



Understanding Adolescent Vulnerability: Transactional Sex & Sexual Exploitation

Joyce Wamoyi,

National Institute for Medical Research Mwanza

1st Annual LINEA meeting, 30th March-1st April 2015

Contextualizing TS in Tanzania

- TS is very common in young people's relationships
- Young people engage in TS for several reasons
 - Poverty
 - Love/emotions
 - Desire to consume items of modernity
- How women perceive themselves in TS
 - Women see themselves as having power to manipulate men to get what they want
 - *Young women perceived themselves as lucky to be created women as they could exploit their sexuality for pleasure and material gain. They felt men were stupid for paying for “goods” (vagina) they could not take away*
(Wamoyi, Fenwick, Stones 2011)

Study aims

- To provide a detailed understanding of the norms, expectations, & contexts that shape and perpetuate the practice of TS in rural & urban Tanzania and Uganda
- To explore when & under what circumstances TS may/or not be considered “exploitative” & generate insights for reducing young women’s reliance on TS

Study Objectives

1. In the opinion of different stakeholders, to elucidate what constitutes sexual exploitation
2. In the opinion of parents, men & women in the community, and girls themselves, to examine when girls are considered physically and emotionally ready to have sex
3. To explore how the practice of TS is defined and perceived
4. To examine the norms, expectations and structural forces driving TS
5. To examine participants' views of the opportunities and risks associated with engaging in TS

Methodology

- Ethnographic research design
- 16 Participatory focus group discussions
- 43 In depth interviews
- Study populations
 - Young people aged 14 to 24 years
 - Adult men and women
 - *Fataki (explosives/dynamite) men*
- A lot of in-depth exercises with vignettes that assess different scenarios & seeking perspective on how appropriate/problematic these are, to be analyzed

Preliminary Findings

- Based on in IDIs with young girls
- Just getting underway – more to come!

Preliminary main Findings

- **Dynamics of TS**
 - Motivations for TS
 - Peer relationships
 - Intergenerational relationships
- **Girls' Understandings of "Exploitative" relationships**
- **Comparison of girls' understanding to international/conventional discourse on sexual exploitation**

Dynamics of TS: What motivates this practice for young women?

- Possibility of marriage and/or
- Economic needs
- Material aspirations
- *Would you stay in the relationship absent the gifts?*
 - Can't really conceptualize a relationship without gifts in this context

Dynamics of TS: Motivations

- Men are the overall decision makers in relationships BUT, girls have the power to agree or refuse to be in a relationship
- Girls reported that boyfriends have to cater for the material needs of girls & sometimes the girls' families
- Accepting gifts/money from men implies readiness/acceptance to have sex with the provider
- A man providing gifts/money to the girl may imply a genuine interest in her

Illustrations

He gives you those things expecting that when he asks you, it is not difficult for you to say “yes” you feel embarrassed to say “no” [IDI#18, 23 year old]

Another one tells you, “I will give you this amount of money if you agree to have sex with me”...he tells you, I will marry you, it is a big gift that you will never forget in your life [IDI#19, 19 years]

Wanting a gift/money but unwilling to have sex:

I mean, there are some who will not understand at all, he forces you and you might get like those whom they have sex with, they are older than them and they give them things [gifts], he will start to remind you that I always give you this and that then today you have refused to have sex with me, you must do it...It is not fair...there are some girls you find they have sex because of being given gifts, you just get her having sex, and she agrees to do it but in her heart she is not actually willing to have sex....[IDI#07, 17 year old girl]

Peer pressure & Consumer culture

- Peer pressure to consume items of modernity

A girl talked about her experience with peers having a school boy for a boyfriend:

- *Yes, they always stop/deny me. If you see them with something good & desire it, they start talking badly, “you decided to be with a student, that is up to you with your student, so, eat your exercise books [IDI#05, 17 year old]*

Sex with peers versus older men

- Girls like older men because they have money, have a job, have business – give girls money for a “good life”
 - Afford a girl a trendy lifestyle compared to same age boyfriends
 - Girls envy peers with older partners & nice things
- Young men as boyfriends versus older men “sugar daddies”:
 - *It is because boys/young men don't give them money, they completely decide to go to that man with a bigger age [old man] so that they can be getting that money...the girl is young while the man is very old [IDI # 19, 19 years old girl]*
 - *Another girl said:*
 - *It is because of money, an old man has a lot of money. If you go to a boy he gives you less while an older man gives more [IDI #34, 20 year old girl]*
- Relationship with older/and married man not socially approved but tolerated

Material aspirations

She goes because this one has money.....but you find her parents give her everything but she wants her personal things so she can be seen in the streets, for example, when you are at school , every minute you have money, now your friends follow you, you become like a queen because you have enough money that you get from that man you bring to school, those things lead her to be like that [have an older partner] [IDI#35, 17 year old]

Now how can I be with someone without him providing, yet I have needs, I would have left him...Yea, I have responsibilities, I might see something that I like what will I use to buy it with? [IDI#34, 20 year old girl]

Dynamics of TS

- Mutually understood expectation that men should provide gifts/money; and that women should reciprocate with sex
 - builds on cultural traditions/expectations of reciprocity
- Girls were aware that the gifts could bind them to have sex with the man
 - Feeling of shame for not offering back anything in return
 - Fear of the man embarrassing them if they refused to have sex with him
- Tension b/t the sexes around manipulation and antagonism b/t the sexes,
 - Men feel that girls have become cunning & as “exploiting” men for their money (perspective of men)
 - Girls sometimes took gifts money/gifts & avoided men when they asked to have sex with them

Dynamics of TS: obligations

- Refusing sex once had agreed/received gifts/money is bad & dangerous
 - Leads to threats, violence, gang rape, termination of the relationship, name calling (devil)
 - Signifies that a girl has other partners that she has sex with
- Girls suggested that one should
 - Refuse the gift/money upfront if not interested in having sex with the man
 - Not agree to go to a private place (guest house, man's house) with a man – going to these places with a man implies readiness for sex
- Girls may not refuse sex for fear of loosing boyfriend & his gifts/money

Perceptions of exploitation fair/not fair

Scenario	Perceptions
A younger sister having sex with an older man	unfair/not right
A poor orphaned child having sex with an older man to get essential needs	Not unfair but a way of helping the girl
A teacher having sex with a school girl & genuinely helping her to pass exams	Fine but not good
A man making a girl pregnant & abandoning her	Not fair
Boyfriends lying to them by having multiple partners	Unfair
A man not providing a gift/money to a girl	Unfair/not good/not right/ exploitative [<i>“unyanyasaji”</i>]

Preliminary conclusions

- A key motivation for girls to engage in premarital sexual relationships remains to be gifts/money
 - Men use gifts/money to get girls & have sex with them
- Intergenerational sex is more attractive/profitable than same age-group sexual relationships
- Many sexual behaviours are not acceptable but are tolerated (e.g. a girl having sex with a sugar daddy, premarital sex)
- Many relationship have elements of coercion/“unfair” treatment but this interpreted differently depending on who is involved & their circumstances

Next Steps

- Analysis of the remaining data
 - FGDs, Men's and adult women's perspectives perspectives
 - Reflections on the findings and potential implications for interventions