken into account.⁷¹ She reaffirms her view when she notes that the consideration of the wellbeing of women takes a second place because of the “joint effects of western Christianity and Islam, Arabic and African cultures.”⁷² Indeed, I would like to concur with her assertions. Colonialism and capitalism that are linked to western Christianity have a lot to do with gender inequality within African cultures but this does not mean that indigenous African cultures are not to blame for existing aspects of male domination. It should be noted that African cultures even before the influence of Christianity and colonialism, had negative aspects of patriarchy that undermined women. African sayings, tales, and proverbs, for instance, played a central role in the process of socialization and communication and many of them were in favor of the male gender. “Herding is better than farming as the man is better than the woman,”⁷³ this Luo proverb in Kenya, is a piece of evidence showing that traces of toxic male superiority existed in African cultures. To uncover the negative effects of patriarchy on women’s sexuality within the indigenous African cultures, I delve into uncovering the injustices that existed even before the coming of Christianity. I unveil this as I

⁶⁷ Afisi, “Power and womanhood in Africa,”233-234.

⁶⁸ Sudarkasa, “The Status of Women” in *Indigenous African Societies*, 102.

⁶⁹ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*. Orbis Books (2004): 61.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁷³ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African women: A modern history* (Routledge, 2018): 12.

discuss the issues of polygamy, HIV/Aids, and virginity, aspects that fall under women's sexuality in African cultures.

2.5 Failed Patriarchy in African cultures

Women in Africa have no voice in matters of their sexuality. This is an injustice that is meted against women to keep them in patriarchal bondage. It only takes logic to see, detect and unveil the injustices that women go through. Teresia Hinga in her book, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*, rightly summarizes that, women in Africa “are conscious, capable, and willing to deal with issues of moral concern. It is such concerns that they consider a challenge both to their will and intellect as they consciously and conscientiously strive to analyze the web of oppression under which they live. Not only are they aware of the issues confronting them and the continent as a whole, but they also feel compelled to act toward the resolution of these issues.”⁷⁴ She echoes the laments of Oduyoye that “for many years African women had been treated as if they were dead. They had been discussed, analyzed, spoken about, and on behalf of, by men and outsiders as if they were not subjects capable of self-naming and analysis of their own experience.”⁷⁵ To her, there is a need for African women to uncover the injustices that they face in the patriarchal cultures of Africa. To achieve this, there is a need to hear the voices of women at the grassroots level, all kinds of women's voices regardless of their social standing, and to protest together against sexism and its roots in religion and cultures.⁷⁶ Like many African women scholars, my intellect is challenged and would therefore aim at unveiling these injustices.

2.5.1 Female virginity in African cultures

To begin with, I choose to reason alongside Danie van Zyl who rightly treats sexuality as the main killer of human dignity in Africa.⁷⁷ Focusing on the study on matters of sexuality among the Xhosa of South Africa, Danie van Zyl writes that the communities remained open and unbothered when it came to sex though procreation was only legitimated in marriage and the virginity of teenage girls, highly valued, was inspected by older women. Boys and girls were allowed to practice sexual intimacy without penetration and on becoming pregnant, the boy's family was required to pay for

⁷⁴ Teresia Hinga, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*. Orbis Books (2017): 6.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6-9.

⁷⁷ Danie Van Zyl, “We have yoked a lion: The 7th commandment and human dignity in Africa.” *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa* 109, no. 1 (2012): 129.

damages caused.⁷⁸ I argue that even though virginity was valued, the aspect of paying damages denotes that, girls were viewed in economic terms. To view women in economic terms is to treat them as commodities and not as humans. Put differently, it is to kill their human dignity. It is important to note that virginity- always a social construct, “is used as a bargaining tool in bride wealth negotiations involving cattle, ...”⁷⁹ On this again, there exist different interpretations which include appreciation and compensation to the girl’s family. These I argue, are just ways to whitewash the true reason behind this rite in a patriarchal society. Indeed, women in African cultures had no power and control over their sexuality, because it was governed by men and for the benefit of men. Sharon Vimbai Matswetu and Deevia Bhana explain this fact,

“Patriarchal values produce sexual double standards whereby virginity has greater significance for females compared to males. As a result, unmarried young men have the freedom to engage in sexual liaisons without any adverse repercussion on their social standing; virginity is thus an element of normative patriarchal restrictions on women’s sexuality..., Female virginity serves patriarchal interests as it enhances the status of the future husband...”⁸⁰

Virginity was not the only aspect that denoted gender inequality. Because the aspect of male dominance, and marriage life in itself, said it all. Margret Farley writes that “husbands hold exclusive rights over their wives, but wives can ordinarily not expect to have sexual rights in regard to their husbands.”⁸¹ The extremism of this power held by men over women, makes “many men think that wife beating is part of their husbandly rights and privileges if not obligation.”⁸² To uncover the effects of this power given to men by African cultures, I now turn to focus on polygamy.

2.5.2 Polygamy as a tool of male dominance

Another level that portrays male dominance has to do with polygamy. I define polygamy as a type of marriage that involves one husband and many wives. Ideally, this type of marriage ought to be referred to as polygyny, because.... I want to argue that polygamy in African cultures was in

⁷⁸ Ibid., 127.

⁷⁹ Sharon Vimbai Matswetu and Deevia Bhana, “Humhandara and Hujaya: virginity, culture, and gender inequalities among adolescents in Zimbabwe.” *Sage open* 8, no. 2 (2018): 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁸¹ Farley, *Just Love*, 81.

⁸² Hinga, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*, 171.

interests of men and that it had little if nothing to benefit women. To explain this, I discuss some traditional purposes of polygamy as noted by the Kenyan theologian Anne Nasimiyu in her article “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique”. She writes that “it was every mans’ ideal to increase the number of his wives and thus recapture and expand his immortality. ...males enjoyed privileged and respectable positions in society.”⁸³ From this, one can deduce that polygamy ensured the continuity of a lineage; a lineage that was male-centered as children belonged to men. The respectable positions were meant for men and not women. One may wonder if only men were involved in childbearing. Of course, patriarchy ensured the place of men and not women in childbearing. Secondly, “the search for male progeny encouraged men to add to their number of wives.”⁸⁴ This denotes the aspect of gender inequality even at birth. It is not just many children that mattered, rather, what mattered most, was that male children were among the many. Male children were better than female children and polygamy ensured that male children took their place over the female. Furthermore, “polygamy was encouraged in the society by the desire of men to accumulate wealth.”⁸⁵ This again shows that polygamy was not for the benefit of women. Women and their children ensured wealth production; wealth that could not be inherited by women but only by men. Indeed, I choose to concur with Anne Nasimiyu’s assertion that “the promotion and encouragement of polygamy were based on grounds that favoured men by boosting their personality and reducing that of women to subservient and inferior status.”⁸⁶ Polygamy has been a tool used by men to ensure that women remain violent to each other. Women have hated and fought bitter fights against each other leaving them almost no chances of being united. Proverbs and wise sayings like “the tongue of cowives is bitter,” “the tongue of cowives is pointed,” or “a cowife is the owner of jealousy!”⁸⁷ depict this occurrence. How can a divided female gender in a homestead stand to uncover this injustice when they “project their dislike not on their husbands or the institution as such but on the co-wives?”⁸⁸ Apart from this, Rakoczy laments that “the freedom that African culture often gives to men to have sexual partners outside of marriage has ... placed

⁸³ Anne Nasimiyu Wasike “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique” *In The Will to Arise: Women, tradition, and the Church in Africa*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1992): 102.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁸⁷ Nasimiyu Wasike “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique”, 112.

⁸⁸ Susan Rakoczy, “A gendered critique of the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and the family: 1965-2016.” *Scriptura* 115 (2016): 17.

African women at risk.”⁸⁹ Musa Dube holds a similar view when she writes that men have made sacred monogamous families unsafe for women.⁹⁰ I concur with them, but I argue that the safety of women in marriages is worse in cultures where polygamy is legitimized. Furthermore, in his evaluation of polygamy, Baloyi writes that in the contemporary world where “health and economic matters is an issue; polygamy cannot be defended”⁹¹. In the phase of HIV/Aids, for instance, polygamy creates an avenue for more women to be infected with the virus. Therefore, it presents a risk. Taken literally, wives remaining faithful to their ‘husband’ have ended up contracting the virus. This can be analyzed on different levels. First, there is a possibility that a man may contract this virus from one of his wives and spread it to other wives, or that he may contract it from extramarital activities beyond his wives and transmit it to them. Whichever way, it is undeniably arguable that most, if not all of his wives would contract the virus. This concern invites me to address the issue of women and HIV/Aids in Africa.

2.5.3 HIV/Aids, a gendered disease

The risk of contracting HIV/Aids is not limited to polygamous marriage only. The virus extends its arms to young teenagers, children, infants males, and females alike. I argue though that young teen girls and children as such remain “vulnerable to sexual abuse by the so-called child molesters”.⁹² Hinga emphatically observes that in cases of political instability characterized by wars and conflicts, women and children tend to suffer more than men as they are always caught amidst male aggressiveness towards each other. Rape is therefore used as a political tool for attacking a conflicting party.⁹³ This is risky and more traumatizing in the phase of HIV/Aids. Musa

⁸⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁰ Musa W. Dube, “Let there be light! Birthing ecumenical theology in the HIV and AIDS apocalypse.” *The Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 4 (2015): 535.

⁹¹ Elijah Baloyi, “Critical reflections on polygamy in the African Christian context.” *Missionalia* 41, no. 2 (2013): 164-181.

⁹² Hinga, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*, 172.

⁹³ Ibid., 174 -176.

Similarly, Van Zyl writes that wars have acted as breeding grounds to enhance the injustices against women and young girls. In cases where people have been pushed by political instabilities and ethnic wars and became, refugees, women, and children seem to suffer the most. Women, young girls, and children have been and continue to be sexually harassed and abused by men. This phenomenon is higher in rural areas. See, Van Zyl, “We have yoked a lion: The 7th commandment and human dignity in Africa.”, 129-130.

Esther Lubunga on analyzing the case of HIV and war in Kivu, the southern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) writes that, during the wars, infants, children and women are not spared. Women are raped by the DRC militia and foreign armies as a way of humiliating the Congolese nation, making women “feel dirty and useless because they have lost their dignity, their family and their health.” They feel devalued, dehumanized, disrespected,

Dube looking at HIV as an apocalyptic text laments that true patriarchy has failed in Africa. To her, patriarchy, "... a system that empowers men socially, economically, and politically. ... socializes men to protect their nations and families... could not hold up. ... men could not stand up to the challenge..."⁹⁴ Womanhood had been violated by men as virgin girls and children had either been raped or enticed to have sex with older men. With a misconception that virgins can cleanse a man's blood from HIV, men had made it their intention to seduce, entice or rape young teenage girls and children in the hope that passing on the virus to the girls would free them of the virus. Men had also remained unfaithful to their partners to the extent that married women and virgins had been put in a worse situation than prostitutes.⁹⁵ Indeed, "HIV/Aids is a gendered pandemic that is greatly exacerbated by patriarchy."⁹⁶ It is needless to say that women and girls who contract the virus from being abused by men face stigma and discrimination. HIV to some extent is always explained in religious and cultural terms and so to be HIV positive to some is to receive a punishment from the gods and ancestors for being immoral.⁹⁷ Sadly, this becomes enough reason for women to be despised, oppressed, and suffer violence. Indeed, women in most circumstances are victims yet they are always judged and blamed for bringing and spreading the virus.⁹⁸

2.6 Understanding sexuality among the Luhya of Kenya

The above-mentioned illuminates what is understood as women's sexuality in Kenya, both in the traditional and contemporary sense. Still, it is important to have a closer look at *Luhya* culture, a Bantu tribe in western Kenya, familiar to the researcher, a tribe that borders and shares cultural practices with *Luo*. Looking at human sexuality among the *Luhyas*, Nyambura Kimani writes that sex is an integral part of life and it aims at procreation mostly among the married. Men are the

and less of a woman. Some feel like they are "not women anymore". For more information, see Esther Lubunga Kenge, "The theology of HIV and AIDS in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The praxis of the doctrine of social holiness." *Pharos Journal of Theology* ISSN 2414-3324 online Volume 99 (2018): 5-7.

⁹⁴ Dube, "Let there be light! Birthing ecumenical theology in the HIV and AIDS apocalypse.", 535.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 535.

⁹⁶ Ernst M Conradie, "HIV/AIDS and Human Suffering: Where on Earth is God? The challenge of HIV/AIDS to Christian Theology." *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa* 89, no. 1 (2005): 414.

⁹⁷ Donald Skinner and Sakhumzi Mfecane, "Stigma, discrimination and the implications for people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa." *Sahara-j: Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS* 1, no. 3 (2004): 158-161.

⁹⁸ Courtney Andrews, et al., "Intimate partner violence, human rights violations, and HIV among women in Nairobi, Kenya." *Health and human rights* 22, no. 2 (2020): 157-158.

heads of the family and polygamy is the order of the day. Besides, the co-wives are expected to live in harmony.⁹⁹ I have indicated that there exists a rivalry between co-wives. Therefore, to argue that there exists peace within a household is too far away from the truth. Polygamy denotes the aspect of gender inequality, stressing that women are inferior to men. I argue that to be polygamous, benefits men more than women. For instance, leadership opportunities are given to older men with many wives with a belief that they can lead the community just as they head their households. Secondly, the aspect of gender inequality is not only confined to polygamy. Women and girls are believed to be inferior to men. For this reason, “a man’s property is inherited by his sons”.¹⁰⁰ I have observed that even in death, women and girls remain inferior to men. Men are mourned for a mandatory four days whereas women are mourned for three days.

Another level where gender inequality is visible has to do with the custom of wife inheritance. Nyambura Kimani writes that “a woman had no power to object to her being inherited”¹⁰¹. This is to say that a woman had no control over her sexuality. It was dictated by ‘others’- a patriarchal society that had the interests of men at hand. After the death of a spouse, both men and women were obligated to engage in sexual rituals that would make them clean. Nyambura Kimani explains this, “he should not engage in sexual intercourse... before he symbolically does it with his departed wife.”¹⁰² For women, it was different. “Tradition demands that ritual sex must be penetrative to facilitate mixing of fluids.”¹⁰³ Rituals are indeed important aspects of *Luhya* culture. But why would a ritual aiming to achieve the same course, be different for men and women? Failure to abide by this ritual, *Ikhira*, a marasmus-like disease would affect one’s children, community, and the victim to the extent of causing death.¹⁰⁴ This made women abide by the requirements of the ritual.

⁹⁹ Violet Nyambura Kimani, “Human sexuality: meaning and purpose in selected communities in contemporary Kenya.” *The Ecumenical Review* 56, no. 4 (2004): 406-407.

Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the founding father of the Kenyan nation had asserted that both man and woman had a desire to have children and upon getting married, their top agenda was to have children ensuring continuity of the lineage. Sexual relations were regarded legitimate and valid within a marriage setting. Despite this fact, premarital sex was common and frequent in the *Luhya* community. See, Miroslava Prazak, “Talking about sex: contemporary construction of sexuality in rural Kenya.” *Africa Today* (2000): 89-91.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 411.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 408-409.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 409.

For teenagers, sex among the *Abaluhya* was openly discussed before and during initiation.¹⁰⁵ During the initiation- a period of learning the ways of the culture, older women and men, believed to be the custodians of the culture, spelt out taboos. At this point, teenagers learnt what it meant to be a man and to be a woman. Boys who after circumcision would become men were asked to engage in sexual relations whereas girls were taught to remain virgins as they anticipated marriage. Traditional huts, *Itsimba* that boys constructed in the villages were a perfect avenue to accomplish their sent mission. Whenever seduction failed, girls would be raped. This is not to say that virginity was not valued. Virginity at marriage attracted respect for the woman, her parents, and the community at large.¹⁰⁶

In contemporary *Luhya* culture, much has not changed. Today's society still allows men to be bold and daring in matters of sexuality whereas girls are expected to maintain their morals by avoiding premarital sex. Although premarital sexual activities still exist, sex is meant for procreation and enjoyment within a marriage setting. Teenage premarital sexual activities are mostly intended whereas teenage pregnancies remain unintended. Maureen Were writes that in Busia County, the main reasons that lead to teenage pregnancy include: peer influence from mates who challenge others to try out sex, parental negligence of girls, and the low reinforcement of cultural norms that would have otherwise advocated for virginity and abstinence till marriage.¹⁰⁷ On this, I concur with her but I argue that the main reason that leads to teenage pregnancy is the lack of contraceptive use among teenagers. I also want to state that in contemporary times, formal education ensures that much time is spent in schools making it difficult for contemporary parents to discuss matters of sexuality with teenagers. In their article "From paper to practice: sexuality education policies and their implementation in Kenya" Estelle M. Sidze and colleagues write that "...the curriculum in Kenya used prescriptive and fear-based teaching methods and lacked depth in its overall content, which did not foster enough critical thinking for students to better understand sexuality and reproductive health. ...the information provided to students was insufficient to help in reducing the risk of HIV, STIs and unintended pregnancy. ... sexuality education offered in secondary

¹⁰⁵ Miroslava Prazak, "Talking about sex: contemporary construction of sexuality in rural Kenya." *Africa Today* (2000): 88.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Naula, Joseph Jakisa Owor, and Cornelius Wambi Gulere. "A study of the portrayal of virginity in Ugandan novels." (2018): 26.

¹⁰⁷ Were, "Determinants of teenage pregnancies: The case of Busia District in Kenya.", 325-329.

schools was not comprehensive.”¹⁰⁸ Following up on this, I want to assume that there is less sexual education in schools. This leaves teenagers with inadequate knowledge about sex and contraceptive use. Apart from that, I want to concur with Were’s assertion that teenage pregnancies are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. This is because of an environment that ensures its propagation. Rural areas, for instance, are full of bushes, farms, maize plantations, and have *itsimba(s)* that provide favorable conditions for premarital sex among teenagers to take place.¹⁰⁹

In Kenya, sexual autonomy for women and teenage girls with regards to premarital sex, contraceptive use, and abortion of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies remains a contested issue. Many people hold onto the idea that distributing contraceptives like condoms and providing sex education in schools is a way of eroding traditional virtues, values, and norms. These discussions go on with less stress put on the perceptions of teenagers.¹¹⁰ In quantitative research to find out the attitudes of Kenyan in-school adolescents towards sexual autonomy, Sunday Adaji and colleagues note that teenagers held a conservative view on matters of sexuality, an aspect that does not parallel the increased cases of teenage pregnancy. To them, strong religious and cultural values that prohibit premarital sex and negative perception of the society towards contraceptive use make it difficult for teenagers to align their attitudes and actions.¹¹¹ Maureen Were comes with a similar observation. She notes that the reproductive health needs of teenagers have been ignored as teenagers find it difficult to access contraceptives and counseling with regards to their sexuality due to the negative attitudes and practices of public health workers which creates a hindrance for the young to seek contraception services.¹¹² In her findings, only 18% of the interviewed teenagers used modern contraceptives compared to the 46% who opposed the idea of contraceptives holding misconceptions that it was immoral, not 100% effective, could lead to infertility; reasons she

¹⁰⁸ Estelle M. Sidze, “From paper to practice: sexuality education policies and their implementation in Kenya.” *New York: Guttmacher Institute* (2017): 18.

Similarly, Maureen Were notes that “Proxies for access to sex education indicate inadequate access. Eight out of every 10 female adolescent interviewed had never discussed sexuality, boy/girl relationships or family life matters with their parents.... Of those who were attending school, 44% conceded that they were taught sex education but mainly referred to reproduction topics taught under subjects as Biology. The quality of sex education received could not be guaranteed... This is a strong indication of the inadequate access to sex education, which also explains the low contraceptive use.” See, Were, “Determinants of teenage pregnancies: The case of Busia District in Kenya.”, 332.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 325-331.

¹¹⁰ Sunday E. Adaji, et al., “The attitudes of Kenyan in-school adolescents toward sexual autonomy.” *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 14, no. 1 (2010): 34.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

¹¹² Were, “Determinants of teenage pregnancies: The case of Busia District in Kenya.”, 325.

attributes to the religious and cultural spheres.¹¹³ From the above analysis, I would like to conclude that a negative attitude especially towards contraceptive use in society and how it influences teenagers, is a major contributing factor to teenage pregnancy. To use the term society at this juncture calls for a definition. I use the word society in the contemporary sense to include both the *Luhya* culture and the church. The two, play an important role in informing the views teenage girls hold on matters of their sexuality. Having discussed the *Luhya* culture, it follows logic to discuss the church in the next chapter.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter sought to respond to the first research sub-question. This entailed an understanding of women's sexuality within Kenyan society. To respond to this, I chose to locate the Kenyan culture within the framework of African cultures. The main argument in this chapter is the aspect of male domination especially in aspects of women's sexuality. This aspect denotes the issue of gender inequality. I have argued that women lack a voice and control over their sexuality. African cultures, *Luhya* culture not being an exception, are dominated by male authorities who aim at keeping women within the patriarchal bondage. To elaborate on the aspect of gender inequality, I have discussed the issues of polygamy, female virginity, and other rituals that ensure the benefit of men over women. I have also argued that men in patriarchal societies have devised mechanisms that propagate violence of women against women. To sum it up, I have argued that religion remains central to the lives of African people and that through its rituals, women continue to take second place after men. Religion contains rituals whose logic lies hidden in taboos that reinforce male domination. In the contemporary *Luhya* culture, I have argued that much has not changed. Religion, for instance, remains central in informing teenage girls' views on matters of premarital sexual activity and contraceptive use.

¹¹³ Ibid., 332.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S SEXUALITY WITHIN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

3.1 Introduction

I earlier indicated that the church remains one of the institutions responsible for shaping teenage girls' views on sexuality. Looking at the church, Maureen Were notes that traditional church teachings have become outdated to efficiently address the problems of teenagers in society.¹¹⁴ Some teenagers have forfeited and continue to forfeit church teachings on their sexuality. This is evident from her Catholic respondents who felt that adolescents should be encouraged to use contraceptives.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Van Zyl notes that Christianity through the missionaries had looked at sexual activities from a conservative edge hence making sex less a topic of discussion. Sex was then viewed as a taboo. This makes Christians feel guilty of their sexuality- they engage in premarital sexual relations, extramarital, and sex-related traditional rites, in silence and with a lot of privacy.¹¹⁶ This depicts a gap between the church teachings and the actual practices of Christians. I want to assume that this resonates with my 'researched'. To explore this gap, it is important to look at how women's sexuality was and continues to be viewed within the Roman Catholic Church. I discuss this with a special focus on the issue of contraceptive use and premarital sexual relations. Besides, I conclude this chapter by finding out whether there exist similarities between the Kenyan society and the Roman Catholic Church in as far as the understanding of women's sexuality is concerned.

3.2 The Roman Catholic church, 'Women', and Sexuality

To write on women's sexuality within the Catholic Church, I choose to carefully review it from a feminist perspective. In turn, I borrow from and enhance the ideas of feminist theologians on women's sexuality. It should be noted that there exists a debate on how women's sexuality was and continues to be viewed within the Catholic church. It is also important to realize that a discussion on women's sexuality in the Catholic tradition is and can never be independent of a

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 329.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 332.

¹¹⁶ Van Zyl, "We have yoked a lion: The 7th commandment and human dignity in Africa.", 128.

discussion on gender (in-)equality. Besides, it is necessary to note that the discussions on women's sexuality in the Catholic church remain incomplete without the mentioning of two church fathers namely; St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas who played a crucial role in informing the church teachings on (women's) sexuality. Writing on Roman Catholic teachings on female sexuality, Maria-Teresa Porcile-Santiso asserts that sexual morality was to be found within heterosexual marriages which were characterized by equality between a man and a woman. She relates this union to the relationship between the church and Christ, a relationship she terms as intimate.¹¹⁷ Tracing the issue of sexuality to the teachings of St Augustine, Porcile in 1990, writes, "Augustine is chiefly concerned to emphasize three matrimonial values: the good of offspring (procreation and upbringing of children), the good of mutual fidelity (conjugal charity freed to the utmost from concupiscence and making adultery impossible), and finally the good of the sacrament (inasmuch as a conjugal union is a sign of the union of Christ and church and consequently incompatible with divorce)."¹¹⁸ She adds,

"The boundary between what is permissible and what is not, which has always existed for the Roman Catholic church and still does, is delimited by the idea of sin, Any activity which is individual and solitary (masturbation), or with persons of the same sex (homosexuality), or without love (prostitution), or extra-institutional (pre-marital relationships), or which is an evasion of procreation (contra conception), or denial of marital fidelity (adultery), is always considered sinful. This morality is in the official terms of catholic doctrines the *same* for men and women."¹¹⁹

Heterosexual marriages within the Catholic church were therefore valid with the main goal of procreation and a depiction of love between the spouses.¹²⁰ Her views are contradicted by Rosemary Radford Ruether in her article "Catholicism, women, body and sexuality" where she asserts that the Catholic Church has not always taught the full equality of women and men as persons created in the image of God. She writes, "St Augustine, in his treatise on the Trinity, which is based on the image of God in the human soul, denies that women possess the image of God in themselves. Women are included in the image of God only under the headship of their

¹¹⁷ Porcile-Santiso, "Roman Catholic teachings on female sexuality", 221.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

husbands.”¹²¹ Her ideas are echoed by Mercy Amba Oduyoye who writes, “it was a ‘church father’ . . . , who had declared that a woman apart from a man is not made in the image of God, whereas a man from a woman, is.”¹²² What Oduyoye terms as patriarchal systems that venture into defining the humanity of women, is what Ruether describes when she says that, the image of God was associated with the sharing of God’s dominion over the lower creation that included the women, slaves, and children. Patriarchy, therefore, was a system that had been legitimized by church fathers. This includes Thomas Aquinas who, borrowing the Aristotelian ideas, viewed women as of unequal status to men because they could only contribute to the process of reproduction passively. Aquinas felt that women were to be considered feeble, persons of fewer wits and moral willpower who could not exercise dominion in the societies or help men to govern the societies. Women’s help was restricted in the reproductive sphere and men were to be helped by their fellow men in matters of the church.¹²³ Ruether notes that for Aquinas, “the maleness of Jesus Christ is not just a contingent historical fact. Christ’s maleness is an ontological necessity. Only the male represents the “perfect” or normative human nature. Only the male can represent the human. . . . Therefore, women cannot be ordained. Since ordination also is a position of dominion, rule, and teaching authority over others, women cannot be ordained because they cannot exercise dominion.”¹²⁴ To her, the main reason why women can’t be ordained is that society regards them as inferior and it has nothing to do with sacramental mystery, an aspect of Jesus look-alike as “bread and wine do not “look like” a male human being, but have always been understood to represent Christ.”¹²⁵ She feels, “Porcile’s account of Catholic teaching on women and sexuality lacks any element of ideology critique. She never suggests that this teaching might have been shaped by patriarchy as a particular social system and ideology.”¹²⁶ Given that the Roman Catholic magisterium is guarded with the doctrine of infallibility, in other words, become God, and as an institution made up of men who can’t repent and acknowledge that they are faulty, having a second thought on women’s sexuality becomes impossible.¹²⁷ At this point, it is important to note that the

¹²¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response”, in *Women, religion, and sexuality: Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. Jeanne Becher (WCC Publications, Geneva, 1991): 221.

¹²² Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, 69-70.

¹²³ Ruether, “Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response”, 222.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 225-226.

aspect of human equality even as far as sexual morality is concerned has always been stated in the church doctrine. The problem is its amendment and applicability in real-life situations. Since the doctrines are informed by church fathers and male figures, there is a likelihood of gender biases. To have women's voices missing during the amendment of the doctrines means that their views are not included and stand no chance of being included even on practical terms hence giving enough evidence of gender inequality.

As indicated, an understanding of women's sexuality in the Catholic Church cannot be analyzed without the mentioning of the church fathers. Even in their absentia, their ideas still thrive. Their ideologies have been inculcated by the Church Popes from one generation to another. Margret Farley writes that "...Christian thinkers assumed and reinforced views of women as inferior to men- despite some signs of commitment to gender equality in the beginnings of Christianity as a movement."¹²⁸ St Augustine, for instance, advocated sexual encounters within heterosexual marriages with the purpose of procreation. To him sexual desire was evil having been distorted by the original sin and any sexual activity that didn't aim at procreation was to be considered sinful. He, St Augustine, viewed men as being intellectually superior to women, men were more active, unlike women who were only partially participants in the image of God and this leads Farley to a conclusion that "sexuality was lodged in gendered hierarchical relations that prevented it from being integrated into the major theologies of grace."¹²⁹ Thomas Aquinas had adjusted the Augustinian views but still didn't depart from them. To him, "sexual desire is not intrinsically evil, since no spontaneous bodily or emotional inclination is evil in itself; only when there is an evil moral choice is an action morally evil."¹³⁰ Susan Rakoczy in her article, "A Gendered Critique of the Catholic church's Teaching on Marriage and Family", echoes the above when she notes,

"Patristic teaching on marriage was heavily influenced by a negative interpretation of sexuality. The views of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) were very influential. He taught that "sexual expression is never without grave sin outside marriage; even within marriage it is always touched by venial sin unless the couple desire only the generation of a child and do not directly seek the pleasure attached to intercourse." The procreation and education of children were thus "the first

¹²⁸ Farley, *Just Love: A framework for Christian sexual ethics*, 38-39.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

and dominant ‘good’ that Christians should seek in their marriage.” This became the basic principle of Catholic teaching on marriage until the 20th century.”¹³¹

She adds that “down the centuries the “generation of children has assumed almost unchallenged primacy as the goal of marriage” with the relationship between the spouses of secondary importance until Vatican II. This perspective heavily influenced the issue of contraception which became important in the 20th century.”¹³² It is interesting that the Augustinian and Aquinas teachings on sexual activity were and remain very influential on the position of the church on contraception hence the need to unveil the Catholic Church’s stand on contraception.

3.3 The Roman Catholic Church and Contraception

The above discussion illuminates what the Catholic Church holds as a position concerning contraception. Sexual activity was legitimate within heterosexual marriages with the end goal of procreation. Any sexual relationship that did not aim at this was considered sinful as earlier pointed out by Porcile. Contraception, therefore, is to be considered a nemesis to the teachings of the church on marriage. Contraception like many other contemporary problems is not directly addressed by the Bible but scriptural clauses have been used to preach against it. Quoting Walter Spitzer and Carlyle Saylor (1969), Dennis Hollinger notes in his article “The Ethics of Contraception: A Theological Assessment” that, “the Bible does not expressly prohibit contraception but it does set forth certain abiding principles such as the sanctity of life, the command to multiply, and the mutual obligation of husband and wife to satisfy each other’s sexual needs.”¹³³ He adds, though, that in the Roman Catholic Church, three arguments have been used against contraception namely; biblical arguments, guilt by association, and the nature of sex argument. To begin with biblical arguments,

“There have been two primary biblical texts utilized to morally reject the use of contraceptive devices: Gen 1:28 and Gen 38:8–10. In the context of the creation of man and woman in God’s image, there is the procreative mandate, ... In the Genesis 38... Often referring to this act as Onanism, the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally utilized the text to argue against both

¹³¹ Rakoczy, “A gendered critique of the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage and the family: 1965-2016.”, 2.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³³ Hollinger, “The ethics of contraception: A theological assessment.”, 684.

masturbation and coitus *interruptus*, the failure to allow the sperm and egg to come together in the act of sexual intercourse.”¹³⁴

Secondly, “throughout much of history, contraception was associated with abortion and prostitution... Some Christians, without clear biological knowledge, wrongly assumed that all contraceptives were abortive in nature...Contraception was also frequently associated with prostitution, for prostitutes were the primary individuals seeking some method of preventing pregnancy.”¹³⁵ And finally, “the ban on artificial contraception in the Roman Catholic Church is rooted in the teaching of Augustine and Aquinas, not regarding contraception, but the ends of marital sex. Both clearly stressed that the only truly legitimate end of sex is procreation. It was out of this framework that the church initially established its rejection of contraception.”¹³⁶ Within the Catholic church, the history of oral contraception (the pill) can be traced back to a Catholic conservative John Rock who argued that with the pill, there was “no barrier preventing the union of sperm and egg; all the Pill did ... was mimic naturally occurring hormones to extend the safe period, so that sex was safe all month long”. Though, his ideas found resonance among the Roman Catholic theologians and the clergy alike, the church through Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, retained its initial teachings on contraception.¹³⁷ Farley writes that during the leadership of Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII, a procreative ethic for Catholics was reaffirmed but marital sex during infertile days had been approved by the former, making it easier for the latter to approve the ‘rhythm method’. In 1968, “Pope Paul VI insisted that contraception was immoral. Rather than settling the issue for Roman Catholics, however, this occasioned intense conflict.”¹³⁸ Indeed, many writers seem to point a finger at *Humanae Vitae*, and thus, I choose to shift my attention to the encyclical for a while. Porcile writes that “in his encyclical the Pope was seeking “a new and deeper reflection upon the principles of the moral teaching on marriage”, indicating that it is “intrinsically dishonest” to prevent conception artificially, “because of the intrinsic ordination (of human generative faculties) towards raising up a life”. The central affirmation of the encyclical is: “every conjugal act must be open to the transmission of life.”¹³⁹ On the other hand, Ruether

¹³⁴ Ibid., 685-686.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 686.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 687.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 685.

¹³⁸ Farley, *Just Love: A framework for Christian sexual ethics*, 48.

¹³⁹ Porcile-Santiso, “Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality”, 204.

categorically analyzes the message of *Humanae Vitae* as a way to show that women and men were not equal to the point of sharing love rather men were to use women's bodies for procreation. To her, an aspect of mutuality that would trigger an expression of love was made lacking.¹⁴⁰ She adds that, "Pope Paul VI called together a birth control commission to study the question. The commission attempted to create a genuine consensus of the church by bringing together bishops, medical and sociological experts, and married people. The majority report... concluded that within the faithful and committed marriage there was no moral difference between safe period and other methods of contraception. However, Pope Paul VI was unable to accept the conclusions of his own Birth Control Commission. Instead, he reaffirmed the traditional anti-contraceptive teaching."¹⁴¹

In the 1980s, pushed by many concerns that included unsafe abortion, access to family planning, and the need for women to have the freedom to make their informed choices concerning their reproduction, feminists began to question the sexuality and reproduction of women in the light of human rights, an aspect that remains complex and contradicting. The idea of sexual rights, as noted by Tina Beattie in her article "Whose Rights, Which Rights?—The United Nations, the Vatican, Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Rights", found resonance among the African delegations as it was to be understood in the context of HIV/Aids, violence against women and not homosexual marriages and relationships.¹⁴² Ruether writes that "the Catholic Church accommodates to the new status quo of women's civil rights in society by forgetting its own past teaching and practice." For instance, focusing on justice for women, the church "attempts to remove the question of women's ordination to another plane unconnected with women's civil rights or standing in society."¹⁴³ The Holy See, on the other hand, delves into fighting for the justice of women by advocating for shared responsibility, respect, and free consent in intimate sexual relationships. This would have had more impact had it been that the Catholic Church didn't detach itself from the lives of its congregants as far as sexuality is concerned. After Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control *Humanae Vitae*, the church through its teachings found less relevance among the lives of the Catholics especially the poor.¹⁴⁴ *Humanae Vitae* had spelled it out loud that the church's long, single teaching on

¹⁴⁰ Ruether, "Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response", 226.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 227.

¹⁴² Beattie, "Whose Rights, Which Rights? —The United Nations, the Vatican, Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Rights.", 2-5.

¹⁴³ Ruether, "Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response", 223.

¹⁴⁴ Beattie, "Whose Rights, Which Rights?", 10.

contraception would not change through history,¹⁴⁵ although, interestingly, “many Catholics around the world were expecting a change in the Church’s teaching on contraception. Thus, *Humanae Vitae* was a huge disappointment, and theologians, some bishops and laity, especially in the West, responded first with shock and then with opposition.”¹⁴⁶ Why did *Humanae Vitae* turn out negative to Catholics? What was the essence of a Birth Control Commission, if its views could not be considered by the Pope? I concur with Ruether that the encyclical denoted the aspect of gender inequality but more than ever, *Humanae Vitae* denoted the unquestioned authority of the Pope within the institution, an aspect neither men nor women could influence. It is so unfortunate that even in discussions concerning contraceptive use, men exercise their power over women’s sexuality but still, their power is limited by the infallibility within the church institution that cannot be contradicted. Still, the teachings on contraception like many other things within the Catholic Church should be allowed to evolve not just within the marriage setting but also with regards to controlling unwanted or unplanned pregnancies. Ruether is right, “Catholicism has let other teaching, with an equally long and authoritative history, such as its teaching on the moral acceptability of slavery, slip away without much notice.”¹⁴⁷ Contraception should not be an exception.

3.4 Premarital sexual relations within the Roman Catholic church

To write about contraception within the Roman Catholic Church indeed invites me to venture into the church’s understanding of the premarital sexual activity. How were premarital sexual relations understood and/or continues to be understood within the Catholic Church? Porcile-Santiso writes that “the RCC (Roman Catholic Church) condemns premarital sex for both men and women.”¹⁴⁸ Premarital relations, an aspect that I want to intentionally add the term teenage to read premarital teenage relations, was condemned both for the male and the female gender by the Roman Catholic church. This was done on three levels namely; the moral-theological level, the socio-legal level, and the psycho-anthropological level. To begin with the moral-theological approach, Porcile writes that “the argument of moral theology uses a biblical approach, although the Bible contains no

¹⁴⁵ Rakoczy, “A gendered critique of the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage and the family: 1965-2016.”, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁷ Ruether, “Catholicism, Women, Body and Sexuality: A Response”, 228.

¹⁴⁸ Porcile-Santiso, “Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality”, 208.

specific references to premarital relations. In general, the passages quoted are 1 Cor. 9:10; Gal. 5:19-21; Lev. 19:20; Deut. 22:21; 22:14 and 23:18.”¹⁴⁹ She adds,

“There is also the approach of natural law. Catholic moral theology sees itself as related to *natural law*. ..., it is inadvisable to enter into pre-marital relations because of demands placed upon us by society. As early as St Thomas we find the guidelines: “it is clear that to bring up children, not only is the role of a mother in feeding them essential but much more the collaboration of the father who instructs and defends them... it is thus against nature to engage in conjugal union independently of all bonds.... Fornication, thus, as conjugal union outside the law, is intrinsically sinful.”¹⁵⁰

When talking of society, I think the society here should be made to include the voice of cultures but more significantly the voice of the Catholic church as it has the potential to influence the voice of the cultures. Secondly, premarital sex remains prohibited “based on the view that sexuality and love have a considerable dimension of social responsibility”¹⁵¹ which premarital relations fail to meet hence the socio-legal approach. Lastly, the psycho-anthropological view holds “the view that love involves the whole person. It is believed that love between unmarried couples leaves open the possibility for the relationship to be broken off. This possibility is not acceptable since no formal commitment has been made. Another argument concerns the potential child born of this union..., from the point of view of the church, what is envisaged is a stable family setting.”¹⁵² At this point, I concur with the Porcile especially when the aim of the church teachings was and remains to provide a good environment to enhance a child’s growth within the society and the best place, needless to say, is the family. Besides, given the fact that premarital teenage relations were advocated against implies two phenomena. First, it implies that there had earlier existed traces of premarital sexual activities which were only evident through pregnancies among the unmarried. It is said, ‘out of sight out of mind’. Hence, the issue of premarital sexual relations to be discussed implies that the occurrence was happening in fewer numbers if not that it was the order of the day. Secondly, one might argue that prevention has always been better than cure denoting that the church had thought of it before it happens and had condemned it so that premarital relations do not occur in the future. Given the two lines of thought, the underlying denominator is that there existed the possibility of premarital sexual activity. I am more inclined to the former argument. It sounds

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 208-209.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 209.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 209.

¹⁵² Ibid., 209.

more convincing that there existed issues of premarital teenage sexual activities that led to premarital teenage pregnancies then and still in the contemporary world, this phenomenon exists.

Given the church's stand on the issue of premarital teenage sexual activity, one does not expect the church to be lenient on the issue of contraceptive use. It is wise to assume that the issue of contraceptive use within premarital teenage sexual relations was never discussed and in case it was, it was more stressed and condemned than how it was and is condemned among married heterosexual couples. To conclude, I note that on matters of women's sexuality within the Catholic Church, common moral views might have existed to govern premarital relations, and extramarital relations within the marriage, but the issue of equality was and remains far from being realized. As shown above, the place of a woman was considered lesser to that of a man. This occurrence is still so much present in contemporary times as it did in the past. Analyzing the messages of Pope Francis on marriage and family, Rakoczy notes that "the Pope speaks of "you and your wife" rather than husband and wife"¹⁵³ in his addresses, and that in the 2014 and 2015 synods, the Pope had "appointed four male theologians to advise the bishops. There are many women theologians who have written about marriage and the family, such as Margaret Farley and Lisa Sowle Cahill and yet no woman was chosen.... There was much comment in the Catholic press about the fact that a synod discussing marriage and family included no women as decision-makers."¹⁵⁴ It is true that women, though in small numbers, were represented in the synods, and that their views were heard. However, I think that listening to women's views was one step of women being represented, but not being allowed to vote erases the whole logic of hearing their voices. It is only logical to argue that to give a personal opinion and defend it by voting for it, is the complete act of listening to a person. I might even be right to think that unmarried or young teenagers were not represented in the synod. Of course, Rakoczy observes that it wasn't just the voices of women and their experiences that were missing, even the voices of Africa and Asia did.¹⁵⁵ Did the church consider Africa and Asia as women? It may be of less importance for this discussion to respond to this question, but it remains of great importance to think about it. The two continents were indeed represented by bishops voting, but it is also true that just like women, at the highest level- the consultation level on issues related to marriage and family, none from Asia and Africa was

¹⁵³ Rakoczy, "A gendered critique of the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and the family: 1965-2016.", 14.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

consulted. Besides, failing to listen to the voice of the laity, the poor, oppressed, suppressed and the marginalized creates an avenue for the church teachings to be disconnected and withdrawn from the lives of the people. This then contradicts what Pope Francis refers to as, “bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its security.”¹⁵⁶ To be out on the streets, an attitude that may be a way of bringing equality of humanity in the church, involves the Church intentionally standing “with and for those who are poor”¹⁵⁷, embracing “the messy realities and challenges of the lives of people”¹⁵⁸, and with the ‘other’ including the women, the young teenagers male and female alike and continents like Africa and Asia. Put differently, the church has to realize that its absolutism and its understanding of women’s sexuality are held within a web of connection. Therefore, it needs to be revisited with a special focus on women as persons fully created in the image of God.

3.5 Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by connecting it to the African cultures. Though I have discussed different aspects of women’s sexuality within these two chapters, I note that there exists a similar thread that runs through these institutions responsible for shaping the views of my ‘researched’. This is the aspect of patriarchy. Patriarchy in both institutions enhances male domination which brings about gender inequality. In both institutions, women’s voices lack in matters of their sexuality. Women’s sexuality is discussed by men and decisions regarding their sexuality are taken by men. To give a vivid example, I have noted earlier that the church’s view on women’s sexuality was largely informed by church fathers. The church fathers who were male figures viewed women as inferior to men. Independent of men, women were not made in the image of God. This is not different from the African cultures who preferred male children to female children. Women in the Luhya culture were properties of men, dead or alive. They had no right to inherit properties including land. How could a property inherit another property? Not having the image of God equates to being property. And to be a man’s property equates to having the image of God. Besides, in the Catholic church, women’s sexuality was confined within the church doctrines. Needless to say, that the doctrines were informed by men, and some of them, their authority couldn’t be

¹⁵⁶ Beattie, “Whose Rights, Which Rights?”, 10.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

questioned. The aspect of only male figures making decisions cannot be independent of gender biases. This parallels what exists in Kenyan society. African cultures are dominated by male authorities who aim at keeping women under their domination. There exist customs and rituals that only aim to benefit the interests of men. To suppress women's voices in matters of doctrines and customs, especially those that have to do with their sexuality, equates to elevating the male gender over the female gender. The infallibility of the Pope's authority ensures that he remains unchallenged. This logic runs through African cultures where men devise mechanisms to keep women under patriarchal bondage. Using taboos is one way of achieving this. The other is devising ways that propagate violence amongst women, making them less united. Lastly, within the two institutions, much has not changed in contemporary times. Still, women take second place after men. Women have no voice in matters of their sexuality. The above-used works of literature indicate that women are aware of this occurrence and many seem to question it. Some women would like to break from this patriarchal bondage. This chapter's introduction illuminates this. At this point, I want to assume that my 'researched' are not different from the women who want to break free. Having delved into these two institutions responsible for informing my researched views on their sexuality, it is important to ask; What are the views of Roman Catholic university first-year teenage girls aged 18-19 years on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PERSPECTIVES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC TEENAGE GIRLS ON THEIR SEXUALITY

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have focused on the understanding of women's sexuality within Kenyan society and the Roman Catholic church. In the two institutions, women lack a voice in matters of their sexuality. This chapter picks up from this. It tries to bring women's voices onboard as far as the discussion on their sexuality is concerned. This chapter attempts to respond to the third research sub-question. To achieve this, it employs Watkin's model of four voices, Farley's concept of 'just sex', Geertz's definition of religion, and in turn, attempts to find out if teenage girls' views fall under the human rights perspective or if they are inclined to the church and societal teachings on women's sexuality. Lastly, it responds to the evaluative question of the extent to which societal and church teachings on women's sexuality influence teenage girls' views on premarital sex and contraceptive use.

4.2 Presentation of Findings: Thematic Analysis

The collected data were grouped into sub-themes which were later merged into main themes. These themes range from the church and societal understanding of women's sexuality; aspects that have been discussed in previous chapters, to the views of teenage girls on their sexuality. Looking at the views of teenage girls, it can be deduced that the church remains vital in their lives as it plays important roles in their day-to-day endeavors. Despite this fact, I recognized that there existed a gap between the church teachings and the actual views and practices of my respondents. The interviewees held different opinions amongst themselves, and most importantly, different from those of the church, too. Eight of my respondents felt they needed the freedom to own their bodies and have control of their sexuality. The dictates of society and church, for instance, don't hinder them from making decisions regarding their sexuality. I will elaborate on this and more in the subsequent sub-topics.

4.2.1 Teenage girls and the significance of the church

From the responses of my interviewees, the church seems to play important roles in their lives. These roles can be categorized into three categories; that is, in connection to the divine, to others, and to oneself. The three, needless to say, are interconnected. To begin with the latter, some of the interviewees indicated that the church gave them a sense of belonging, moral guidance and instilled in them moral values that aided their living and also guided their interaction with others. Akumu, for instance, explained that “*Basically, the church is there to inform me of values that I need to have for my general well-being.*”¹⁵⁹ To her, “*...the church is a platform whose teachings should impact values on me, such as honesty, hard work, integrity just to name a few. These values would, in turn, help me lead a better-quality life, and promote a just society.*”¹⁶⁰ Apiyo concurs, “*The church has impacted in terms of giving me patience. I learn the value of patience from the church.*”¹⁶¹ Similarly, Auma noted, “*It really aids in my moral upbringing in that the Catholic church has rules which have to be followed. Thus, enhancing my ethics.*”¹⁶² Apondi also pointed out that “*...It is useful in giving me moral guidance and support, a sense of belonging as well, and above all, I get to worship God in fellowships with others, that is, when we gather.*”¹⁶³ This moral guidance given by the church extends to the decision-making process of teenage girls. “*The Church has helped me a lot, that is when it comes to making most of my decisions. ... before I make any decision, I first think if it is good or bad and of what impact it does add to my life.*”¹⁶⁴ Akello asserted. Abungu reaffirmed, “*It also helps us in knowing where we are going wrong and where we are supposed to be heading.*”¹⁶⁵

In connection to the divine, the church plays an important role in enhancing the spirituality of my ‘researched’. Many of my respondents attested to this. Awino, for instance, says, “*It plays a great deal in my spiritual growth,...*”¹⁶⁶ Her views are not much different from Atieno’s. The latter notes that “*... it has nourished my understanding about the word of God.*”¹⁶⁷ Similarly, Achieno notes

¹⁵⁹ Appendix, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Appendix, 1.

¹⁶¹ Appendix, 39.

¹⁶² Appendix, 6.

¹⁶³ Appendix, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Appendix, 35.

¹⁶⁵ Appendix, 47.

¹⁶⁶ Appendix, 15.

¹⁶⁷ Appendix, 23.

that *“The church has helped me connect with God and be able to understand God better and it has also given me a sense of belonging.”*¹⁶⁸ Ayuma also indicated that *“... it helps me particularly with my spiritual growth and also to get to know what God wants us to do as his people. Actually, the church helps in the building of my faith as a Christian.”*¹⁶⁹ Anyango also stated that *“...the role of my church in my life is to guide me in living according to God’s will and to prepare me for the second coming of Jesus Christ.”*¹⁷⁰

In relation to others, some of my respondents noted that the church remains helpful in guiding them on relating with others. Awino, for instance, pointed out that the church *“plays a great deal... in better handling of individual and considering other humans as also better beings.”*¹⁷¹ Likewise, Atieno indicated that she learns *“...how to cope with relationship issues and relating with opposite sex”*¹⁷² through the church’s help. Looking at the role of the church in my researched lives, it can be concluded that the church plays an important role in connecting the self, the other, and God. Akuku rightly summarizes this, *“...the church ... helps me to learn how to respect people and deal with people accordingly. It teaches me of the love to others and myself, helps me to have faith in every activity that I tackle in my daily life, and lastly, the church helps me to understand God, the Bible, and how He created the Universe and everything on it.”*¹⁷³ From my analysis, I note that the church plays important general roles in the lives of my ‘researched’. It is therefore important to take a closer look at its teachings on women’s sexuality and how it influences teenage girls’ views on their sexuality.

4.2.2 Kenyan society, the Church and Gender inequality

In attempting to understand what teenage girls know of the societal teachings on their sexuality, some of the respondents indicated that their parents and teachers in school had talked to them about premarital sexual activity. Societal teachings on premarital sex differed from one person to the other. Three respondents indicated that premarital sex was a sin and that it was against God and culture. The right context of having sex was to be found in marriage. For instance, Atieno indicated

¹⁶⁸ Appendix, 27.

¹⁶⁹ Appendix, 38.

¹⁷⁰ Appendix, 11.

¹⁷¹ Appendix, 15.

¹⁷² Appendix, 23.

¹⁷³ Appendix, 19.

that premarital sex is “... a sin and the punishment of sin is death. It’s against our culture to have sex before marriage. Besides, my body is the temple of God, so I should respect it and keep it holy.”¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Apondi notes that “... premarital sex is wrong and it’s sinning against God.”¹⁷⁵ This isn’t far from Auma’s perception, “... having sex before marriage is like going against the word of God and this should be considered a sin.”¹⁷⁶ Others denoted that premarital sex was discouraged and that it had some consequences. Abungu stated that “I was taught that I should always take care of myself and the consequences of premarital sex.”¹⁷⁷ Achieno also indicated that “They have discouraged me from engaging in premarital sex.”¹⁷⁸ Some of the parents and teachers saw no problem with it as Akumu indicates; “...others who ...in the present day vernacular wamechanuka (those who adopt the modern trends of doing things) implied that premarital sex wasn’t such a big issue.”¹⁷⁹ Four respondents indicated the same understanding of societal teachings on premarital sex. They had been taught that premarital sex was bad and they had to abstain till marriage. If abstinence should fail, they had to use protective measures. Anyango says, “...they say premarital sex is bad, but if one can’t control herself, then she should consider other means of protecting herself and preventing pregnancy, as the use of condoms and contraceptives.”¹⁸⁰ Likewise, Auma narrates, “She would tell me that if I had to be with a man, then I would have to have a condom to prevent sexually transmitted infection as well as pregnancy.”¹⁸¹ “... they always told us to abstain but if one can’t, then she should use protective measures”¹⁸² and “if you really have to have sex make sure you are protected...”¹⁸³ are Akello’s and Apiyo’s sentiments respectively. Five respondents indicated that they did not have a conversation about sex with their parents. Some attribute this to the fear that exists in parents and teenage girls themselves. Abungu, for instance, states that “I grew up fearing my mother and ...my father too”.¹⁸⁴ Despite this occurrence, some learnt about sex outside the nuclear family setting. Anyango notes that “I haven’t really been taught by my parents anything about sex, but my

¹⁷⁴ Appendix, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Appendix, 32.

¹⁷⁶ Appendix, 44.

¹⁷⁷ Appendix, 48.

¹⁷⁸ Appendix, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Appendix, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Appendix, 11-12.

¹⁸¹ Appendix, 7.

¹⁸² Appendix, 36.

¹⁸³ Appendix, 40.

¹⁸⁴ Appendix, 48.

teachers have mentioned it to me”.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Akello admits “... I never talk about sex with my parents. My teachers ...my uncle here always tells me ...”¹⁸⁶ One respondent indicated that she learnt about premarital sex indirectly from her mother. “The only message about sex that my parents ever told me was told in a parable, by my mother”,¹⁸⁷ said Akumu. Lastly, one respondent Awino, indicated that “It is something I have been learning on my own.”¹⁸⁸

Several respondents indicated that church teachings were not any different from societal teachings. All agreed that they had been taught to avoid and shun away from it. Premarital sex was a sin, fornication, the work of the devil, against God’s word, parents’ and teenage girls’ fault and had negative effects on the life of teenage girls. Several respondents stated that the right context of sex was in marriage. Akuku stated that, “I was told that it is a sin against God and it is not encouraged.”¹⁸⁹ “We were taught that engaging in premarital sex is a sin, one should wait until he/she is rightfully married first”¹⁹⁰ and “The church always believes that premarital sex can be and is a sin”¹⁹¹ are Apondi’s and Akello’s sentiments respectively. Stressing on the context, one respondent indicated that the church was not particular about the age of engaging in sex, because what mattered was the right context of having sex. “The church doesn’t say anything about teenage girls. All it says is ‘wait till marriage’”,¹⁹² Apiyo asserted.

From the above views, it can be deduced that there exists a similarity between the church teachings and societal teachings on premarital sex. In both institutions, marriage is the right context for having sex. Premarital sex should therefore be avoided especially by girls as one’s virginity should be maintained for one’s husband. Auma noted that a “...lady isn’t supposed to be having an intimate and sexual relationship with a man until marriage. This enables the lady to maintain herself and her virginity for the husband.”¹⁹³ Similarly, Awino indicated that “Girls should not engage in the sex act since one’s virginity should be kept for the husband when in matrimony.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁵ Appendix, 11.

¹⁸⁶ Appendix, 36.

¹⁸⁷ Appendix, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Appendix, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Appendix, 19.

¹⁹⁰ Appendix, 31.

¹⁹¹ Appendix, 36.

¹⁹² Appendix, 40.

¹⁹³ Appendix, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Appendix, 15.

This denotes the aspect of gender inequality even as far as the teachings on premarital sex are concerned. Premarital sex seems to lower girls' dignity, an aspect a respondent is not sure it does for boys. This is evident from Awino's response; "*Premarital sex plays a great deal in lowering a person's dignity especially females.*"¹⁹⁵ When asked if it does the same for boys, she responded, "*I'm not sure about males.*"¹⁹⁶ Although there exists a similarity within these two institutions, the society seems to be more flexible than the church. The parents and teachers advise on the use of protection in case abstinence fails, an aspect the church does not advise on.

4.2.3 Teenage girls' understanding of Premarital sex

Talking about their personal opinions regarding premarital sex, my respondents held diverse views. Four of my respondents indicated that premarital sex was bad and a sin as it was against the commandments of God. Premarital sex to them, occurred outside marriage which was the wrong context. According to Ayuma, "*...premarital sex is not good. This is because even according to the word of God, sex is only meant for people who are married. Premarital sex means therefore that sex happens outside marriage. ...*"¹⁹⁷ Likewise, Apondi indicated that "*It's sin. From a biblical perspective, God founded marriage, and therefore, we are expected to engage in sex only in marriage. Premarital sexual activity does not fall within a marriage setting and this makes it a sin.*"¹⁹⁸ Atieno held a similar view. Premarital sex "*...a sin that we should not get involved in before the right time, that is, in marriage*"¹⁹⁹, she asserted. Interestingly, only one of the four respondents indicated that sex was meant for procreation; an aspect premarital sex does not aim to fulfill. According to Anyango, "*sex was created for reproduction, and mostly the intention in premature sex is never to procreate, so I think it's unnecessary to have premature sex.*"²⁰⁰ On the other hand, some of my respondents did not find any problem with premarital sex. Premarital sex was a common phenomenon that was difficult to be avoided. Achieno explained that "*premarital sex is something normal and very common. That doesn't make it right as such but it's difficult to avoid.*"²⁰¹ According to her, "*...as we grow, we develop hormones of attraction and*

¹⁹⁵ Appendix, 15.

¹⁹⁶ Appendix, 16.

¹⁹⁷ Appendix, 43.

¹⁹⁸ Appendix, 31.

¹⁹⁹ Appendix, 23.

²⁰⁰ Appendix, 11.

²⁰¹ Appendix, 27.

*sexual urge... during the adolescence stage, a stage meant for these hormones to be channeled somewhere, and the sexual urge to be taken care of, you are most likely not married hence you may be tempted to engage in premarital sex.*²⁰² One respondent pointed out that the sexual activity of unmarried girls past the adolescent stage, should not be termed as premarital sex. According to Apiyo, “... once a girl or a child is past the adolescent stage, I don’t consider sex then as premarital because from what we see from kitambo (to mean in the past) people were getting married from the age of 15 years.”²⁰³ This implies that she shifts the meaning of the word ‘premarital sex’ from the more literal meaning pre- marriage sex’ to pre-marriage age’. It may imply that the term ‘premarital sex’ comes with a negative connotation. To explain this interpretation further, some of my respondents did not want to associate themselves with premarital sex. Talking of conditions that lead to premarital sex, many of my respondents who preferred using ‘you’ to ‘I’ indicated the following; premarital sex was due to peer pressure, bad companies, lack of parental guidance on matters of sexual activities, improper upbringing, lack of adherence to church teachings, poverty, the emergence of western trends on sexual content and abuse of drugs. Abungu explained that “*premarital sex is based on peer pressure... and the groups that teens... have. Secondly, it is due to the lack of parental care or ... advice from parents to their children. Those practicing premarital sex are those lacking a particular thing.*”²⁰⁴ Some indicated that to engage in premarital sex was one’s personal choice. Akello, for instance, noted that “*to engage in premarital sex ... is one’s choice.*”²⁰⁵ Similarly, Atieno asserted that engaging in premarital sex “...*might be; due to improper upbringing or a personal choice.*”²⁰⁶ To Akuku, one engages in premarital sex “*under the peer pressure from friends, when having low self-esteem, due to lack of advice from parents and guardians, when you engage yourself in immoral behaviors and lastly when you fail to follow the church’s way of life...*”²⁰⁷ Some who were brave enough to relate to premarital sex indicated that if they had protection measures, had been tested for HIV, and got the uncontrollable urge of having sex, they will engage in premarital sex. “*I will consider engaging in premarital sex when I get a strong uncontrollable urge to do so*”,²⁰⁸ indicated Achieno. Auma

²⁰² Appendix, 27.

²⁰³ Appendix, 39.

²⁰⁴ Appendix, 47.

²⁰⁵ Appendix, 36.

²⁰⁶ Appendix, 24.

²⁰⁷ Appendix, 19-20.

²⁰⁸ Appendix, 28.

also asserted, *“If we are both HIV tested recently and with the use of a condom.”*²⁰⁹ Other conditions included; loving the person, free consent, knowledge of implications of premarital sex, the feeling of having the right person, mutual understanding, commitment, and the capability of funding oneself’ basic needs. For Akumu conditions to engage in sex include; *“When... I love the guy. ...when I’d definitely take him in as my husband. ..., when I’m capable of funding at least my basic needs and ... when there’s a mutual understanding between us about why we’re engaging in sex.”*²¹⁰ Elsewhere she adds, premarital sex is *“only alright if both parties fully understand what they’re getting themselves into.”*²¹¹ Likewise, Apiyo noted that to engage in sex *“what is needed is once you are ready and you feel you have found the right person...”*²¹² *“If there is protection and if I feel that I love a guy, ... I will go ahead”*²¹³, she added.

As indicated above, some of my respondents didn’t want to associate with sexual activity. I noted that they gave reasons as to why girls engage in premarital sex that didn’t hold teenage girls responsible. There is a negative connotation attached to premarital sex that makes some of my respondents disassociate themselves from it. This, I want to believe results from how society and the church view premarital sex. I believe that the position of society and the church on premarital sex makes the girls shun away from relating to it. This way, the two institutions influence how teenage girls view premarital sex. Apart from this, I note that there exist premarital sexual relations among teenagers whose implications include: the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, the creation of ‘soul ties’ between persons, shame on the pregnant teenage girls, and forced marriages.

4.2.4 Teenage girls’ views on Contraceptive use

The teenage girls held different views on contraceptive use. Some of the respondents noted that modern contraceptives are being misused by teenage girls. The assurance that one can engage in sex without getting pregnant, facilitates the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and also causes girls to become sexually active at an early stage. Ayuma, for instance, asserted that *“modern contraceptives are being misused and this contributes to making so many of teenage girls to be*

²⁰⁹ Appendix, 7.

²¹⁰ Appendix, 3.

²¹¹ Appendix, 1.

²¹² Appendix, 39.

²¹³ Appendix, 40.

sexually active and also, on the other hand, the availability of contraceptives causes many teenagers to spread sexually transmitted diseases. They engage in sex because they feel like they will take contraceptives afterward.”²¹⁴ Similarly, Abungu indicated that “they are blinding the minds of young women in our generation because they are happy that the possibility of having sex without getting pregnant is assured, and this is taken for granted. You know, contraceptives weaken the health system of women. The result of its use is usually poor sexual and reproductive health which is not good.”²¹⁵ In cases where teenage girls could not avoid engaging in premarital sex, some recommended the use of contraceptives. Besides, some of the respondents noted that there existed a difference between contraceptives and condoms. Anyango, for instance, noted that “if one can’t control herself, then she should consider other means of protecting herself and preventing pregnancy, as the use of condoms and contraceptives.”²¹⁶ Likewise, Auma explained that “when I say contraceptives, I mean the pills and the arm stuff ..., a condom is not a contraceptive.”²¹⁷ While others didn’t term condoms as a contraceptive, one indicated that the use of condoms was the only method of contraception she knew. “To be sincere the only contraceptive I know of is the use of condoms”²¹⁸, Apiyo confessed. Some of my respondents indicated that condoms were a safer method of contraception compared to the rest. Akumu stated that “I prefer condoms but I hold the view that pills, coils, and injections should be avoided when they can be before one has her kids. ... I’ve also read on how they affect someone’s hormonal imbalance and though its effects vary from one person to another person, I prefer to be safe than sorry.”²¹⁹ Although many felt that using condoms was safe, one respondent felt otherwise. To Abungu, “there are various types of condoms nowadays and there are those which cause vaginal cancer because of the perfumes used to decorate them, and condoms do burst inside the body of women which is of high risk to them.”²²⁰ Methods of contraception familiar to my respondents included; the use of male condoms, oral pills, coils, injections, emergency contraceptives, intrauterine devices and rings, ‘morning after’ pills, as well as a natural way of birth control. While several respondents agreed that they would use contraceptives when they engaged in sex, two respondents

²¹⁴ Appendix, 46.

²¹⁵ Appendix, 48.

²¹⁶ Appendix, 11-12.

²¹⁷ Appendix, 8.

²¹⁸ Appendix, 40.

²¹⁹ Appendix, 3.

²²⁰ Appendix, 49.

asserted that contraceptives should be used when one is married. “*When I have a family to plan*”²²¹ and “*when I’m married and I want to plan on how I want to give birth but I would rather use natural birth control methods*”²²², are Awino’s and Anyango’s verdicts respectively. Additionally, my respondents agreed that modern contraceptives had two sides; advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of contraceptives to many included; prevention of early, unwanted, unplanned pregnancies, prevention of the spread of HIV/Aids as well as prevention of other sexually transmitted diseases. The disadvantages on the other hand included; a possibility of having fibroids, infertility, a hormonal imbalance that causes irregular, prolonged, and heavy menses, vaginal cancer, miscarriages, cervical cancer, as well as increased vulnerability to a heart attack. My respondents also indicated that they had learnt from friends, family members, classmates, certain articles, elderly women, and sex-education programs about the negative effects of contraceptives. Asked from where she heard stories about the effects of contraceptives, Apondi responded, “Village mamas”²²³. Similarly, Awino responded that she heard of the effects of contraceptives “from a certain article”²²⁴. Atieno also indicated that she heard from friends,²²⁵ whereas Anyango pointed out that she learnt of the side effects of contraceptives from her classmates.²²⁶

4.3 Discussion of results

From the above-stated findings, it is evident that my respondents are aware of the church and societal teachings on premarital sex. It can also be concluded that their perceptions and interpretations of premarital sex cannot be seen independently from societal and church teachings. To both the church and Kenyan society, sex finds its right context in marriage. Premarital sex is considered wrong and teenage girls ought to avoid engaging in it. Also given the fact that my ‘researched’ are first-year students who are just transitioning from living with their families to being independent in university hostels, there is a high likelihood of seeing issues from their

²²¹ Appendix, 16.

²²² Appendix, 12.

²²³ Appendix, 32.

²²⁴ Appendix, 16.

²²⁵ Appendix, 24.

²²⁶ Appendix, 12.

parents' and church's point of view. Below I discuss ways in which the church and societal teachings are still at work in the ideas of my respondents.

First, dissociating from the conversation on premarital sex, for instance, can be attributed to the negative connotation that has been attached to premarital sex by society and the church. Indeed, Clifford Geertz is right, religion “is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men...”²²⁷ where motivation is defined as “a persisting tendency, a chronic inclination to perform certain sorts of acts and experience, certain sorts of feelings in certain sorts of situations, the ‘sorts’ being commonly very heterogeneous...”²²⁸ These long-lasting moods and motivations among teenage girls, in turn, inform how they view premarital sex. To view premarital sex as a sin aligns with the teachings of the church. One respondent, even stated that premarital sex was against her cultural demands. Sex encounters are only legitimate in marriage. Because of these developed moods and motivations, some of my ‘researched’ give reasons as to why teenage girls would engage in premarital sex that do not hold teenage girls responsible. These reasons include poor parental upbringing, peer pressure, taken advantage of, and sex due to lack of necessities. Also because of a negative connotation attached to premarital sex by the church and society, many of my respondents are so careful to use ‘I’ and instead, they choose to use ‘You’ when talking about premarital sex. But this does not apply to all my respondents. There exist a few who are brave enough to refer to themselves when talking about premarital sex. Though, I note that even among these, some still view premarital sex as negative but then indicate that in contemporary times, it is common and difficult to be avoided. Of my twelve respondents, only two, that is, Akumu²²⁹ and Apiyo,²³⁰ view premarital sex independent of societal and church teachings. Therefore, I argue that indeed, the church and societal teachings influence my researched views on premarital sex. But I also note that on premarital sex, teenage girls do not fully follow the dictates of the church. I will expound on this when I interpret my findings from the perspective of the four voices.

There exist premarital sexual relations among teenage girls that have diverse causes. This is to say that in as much as religion and culture spell out what is to be done and influences my researched

²²⁷ Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System”, 90.

²²⁸ Ibid., 96.

²²⁹ Appendix, 1.

²³⁰ Appendix, 39.

perceptions, they do not fully follow the dictates of the system. They make their choices. To engage in premarital sex is an example of the choices they make as ‘men’ within the system. Premarital sex among teenage girls can be characterized by several different factors. On one hand, there are factors like peer pressure, being taken advantage of, poverty, having inadequate knowledge on sex matters that do not hold teenage girls responsible. On the other hand, aspects like love, free consent, personal choice, mutual understanding, commitment, the capability of funding, the feeling of having the right person, knowledge of implications of premarital sex are aspects that some teenage girls consider before engaging in a premarital sexual relationship. I argue that this is the ideal criteria of a sexual relationship among my sexually active respondents. Margret Farley notes that ‘just sex’ is characterized by norms like; doing no unjust harm, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness, and social justice. The norm of ‘do no unjust harm’ views humans, as vulnerable and ensures that they are not exploited in a sexual relationship. Free consent on the other hand aims at respecting the other’s privacy and their rights to determine their actions. Mutuality focuses on viewing both genders in a sexual relationship as having equal input. Equality ensures that there is no power difference between the two and that the other’s uniqueness is appreciated. Commitment focuses on the aspect of time that creates space for a life together and long-lasting love. Fruitfulness is concerned with love between sexual partners and also with the responsible reproduction of children. Finally, social justice ensures that all persons’ freedom and relationality are respected in society and that society aims to support and not harm sexual partners.²³¹ Put together, these norms ensure freedom and relationality; compulsory features that ground a Christian sexual ethic.²³² I note that teenage girls’ understanding of an ideal premarital sexual relationship, indeed, finds relevance with Farley’s understanding of ‘just sex’. At this point, it is vital to say that this understanding runs through the minds of some teenage girls and not all of them. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that premarital sexual activities among the Luhya teenagers should be viewed on both ends; as just and unjust.

Secondly, it is important to note that teenage girls were freer to talk about contraceptives as compared to premarital sex. This can be attributed to the fact that the church and Kenyan society do not talk about contraceptives as much as they do talk about premarital sex. For instance, several respondents couldn’t recall any church teachings on contraceptive use. It is important to note that

²³¹ Farley, *Just Love: A framework for Christian sexual ethics*, 216-230.

²³² *Ibid.*, 214.

contraceptive use, cannot be independent of sexual activity. To the church, premarital sex is not allowed. Sex is to be found within the confines of heterosexual marriages with the aim of procreation. To the church, a conversation on contraception among teenage girls, therefore, denotes tolerance towards premarital sex; an aspect forbidden in the church. It can therefore be assumed that the church intentionally fails to talk about contraceptive use among teenagers as premarital sex is not entertained. This fact makes several of girls' views on contraception independent of church influence. Unlike the church, society shows some level of flexibility when it comes to contraceptive use. Though on a small scale, some parents and teachers advise on contraceptive use in case abstinence fails. I want to believe that, unlike the church, the Kenyan society has realized that premarital sex is difficult to be avoided, its effects are diverse for them and their children and that contraceptive use seems to be a way out. This also explains why teenage girls feel free to talk about contraceptives. Besides, it can also be concluded that of contraceptives known to teenage girls, the use of condoms feels safer as compared to other methods of contraception. This may be because they are cheaper, readily available and that it is men and not women who wear them. Treating condoms, not as a method of contraception denotes the fact that teenage girls do not have adequate sex education on contraceptives hence the ignorance. This justifies my assumption that there is less sex education given to teenage girls. Apart from this, treating condoms, not as a contraceptive can also be because teenage girls know of fewer side effects of condoms than of other contraceptives. Besides, contraception has always been seen as a woman's responsibility, male condoms are worn by men and for this reason, the teens feel like they should be excluded from contraceptives. Alternatively, it might be that condoms are majorly linked to the prevention of HIV/Aids whereas contraceptives aim at the prevention of pregnancies. Furthermore, looking at the sources that inform teenage girls on the side effects of contraceptives, it can also be concluded that they are not mainly from qualified medical personnel hence unreliable. Interestingly, there exists a discourse on the negative effects of contraceptives outside the church sphere that informs teenage girls' decisions on the choice of contraceptives to use. There are different ways of looking at these sources of information. First, they can be considered not helpful. They are rumors from family and friends who may not have a scientific grounding. This implies that the information on the effects of contraceptives equals incorrect data. On the other hand, it is unsafe to conclude that rumors lack some truth in them. Oduyoye notes that women in Africa "are kept ignorant of what drugs they take, or are made to take, do to their bodies and

environment.”²³³ Elsewhere she laments, “scientists exploit women bodies for these experiments which require loans which the men may not even help to repay.”²³⁴ From her observations, it is evident that there may exist negative effects that are associated with developments in women’s reproductive health. To dismiss the rumors on the negative effects of contraceptives, therefore, does no justice to those who have experienced their side effects. More qualitative and scientific studies, mainly from the medical field are needed to prove these rumors as wrong or right. Despite the said side effects, all my respondents agree that contraceptives help prevent early, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. But does this count to the church? I now turn to interpret my findings from the perspective of the four voices.

At this point, it is quite evident that contraception is the nemesis of Catholic church teachings on women’s sexuality. Porcile rightly summarizes that “the boundary between what is permissible and what is not, which has always existed and still does, is delimited by the idea of sin, ... any activity which is an evasion of procreation (contra conception) ... is always considered sinful.”²³⁵ Contrary to this long-lasting tradition, there is the question of women’s autonomy to own their bodies and make decisions concerning their reproductive health. Tina Beattie had earlier noted that feminists started questioning the aspect of sexuality and reproduction in the context of human rights. Concerns that led to this include access to family planning or contraceptives, women’s freedom to make their own choices, unsafe abortions among others.²³⁶ One of the feminists, for instance, lamented that “the condemnation of condoms, among other mechanical contraceptive devices, is based on rather outdated understanding of the role of procreation in marriage, reflecting at times the disdain with which non-procreative sex is viewed in some religious and traditional circles. This condemnation seems to minimize the ability of the laity (and women in particular) to make decisions regarding their sexuality.”²³⁷ Looking at these two scenarios, the issue of contraceptives is discussed or better still questioned in the context of heterosexual marriages. I would therefore like to stretch this to the spectrum of unmarried teenage girls.

²³³ Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, 59-60.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

²³⁵ Porcile-Santiso, “Roman Catholic Teachings on Female Sexuality”, 198.

²³⁶ Beattie, “Whose Rights, Which Rights?”, 2.

²³⁷ Hinga, *African, Christian, Feminist: The Enduring Search for What Matters*, 138.

From the discussion on contraceptive use, it can be concluded that the two lines of thought are evident in how teenage girls perceive their sexuality. Some of my respondents are inclined to the human rights perspective and feel like they do have a right to make their own choices despite what the church says. Akumu, for instance, noted that *“I’ll definitely hear what their say on the issue is, then I’ll examine its pros and cons, then make a choice on my own.”*²³⁸ *“I recommend using contraceptives with less or no side effects to your body. This way you can be assured of your safety”*²³⁹, asserted Achieno. To some, church teachings on contraceptives may not be present in the Bible but are rather developed from human reasoning. For this reason, they disagree with the church’s teachings. The unsure yet confident Apiyo indicated that, *“I don’t agree with the church, I agree with the bible. The church dwells on human reasoning which may not be present in the bible.”*²⁴⁰ Similarly, asked if what the church says on premarital sex and contraceptive use mattered to her, Akuku responded, *“I disagree with them.”*²⁴¹ I have argued earlier that the views of several respondents on contraceptives are independent of church teachings. This explains why they do not refer to specific scriptures when talking about contraceptives. I, therefore, suggest that the church doctrines and their supportive scriptural arguments should be made known to all, including teenage girls. This, I believe, will give them room to align themselves with the church’s theology and/or develop their own theology to counter the church’s theology. Although some feel like they will use contraceptives when married, many tend to support the use of modern contraceptives among sexually active teenage girls. The sexually inactive Apondi indicated that *“it is good for the sexually active girls to have access to contraceptives, but again ..., I have not seen girls with such cases though I believe they exist.”*²⁴² Additionally, Auma explained that *“with the generation, we are in, one cannot actually force abstinence. I prefer preventive measures from early pregnancy should be given more mandate than abstinence.”*²⁴³ According to her, *“we are in a different generation ..., some of the church doctrines are altered.”*²⁴⁴ Akello had the feeling that *“there are many contraceptives in the market and it’s all about choosing which one works best for you, that*

²³⁸ Appendix, 4.

²³⁹ Appendix, 28.

²⁴⁰ Appendix, 41.

²⁴¹ Appendix, 20.

²⁴² Appendix, 32.

²⁴³ Appendix, 6.

²⁴⁴ Appendix, 8.

*is if one is engaging in sex.*²⁴⁵ While several respondents felt that contraceptives were helpful, four of my respondents felt otherwise. To them, contraceptives had side effects on teenage girls and they were being misused. According to Ayuma, contraceptives “*may also have side effects ... It is hard to say that they are helpful when there seems to be a possibility of side effects.*”²⁴⁶ Besides, contraceptives were meant to be used in a marriage context to plan a family. Awino indicated that, “*When I have a family to plan*”²⁴⁷ Similarly Abungu asserted that “*when one is in marriage, one can use it. So, when I get married, I will*”²⁴⁸. Awino adds that “*I think it’s not effective for teenagers with zero families to take contraceptives which might affect them in their later stages of life.*”²⁴⁹ One respondent categorically indicated that since the church is reserved on issues of contraceptives, she will go for natural birth control. Asked when she would use contraceptives, “*When I’m married and I want to plan on how I want to give birth but I would rather use natural birth control methods*”²⁵⁰, Anyango stated. To her, “*there has been a debate in the church about contraceptives, and the church prefers natural birth control methods to contraceptives.*”²⁵¹

It is important to note that the teenage girls of premarital sex, tend to speak a voice similar to the normative voice but do not follow the teachings in the actual sense. Below I give five reasons to enhance my stand. Firstly, I think they look at sexual drive as an urge that needs to be satisfied. This way, they look at sex more from a biological point of view than a religious and cultural perspective. In contemporary times where formal education ensures that a lot of time is spent in schools- including the time the sexual urge is present-, I think that they view premarital sex, not as their fault but the fault of the societal systems. Apart from that, though unsure and uninformed of scriptures that shed light on the aspects of women’s sexuality, I tend to think that some of my respondents see the Church teachings not tallying with the Scriptures in the Bible. To them, the voice of the church is mostly human-influenced and does not take into consideration contemporary concerns. Indeed, Auma’s assertion that “... some church doctrines are altered”²⁵² finds resonance

²⁴⁵ Appendix, 37.

²⁴⁶ Appendix, 44.

²⁴⁷ Appendix, 16.

²⁴⁸ Appendix, 49.

²⁴⁹ Appendix, 16.

²⁵⁰ Appendix, 12.

²⁵¹ Appendix, 12.

²⁵² Appendix, 8.

with this explanation. This, in turn, resonates with Maureen Were's observation that "the traditional church dogmas had become outdated to effectively address the challenges adolescents faced in the modern society".²⁵³ I also think that teenage girls give a priority to the norms that should govern a sexual relationship, rather than the context of having sex. Lastly, I argue that teenage girls feel that they have a right to dictate what to do with their bodies, even if it means discrete. These reasons put together, explain why my respondents don't feel obliged to follow the dictates of society and church. But in as much as they choose to engage in premarital sex; a phenomenon not tolerated in the church, their voice on premarital sex is much influenced by the church's standing. They tend to view premarital sex as bad or hold reservations about the practice. I am not able to describe the practice of premarital sex among my researched because several of them fail to describe it. This seems not to be the case when it comes to contraceptive use. This is because the voice of the church on contraceptive use remains unknown to many for reasons I have stated above. Several voices of respondents do not seem to match the normative voice. Their operant voice- the voice explicit in what they do- finds relevance with the lamenting voices of feminists who advocate for women's autonomy to own their sexuality. I want to argue that, although I do not describe the practices of teenage girls since they also fail to describe them, their views illuminate their practices. This way, I dig out their operant voice. Looking at their operant voice, I note that this unfolds in two ways, namely; the 'now or present' and the 'yet to happen'. Several respondents feel they have a right to make their own decisions. They just don't feel like, they do make decisions and what the church says doesn't matter to them. Looking at the four of my respondents who held conservative views on contraceptive use, it is necessary to state that they still held negative views on premarital sex. Apart from Abungu who saw premarital sex as peer pressure-based, and didn't agree that sex was only legitimate within heterosexual marriages, the remaining three viewed sexual activity to be legitimate in marital relations. On the discussion of contraceptive use, it is interesting to note that they don't fully view contraceptives as negative. They contradict the church's stance despite having an idea of what the church stands for. Their operant voice- the voice explicit in what they do- contradicts their espoused voice- the voice explicit in what they say they do. For instance, Anyango, -through her espoused theology views sex as legitimate in marriage and for procreation-, acknowledges that she will use modern contraceptives when married. But because of an ongoing discussion in the church on contraceptive

²⁵³ Were, "Determinants of teenage pregnancies: The case of Busia District in Kenya", 329.

use, she will prefer using natural birth control methods. Her message to the church and society- what I term as her operant voice- describes her independent opinion. “*Concerning contraceptives, I would ask them to guide their daughters in using the right contraceptive the right way*”²⁵⁴, she recommended. Besides, she also agrees that every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.²⁵⁵ It is true that the church’s stand influences her preference but does not erase other options of contraception. Similarly, Abungu- whose espoused voice contradicts the normative voice on the context of sex- thinks that the church doesn’t encourage the use of contraceptives but plans to use them- her operant voice- when she gets married.²⁵⁶ Her operant voice stands out when she notes that every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.²⁵⁷ Awino seems to take a different stance. Through her espoused theology, she agrees that sex is only legitimate in marriage and that, teenage girls ought not to use contraceptives.²⁵⁸ Her stand against contraceptives is because premarital sex is not allowed and contraceptives pose effects on teenage girls’ lives.²⁵⁹ This finds relevance with the normative voice. Despite this, through her operant voice, she acknowledges that she would use contraceptives to plan her family. This contradicts her continued agreement with the normative voice. Similarly, Ayuma views premarital sex as bad and considers contraceptives as not helpful because of their side effects. This depicts ‘what she says she does’. Her level of confusion is evident in her sentiment; “*it is hard to say that they are helpful when there seem to be a possibility of side effects. But again, they are important as they help prevent early pregnancies.*”²⁶⁰ As much as her views on premarital sex align with the church teachings, her views on contraceptives don’t. Her message to the church includes the following; “*girls should be taught the main roles of contraceptives. Contraceptives are not bad but it is wrong to use them for wrong reasons.... It is the role of parents and church priests to talk this through with the teenage girls.*”²⁶¹ The above quote illuminates into her operant theology that does not treat contraceptives as bad. Her operant voice at this point challenges both the normative voice as well as her espoused voice. At this point, it is evident that

²⁵⁴ Appendix, 12.

²⁵⁵ Appendix, 13.

²⁵⁶ Appendix, 49.

²⁵⁷ Appendix, 51.

²⁵⁸ Appendix, 17-18.

²⁵⁹ Appendix, 16-17.

²⁶⁰ Appendix, 44-45.

²⁶¹ Appendix, 45.

even the conservative teenage girls are at crossroads between their views and church teachings. Their views are informed by the church and so how they interpret their sexuality aligns with the church's interpretation. This is different from what exists in their views and what they will want to see existing. For instance, their independent views on contraceptives depart from the doctrinal standing. They indeed remain faithful to the church teachings. But they envision breaking this faithfulness in the future, especially when they get married. I argue that this may be because they don't have adequate information on church teachings on contraceptive use, especially in a marriage setting. Alternatively, to divert from church teachings on contraceptives especially in marriage indicates that the conservatives aim at planning their future. In times where climate change is a global problem, and the country's economic growth remains unpromising, planning one's family in marriage is a responsible way of contributing to the development of women, families, the environment, and the country at large. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that several teenage girls want the autonomy to own and direct their sexuality and that the conservatives do not fully follow the church teachings in their practices even though their views are influenced by the church. This in turn implies that there exists a gap between the church teachings on girls' sexuality and teenage girls' views on their sexuality. Put differently, the church influences how girls view their sexuality but this influence is restricted when it comes to the actual practices and views of teenage girls.

4.4 Conclusion

Among my 'researched', the church instills values such as patience, honesty, hard work among others which guide one's living and also ensures a good relationship with others. The church also acts as a platform to bring people together through fellowships hence a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the church also influences teenage girls decision-making processes. The church through its teachings spells the dos and don'ts needed in the day-to-day living of my 'researched'. At a personal level, the church through its teachings helps one to have a clear understanding of God, His will, His creation, and His word. Above all, the church aims at keeping the morality of the teenage girls in check. It is important to note that women's sexuality demarcated by what is wrong or right, falls under the aspect of morality. How the girls view their sexuality, therefore, questions their morality as instructed by the church and the society at large. It was noted that my respondents had knowledge of the church and societal teachings on their sexuality. The two institutions for instance share the same views on premarital sex. Premarital sex is wrong and should

not be encouraged. Despite this fact, the church has a fixed stand on the issue whereas the society depicts its flexibility by tolerating premarital sex. I want to believe that, unlike the church, the Kenyan society learns to adjust its stand as far premarital sex and contraceptive use are concerned. This raises the question of what the place of the church is in the practical lives of its congregants. It can also be concluded that indeed the church influences the views of the girls on their sexuality. But these remain as abstract ideas which have less effect on the actual practices and views of teenage girls. Tina Beattie is right in her observation; “The problem is that since Pope Paul VI’s encyclical on birth regulation, *Humanae Vitae*, in 1968, the official teachings of the Church have become increasingly detached from the real lives of ordinary Catholics as far as sexuality is concerned.”²⁶² Although a negative connotation is attached to premarital sex, teenage girls do not feel obliged to follow the dictates of the church. They make their own choices. These choices extend to the issue of contraceptive use. Teenage girls, the sexually active and sexually inactive alike, feel that contraceptives are the best way of preventing early, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. Regardless of their preference and the context of contraceptive usage, all respondents agreed that they would use contraceptives. The girls who are more inclined to want to decide about their sexuality, feel that the use of male condoms is safer compared to other contraceptives. This may be since they have fewer side effects, they are cost-effective, easily available or probably they are men’s responsibility. The choice to use or not use contraceptives is theirs to make. The church teachings on contraceptive use do not matter to them; they need the freedom to make their reproductive choices. But how would the church teachings on contraceptive use matter, if they remain unknown to them? The church indeed remains important in the lives of teenage girls especially in creating a relationship with God, others, and oneself. But on matters of sexuality, church teachings remain restricted and only exist as abstract ideas. My assumption was right. There exists a gap between the church teachings on girls’ sexuality and actual views and practices of teenage girls concerning their sexuality.

²⁶² Beattie, “Whose Rights, Which Rights?”, 9-10.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

This study aimed at finding out ways in which societal and church understanding of women's sexuality influence the views of teenage girls on premarital sex and contraceptive use. To locate teenage girls' views, it was important to understand how women's sexuality was and continues to be viewed in Kenyan society and the Roman Catholic church. Discussing women's sexuality within the *Luhya* culture called for an overview of African cultures at large as the former cannot remain independent of the latter. To have a closer look at women's sexuality, aspects like polygamy, premarital sex, and contraceptive use were discussed. Within the two institutions responsible for shaping the views of teenage girls under study, it was concluded that there existed a common thread that aimed at keeping women under domination. This was the aspect of patriarchy that elevated the male gender over the female gender leading to gender inequality. This extends even in the understanding of women's sexuality. With the assumption that teenage girls like many other women, wanted to break free from the dictates of the system, have a right to make their reproductive choices, and have control of their bodies, the empirical part of this study focused on getting teenage girls views on their sexuality. This was done with contraceptive use and premarital sex as the focal points. This is because a discussion on contraceptive use calls for a keen look at premarital sex which creates an avenue for teenage pregnancies.

It was discovered that teenage girls were aware of the societal and church teachings on premarital sex. Premarital sex is seen in negative terms. Although the views of teenage girls on premarital sex remain dependent on societal and church teachings, the dictates of the two institutions are not followed fully by the teenage girls. Besides, the majority of teenage girls held a positive view of contraceptive use. To all, contraceptives were a way of preventing early, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. While there exists a voice that goes against contraceptive use and one that advocates for women's autonomy to own their bodies, the voice of teenage girls seems to combine the two. Several respondents felt that they need the autonomy to make their own choices and own their bodies. The few teenagers that align with the church teachings on contraceptive use still have mixed reactions between their actual views and the voice of the church. This phenomenon denotes the fact that there exists a gap between the church teachings on women's sexuality and the actual

practices and views of teenage girls. To therefore respond to the main research question, this study was divided into five chapters. The first chapter sought to give a background to the study, identify the existing gap, state the theoretical framework as well as the justification of the study. Chapter two on the other hand aimed at unveiling how women's sexuality was viewed and continues to be viewed in the contemporary Luhya culture. To achieve this, the *Luhya* culture was situated in the larger African cultures. Chapter three of this study focused on the understanding of women's sexuality within the Catholic Church. This was achieved with the stress put on premarital sexual activities and contraceptive use. The chapter was concluded by being linked to the previous one. A common phenomenon- patriarchy was identified. Chapter four delved into presenting teenage girls' views on premarital sex and contraceptive use. It was noted that in as much as the church plays important roles in the lives of teenage girls, its teachings are restricted in the sphere of women's sexuality. They, teenage girls, still have the agency to make their own decisions regardless of the church teachings. The dictates of the church do not hinder them from making their choices. In turn, the chapter also aimed at unveiling to what extent the church and societal teachings on women's sexuality influence teenage girls' views on their sexuality. This last chapter sought to give a summary of the study. And also given the gap between the church teachings on women's sexuality and teenage girls' views on their sexuality, this chapter gives some recommendations, mostly, the voice of the teenage girls that can help bridge the gap.

5.2 Recommendations

I have earlier indicated that this study contributes to an ongoing discussion on women's sexuality within the Roman Catholic Church. I want to mention specifically that this study is more helpful to the Roman Catholic Church fraternity within Busia County, Kenya. It has aimed at bringing women's voices onboard as far as a discussion on their sexuality is concerned. More than ever, it brings to the church the views of the laity and depicts the gap that exists between its teachings and the views of its congregants. Exploring the views of teenage girls in the previous chapter is a step towards bringing their voices onboard. To give recommendations from their point of view is a complete step of hearing their voice in anticipation of liberation. As a concerned African woman theologian belonging to the Roman Catholic tradition, I realize that there is discontinuation between the church teachings and actual views, 'theologies' and practices of teenage girls. This implies that the teachings of the church are continuously getting detached from the actual lives of

the laity. In an institution where teenage girls have no space to reach out to the church about their views and the church dictates the laity without consultation, I am challenged to create a space for teenage girls through this thesis. I do so by treating their message to the church as my recommendations. I believe that this way, the church will get to know the voice of teenage girls and in turn, find ways of bridging the gap that is continuously getting widened. Looking at the responses of my ‘researched’, it is evident that there exist premarital sexual relations among teenage girls and that without contraceptive use, several, risk a possibility of teenage pregnancy. To prevent this phenomenon, there is a need for sex education that will entail stating the effects of premarital sex, the right usage of contraceptives, the importance of contraceptives, as well as the right contraceptive to be used. Ayuma, for instance, noted that “*girls should be taught the main roles of contraceptives. Contraceptives are not bad but it is wrong to use them for wrong reasons. Instead, contraceptives should be used for the right purpose.*”²⁶³ Apondi who feels that every sexually active girl should have access to contraceptive use laments that “*having girls take contraceptive pill makes them so careless..., so they do not prevent pregnancy which is not right. This again is like taking contraceptives for a wrong reason and this is not right.*”²⁶⁴ Similarly, Anyango feels that the priests need “*to be open to their youth concerning the topic of sex...,*”²⁶⁵ She adds, “*concerning contraceptives, I would ask them to guide their daughters in using the right contraceptives the right way.*”²⁶⁶ Auma feels that the church should organize seminars to hear the voices of teenage girls who in turn “*should be taught the importance of using condoms during intercourse...*”²⁶⁷ Akuku thinks the church needs to be educated, “*I will tell them the importance of contraceptives..., I will educate them that not only do contraceptives prevent early pregnancies, they also prevent one from getting some other diseases like the UTIs and STIs.*”²⁶⁸ Akumu and Apiyo seem to share the same view. “*...religious people and parents should acknowledge that at this time and age, admonishing teenagers not to have sex does not really work, they should however, turn to giving wholesome education on sex, its implication, how to make choices...*”²⁶⁹ the former recommends. “*Teach your girls and boys about contraceptives to prevent the many*

²⁶³ Appendix, 45.

²⁶⁴ Appendix, 32.

²⁶⁵ Appendix, 12.

²⁶⁶ Appendix, 12.

²⁶⁷ Appendix, 8-9.

²⁶⁸ Appendix, 21.

²⁶⁹ Appendix, 4.

issues we are having of early pregnancy and STDs and HIV. Biologically, our bodies mature from 15 years therefore they need to be educated.”²⁷⁰ She explains, “although I still believe in the church, I think we should change our minds to suit current situations.”²⁷¹ Akello emphatically notes that, parents and priests “should accept that teenage girls practice sex and that contraceptives are the only way to keep them safe. They should stop discriminating the girls that practice it and embrace them as their kids. Priests should stop their lousy preaching and rather try to help in educating them...”²⁷² Achieno thinks the church should “give it a thought because contraceptives if administered properly, they have more pros than cons especially in this generation where young people become sexually active at a very young age. Rather than advising against them, people should look at the bright side of contraceptives that matters a lot than the negative side especially for teenage girls.”²⁷³ Contrary to the above recommendations, three respondents thought otherwise. The three agree that sex education should be given to teenage girls but premarital sex and contraceptive use should not be tolerated. Atieno says, “they should educate us, tell us it’s bad to engage in sex..., they should continue preaching the gospel about contraceptives and help us to be closer to our creator so that we can overcome this temptation.”²⁷⁴ Addressing the church, Awino noted, “I would encourage them to talk to their girls on sexuality rather than allowing administration of contraceptives amongst teenagers. They should advise girls to refrain from sexual activities.”²⁷⁵ Her message is not different from Abungu’s, who recommends that “contraceptive usage should be banned... they should provide contraceptive use programs for teenage girls... girls should be told the effects of contraceptives”²⁷⁶ To her, “most girls know vividly the effects of premarital sex and are ready to live a successful life without any hindrance of early pregnancy or AIDS”²⁷⁷

From the above recommendations given by teenage girls, it is evident that there exists a common thread, that is, the aspect of sex education. I, therefore, recommend that Holistic Sex Education

²⁷⁰ Appendix, 41.

²⁷¹ Appendix, 41.

²⁷² Appendix, 37.

²⁷³ Appendix, 29.

²⁷⁴ Appendix, 24-25.

²⁷⁵ Appendix, 17.

²⁷⁶ Appendix, 50.

²⁷⁷ Appendix, 50.

should be given to teenage girls and boys alike to help prevent the phenomena of teenage pregnancies. Evert Ketting and colleagues write that Holistic Sex Education is:

“defined as ‘Learning about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality’. Accordingly, ‘Sexuality education starts early in childhood and progresses through adolescence and adulthood. It aims at supporting and protecting sexual development. It gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information, skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships and take responsibility for their own and other people’s sexual health and well-being’²⁷⁸

I concur with them that there is a need to teach on all spheres of life that shape the sexual lives of teenage girls. This should include biological factors like hormones and reproductive knowledge, social factors like cultural norms, spiritual factors like religious teachings, and psychological factors like emotions. Talks on sex-related topics should be normalized. This will equip teenagers with knowledge on sexual matters that will help them make informed decisions. I have stated in chapter one that this study borrows from works of feminist theologians who delve into notions of justice, human dignity, and *Imago Dei*. I have also argued that these notions are interconnected. I, therefore, argue that giving teenage girls Holistic Sex Education resonates with these notions. First, having adequate knowledge about sex matters, offers one with many and different options to choose from, thus allowing one to live a responsible sexual life. To give one many choices to choose from is an aspect of justice. Apart from that, to give the truth on sex matters without keeping other information discrete is to respect people as humans and as persons created in the image of God. Since my ‘researched’ are adults, respecting their choices is a way of respecting their autonomy as decision-makers. In turn, respecting their decisions especially with regards to their sexuality equals respecting them as humans. This ensures that their decisions are not trampled upon hence respecting their human dignity. And to not trample on their dignity, implies that they will be treated with fairness.

I also agree that Holistic Sex Education should be given from childhood, through adolescence to adulthood. Among sexually active teenagers, Holistic Sex Education should be achieved through the creation of awareness in youth seminars, sex-related campaigns, forums, symposiums,

²⁷⁸ Evert Ketting et al., “Evaluation of holistic sexuality education: A European expert group consensus agreement.” *The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care* 21, no. 1 (2016): 69.

programs, sermons, and workshops that aim at informing teenagers fully on matters of their sexuality. Besides, I also wish to state that there exists a few teenagers that believe in abstinence. That means that abstinence works for few first-year university students. There is a possibility though that this occurrence may change with time, as this is only a transitioning phase. With more time and space to themselves, conservative girls may choose to forsake the abstinence doctrine. To give a Holistic Sex Education to these girls will, therefore, ensure that girls are informed fully on matters of sex which will enable them to make informed decisions that include upholding the doctrine of abstinence. Among non-conformists of abstinence doctrine, Holistic Sex Education will ensure that they lead a responsible sexual life. For a Holistic Sex Education to affect teenagers, safe spaces should be created in churches where teenage girls sexually active and inactive alike, can feel free to disclose and discuss issues concerning their sexuality without being judged. Creating a safe space could also include coming up with ‘suggestion boxes’ where anonymous messages from teenagers on matters of their sexuality could be dropped to be considered as topics to be discussed. This will help the church get the specific issues that teenagers would like to see addressed.

To give teenage girls Holistic Sex Education, I recommend that the church should appoint youth officials who have to make intentional visits to the student hostels, reach out to girls as a way of creating a connection and building trust. I suggest youth officials with the understanding that teenage girls would open up more to a younger person than an older one. I also note that every girl is different and has a different opinion, therefore each case and every girl should be approached and treated as such. Lastly, there is also a need for the Roman Catholic church(es) in Busia county to form a research committee that will include professionals from different fields of expertise in an attempt to inquire more on the actual practices of teenage girls and possible practical solutions. For instance, making contraceptives available and giving adequate information on them are some of the practical solutions that the church may need. Before then, the church needs to accept that there exist premarital sexual activities among teenagers in Busia. Anne Nasimiyu writing on polygamy notes that “...Anglican church, inspired by pastoral concern for people in polygamous households, has had to reverse its... decision of withholding baptism from polygamous households”²⁷⁹. To her, “it has to be realized that the importance here is placed on the pastoral

²⁷⁹ Anne Nasimiyu Wasike “Polygamy: A Feminist Critique”, 101.

rather than on the doctrinal understanding of marriage.”²⁸⁰ Indeed, though a different issue, I choose to share her sentiments. Teenage girls’ views and practices may differ from a place to another, one girl to the other. To give adequate information on contraceptives equates to answering a call of many Catholic teenage girls in Busia. This aligns with pastoral concern rather than the main doctrines of the Catholic Church. Lartey is right, “theology is not merely about doctrines and propositions but is also about how we understand and live in the world as it is.”²⁸¹ Though giving a Holistic Sex Education requires other stakeholders like teachers, parents, and guardians from society, I have chosen to focus on the church as it has the potential of informing society.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 101.

²⁸¹ Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World*, 6.

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APPENDICES

Transcription of interviews conducted by the researcher CONCILENCE ALFIN OJIAMBO on Perceptions of Roman Catholic Teenage girls aged 18-19 years on Women's Sexuality with a special focus on Premarital Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use.

NB: All interviews were conducted in the English Language over WhatsApp Messenger and recorded. Also, participants have been assigned fictitious names and are not represented by their real names.

Words or phrases said in Kiswahili or Sheng (a slang used by many youths in Kenya) have been translated to English. An abbreviation of RCC means Roman Catholic Church, STIs/STDs stands for Sexually Transmitted Infections/ Diseases.

Interview 1

Name of Respondent: Akumu

Age: 19 years

University: University of Nairobi

(Interview begins)

Interviewer: What would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Akumu: Basically, the church is there to inform me of values that I need to have for my general well-being.

Interviewer: If you do not mind, would you like to explain further?

Akumu: No, I don't. For me, the church is a platform whose teachings should impact values on me, such as honesty, hard work, integrity just to name a few. These values would in turn help me lead a better-quality life, and promote a just society.

Interviewer: This is great. Please, what are your views on premarital sex?

Akumu: It's only alright if both parties fully understand what they're getting themselves into.

Interviewer: When you say 'fully understand...', what do you mean?

Akumu: They have to understand what sex is, its physical and emotional implications, and that they're ready to shoulder the consequences that come with sex.

Interviewer: Talking about consequences, what do you imply precisely?

Akumu: The attachment you have to the guy afterwards, the risk of getting pregnant and STIs- to imply Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Akumu: (Laughing) I only remember the priest saying we should shun away from premarital sex. I did my catechism when I was very young, at no point was any teaching on sex and sexuality mentioned. But in their defense, we we're only 7 years old.

Interviewer: I get it, but why are you laughing?

Akumu: Because he was preaching one day at a youth seminar and immediately, he left, ironically, the youths started the conversation, and there was a consensus that guys should use protection.

Interviewer: So funny.

Akumu: It's at that very seminar that the youth chaplain, frustrated by the previous cases of pregnancy during the seminars and among the youth group, that he decided to resort to threats (for lack of a better word) He blessed all the sexual activities that would take place asking God to show us the fruits as evidence. (Laughs)

Interviewer: What a beautiful memory! Thanks for sharing. But growing up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Akumu: My teachers, yes, but parents... (laughs). The only message about the sex that my parents ever told me was told in a parable, by my mother. My guy friends had come home to visit and after they left my mother started saying how at first my Dad preferred not to have girls because if anyone impregnated them, he'd put a bullet in their head. When I shared the story with a close guy friend, he's never stepped 100 metre close to our home.

Interviewer: What a great mother! (laughing). What did your teachers say?

Akumu: Well, my staunch teachers told us to wait till we got married, others who we're, in the present-day vernacular wamechanuka (those who adopt modern trends of doing things) implied that premarital sex wasn't such a big issue, while others who were frustrated, told of how, what men only want is sex.

Interviewer: I like the phrase "frustrated". Personally, under what conditions would you consider engaging in premarital sex?

Akumu: When, first I love the guy. Secondly, when I'd definitely take him in as my husband. Third, when I'm capable of funding at least my basic needs and lastly, when there's a mutual understanding between us about why we're engaging in sex.

Interviewer: Wow, this is great. Would you please elaborate on the issue of funding?

Akumu: When I have a source of income from which I can buy my basic needs, for example, food, personal effects, pay my own rent etc.

Interviewer: Oh, and what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Akumu: I prefer condoms but I hold the view that pills, coils, and injections should be avoided when they can be before one has her kids. I have seen a close family member have to go for surgery to remove fibroids, and the doctor attributed that to her continuous use of p2 (an example of emergency contraceptive pill). I've also read on how they affect someone's hormonal imbalance and though its' effects vary from one person to another person, I prefer to be safe than sorry.

Interviewer: Mmmmmh, so how easy is it for you to access condoms, for instance?

Akumu: Very easy, I can always walk into a chemist or a supermarket and buy one, at least I can afford.

Interviewer: That is good to know. How helpful, according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Akumu: Very, very helpful. It helps prevent unplanned pregnancy and contraction of STI'S.

Interviewer: So, for you to use contraceptives, especially condoms, does it matter for you what your parents think or say on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Akumu: No not at all, what matters is what I know is best for me and what decision I have chosen to make.

Interviewer: What about what the church says on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Akumu: With both my parents and the church, I'll definitely hear what their say on the issue is, then I'll examine its pros and cons, then make a choice on my own.

Interviewer: Great. If you were to address the catholic priests and parents in Busia county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among sexually active teenage girls?

Akumu: That's a tough question, I will urge them to focus on teaching the girls the different types of contraceptives, their usefulness and effects, but be very clear that that doesn't mean they should go ahead and have premarital sex without thoroughly contemplating on its effects in their lives.

Interviewer: Is there something else you would love to add?

Akumu: Yes, that religious people and parents should acknowledge that at this time and age, admonishing teenagers not to have sex does not really work, they should however, turn to giving wholesome education on sex, its implication, how to make choices based on their priorities as a way of protecting the teenagers from STIs, pregnancy and most important the frustration that comes with relationships that we're rushed into without taking into account what was at risk.

Interviewer: Great piece. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request you that you respond to the following statements in terms of: don't agree at all- don't agree- neutral- agree- agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting.

Akumu: Don't agree

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner

Akumu: Agree totally

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls

Akumu: Neutral

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Akumu: Neutral

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Akumu: Don't agree

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Akumu: Agree totally

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Akumu: Don't agree

Interviewer: Every RCC sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Akumu: Agree totally

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier or regarding the statements you just responded to?

Akumu: No, I have talked about everything. (Smiling) My debating nature wants me to argue all the statements but my phone's battery is about to die, there's no power at home.

Interviewer: Oh sorry, I get you. Great. Then I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

Akumu: It's been a pleasure, looking forward to more sessions, possibly I'd have gotten back to Nairobi where the power and internet is more stable.

Interviewer: Me too. All the same, it was great having you on board. Thank you so much.

(Interview ends)

Interview 2

Name of respondent: Auma

Age: 19 years

University: Pwani University

(Interview begins)

Interviewer: I understand that you belong to the Roman Catholic tradition. What would you say is the role of RCC in your life?

Auma: It really aids in my moral upbringing in that the Catholic have rules which have to be followed. Thus, enhancing my ethics.

Interviewer: Good remark. Would you like to explain further or maybe give an example?

Auma: In terms of sexuality..., a Catholic lady isn't supposed to be having intimate and sexual relationship with a man until marriage. This enables the lady to maintain herself and her virginity for the husband.

interviewer: Oh, I get it. Talking of sexual relationships before marriage, what are your views on it?

Auma: With the generation we are in, one cannot actually force abstinence. I prefer preventive measures from early pregnancy should be given more mandate than abstinence.

Interviewer: Oh, well. What would you say characterizes this current generation that abstinence cannot be forced?

Auma: Peer influence, the emergence of western trends on sexual content, and parents are also afraid to talk to their children on sexual issues.

Interviewer: It is great that you talk about parents' fears. Growing up, was your parent afraid and/or still afraid of discussing sex matters with you?

Auma: No, not really. She openly talked about it and advised on it as well.

Interviewer: What a great parent! You mentioned earlier of peer influence and western trends on sexual content. Would you mind explaining further how this, impacts you as a teenager?

Auma: We all have lust at a point. When I see something, I either will want to do as they do or decline...most teenagers now have access to phones laptops tablets etc. They see emerging trends like using contraceptives or freezing the female eggs. What will stop a teenager from desiring that?

Interviewer: Wow, that is a great sentiment. Talking of using contraceptives, when would you as a teenager choose to use modern contraceptives?

Auma: I personally would not encourage using contraceptives as a teenager. It should be used when one is mature enough from the age of 25 years onwards.

Interviewer: Would you mind giving reasons for your position?

Auma: A teenager's body isn't fully developed and these contraceptives may have side effects on such a teenager.

Interviewer: Well, I get it. Earlier, you mentioned that you parent, on matters of sex, advised you as a teenager. Do you mind sharing some of the advice?

Auma: She would tell me that if I had to be with a man, then I would have to have a condom to prevent sexually transmitted infection as well as pregnancy.

Interviewer: Oh, great that you shared that. Did she give a particular age for engaging in a sexual act?

Auma: At 18 years she would let me make my choice.

Interviewer: Because it is a consenting age in your country, I guess...

Auma: Yes, it is.

Interviewer: I will therefore wish to ask; under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Auma: If we are both HIV tested recently and with the use of a condom.

Interviewer: If I get you correctly, you would not encourage the use of contraceptives for teenagers but when you know your partner's HIV status, you will consider using a condom?

Auma: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, good to know. Maybe for clarification purposes, you do not consider condoms as a modern contraceptive method?

Auma: When I say contraceptives, I mean the pills and the arm stuff (am not conversant with the names) ..., a condom is not a contraceptive.

Interviewer: Great.

Interviewer: For you to use condoms, for instance, does it matter to you what the church says on premarital sex and condom use?

Auma: As I said we are on a different generation ..., some of the church doctrines are altered.

Interviewer: Interesting, and those teachings include abstinence, right?

Auma: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think the same is the case for the societal demands on girls' virginity?

Auma: Not really. Virginity isn't really a major influence on this generation

Interviewer: Please explain?

Auma: There are very few individuals who still remain to be virgins by around 20 years.

Interviewer: Well, if you were to address the catholic priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Auma: They should organise seminars or talks where they can freely discuss this issue among themselves as well as the teenagers so as to reach an understanding.

Interviewer: Besides, what will you tell them concerning the use of condoms by teenage girls?

Auma: The girls should be taught the importance of using condoms during intercourse for it is to their own benefit.

Interviewer: Great. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request that you respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Auma: Don't agree.

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Auma: Neutral.

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on premarital sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Auma: Don't agree at all.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Auma: Don't agree at all.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Auma: Neutral

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Auma: Agree

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available condoms

Auma: Agree

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives/ condoms will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Auma: Don't agree at all

Interviewer: Every RCC sexually active girl should be allowed to use condoms/contraceptives.

Auma: I agree

Interviewer: as we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier?

Auma: I think I have said all my ideas.

Interviewer: Great. Then I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

Auma: Welcome Connie. The session was good.

Interviewer: Glad that you liked it.

(Interview Ends)

Interview 3

Name of respondent: Anyango

Age: 19 years

University: Masinde Muliro University

(Interview begins)

Interviewer: Great to know. Please, what would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Anyango: Umm, I would say, the role of my church in my life is to guide me in living according to God's will and to prepare me for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Interviewer: Oh well, so what are your views on premarital sex?

Anyango: Premarital sex is bad. Personally, I wouldn't advice anyone to have it. But the bad thing is that the larger percentage of the youths today are having it.

Interviewer: What makes you feel that premarital sex is bad?

Anyango: Because I believe sex creates soul ties...and having it with someone who you're not married to looks off to me, because you'll have ties with them yet your future with them is so uncertain. Also, I think sex was created for the purpose of reproduction, and mostly the intention in premature sex is never to procreate, so I think it's unnecessary to have premature sex.

Interviewer: Wow, well said. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Anyango: Premarital sex is fornication, and teenage girls should abstain from it.

Interviewer: How about what you have been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Anyango: I haven't really been taught by my parents anything about sex, but my teachers have mentioned it to me, they say premarital sex is bad, but if one can't control herself, then she should consider other means of protecting herself and preventing pregnancy, like the use of condoms and contraceptives.

Interviewer: Oh, great that you mentioned that ‘if one can’t control herself’, so basically, under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Anyango: Well, if one is under the influence of drugs, and maybe they get drunk or are in the wrong company, anything can happen. The probability of having premarital sex here is high. Sometimes it's even because of pressure and influence from friends.

Interviewer: Earlier, you mentioned condoms and contraceptives, when would you use modern contraceptives?

Anyango: When I'm married and I want to plan on how I want to give birth but I would rather use natural birth control methods.

Interviewer: Oh well, would you like to explain further the reasons for your preference?

Anyango: For quite some time there has been a debate in the church about contraceptives, and the church prefers natural birth control methods to contraceptives. I also heard some contraceptives may come with side effects to the body like they'd increase my vulnerability to a heart attack.

Interviewer: When you say, ‘you heard of side effects’, do you mind telling me your sources?

Anyango: My classmates.

Interviewer: You mentioned that there exists premarital sexual activity, according to you, how important is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Anyango: Yes, there exists premarital sexual activity. Using contraceptives could be of help, it would prevent unwanted pregnancy, and also one would be able to plan their life.

Interviewer: That is nice. If you were to address the priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Anyango: First of all, I would encourage parents and priests to be open to their youth concerning the topic of sex, because I've realized that most guardians don't talk to their children about sex. Concerning contraceptives, I would ask them to guide their daughters in using the right contraceptives the right way.

Interviewer: Great. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request that you respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally

Anyango: Okay

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Anyango: Agree totally

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner

Anyango: Neutral

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls

Anyango: Agree

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Anyango: Agree

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Anyango: Neutral

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Anyango: Agree totally

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Anyango: Agree totally

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Anyango: Agree totally

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier?

Anyango: No. I have nothing to add.

Interviewer: Great. Then I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

Anyango: Welcome.

(Interview ends)

Interview 4

Name of respondent: Awino

Age: 19 years

University: University of Nairobi

Interviewer: Please, what would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Awino: It plays a great deal in my spiritual growth, in better handling of individuals and considering other humans as also better beings.

Interviewer: Great to know, so what are your views on premarital sex?

Awino: Premarital sex plays a great deal in lowering a person's dignity especially females.

Interviewer: Would you like to elaborate, please.

Awino: Yeah, when a person loses respect while engaging in premarital sex, her self-esteem is lowered, and eventually this leads one to be desperate onwards over the same.

Interviewer: Well said. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Awino: Premarital sex shouldn't be participated in. Girls should not engage in the sex act since one's virginity should be kept for the husband when in matrimony.

Interviewer: Great, is this expected of boys as well, I mean to keep their virginity for their wives?

Awino: Of course, yes.

Interviewer: Growing up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers, or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity.

Awino: I can't recall being taught by any of them. It is something I have been learning on my own. Actually, it's something that's hardly addressed especially by parents. But I have learned about it a little bit in the school syllabus. So maybe, can say that I got a clue of it while in school.

Interviewer: Why do you think parents hardly want to address the issue of premarital sex?

Awino: I really can't say because I have never understood why it is so.

Interviewer: Oh great, earlier you mentioned that premarital sex lowers one's dignity especially females, does it do the same for males?

Awino: I'm not sure about males.

Interviewer: Under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Awino: There is a situation where maybe one may be undergoing depression and at that particular time, she has no confidant, for instance, she has trust issues with people around her, and so she may decide to hook up with a guy and under pressure may indulge into sex.

Interviewer: Oh, do you mean to say, the guy would pressure the girl in this situation?

Awino: Maybe yes, because either way one may be aroused and since the two of you are close, it may happen.

Interviewer: I get it and..., when would you use modern contraceptives?

Awino: When I have a family to plan.

Interviewer: Great, and what are your views on contraceptive usage by teenagers who do not have families to plan?

Awino: I think it's not effective for teenagers with zero families to take contraceptives which might affect them in their later stages of life.

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say "affect them in their later life"? Please do explain.

Awino: For instance, they may not be able to bear kids since contraceptives may have blocked their uterus, or they may have used contraceptives not suitable for their consumption.

Interviewer: Oh, I understand, but from where did you hear this?

Awino: From a certain article.

Interviewer: Oh great. What do think is your church's teaching on contraceptives especially among teenagers?

Awino: So far, I have not gotten such being taught in our church, maybe if it happened in my absence.

Interviewer: How helpful according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Awino: Not helpful since it may have adverse effects on later part of their growth.

Interviewer: If you were to address the priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Awino: I would encourage them to talk to their girls on sexuality rather than allowing the administration of contraceptives amongst teenagers.

Interviewer: What should they specifically tell girls when it comes to their sexuality?

Awino: They should advise girls to refrain from sexual activities.

Interviewer: Great. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request that you respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally

Awino: Well.

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting.

Awino: Agree totally

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Awino: Don't agree

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Awino: Neutral

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Awino: Agree

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Awino: Agree totally

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Awino: Don't agree

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Awino: Agree

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Awino: Don't agree

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier?

Awino: It's fine. Thank you

Interviewer: Great. Then I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

(Interview ends)

Interview 5

Name of respondent: Akuku

Age: 19 years

University: Beam International Training Institute

(Interview begins)

Interviewer: What would you say is the role of the church in your life?

Akuku: What I can say; first, the church strengthens my heart, helps me to learn how to respect people and deal with people accordingly. It teaches me of the love to others and myself, helps me to have faith in every activity that I tackle in my daily life, and lastly, the church helps me to understand God, the Bible, and how He created the Universe and everything on it.

Interviewer: Wow, that is great to know. Please tell me, what are your views on premarital sex?

Akuku: On premarital sex; for me, I don't see any problem with it because, in the current world, the children in the society go to school and while at school they do learn these things and start practicing them as early as 14 years. So, I have no problem with it according to the current world.

Interviewer: Well but growing up, what do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Akuku: When I was growing up, I was told that it is a sin against God and it is not encouraged.

Interviewer: How about what you have been taught by your parents, teachers, or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Akuku: They do not encourage it either and they will always advise us to abstain from it until marriage.

Interviewer: So, under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Akuku: Under peer pressure from friends, when having low self-esteem, due to lack of advice from parents and guardians, when you engage yourself in immoral behaviors like for example, you start taking alcohol, you may find yourself engaging in premarital sex, and lastly when you fail to follow the church's way of life where you are taught how to take care of yourself.

Interviewer: Oh, great. So, what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Akuku: For me I support it.

Interviewer: Would you like to give reasons for your position?

Akuku: The truth is, contraceptives help to prevent early pregnancies.

Interviewer: What are some methods of contraception that are familiar to you?

Akuku: Depo, the use of condoms, Jadelle, coil.

Interviewer: How easy is it for you to access contraceptives?

Akuku: Maybe through educating young girls on the importance of acquiring them.

Interviewer: Do you think it is easy for girls to access modern contraceptives?

Akuku: It is not easy because they have different beliefs about contraceptives. Some think that if they use some contraceptives, they will be barren or they think they can get some other diseases from contraceptives like Cancer.

Interviewer: Do you hold any of the beliefs that you have just mentioned?

Akuku: For me is a No.

Interviewer: Does it, therefore, mean that it is easy for you to access contraceptives?

Akuku: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh great, so for you to use contraceptives, does it matter what your parents think or say on premarital sex and contraceptive use

Akuku: It doesn't matter.

Interviewer: What about what the church says on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Akuku: I disagree with them.

Interviewer: Well, if you were to address the catholic priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Akuku: I will tell them the importance of using contraceptives among girls in the community and also, I will educate them that not only do contraceptives prevent early pregnancies, they also prevents one from getting some other diseases like the UTIs and STIs.

Interviewer: Is there something you would like to add?

Akuku: Not really. I think I have said everything.

Interviewer: Great. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request that you respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Akuku: Neutral

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Akuku: Agree.

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Akuku: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Akuku: Dont agree.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Akuku: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Akuku: Agree totally.

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Akuku: Neutral.

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Akuku: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Great. I would then like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

(Interview Ends)

Interview 6

Name of respondent: Atieno

Age: 18 years

University: University of Nairobi

Interviewer: What would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Atieno: Yeah, it has helped a lot in giving me guidelines on how to relate with people and how to cope with relationship issues and relating with the opposite sex. Also, it has nourished my understanding about the word of God.

Interviewer: That is awesome, I like the fact that you mention relationships and opposite sex. So, what are your views on premarital sex?

Atieno: Okay, according to my understanding and the way I have been brought up, premarital sex is something that is not tolerated at all and it's an act that is against the commandments of God. So, it's a sin that we should not get involved in before the right time, that is, in marriage.

Interviewer: Talking about being brought up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Atieno: First it's a sin and the punishment of sin is death. It's against our culture to have sex before marriage. Besides, my body is the temple of God, so I should respect it and keep it holy. There is time for everything so this is not the time to engage in sex.

Interviewer: How great of you to note. Do you know any of your agemates who engage in premarital sex?

Atieno: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think of them?

Atieno: I can't judge them of course because am not God, but I just talk to them consistently to change.

Interviewer: Well, but personally, under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Atieno: Personally, I have not engaged in one but from article that I read and from the surrounding that I have come across it might be; due to improper upbringing or a personal choice.

Interviewer: ..., and, what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Atieno: Mmmh, okay... yeah, they are reducing the rate of unwanted pregnancy but again they have got their own disadvantages.

Interviewer: Could you please mention some of the disadvantages of contraceptive use?

Atieno: It may lead to fibroids, continuous menstruation, as well as diseases like cervical cancer.

Interviewer: This is interesting. If you do not mind, please tell me where you heard this from.

Atieno: Ooh, friends.

Interviewer: I get it, so what methods of contraception do your friends mention or those you are familiar with?

Atieno: Family planning, p2 and coil.

Interviewer: Oh great, what do you think the church says about modern contraceptive use?

Atieno: Actually, I don't have an idea about it.

Interviewer: Well, you mentioned earlier that contraceptives can be used to prevent unwanted pregnancy, how helpful according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Atieno: It isn't helpful at all. So, I can't say it's helpful yet it encourages young girls and boys to engage in sex.

Interviewer: If you were to address the catholic priests and parents in Busia county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among sexually active teenage girls?

Atieno: They should educate us, tell us that it's bad to engage in sex rather than parents encouraging their girls and boys to engage in sex because there are contraceptives. They should not be afraid to talk to us because it's a modern country and to our priests, they should continue preaching the gospel about contraceptives and help us to be closer to our creator so that we can overcome this temptation.

Interviewer: Great. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request that you respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Atieno: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner

Atieno: Don't agree at all.

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Atieno: Agree.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Atieno: Don't agree.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Atieno: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Atieno: Don't agree.

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Atieno: Totally agree.

Interviewer: Every Roman Catholic sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Atieno: Don't agree at all.

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier?

Atieno: Not really. I have nothing.

Interviewer: Great. I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you so much.

Atieno: Welcome, thank you too for the opportunity.

(Interview ends)

Interview 7

Name of respondent: Achieno

Age: 19 years

University: Technical University of Mombasa

(Interview starts)

Interviewer: What can you say is the role of your church in your life?

Achieno: The church has helped me connect with God and be able to understand God better and it has also given me a sense of belonging.

Interviewer: Great. Please tell me, what are your views on premarital sex?

Achieno: This is quite tricky but I think in our generation today, premarital sex is something normal and very common. That doesn't make it right as such but it's difficult to avoid.

Interviewer: Why do you think it is difficult to be avoided?

Achieno: Because as we grow, we develop hormones of attraction and sexual urge and in these times by the time you are physically mature, that is, during the adolescence stage, a stage meant for these hormones to be channeled somewhere, and the sexual urge to be taken care of, you are most likely not married hence you may be tempted to engage in premarital sex.

Interviewer: Well, what do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Achieno: As teenage girls the church taught us to avoid it. We are not supposed to be involved in premarital sexual activities.

Interviewer: Growing up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Achieno: my parents are not any different from the church as such. My teachers as well. They have discouraged me from engaging in premarital sex.

Interviewer: Under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Achieno: personally, I will consider engaging in premarital sex when I get a strong uncontrollable urge to do so.

Interviewer: Well, will you then consider using contraceptives afterwards?

Achieno: Yes.

Interviewer: So, what are your views on contraceptive use?

Achieno: I recommend using contraceptive with less or no side effects to your body. This way you can be assured of your safety.

Interviewer: What are some methods of contraception that are familiar to you?

Achieno: I do know of contraceptives like Oral pills, Condoms, Intrauterine devices and rings.

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier of side effects, if you do not mind, please, tell me some.

Achieno: Some of the IUDs inserted in women may cause your menses to disappear or you may have heavier flows than before. Some pills may interfere with your hormones causing you to develop a lot of pimples, be plump etcetera.

Interviewer: Great. How easy is it for you to access contraceptives?

Achieno: Condoms are the only contraceptive that can be easily accessed in my country. The other contraceptives are a bit expensive.

Interviewer: How helpful according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Achieno: It's very helpful because it helps prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Interviewer: For you to use contraceptives, does it matter for you what your parents think or say on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Achieno: No, I am old enough to make such decisions for myself.

Interviewer: What about what the church says on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Achieno: I will consider and do what's best for my future even if it means disagreeing with the church or my parents sometimes.

Interviewer: If you were to address the catholic priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Achieno: I would advise them to give it a thought because contraceptive if administered properly it has more pros than cons especially in this generation where young people become sexually active at a very young age. Rather than advising against them, people should look at the bright side of contraceptives that matters a lot than the negative side especially for teenage girls.

Interviewer: Is there something you want to add?

Achieno: Nothing. I kind of have nothing to add.

Interviewer: I get it. I appreciate this. We are almost at the end of this conversation and I will therefore request you to respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally

Achieno: Alright.

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting.

Achieno: I agree.

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Achieno: I agree.

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Achieno: don't agree.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Achieno: Neutral.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Achieno: Agree.

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Achieno: Agree totally.

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Achieno: Neutral.

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Achieno: Agree totally.

Interviewer: I would like to end this conversation here and thank you so much for your time.

(Interview ends)

Interview 8

Name of respondent: Apondi

Age: 19 years

University: Kenyatta University

(Interview Begins)

Interviewer: Please, what is the role of your church in your life?

Apondi: My church plays a vital role in my life. It is useful in giving me moral guidance and support, a sense of belonging as well, and above all I get to worship God in fellowships with others, that is, when we gather.

Interviewer: Oh well, what are your views on premarital sex?

Apondi: It's wrong. It's a sin.

Interviewer: If you do not mind, please explain further.

Apondi: It's sin. From a biblical perspective, God founded marriage and therefore, we are expected to engage in sex only in marriage. Premarital sexual activity does not fall within a marriage setting and this makes it a sin. It is also wrong because it degrades someone, and its consequences include shame, forced marriage, equation to poor parenting, just to name but a few.

Interviewer: Oh great, so where did you hear this from?

Apondi: In Genesis; when God creates Adam and Eve.

Interviewer: What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Apondi: We were taught that engaging in premarital sex is a sin, one should wait until he/she is rightfully married first.

Interviewer: Great, what about what your parents, teachers or guardians taught you regarding premarital sexual activity?

Apondi: I guess there is no difference between what I was taught in the church and my parents or let us say teachers. The teachings are all the same, nothing new. To them, premarital sex is wrong and it's sinning against God.

Interviewer: I get it, so under what conditions would you engage in premarital sex?

Apondi: Personally, I have never thought of engaging myself in that, my conscience will not allow me to.

Interviewer: Well, so what are your views on modern contraceptives use?

Apondi: They help reduce pregnancy cases among teenage girls. That is a fact, but just from stories I heard, they can lead to miscarriages in the future or rather total barrenness.

Interviewer: So, according to you, would you consider the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls helpful?

Apondi: Yeah.

Interviewer: You said you heard stories about effects of contraceptives, from where or whom did you hear this?

Apondi: Village mamas (mothers/women)

Interviewer: That is nice. If you were to address the priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Apondi: It is good for the sexually active girls to have access to contraceptives, but again personally, I have not seen girls with such cases though I believe they exist. My view is that unless it is the last option, I can't recommend the use of contraceptives.

Interviewer: Do you want to add something, give an example or elaborate perhaps?

Apondi: Sure. Having girls take this contraceptive pill makes them so careless and some just take them because they well know themselves as careless, so they do to prevent pregnancy which is not right. This again is like taking contraceptives for a wrong reason and this is not right.

Interviewer: I get it. I appreciate this. We are almost at the end of this conversation and I will therefore request you to respond to the following statements in terms of: Don't agree at all – don't agree – neutral – agree – agree totally

Apondi: Okay.

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Apondi: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Apondi: Don't agree at all.

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Apondi: Agree.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Apondi: Neutral.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Apondi: Agree totally.

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Apondi: Agree.

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Apondi: Agree.

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Apondi: Agree.

Interviewer: Great. I am really grateful for having this conversation with you. I would like to say that we have to come to the end of the session. Thank you so much.

Apondi: You welcome.

(Interview ends)

Interview 9

Name of respondent: Akello

Age: 19 years

University: Pwani University

(The Interview Begins)

Interviewer: What would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Akello: Basically, I was brought up in a Christian community and the Church has helped me a lot, that is, when it comes to making most of my decisions.

Interviewer: Would you like to explain further?

Akello: Okay. For me, before I make any decision, I first think if it is good or bad and of what impact it does add to my life. I first think of what and how my family will think of me.

Interviewer: This is great. Please, what are your views on premarital sex?

Akello: I basically don't just judge people. I always believe that there are many factors that lead to premarital sex, so we are not just supposed to judge anyone but we should try always to understand them.

Interviewer: Oh great, would you mind to share some factors that lead to premarital sex, according to you.

Akello: Take for example, in our country here (Kenya), there is poverty. Many girls can't afford a single penny to buy sanitary towels they are forced to offer themselves to men just to get 50 Kenya shillings (equivalent to half a Euro) for pads, others are to do this so as to earn money for food, the kind of lifestyle they live in also contributes a lot. Maybe they come from a home where the mother does prostitution as her job, they will be exposed to such environment.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Akello: It used to criticize a lot but as I grew up, I came to understand why girls get involved in premarital sexual activities.

Interviewer: What do you think were the reasons for the church to criticize premarital sexual activity?

Akello: The church always believes that premarital sex can be and is a sin and..., yeah, it may be a sin but they don't major on what the causes are, they are just based on the bible and that's where I differ with them. The church also believes that it's the fault of our parents and us as human beings. The church looking at premarital sexual activity, normally claims it as the work of the devil.

Interviewer: Great. What have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Akello: Truth be told, I never talk about sex with my parents. My teachers were always against premarital sex as they always told us to abstain but if one can't, then she should use protective measures. On the other hand, my uncle here always tells me this, "if you can't avoid having sex then always make sure you use protection and let it not be your daily meal". He is against judging those who practice it.

Interviewer: What a great uncle! Under what conditions would you consider engaging in premarital sex?

Akello: I don't believe in any conditions to engage in premarital sex rather I always believe that it is one's choice. Instead of engaging in it I will go for help or find a way to solve whatever problems I am facing. I always believe that I can talk to someone and all will be well. I would rather work myself out to earn what I need.

Interviewer: ..., and when would you consider engaging in premarital sexual activity?

Akello: You know, I have never thought about it and I don't think I can.

Interviewer: You mentioned of protective measures, what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Akello: There are many contraceptives in the market and it's all about choosing which one works best for you, that is if one is engaging in sex. But personally, I will go for abstaining all the way till the time I feel like am ready for sex.

Interviewer: How helpful according to you is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Akello: It is all about preventing pregnancy and at some point, help prevent one from getting infected with sexually transmitted diseases.

Interviewer: Would you like to explain further?

Akello: Contraceptives are mostly made for two main functions as I have said. Or is there a place where they state other functions of the contraceptives? As far as people practice sex, no one wants to live knowing that they are infected.

Interviewer: Thanks for clarifying. If you were to address the priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Akello: They should all accept that teenage girls practice sex and that contraceptives are the only way to keep them safe. They should stop discriminating the girls that practice it and embrace them as their kids. Priests should stop with their lousy preaching and rather try to help in educating them, guiding as well as assisting them in any problem they face.

Interviewer: Great piece. Is there something you would like to add?

Akello: I insist on not judging the girls that practice sex but we all should take it as our responsibility to try and help them if we are capable looking at them as the young society that is yet to grow, then we should try and make a clear and smooth environment for them where they can all be free and comfortable to ask for help when facing a problem.

Interviewer: That is awesome. We are almost at the end of this interview and I will therefore request you that you respond to the following statements in terms of: don't agree at all- don't agree- neutral- agree- agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting.

Akello: I don't agree at all

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Akello: Neutral

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls.

Akello: I agree totally.

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them.

Akello: I don't agree.

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin.

Akello: I don't agree at all

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives.

Akello: I agree.

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Akello: I agree totally.

Interviewer: Every RCC sexually active girl should be allowed to uses contraceptives.

Akello: I agree totally

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier or regarding the statements you just responded to.

Akello: Not really, I think I have mentioned all the stuff I wanted to talk about.

Interviewer: I will therefore like to say that we have come to the end of this session and thanks a lot for your time.

Akello: The pleasure is all mine, at least you gave me a chance to speak out my mind.

(The Interview Ends)

Interview 10

Name of respondent: Apiyo

Age: 19 years

University: University of Nairobi

(Interview Begins)

Interviewer: Please, what would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Apiyo: The church has impacted in terms of giving me patience. I learn the value of patience from the church.

Interviewer: Would you like to explain further?

Apiyo: You see in the current situation we are in everyone is rushing most especially, to get money. People are not patient enough to wait for what is rightfully theirs. So, from what is in the church, I think the greatest value that it has impacted in me is patience.

Interviewer: This is great. Please, what are your views on premarital sex?

Apiyo: To be sincere, once a girl or a child is past the adolescent stage, I don't consider sex then as premarital because from what we see from kitambo (to mean in the past) people were getting married from the age of 15 years.

Interviewer: Would you like to explain further?

Apiyo: What I mean to say is the issue of a child being told not to engage in sex before marriage, yet most of us have to accomplish our academic dreams that takes approximately 25 years. You know our bodies have hormones and as humans they need to be satisfied.

Interviewer: So according to you, what would you say is the best age for one to engage in sex?

Apiyo: There is no perfect age. What is needed is once you are ready and you feel you have found the right person; you can go ahead.

Interviewer: What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Apiyo: The church doesn't say anything about teenage girls. All it says is 'wait till marriage'. The bible I believe was written before all this formal education began, that time people used to get married probably at the age of 15 years. You get my point?

Interviewer: I do. Growing up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Apiyo: My teachers say 'wait till you are married'. My mum says 'if you really have to have sex make sure you are protected or if you think you can take the consequences of unprotected sex go ahead but don't inconvenience others'.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, for you, under what conditions would you engage in sexual activity?

Apiyo: If there is protection and if I feel that I love a guy, personally, I will go ahead.

Interviewer: talking of protection, what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Apiyo: To be sincere the only contraceptive I know of is the use of condoms.

Interviewer: when you say condoms, do you mean the female or male condoms?

Apiyo: The male condoms.

Interviewer: How easy is it for you to access condoms?

Apiyo: It is very easy. I can get them kwa duka (in the shop) as well as in the chemists.

Interviewer: How helpful according to you, is the use of contraceptives like condoms to sexually active teenage girls?

Apiyo: They are very helpful as they help to prevent unwanted pregnancy as well as the contraction of STDs.

Interviewer: For you to use condoms, for instance, does it matter for you what your parents think or say on premarital sex and contraceptive use?

Apiyo: I have told you right, my mum says 'have sex knowing the consequences'.

Interviewer: And does it matter to you what the church says?

Apiyo: I don't agree with the church, I agree with the bible. The church dwells on human reasoning which may not be present in the bible.

Interviewer: If you were to address the catholic priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Apiyo: Teach your girls and boys about contraceptives to prevent the many issues we are having of early pregnancy and STDs and HIV. Biologically our bodies mature from 15 years therefore they need to be educated.

Interviewer: Would you like to add something else?

Apiyo: Yes. I am an open-minded person, although I still believe in the church and I think we should change our minds to suit current situations.

Interviewer: Well said. we are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request you that you respond to the following statements in terms of: don't agree at all- don't agree- neutral- agree- agree totally.

Apiyo: Sure.

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Apiyo: Neutral

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner

Apiyo: I Agree

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls

Apiyo: I agree

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Apiyo: I agree

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Apiyo: I don't agree

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Apiyo: I agree

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Apiyo: Neutral

Interviewer: Every RCC sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Apiyo: I agree

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier or regarding the statements you just responded to?

Apiyo: Not really. I think I have exhausted whatever I needed to say. Besides, all I can say is that it was fun and I loved this conversation. It was fun

Interviewer: It was fun for me too. I will therefore like to say that we have come to the end of this session and thank a lot for your time.

Apiyo: You are welcome

Interviewer: I am glad to have had a chat with you

(Interview Ends)

Interview 11

Name of respondent: Ayuma

Age: 18 years

University: Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

(Interview Begins)

Interviewer: Please, what would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Ayuma: I consider the church very helpful for me because it plays a lot of roles in my life. First, I think it helps me particularly with my spiritual growth and also to get to know what God wants us to do as his people. Actually, the church helps in the building of my faith as a Christian.

Interviewer: That is great to note. Please, what are your views on premarital sex?

Ayuma: Mmmmh, I think premarital sex is not good. This is because even according to the word of God, sex is only meant for people who are married. Premarital sex means therefore that sex happens outside marriage. This makes it not acceptable.

Interviewer: When you talk of the 'word of God', do you mean the Bible?

Ayuma: Oh yeah, the Bible.

Interviewer: I see. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Ayuma: Actually, I do not remember a lot but what I remember is that the priest would say engaging in premarital sexual activity would not be pleasing in the eyes of God and that it could also lead to negative effects like early pregnancy, and in the process, one would be exposed to sexually transmitted diseases....,

Interviewer: Oh great. Growing up, what have you been taught by your teachers, parents or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Ayuma: The teachings of my parents and teachers do not differ with the church teachings. They all like the teachings in the church, stressed the problem of sexually transmitted diseases and the possibility of early pregnancies that would destroy my future by cutting my chances of being in

school. Actually, to my mother, having sex before marriage is like going against the word of God and this should be considered a sin.

Interviewer: Oh well, and what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Ayuma: Okay..., I honestly don't know much about modern contraceptives but I guess they got advantages and disadvantages. Just like other thing, they have two sides. My friends say that they remain good in as far as preventing pregnancies is concerned but they can also lead to diseases like fibroids and infertility.

Interviewer: What are some methods of contraception that are familiar to you?

Ayuma: I know of the tablets which can be taken within seventy-two hours of having unprotected sex and also those that should be taken monthly..., I have also heard of coils and syringes but I do not know much about them.

Interviewer: That is good to know. Earlier you mentioned that contraceptives can be used to prevent early pregnancies. For this reason, how helpful, according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Ayuma: Okay..., it is true that contraceptives prevent girls who engage in sexual activity from the unwanted pregnancies. Especially those who are not married and still in school...,

Interviewer: Would you then consider it helpful, maybe?

Ayuma: I may or maybe I should but the thing is..., I am not even sure because what I know is that they prevent the pregnancies and therefore I think it is helpful for that reason. But they may also have side effects as I mentioned earlier. It is hard to say that they are helpful when there seems to be a possibility of side effects. But again, they are important as they help prevent early pregnancies.

Interviewer: Wow, great. Let us say you are asked to address the priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among teenage girls?

Ayuma: The parents and priests should talk and embrace their girls. Girls should be taught the main roles of contraceptives. Contraceptives are not bad but it is wrong to use them for wrong reasons. Instead, contraceptives should be used for the right purpose. Just because they prevent

one from getting pregnant at an early stage, it is not right for some girls to take advantage of them and use them for sexual pleasure and satisfaction. It is the role of parents and church priests to talk this through with the teenage girls.

Interviewer: Great piece. we are almost at the end of this interview. i will therefore request you that you respond to the following statements in terms of: don't agree at all- don't agree- neutral- agree- agree totally. Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting.

Ayuma: Agree

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner.

Ayuma: Don't agree

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls

Ayuma: Agree

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Ayuma: Don't agree at all

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Ayuma: Neutral

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Ayuma: Agree

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Ayuma: Agree

Interviewer: Every Roman Catholic sexually active girl should be allowed to uses contraceptives.

Ayuma: Neutral

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier or regarding the statements you just responded to?

Ayuma: ..., well, I would really like to say that in this generation of ours, modern contraceptives are being misused and this contributes into making so many of teenage girls to be sexually active and also on the other hand, the availability of contraceptives causes many teenagers to spread sexually transmitted diseases. They engage in sex because they feel like they will take contraceptives afterwards.

Interviewer: This is a beautiful observation and remark..., I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

Ayuma: Anytime. Welcome.

(Interview Ends)

Interview 12

Name of respondent: Abungu

Age: 19 years

University: Cooperative University of Kenya

(Interview Begins)

Interviewer: Kindly, what would you say is the role of your church in your life?

Abungu: The church gives me the spiritual thinking and also leads my life towards a successful path of which the religious teachings, are the main sources of my spiritual living.

Interviewer: Would you love to explain further?

Abungu: Yes. The church is wide, it also has the programs which helps the youths in the society in their day-to-day life of knowing Christ and living a super spiritual life which in particular will lead us the youths to a loving and memorable life. It also helps us in knowing where we are going wrong and where we are supposed to be heading.

Interviewer: Thanks for explaining. Please, what are your views on premarital sex?

Abungu: Mainly premarital sex is based on peer pressure as I can personally see it or according to my view, and the groups that teens and young youths have. Secondly it is due to the lack of parental care or perhaps advise from parents to their children. Those practicing premarital sex are those lacking a particular thing; it may be as I have stated earlier, for instance, the lack of pads, lack of clothes and possibly they want to look smart to their friends.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. What do you remember of the church teachings on premarital sexual activities especially for teenage girls?

Abungu: The church says teenagers should keep themselves busy in groups which are helpful to their lives, they should be ready to open up to their parents and also should have mentors of which they will be free to talk to at any time they are in need.

Interviewer: What a beautiful summary! Thanks for sharing. But growing up, what have you been taught by your parents, teachers or guardians regarding premarital sexual activity?

Abungu: Personally, I grew up fearing my mother and I was afraid of my father too, but I had and have my mentors from church and other groups in the society. I was taught that I should always take care of myself and the consequences of premarital sex. Those consequences are the ones that always stick to my mind seeing my parents struggling and growing up in ushago ghetto- (a poor rural area), I had to take care.

Interviewer: Oh, wow. Well, personally, under what conditions would you consider engaging in premarital sex?

Abungu: That is tricky, but I think when, let us assume both of my parents are dead and as a lady I am supposed to take care of the siblings and myself, maybe when I have tried other odd jobs, that is where premarital sex may be engaged in to get a daily living. But I don't actually agree to it just an opinion.

Interviewer: Oh, I get it.

Abungu: Yeah

Interviewer: Well, and what are your views on modern contraceptive use?

Abungu: They are blinding the minds of young women in our generation, because they are happy that the possibility of having sex without getting pregnant is assured, and this is taken for granted. You know, contraceptives weaken the health system of women. The result of its use is usually poor sexual and reproductive health which is not good.

Interviewer: Well, talking of weakening health system of women, what are some of the effects of contraceptives that you know of, maybe?

Abungu: They include lack of conceiving, irregular periods and there is this one I am looking for the word but I do not remember...

Interviewer: Okay... where did you hear this from if you do not mind sharing.

Abungu: After I was done with high school, I joined a program of girls which we were educated on this.

Interviewer: Was the program church oriented?

Abungu: Not really. I am not sure but it was not from my church.

Interviewer: Did you have any priests talk to you?

Abungu: No, just some elderly women and a man.

Interviewer: I see. Maybe, what are some methods of contraception that are familiar to you?

Abungu: The daily pills, three to five years contraceptives which are put in the hand a woman and three months injection.

Interviewer: Do you consider male condoms as part of contraceptives?

Abungu: Yeah, I do consider them..., and they are highly used.

Interviewer: Do you think that they also have side effects like the rest as you mentioned earlier?

Abungu: Yes, they do. There are various types of condoms nowadays and there are those which cause vaginal cancer because of the perfumes used to decorate them, and condoms do burst inside the body of women which is of high risk to them.

Interviewer: Well, so, how helpful according to you, is the use of contraceptives to sexually active teenage girls?

Abungu: They actually prevent early pregnancy, the spread HIV/AIDS and STIs as well.

Interviewer: Would you then consider them helpful then, in this essence?

Abungu: Yes. They are helpful.

Interviewer: What do you think are the church teachings on contraceptive use?

Abungu: I am not sure but I think the church does not encourage the use of contraceptives.

Interviewer: At an individual level, when would you use contraceptives?

Abungu: When one is in marriage, one can use it. So, when I get married, I will.

Interviewer: If you were to address the catholic priests and parents in your county, what would you tell them regarding contraceptive use among sexually active teenage girls?

Abungu: Contraceptive usage should be banned but also at the same time they should be made available. They should provide contraceptive use programs for teenage girls and where girls should be told the effects of contraceptives and the possibility of addiction that lies with them.

Interviewer: Maybe, just to get some clarification... How should they be banned and made available at the same time?

Abungu: I mean, a warning should be set to those selling contraceptives and also the free donations of condoms should not be made available.

Interviewer: ..., warning, including those who sell condoms?

Abungu: Sure, like if they are found selling contraceptives they will be jailed.

Interviewer: I get you. Is there something you would like to add?

Abungu: Yeah, the fact that most of teenage girls got to know how to manage their lives and avoid premarital sex.

Interviewer: Please elaborate.

Abungu: Now, most girls know vividly the effects of premarital sex and are ready to live a successful life without any hinderance of early pregnancy or AIDS.

Interviewer: Do you mean to say that many are not engaging in sexual activity?

Abungu: Not many but a good number.

Interviewer: Great observation. We are almost at the end of this interview. I will therefore request you that you respond to the following statements in terms of: don't agree at all- don't agree- neutral- agree- agree totally

Abungu: Oh, sure.

Interviewer: Sexual activity is only legitimate within a heterosexual marriage setting

Abungu: Dont agree at all

Interviewer: Having premarital sex is allowed when one envisions a long-term relationship with the partner

Abungu: Dont agree

Interviewer: The church and societal teachings on sexual activity are more lenient/flexible/ less restrictive/less strict for teenage boys than teenage girls

Abungu: Agree

Interviewer: Boys/ men exercise pressure on teenage girls to have sex with them

Abungu: Agree totally

Interviewer: It is important for a girl to enter the married state as a virgin

Abungu: Agree

Interviewer: Teenage pregnancies can be prevented by freely available contraceptives

Abungu: Neutral

Interviewer: The free availability of contraceptives will inspire teenage girls to become sexually active at a far too young age.

Abungu: Agree totally

Interviewer: Every sexually active girl should be allowed to use contraceptives.

Abungu: Agree

Interviewer: As we come to the end of this session, would you like to add something you have not talked about or expound on what you said earlier or regarding the statements you just responded to?

Abungu: Mmmh, I don't think I have anything to add.

Interviewer: Great then, I would like to say that we have come to the end of this session and I am so grateful having you take part in this interview. Thank you.

Abungu: Anytime. Thank you very much.

(Interview Ends)

List of Respondents

Fictitious name	Age	University
Akumu	19	University of Nairobi
Auma	19	Pwani University
Anyango	19	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
Awino	19	University of Nairobi
Akuku	19	Beam International Training Institute
Atieno	18	University of Nairobi
Achieno	19	Technical University of Mombasa
Apondi	19	Kenyatta University
Akello	19	Pwani University
Apiyo	19	University of Nairobi
Ayuma	18	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
Abungu	19	Cooperative University of Kenya

Declaration Sheet Master's Thesis

Name student: Concidence Alfin Ojiambo

Title master's thesis: "I don't agree with the church, I agree with the Bible": Roman Catholic Teenage Girls' Perceptions on Premarital Sex and Contraceptive Use in the Contemporary Rural Busia, Kenya.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that the aforementioned master's thesis consists of original work. The thesis is the result of my own research and is written only by myself, unless stated otherwise. Where information and ideas have been taken from other sources, this is stated explicitly, completely and appropriately in the text or in the notes. A bibliography has been included.

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Signature:

27th June, 2021



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