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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## EXPOSURE TO SEXUAL CONTENT ON TELEVISION AND ITS EFFECTS ON YOUTH SEXUAL ATTITUDES IN TECHNICAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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### Abstract

Youth in Kenya are active consumers of media and often report that media are among the top sexual educators. Television presents to the youth a world that is different from the one they live in, which the youth may perceive to be reality. This study sought to establish the sexual attitudes of the youth in relation to sexual content on television. The study was guided by two complimentary theoretical perspectives: Gerber's Cultivation Theory and the Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura. The research adopted a pragmatic philosophical approach in which it is believed that there is no value in absolute objectivity or absolute subjectivity, and thus neither is sufficient for the understanding of reality. A descriptive survey design was adopted to generate data from the respondents of the study. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews and participant observation were used to generate additional data for the purpose of validating and supplementing survey information. A total of 420 questionnaires were administered to the respondents selected through stratified random sampling technique. The study established that the youth have permissive attitudes towards sex in that they do not find it wrong for unmarried men and women engaging in premarital sexual behaviour. They also do not find it wrong for married men and women engaging in extramarital sex. The study also established that youth who spent more time watching TV had permissive attitudes towards sex. The study therefore recommends that to prevent adverse effects of exposure to sexual content on television on the sexual attitudes of the youth, there is need for media literacy as a skill which needs to be improved among the youth to enable them interpret television content appropriately.

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### Introduction

Santrock (2001) observes that adolescence is a period where life becomes wrapped up in sexuality. It is the time of sexual exploration and experimentation, sexual fantasies and realities and of incorporating sexuality into their identity. Adolescents have an almost insatiable curiosity about the mysteries of sex. They think about whether they are sexually attractive, how to do sex, and what the future holds for their sexual lives. A key period of exploration and development occurs in adolescence which continues until late adolescence/youth. It is during this period that the youth begin to find out which sexual behaviours are enjoyable, moral and appropriate for their age (Lips, 2001). It is also important to note that during this period many youth become sexually active although not always by choice. It has been observed that although sexual intercourse is common among the youth majority of them wish they had waited longer to have sex.

During this period also the youth develop sexual identity which is often coupled with mastering emerging sexual feelings (Brooks-Gunn & Graber, 1999). This process involves learning to manage sexual feelings, such as sexual

arousal and attraction, developing new forms of intimacy, learning the skills to regulate sexual behaviour to avoid undesirable consequences. It is important to note that developing sexual identity includes interfaces with other developing identities. Sexual identities emerge in the context of physical factors, social factors, and cultural factors with most societies putting restrictions on sexual behaviour of adolescents.

Sexual orientation refers to a person's preference for partners of the same or the other sex. Heterosexual is the label used for a person who prefers partners of the other sex, homosexual is the label applied to a person who prefers partners of the same sex, and bisexual is a term used to describe a person who can be attracted to partners of either sex (Lips, 2001). This paper concentrates only on heterosexual behaviour.

Santrock (2001) further observes that the youth with their developing idealism and ability to think in more abstract and hypothetical ways may get caught up in mental world that is far removed from reality and one that may involve a belief that things cannot happen to them and they are omnipotent and indestructible. Therefore, having information about contraception is not enough and whether or not adolescents will use contraceptives is determined by their acceptance of themselves and their sexuality. This acceptance requires not only cognitive maturity but also emotional maturity.

It is important to note that most programmes targeting the youth assume that they have the ability to anticipate consequences, to weigh the possible outcome of behaviour, and to project into the future what will happen if they engage in certain acts, such as sexual intercourse. It is thus assumed that the youth have the cognitive ability to approach problem solving in a planned, organized and analytical manner. However, many adolescents, as studies indicate, are just beginning to develop these capacities while others have not developed them at all.

Santrock (2001) has established that late adolescents (18-19 years of age) are to some degree realistic and future oriented about sexual experiences, just as they are about career and marriage. He observes further that middle adolescents (15-17 years of age) often romanticize sexuality, while young adolescents (10 to 15 years of age) seem to experience sex in a depersonalised way that is filled with anxiety and denial. This depersonalised orientation is not likely to lead to preventative behaviour.

Females and males respond differently to the question "What are your motives for having sexual intercourse?" Women tend to stress love and commitment to their partner whereas men emphasize physical needs and pleasure (Carroll *et al.*, 1985). Twice as many female youth say that they would have sex with a date simply because they are sexually attracted (Pesmen, 1991).

Research has indicated that men and women value different things in heterosexual relationships. For instance, it is widely believed that women place higher value on love, intimacy and togetherness whereas men tend to emphasize the importance of the physical relationship and sexual variety. Clark and Hatfield (1989) have found out that men are more interested than women in sexual variety. They interviewed casual dating and newly-wed couples about their desire for variety in sexual relationships and found that men tended to wish their sexual lives were more exciting while women were more likely to be satisfied with the way things are.

The idea that love is more important to women than men in sexual relationships is supported by some findings and contradicted by others. Carroll *et al.* (1985) in their have found out that 45 per cent of college females regard emotional involvement as a prerequisite for participating in sexual intercourse while only 8 per cent of the male regard the same as a prerequisite to sexual intercourse. Studies by Rubin *et al.* (1981) have established that men tend to be more romantic than women and they are more likely to fall in love quickly and suffer terribly when the relationship ends. The study upon which this paper is based aimed at establishing the sexual attitudes of the youth and stands to be informed by the studies more especially in determining the motives and values that youth place on sexual intercourse. The study did not concentrate on gender differences though it was acknowledged that men and women differ in their motives and values towards sex.

Attitudes towards sexual activity have changed over the last several decades. Among the Americans, for example, especially those under the age of 30, they have become more permissive of sexual activity, especially premarital sex. Fink (1983), in a poll taken in the early 1980s, has established that 79 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women aged 18-29 approved of sexual intercourse for regularly dating couples. A later survey of Americans aged 14-21 revealed that 28 per cent of the females and 16 per cent of the males said they did not intend to have sex

before marriage (Pesmen, 1991). The findings are in sharp contrast to surveys taken in 1937 and 1959, in which 56 per cent and 54 per cent of the respondents, respectively, disapproved of premarital sexual intercourse (Hunt, 1974).

Studies conducted in North America have revealed that women are less permissive than men in sexual behaviour. Women have much more negative attitudes than men do about casual sex and premarital sex, and women are moderately less approving than men of premarital sex in a committed relationship. Women are likely than men to feel anxious or guilty about sex and to endorse the double standard (Oliver & Hyde, 1993).

In a study of American youth, there was more permissiveness where 6 per cent of the females and 21 per cent of the males agreed that it was okay to have sex with someone simply because it is fun (Pesmen, 1991). In another study among college students, males scored higher than females in all items of a scale measuring sexual permissiveness (Hendrick *et al.*, 1985). The differences were, however, not extreme and the researchers characterised the males as "moderately permissive" and the females as "moderately conservative".

It can be concluded that according to the studies done in developed countries there is evidence to suggest that sexual attitudes of both women and men are becoming more similar, though small differences do still exist. Researchers are not sure whether the trend towards convergence of male and female attitudes will shift or not. Lips (2001), however observes that a major determining factor in the trend will be the media portrayal of sexuality. This is because, Lips (*ibid.*) believes, sexual attitudes are shaped by the way sexual relationships are depicted in movies, television, music videos, magazines and books. If the media continue to emphasize a double standard of sexual behaviour, an absence of sexual responsibility for males and greater concern for females than males for relationships context of sexuality, then the attitudinal gender differences are likely to persist.

The findings from the studies conducted in the USA are crucial in laying a foundation for the understanding of youth sexual behaviour and attitudes more especially due to the fact that much of the Kenyan youth culture is borrowed from the west. Even in terms of television programming, there is a lot of similarity between the programmes shown in the western countries and in the developing countries such as Kenya.

In the African context, different societies have different beliefs, values and attitudes towards sex and sexuality. In African traditional beliefs, sexuality was a taboo topic which was only to be discussed in privacy and among specific age groups. Mbithi (1969) observes that among the Nandi of the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, sex could only be discussed in a *Sikiroino*, a special hut where young men and women were gathered for initiation into adulthood. Kamaara (2005), however, observes that both the secular and religious traditions hold the view that sex is morally good when used for purposes other than procreation. She notes that the use of sex in enhancing marital love and companionship between couples is acceptable. It is also important to note that sexuality facilitates human existence through the procreation of children and that children should only be procreated within the confines of the family setting. Sex within marriage ensures that children are brought in a balanced way by ensuring that they are provided with the material, spiritual and emotional needs.

Youth sexual behaviour is of great concern to the society at large both in the developing and the developed world because of premarital sexual behaviour and its consequences. In most countries, sexual conduct between adults and adolescents younger than the local age of consent is illegal, and in some Muslim countries any kind of sexual activity outside marriage is not allowed. Sexual intercourse between adolescents with age differences within 2-3 years is prohibited under law, in many countries. In many countries, the age of consent is 16 years though this varies from country to country. In Spain, the age of consent is 13 while in Canada is 16 and in the United States it is 16-18 (Santrock, 2001). In Kenya, the age of consent for one to have sexual intercourse is 18 years. It is important to note that the age of marriage is sometimes different from the age of legal consent.

Developed countries, such as the United States, under the federal government policy under George W. Bush emphasized sexual abstinence or premarital chastity, particularly in sex education, with a focus on abstinence only sex education rather than the harm reduction approach of the safe sex focus (Santrock, 2001). This approach has been extended to foreign policy, using foreign aid to pressure Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) into ending condom education in developing countries. There is an ongoing debate between those advocating comprehensive medically accurate sex education and those advocating for abstinence education opposed to the values held by Americans.

Santrock (2001) observes that in the current society the youth are at crossroads because of several messages about what is appropriate sexual behaviour. He says that a situation where several factors are combined, such as early adolescent cognition, anxiety about sex, gender role definitions about what is masculine and what is feminine, the sexual themes of music, the sexual overtones of magazines and television and societal standards that say that sex is fun, harmless, adult and forbidden. The combination of early physical maturation, risk taking behaviour, egocentrism, the inability to think futuristically and an ambivalent, contradictory culture makes sex difficult for adolescents to handle.

In Kenya, though the majority of the youth engage in premarital sexual behaviour, they are aware that it is prohibited. Kiragu (1994) has carried out a study involving 1,476 respondents comprising youth between the ages of 15 and 19 years and adults of 20 and 54 years to establish their attitudes towards premarital sexual behaviour. The study established that both adults and youth viewed premarital sex as morally wrong, though both groups were found to have engaged in the same act.

Adaji *et al.* (2010), in their study among in-school adolescents in Kenya, have found out that they have conservative attitudes towards premarital sexual behaviour. The study also found out that the attitudes of the youth to contraception are conservative. The research study observed that these findings conflicted with the findings of high levels of unsafe sexual behaviour and reproductive ill health among Kenya youth. The conservative attitudes were attributed to strong religious influence and cultural values that are deep rooted and which prohibit premarital sex. It is important to note that when faced with social and biological pressure to engage in sex, adolescents find it difficult to match their attitudes with practice. The study recommended the need to help Kenyan youth to develop more realistic attitudes towards sexuality in order to improve their reproductive health.

#### **Effects of Exposure to Sexual Content on Television on Sexual Attitudes of the Youth**

A study by Murgor (2004) among Kenyan youth in School has established that the youth have conservative attitudes towards sex. Another study by Kiragu (1996) has also established that the youth have conservative attitudes towards sex. It is important to note that even though the youth in Kiragu and Murgor's studies indicate that the youth have conservative attitudes towards sex, the same studies have established that the youth are sexually active. In view of this, the question that remains unanswered is on whether there is a relationship between the sexual attitudes of the youth and their exposure to television content. The aim of the current study was to establish whether exposure to sexual content on television might influence the attitudes of the youth towards sex.

The fear of the influence and impact of sexual images on the media on the behaviour and attitudes of the youth has raised concerns of the parents and policy-makers (Villiani, 2001). Similarly, the sexual development of the youth has increased the society and public health concerns of all involved. This is because of the increased access to various media by the youth leading to higher consumption of television programmes and information (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009).

Youth are active consumers of media content and often report that the media are among the top sexual educators. It has also been established that many youth report that their parents do not give them sufficient information about sexual subjects during adolescence (Brown *et al.*, 1993). It is true that television presents to the youth a world that is different from the one they live in. This means that they are exposed to a wider variety of views and knowledge than what they can get from their parents, immediate environment, peers and teachers (Santrock, 2001). In the past, many identification figures from family or figures whose attitudes towards issues such as sexuality might have been relatively homogenous due to shared culture but this might no longer be the case due to changes in society.

Media images that portray sex as glamorous, exciting and risk free may be associated with the initiation and development of permissive sexual attitudes (Brown, Childers & Waszak, 1990). Because of these, adolescents form attitudes about sex that are unrealistic, do not mention negative outcomes, are stereotypical and potentially unhealthy (Ward & Fredman, 2006). It has been observed that because of this influence and presentation of unrealistic images and messages on the media, it is important to know how attitudes are formed and what influences them (Daugherty & Burger, 1984).

The theories that have been used to explain the way in which media exposure influences sexual attitudes are social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986) and the cultivation theory by Gerbner *et al.* (1973). The Cognitive Social Learning Theory states that people learn through observing others and imitating

others. Bandura identifies three main processes involved in learning: direct experience, modelling and the storing and processing of information through cognitive operations (Escobar-Chaves *et al.*, 2005).

The theory also predicts that people who view media programmes showing attractive characters who enjoy having sexual intercourse without suffering any negative consequences are prone to imitate the behaviour (Brown & Keller, 2000), and learn which behaviours are "appropriate" and "inappropriate" (Ward, 2002). The cultivation theory, on the other hand, proposes that exposure to a greater amount of media, cultivates and creates attitudes that are consistent with the media message, instead of reality (Escobar-Chaves *et al.*, 2005).

Kunkel *et al.* (2007), in their study among the youth in the USA, have found out that youth's attitudes and beliefs regarding sex and sexual topics can be influenced by television. A study by Braun-Courville and Rojas (2009) have further found out that sexual references in movies and television were found to be associated to negative attitudes towards condom use and contraception, associated with multiple sexual partners and having sex more frequently. Sexual references were also found to influence the youth's beliefs about sexual norms (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993).

Correlation and experimental studies have further established that televisions abundant and often stereotypical sexual content is linked to stronger support of non-relational sex and sexual stereotypes (Ward, 2002). Bogt *et al.* (2010) have found that watching erotic television content is associated with more permissive attitudes towards sex. Furthermore, a study by Buerkel-Rothfuss and Strouse (1993) has found out that watching erotic music television content is associated with permissiveness for females.

Theoretical models on sexual decision-making (Christopher, 2001) and studies on sexual initiation (Catania *et al.*, 1989; Whitaker & Miller, 2000) have indicated that teenagers' perceptions of peer sexual behaviours as well as their acceptance of stereotypical attitudes about intimate relationships play a pivotal role in sexual maturity processes. With regard to stereotypical attitudes, for instance, stronger endorsement of certain sexuality-related beliefs is associated with having more and riskier sexual experiences. As regards assumptions about peer sexual experiences, the intention of starting sexual activity was found to be predicted by the belief that most friends have already had sexual intercourse (Kinsman *et al.*, 1998). Likewise, young adolescent girls classified the assumption of sexual activity in friends as a valid reason for their own sexual debut (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2001).

Researchers who have described how adolescents come to develop these assumptions and attitudes often have included an account of adolescents' television viewing. Several authors have warned that television examples of intimate relationships might have an impact on various sexuality-related assumptions and beliefs. These warnings generally rest on evidence about how television conveys images of dating, romance and sex (Haferkamp, 1999; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991).

Content analyses have come up with two major conclusions. First, the studies have indicated that sexuality is an everyday ingredient of television entertainment. Kunkel *et al.* (2001), for instance, have reported that nearly seven in ten television programmes contain sexual messages. Heintz-Knowles (1996) has calculated an average of 10 references to intercourse per hour in soap operas (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996), and Ward (1995) estimates an average of 20 instances per hour in programmes most preferred by young people. The fact that these sexual content appears in most of the programmes might create the perception among the youth that sex is central in the day to day living but which not often the case.

A second common finding across content analyses is that television messages often are distorted and clichéd. More specifically, several authors have drawn attention to a set of interrelated stereotypes that appear to be repeatedly featured throughout television fare (Ward, 2002). The study hypothesized that those youth who are exposed to a lot of sexual content on television may develop attitudes consistent with what is being portrayed on television. Studies conducted in the USA have established that greater TV exposure and greater viewing involvement have been associated with stronger support for recreational attitudes (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999) and acceptance of stereotypes as "men are sex driven" and women are sexual objects" (Ward, 2002). Results from other types of media like the internet use and attitudes of the youth show that there is an association. The internet has a bigger impact

because of the nature of the pornographic content that can be watched anonymously (Doring, 2009). Adolescents that have visited sexually explicit websites, compared to those who have not, had permissive attitudes (Braun-Courville & Rojas, 2009). A study that was done among adolescents in Taiwan and Hong Kong has established that watching pornography was related to negative attitudes towards monogamy, marriage and family (Lam & Chan, 2007).

One of the objectives of the study was to establish whether there exists an association between exposure to sexual content on television and youth sexual attitudes. The results from other types of media like the internet are applicable to this paper, although in a developing country like Kenya the use of the internet might be limited, especially to those youth in the urban centres, and thus the impact might not apply to all youth. While majority of the studies have found that there is an association between exposure to sexual content on television and the sexual behaviour and attitudes of the youth, on the other hand there are other studies that have found no association. Nikken and Graaf (2011) have conducted a longitudinal study in which they did not find that sexualised media consumption was associated with permissive sexual attitudes.

#### Statement of the Problem

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

With the current advancement of technology, the youth in Kenyan technical training institutions are increasingly accessing sexual content which may negatively affect their attitudes and behaviour towards sex hence lead to their engagement in premarital and extra-marital sexual practices and promiscuity.

This study sought to establish the effects of exposure to sexual content on Television on the sexual attitudes of the youth in technical training institutions in Kenya with a view of making recommendations regarding responsible use of Television content.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

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

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

The enrolment in the targeted institutions during the period of study indicated that there were 25,384 students who were registered for various courses of study, where 14,042 were male and 11,566 were female. The targeted institutions were organized into the following 5 administrative regions: Western region, Mt. Kenya region, Nairobi region, North rift region and Coast. The author used multistage sampling to identify institutions for the study where 3 regions were randomly selected out of the 5. Thereafter, 2 institutions were randomly selected from each of the 3 regions to give a total of 6 institutions for the study. A total of 70 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling technique to select respondents from the student population, giving a total of 420 respondents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents from members of management.

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

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

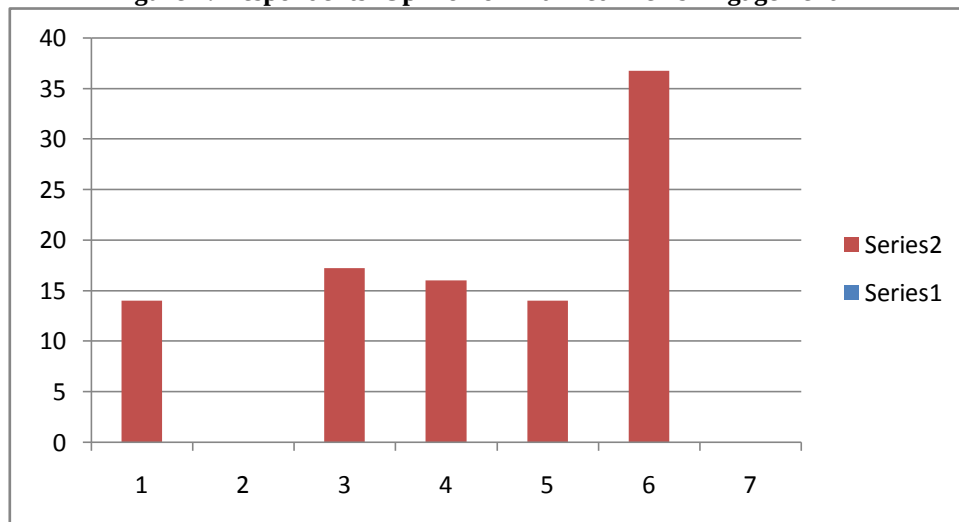
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Attitudes of the Youth towards Sex

The study sought to determine the attitudes of the youth towards sex in relation to exposure to sexual content on television. In order to establish the attitudes of respondents towards extramarital sex, the respondents were asked to state the extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. Likert scale was used for answering (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Can't Tell, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute.

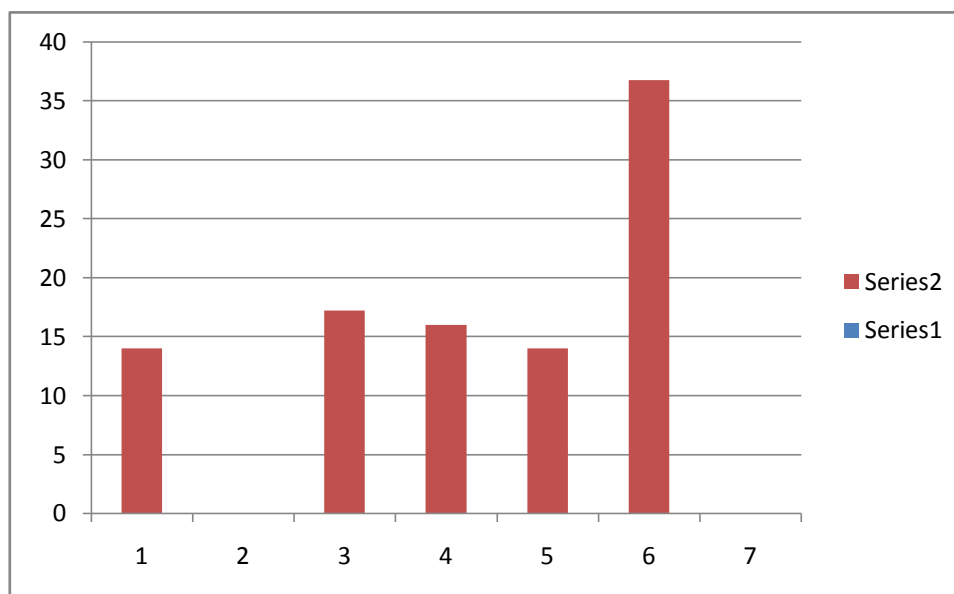
The study established that 58.2% of the respondents generally agreed that there was nothing wrong with married women engaging on extramarital sexual behaviour. Specifically, 37.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that it is okay for married women to engage in extramarital sexual behaviour, 20.6% agreed with the same statement. Figure 1 below summarizes the findings. The study established that 50.8% of the respondents generally agreed that there was nothing wrong with married men engaging in extramarital sexual behaviour. Specifically, 36.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that it is okay for married men engaging in extramarital sexual behaviour, 14.0% agreed with the same statement. Figure 1 below summarizes the findings.

**Figure 1: Respondents' Opinion on Married Men's Engagement in**



### Extramarital Sexual Behavior

The study established that 55.6% of the respondents generally agreed that there was nothing wrong with unmarried men and women engaging in premarital sexual behaviour. Specifically, 38.4% of the respondents strongly agreed that it is okay for unmarried men and women engaging in premarital sexual behaviour, 17.2% agreed with the same statement. Figures 2 below summarize the findings.



**Figure 2: Respondents' opinion on premarital sexual behaviour**

From the findings, it can be inferred that young people have permissive attitudes towards premarital and extramarital sex. This is evidenced from the responses where they state that there is no problem in married men engaging in sex with unmarried women, and even married women doing the same and also having several sexual partners.

Extra-marital affairs among married couples are very dangerous as it may lead to family disintegration. However, it was established that majority of unmarried people who engage in love relationship with married people are college students especially ladies who want to be taken care of by being provided with basic needs in exchange with sexual favours. This statement was validated when one of the participants in a focus group discussion said:

in this school there is one place called the 'airport' where sugar daddies come every Friday to pick female students to town for the members' day refreshment and thereafter, you will see them back with shopping for the whole week.

An interview conducted with the deans and management of technical colleges indicated that cases of students, especially female students, engaging in sexual affairs with married men were very common. A further investigation revealed that most of these affairs flourished more especially when students went for 3 months attachment in industry.

A case was narrated to the author of one female student who went for attachment at a local sugar company. When she reported for attachment, the department where she was attached was headed by a man who, though married, took advantage of her vulnerability to get her involved in a relationship. By the time she was through with the attachments, she was already expectant. When she finally reported to college, the pregnancy was at an advanced stage and she was to be assisted by the college to be taken to the hospital for delivery. When the college authorities wanted to know about the whereabouts of the father they established that he worked in a local sugar factory. When they tried to reach him he denied knowledge of the girl and when he was pressed further he managed to remember the name of the girl but with difficulty. He sent a few items for the new born baby after threats that his amorous activities would be reported to his wife. Afterwards he kept off contact of the girl.

What one can conclude from this particular case is that the girl's permissive attitude towards extramarital sex might

have likely contributed to her behaviour. On the other hand, the man simply wanted to enjoy himself and did not want any commitments. The fact that he could not remember the name of the girl would be inferred to mean that he had has several love affairs with many girls and to him it was a normal activity each time the girls presented themselves for attachment.

Results from the Focus Group Discussions indicated that the youth have permissive attitudes towards sex. A participant in one of the Focus Group Discussions aggressively defended herself that there was nothing wrong with engaging in premarital sexual behaviour as can be seen from the following statement:

Kwani sisi tumewekewa chronometer ya feelings ati till we get married ndio tutaanza kuwa na hizo feelings!? Na kama hizo feelings ziko, kwa nini tungoje mpaka after marriage!? Mbona hakunanga marriage ya animals ndio tuseme hata wanyama wangoje!? Immediately ng'ombe ikianza kulilia ndume, munaikimbiza kwa ndume ya jirani ... kwa nini msichana akianza kuwa na feelings mama yake anaamfungia na kuweka mbwa kali kwa gate!?

Previous research has concurred with the findings of the study that youth have permissive attitudes towards sex. For example, Kunkel *et al.* (2007) has established that the youth's attitudes and beliefs regarding sex and sexual topics can be influenced by television. Braun-Courville and Rojas (2009) have further established that sexual references in movies and on television were found to be associated with negative attitudes towards condom use and contraception, associated with multiple sexual partners and having sex more frequently.

### Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis stated that there is no association between the hours youth spend watching television and their attitudes towards premarital and extramarital sex. The independent variable in testing this hypothesis was accessibility to television by the individual respondent. On the other hand, dependent variables in the study were indicators of permissive attitudes such as: "Messages from television are that it is okay for adolescents to engage in sex before marriage, The kind of programmes that I watch on TV affect the way I feel towards sex, most television networks have shows that are sexually explicit, more than one sex partner (for both men and women), extra marital sex (married men) and extra marital sex (married women).

**Table 1: A Cross-tabulation between hours spent watching Television and Attitudes towards Pre-marital and Extra-marital sex**

|                                                                                                  | Chi-square |    |              | Correlation |           |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
|                                                                                                  | Value X2   | df | Significance | Value R     | Std error | Significance |
| <b>Independent variable</b>                                                                      |            |    |              |             |           |              |
| Hours spent watching television                                                                  |            |    |              |             |           |              |
| <b>Dependant variable</b>                                                                        | 33.085     | 4  | 0.000        | 0.220       | 0.027     | 0.000        |
| a) Messages from television are that it is okay for adolescents to engage in sex before marriage |            |    |              |             |           |              |
| b) The Kind of programmes that I watch on TV affect the way I feel towards sex                   | 71.053     | 4  | 0.000        | 0.317       | 0.037     | 0.000        |
| c) Most television networks have shows that are sexually explicit                                | 150        | 4  | 0.000        | 0.396       | 0.44      | 0.000        |
| d) is it ok to have more than one sex partner (for both men and women)                           | 142.063    | 4  | 0.000        | 0.307       | 0.306     | 0.000        |

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|                                                                |        |   |       |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| e) Perception of engaging in Extra marital sex (married men)   | 23.494 | 4 | 0.000 | 0.201 | 0.025 | 0.000 |
| f) Perception of engaging in Extra marital sex (married women) | 24.741 | 4 | 0.000 | 0.207 | 0.026 | 0.000 |

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From the table above, it is evident that there is an association between the amount of time an individual youth spends watching television and their attitudes towards pre-marital and extra-marital sex. In all the above dependent variables, the chi-square value is significant at 0.000 which implies that it is significant. The implication of this finding is that it is most likely that those youth who spend more hours watching television are most likely to have permissive attitudes towards sex.

The findings concur with previous studies that have established that there exists a relationship between the amount of time youth spend watching television and their attitudes towards sex. Brown and Steele (1995) have established that the television has a powerful effect on adolescents' sexual attitudes, values and beliefs. Burkel-Rothfuss and Strouse (1993), in their study conducted in the United States of America, have established that there is a relationship between heavy exposure to media sex and perceptions of the frequency of sexual activity in the real world. They further observe that in the case of television it may function as a kind of "super-peer", and therefore normalising these behaviours and therefore encouraging them among the youth. This is why those youth who are exposed to more sexual content on television might develop permissive attitudes towards premarital and extramarital sexual behaviour.

The findings in the study is that those youth who are exposed to more content on television are more likely to have permissive attitudes towards sex is related to the views held by the two theories which guided the study. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) puts a lot of emphasis on observing and modelling behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. Bandura (ibid.) observes that by observing others one may form an idea of how new behaviours are formed and on later occasions this coded behaviour may serve as guide to future action.

The Cultivation Theory by Gerbner (1973) proposes that viewing television gradually leads to the adoption of beliefs about the nature of the social world, which conform to the stereotyped, distorted and very selective view of reality as portrayed in systematic way on television. The theory confirms the findings in the study that youth who are exposed to more sexual content on television are likely to adopt attitudes that conform to those mostly portrayed on television.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is a relationship between exposure to sexual content on television and youth sexual attitudes. It is clear that exposure to sexual content on television has an effect on the sexual behaviour and attitudes of the youth. It is important to note that unlike other causes of influence on behaviour that can be quickly done away with to avoid influence, unfortunately society cannot do away with television and even if we did that are other types of media that are equally influential. It is also worth noting that television and other types of media have some positive influence such as they can also be used for campaigns to influence behaviour positively.

Baran (2004) has pointed out that the media are important in creating and maintain the culture that helps to define us and our lives. In view of the fact that society cannot do away with media, since it is central to creating its culture and that new and more complicated media are evolving daily, the question that media users should be asking themselves is how best to use the strengths of the media such as television and how to minimize its effects on behaviour.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends programmes to equip the youth with media literacy skills for the following reasons:

- i. An understanding of the process of mass communication: Knowing the components of the mass communication process and how they relate to one another can form expectations of how they can serve the community. How do the various media industries operate? What are their obligations to their audiences?

What are the obligations of the audiences? How do different media limit or enhance messages? Which forms of feedback are most effective and why?

- ii. Strategies for analysing and discussing media messages: For the media messages to be consumed thoughtfully there is need for a foundation on which thoughts and reflection are based. If individuals make meaning they must also possess the tools with which to make it. If meaning is made for the audiences then interpretation of media content will remain with its creator, not with the audience.

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