

Exploring University Students' Gender Role Attitudes and their Effects on Sexuality and Behaviour Towards HIV/AIDS Prevention: A Case Study

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Abstract

The paper investigated the effects of gender attitudes and the extent to which they impact on the sexuality of third year Bachelor Degree students in a Zimbabwean university. The goal of the study was to establish their level of awareness to the existing HIV/AIDS preventive measures. The study used a total sample size of 80 participants selected from four faculties in the university through the gender stratified random sampling technique. The design adopted was a quantitative case study and data were elicited by means of questionnaires, focus group interviews and observations of co-curricular activities. The analysis of findings followed the use of descriptive and inferential statistics, with statistical models such as the chi-square test of significance being adopted to establish the students' differential gender attitudes towards sexuality and awareness to the existence of HIV/AIDS preventive measures. The major findings indicated that the students' attitudes towards sexuality were gender based while their awareness to HIV/AIDS preventive strategies was mainly influenced by gender stereotypes and cultural beliefs about femininity and masculinity. The study concluded that there is an imperative need for social structures to help deconstruct the gender biases, stigmas, stereotypes and prejudices that render girls and women vulnerable. This can be done through the use of gender neutral discourses and advocacy activities by their lecturers, parents, teachers as significant others in their society.

Keywords: Abuse, Attitudes, Behaviour change, Gender discourses, Sexuality.

1. Introduction

In Zimbabwe in particular and Southern Africa in general research on the impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic reveals that sixty percent of those infected fall within twenty to thirty nine year age group (Jackson, 2001). Campbell (2007) also added that, of the infected, the number of women is one and half times more than that of men.

The research findings stated above have very serious implications for institutions of higher learning. Most students at institutions of higher learning fall within this age group and as centres of emancipation these institutions have affirmative action programmes to sensitize students on gender issues and promote awareness in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These institutions are therefore challenged to put measures in place to slow down the rate of infection by addressing gender disparities since the rate of infection is attributed to gender inequality. Secondly, as centers of emancipation, institutions of higher learning are also challenged to address gender disparities because the difference in the rate of infection is attributed to gender inequality (SAFAIDS 2002). The National Aids strategic plan (2006) explains that HIV/AIDS is a gendered issue because gender inequalities imbedded in all facets of livelihood continue to fuel the HIV/AIDS crisis. In the same vein, Mathur and Gupta (2005) also add that special vulnerability of women that stems from socio-cultural norms around gender have always promoted male superiority and control over women while at the same time restricting women's access to knowledge, skills and opportunity to protect themselves in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

2. Background of the Study

The traditional conception of a "real man" holds that manhood is expressed through dominating and controlling women (UNIAIDS 2000). As such, there are so many factors emanating from stereotypes of masculinity that give men the pride,

the justification and the confidence to be careless. For instance, men can be proud of having multiple partners. They can also treat sexually transmitted diseases as battle scars and demand unprotected sex just for the sake of demonstrating the manhood in them (Jackson, 2001). On the other hand, women in Zimbabwe were taught from early childhood to be obedient and submissive to males and therefore cannot deny sex to their husbands or boyfriends whether they have other partners or not. (National Aids Council, 2004). Jackson (2001) adds that to women sex is about pleasing men. In addition, Campbell, (2007) explains that women who enjoy sex and express their sexual desire openly are regarded as cheap and whores by both males and females. Furthermore, the situation is aggravated by the fact that most women depend on men economically. Mathur and Gupta (2005) point out that lack of economic options makes it less likely that young women would succeed in negotiating and willing to leave a relationship perceived to be risk. Even culturally, the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2006) openly states that ignorance was equated to innocence and women never struggled to seek information. Thus, in the wake of HIV/AIDS women could not adopt risk reduction behavior because of such cultural beliefs. Apart from that, talking about sex was taboo among many African cultures (Jackson 2001 & UNICEF 2007).

In light of the above, this situation needs to be explored further in a university setting to find out about the real situation on the ground. This was prompted by the fact that universities are centers of assertiveness, emancipation and equip both men and women not only with knowledge and skills on prevention but economic independence and gender equality. Interest to carry out this research developed after hearing male students encouraging their friends openly to have unprotected sex, hearing complains that cases of sexually transmitted diseases were on the increase, when only a handful of students went for voluntary counseling and testing of HIV/AIDS and after hearing rumors that the university was full of ladies who were an easy pick for sugar daddies. There was a need then to find out why students were encouraging each other to behave in a risk manner when everyone else was busy encouraging behavior change. Thus, the language used by students as they interacted, interaction patterns and interpersonal relationships provided a fertile ground from which an investigation could be launched to examine student attitudes towards sexuality, the effect of those attitudes towards their sexual behavior and their response towards the preventive strategies of HIV/AIDS. Undie, Critchton and Zulu (2007) in a recent study point out that the language used by students, the interaction patterns among male and female students provided an insight into ways in which students understand sexuality, how their behavior could be changed and most importantly how they reacted to the preventive strategies of HIV/AIDS.

It is against this background that the study seeks to examine the effect of gender on students' attitudes towards sexuality and how these attitudes affect their sexual behavior and response to HIV/AIDS preventive strategies. The study sought to test the following hypothesis:

- Gender differences do not affect university students' attitudes towards sexuality.
- There are no significant gender differences between university students' attitudes to sexuality and awareness to HIV/AIDS preventive measures

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

The study followed a quantitative research paradigm, whose epistemology hinges upon the existence of an objective reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The design genre used was a case study, defined by Yin (2000) as a detailed analysis of a situation, individual social group or institution in order to establish the obtaining culture.

3.2 Population and sample

The target population for this study were university students particularly undergraduates in their second year of study. It was from this population that the sample size was obtained through a gender stratified sampling technique. This involved ensuring that equal gender cohorts of 40 girls and 40 boys constituted the sample. The objective was basically to elicit gender balanced data (Mutekwe & Modiba, 2012) reflecting both categories of students in universities.

3.3 Instrumentation

Questionnaires and observations were used to gather the data for this study. The instruments facilitated the provision of triangulated data and thus helped guarantee the research's validity and reliability (Maree, 2012). The tools (instruments) were first piloted with a group of students from a different institution within the same province for purposes of establishing

their transferability, consistency and or dependability (Richardson, 2000). Specifically, the pilot study helped remove some ambiguities in the questionnaire and observational data.

3.4 Data management and analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted in line with Clark and Creswell's (2008) cautioning that the use of descriptive and inferential statistics needs to be adopted with precision if the researcher wishes to obtain data that is unequivocal in its ontology. The analysis thus followed a thematic approach and used statistical tools: the chi-square test of significance to show relationships between variables in the research, particularly students' differential gender attitudes towards sexuality and their awareness to the existential HIV/AIDS preventive measures.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of this of this study are reported descriptively under the following themes

4.1 Demographic attributes of the participants

The participants were youths between the ages of 20 and 30 years of age and 85% of them were still single at the time of the study. About 37% of them belonged to some university social clubs whose roles were to sensitize students from all walks of life on issues to do with amongst others, an awareness of the scourge of the HIV/AIDS virus, the need for voluntary counselling and testing, herein after abbreviated VCT, issues of gender equity and equality as well as HIV/AIDS prevention mechanisms for those who cannot abstain. The table below summarises the demographic details of the participants.

Table 1: The demographic attributes of participants

Programme	Education		Arts		BSC		Commerce		Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Sex										
Age Range										
19-20	2	2	4	1	3	3	2	1	11(13%)	8(20%)
21-24	7	6	6	9	7	6	6	8	26(32.5%)	29(36.5%)
25-30	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	2(2.5%)	3(3.5%)
Above 30	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1(0.25%)	-
Marital Status										
Single	7	8	9	7	10	8	9	8	35(46.5%)	31(38.5%)
Married	3	2	1	3	0	2	1	2	5(6.5%)	9(11.5%)
Social Clubs										
Hiv/Aids	3	3	7	4	8	3	2	0	20(25%)	10(12.5%)
Peer Education	1	2	4	5	3	4	2	9	10(12.5)	20(25)
Drama	6	3	5	3	3	5	2	4	15(18)	15(18)

4.2 The influence of gender differences on university students' attitudes towards sexuality

The hypothesis tested to find out what effects the students' gender difference have on their attitudes towards sexuality indicated that their perceptions towards sexuality were gender based, biased and terribly stereotypical and prejudicial. These findings are summarized in the table below:

Table 2: How gender differences affect university students' sexual attitudes

Question Posed	Education				Arts				Maths and Science				Commerce				F	M	
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male				
	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1			
Men should be more sexually experienced than their sexual partner	A	5	4	5	4	3	2	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	80	90
	Dis	0	1	0	1	2	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	20	10
Man should provide all basic needs to dominate their sexual partners	A	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	3	4	3	4	1	85.5	87.5
	Dis	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	4	17.5	12.5
A good woman should provide sexual pleasure	A	5	4	5	5	2	2	2	1	1	4	1	2	2	1	4	2	50	62.5
	Dis	0	1	0	0	3	3	3	4	4	1	4	3	3	4	1	3	50	37.5
Man have right to control and dominate their sexual partner s	A	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	4	4	2	5	2	47.5	62.5
	Dis	2	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	1	3	0	5	4	52.5	37.5
Woman who talk openly about their sexual desire are loose	A	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	5	0	1	52.5	72.5
	Dis	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	5	4	47.5	37.5
Responsible women are usually very shy, silent and ignorant about sex	A	3	3	3	4	1	1	4	4	1/4	3	3	3	3	4	0	5	67.5	52.5
	Dis	2	2	2	1	4	4	1	1	4	2	2	2	2	1	5	0	32.5	47.5
A good woman should provide sexual pleasure to her partner	A	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	5	4	2	5	3	4	1	5	1	47.5	52.5
	Dis	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	0	1	3	0	2	0	4	0	4	52.5	47.5
Well behaved should not talk openly about their sexual desire	A	2	1	2	1	5	1	2	2	4	2	5	3	4	2	5	3	55	55
	Dis	3	4	3	4	0	4	3	3	1	3	0	2	1	3	0	2	45	45
A good woman should provide sexual sex to their sexual partners	A	5	0	4	2	4	2	4	3	5	5	5	3	3	5	5	2	90.5	70
	Dis	0	5	1	3	1	3	1	3	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	3	9.5	30
A good woman should provide sexual to their partners	A	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	95	92.5
	Dis	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	5	55

The participants' responses to many of the questions posed (cf. table 2) indicated that girls and or women were generally very reserved on issues of sexuality. In the focus group interviews a number of girls or females still stigmatised those who spoke openly about their sexuality as prostitutes. The males students interviewed also indicated that they would not be sexually interested in those who openly spoke about sexual issues for life partners because for them, it is not a decent subject for women to talk about publicly as such.

In discussing the issue that traditionally married women do not need to deprive their spouses of any sexual or conjugal responsibilities, it was interesting to note how some of the taken-for-granted gender role biases and stereotypes were so ingrained in the girls and women as quite a good number of them (90.5%) answered in the affirmative, a response that vindicates Mutekwe's (2008) that due to their primary gender role socialisation, many girls and women have been made to believe that one of their major role in marriages is being sexual objects meant to please their spouses sexually regardless of whether they enjoy the process themselves. Seventy(70%) of the male respondents concurred with their girl counterparts on this theme claiming that sex should be at the core of every relationship if women are to succeed in preserving their marital relationship with their husbands, lest they are abandoned and end up a disgrace to their families or social misfits (Mutekwe, 2014). A disturbing assumption condoned by both male and female participants was the myth and misconception held by 55% of both the male and female respondents that generally men are not satisfied or contented by one woman sexually. However, it was important to note that the other participants, 45% comprising both male and female participants challenged the aforementioned view on the grounds that it is a mere justification of unnecessary hegemonic masculinity (Mutekwe, 2014) as men want to use tradition as a vehicle for promiscuity or to justify their loose morals. Eight of the respondents further indicated that it was not a natural thing for men but it was just psychological and lustful carelessness for them to claim not to be satisfied by one woman. In trying to establish if attitudes towards sexuality were a co-related to gender role stereotypes a Chi-square test of significance was used and the findings of this are summarized on the table below according to the participants' faculties of study.

Table 3: Students' gender and sexual attitudes and behaviour

Programme	Number	Responses	Female		Males		DF	X2 Critical Value	X2 Observed Value	Level of Significance
			1 st	FI	1 st	FI				
Education	Females 20	Positive	78	4 8	7 4	5 8	3	7.81	7.79	5%
	Males 20	Negative	22	5 2	2 6	4 2				
Arts	Females 20	Positive	87	5 8	9 3	6 2	3	7.81	4.63	
	Males 20	Negative	13	4 2	0 7	3 8				
Commerce	Females 20	Positive	76	4 2	8 6	5 4	3	7.81	7.06	
	Males 20	Negative	24	5 8	1 4	4 6				
BSc	Females 20	Positive	74	5 8	7 4	6 3	3	7.81	7.79	
	Males 20	Negative	26	4 8	2 1	3 2				

The results summarised above indicate that 80% of the female and 90% male participants concurred that men are often more sexually experienced than their women counterparts. In their questionnaire responses many female respondents expressed a desire to have more mature male sexual partners than their same age male counterparts. Their argument was that more often than not the young male sexual partners knew very little about safe sex since many of them cannot control sexual relationships in terms of for example, being able to abide by the conditions of safe sex (e.g condom use). One girl respondent expressing herself in the local language (Shona) had this to say:

Respondent: *twunozivei tukomana itwotwu? Uye hatwuna chatwunotipa*, which implies that the younger males had nothing to offer sexually and even materially. Thus, from this point of view the implication was that females were still controlled by gender role stereotypes that define men as the chief breadwinners in society. The members of staff responding to the issue believed students were just careless because of the need to find economic support particularly in the wake of economic challenges such as the ones affecting Zimbabwe currently.

On the question of the girls' anticipated sexual attitudes, many of the participants indicated that, society expects that decent girls and women should be shy, reserved on matters to do with sex, not even talk about it and therefore those who dared talk openly about their sexual needs were considered to be of loose morals. Only a handful of women, about 30% claimed they needed to challenge this as a misconception and an affront to their right like anybody else to information about sex.

Drawing from the data illustrated in table 3 on the Chi-square distribution, it can be discerned that the level of significance for the cases was 5% with a critical value of 7.81. The computed value for Education faculty was 7.79 while for the Arts it was 4.63. For the Science faculty it was 7.79 while Commerce had 4.63. These variables indicated gender differences in the way male and female university students and academic staff viewed sexuality. The apparent differences in attitudes between male and female attitudes towards sexuality also revealed that the attitudes of first year students in the faculty of Education were largely influenced by gender role stereotypes and biases. The results also revealed a significant drop and attitudinal change among the final year female and male students since their scores were 48% and 58% respectively. This might be interpreted as an indication that the HIV/AIDS awareness programmes offered at the university are having a positive impact on the students' attitudes towards their sexual behaviour.

Table 4: Students' sexual behavioural attitudes by faculty

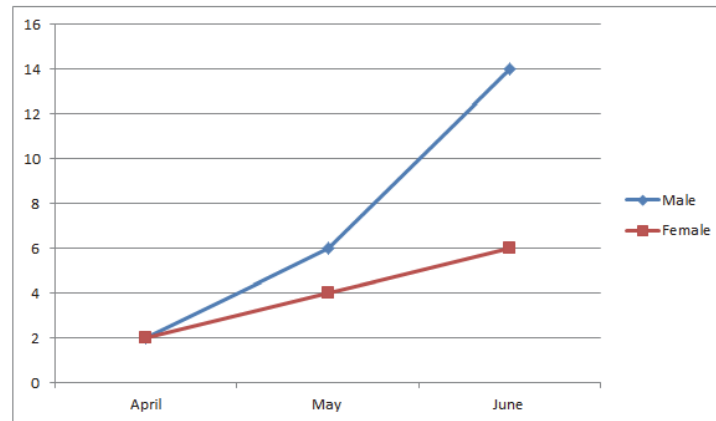
Item		EDUCATION				ARTS				BSC				COMMERCE			
		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
		1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1
Do you use substances to enhance sexual pleasure	A	4	10	6	3	2	4	3	5	3	4	4	2	3	1	3	2
	Dis	96	90	94	97	98	96	97	95	97	96	96	98	97	99	97	98
Do you discuss sexual issues with your partner and decide on how to have sex?	A	50	70	40	80	10	06	30	90	60	20	50	39	42	60	40	50
	Dis	50	30	60	20	90	14	70	10	40	50	50	64	58	40	60	50
Do you force your partner to have sex?	A	1	0	11	7	0	0	7	8	0	0	10	10	0	2	0	0
	Dis	99	100	89	93	100	100	93	92	100	100	90	90	100	98	100	100
Have you been forced to have sex	A	50	35	3	0	38	37	1	0	1	0	37	38	1	0	37	38
	Dis	50	15	97	100	62	63	99	100	99	100	63	62	99	100	63	62
Is your sexual partner older than you?	A	90	86	3	2	96	97	4	5	95	93	4	3	89	95	2	4
	Dis	10	14	97	98	4	3	96	95	5	7	96	93	11	5	98	96
Is you sexual partner a student?	A	9	15	89	40	10	19	70	51	10	12	81	53	13	17	70	38
	Dis	91	85	11	60	90	81	30	49	90	88	19	47	87	83	30	22
Does your partner provide most of your material needs?	A	89	90	13	04	93	88	11	14	95	98	12	13	90	96	13	11
	Dis	11	10	87	96	07	12	89	86	05	02	88	87	10	02	87	89
Have you ever had sex with other sexual partners?	A	79	81	68	58	89	90	87	78	79	78	89	93	81	78	78	69
	Dis	11	19	32	42	11	10	13	22	21	22	11	07	19	22	22	31

Aphrodisiacs indicate that very few; about 30 % were in the habit of using sexual drugs, which they called sex enhancing herbs. In responding to the question of open discussions about sexual issues, the respondents argued that it is a new culture they need to adopt given the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among university students. This view lent credence to Jackson's (2000) assertion that if issues of HIV/AIDS and how the pandemic has caused havoc in Africa are openly discussed, many people would tend to develop confidence and assertiveness in their approaches to the pandemic. The respondents' views also vindicates Jackson's view given that of the responses from the different faculties indicated that 90% of the Science female students, 86% from the Arts, 70% from Education and 60% from Commerce argued that they as a result of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign launched on campus, they can now decide freely as to when and how they want to have sex. The same trend of scores is recorded for final year male students where 80% of Education students, 90% from the Arts and 83% from sciences concurred that the HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns are yielding some dividends in students' sexual behavioural changes on campus. Responding to the question of whether female students sometimes make sexual demands on their male counterparts during a love relationship, the results reveal that female students do not openly call for sex but do so in a subtle way to their male partners. These findings lent credence to Mutekwe's (2012) assertion that due to traditional gender socialisation, girls and women are taught not to openly demand sex from their partners as this would be construed as a sign of immorality. According to this view males are also taught to use wisdom in discerning the females' attitude to sex given their gender role socialisation in traditional African settings. The findings also imply that male students need to be able to weigh their female partners' 'no' approach to sex since they are socialised never to say 'yes' even when they desperately feel positive about it. Some female respondents however argued that males have a tendency to force them into sex. They cited older men in relationship with young girls as being the main perpetrators of forced sexual activities particularly if they provide such material support as money to the young girls. The responses given by the respondents were as follows: From the Education Faculty, fifty percent of the female respondents argued that they were more often than not forced into sex by their partners. As apparent in table 4, the Faculty of Education has the highest number of married students and the dominant argument among these was that their husbands are often not prepared to accept a 'no' for an answer to their sexual advances most of the time. They attributed the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections to such male chauvinist attitudes in society.

4.3 Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

On the question of whether the participants once got treated for STIs, the results of the study indicate that 15% of final year Education students, 19% from the arts, 12% from Commerce and 21% from Sciences once suffered from STIs as a result of their campus sexual relationships. These results indicated that despite being aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and STIS some university students do not use practice safe sex. The graph below shows the cases of STIs over three months as observed from the clinic records' information.

Figure 1: Figures Reflecting Sexually Transmitted Infections From University Clinic For Male And Female Students.



The above findings reflect many cases of STIs among female than male students at the institution. This is an indication that more females are engaging in risk sexual behaviour than their male counterparts. This was interpreted as one of the consequences of forced sexual encounters (rape), where men do not give these girls or women and themselves room for safe sex. The data gathered through informal discussions with the nurse on the campus healthy facility revealed that commercial sex is also rife on campus and according to their views, there are possibilities of that some men paid for sexual favours and demanded them without using condoms. According to the information from the nurses, these are usually older men sleeping with younger women either due to some myths and misconceptions around HIV/AIDS such as that if an HIV positive man sleeps with a virgin, then he gets cured for AIDS (Jackson, 2000).

Table 5: Effects of sexual attitudes on preventive measures to HIV/AIDS infections.

Item		EDUCATION				ARTS				BSC				COMMERCE			
		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
		1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1	1st	F1
Engaged in sex in the past three months	A	96	100	99	100	97	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100	99	100
	Dis	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
Use of male condom	A	60	80	100	90	60	80	90	86	90	100	89	90	96	78	87	85
	Dis	40	20	0	10	40	20	10	14	10	0	11	11	4	22	13	15
Use female condom	A	4	40	3	12	36	3	0	0	13	28	5	10	0	4	2	0
	Dis	96	60	97	88	91	64	97	100	87	72	95	90	100	96	98	100
Had sex with more than one person in the past three months	A	8	86	17	52	57	90	29	47	40	79	19	59	50	88	41	58
	Dis	92	14	83	48	43	10	71	53	60	21	81	41	50	12	59	42
Had sexually transmitted diseases	A	0	10	0	1	0	15	0	2	1	18	0	3	1	18	3	2
	Dis	100	90	100	99	100	85	100	98	99	82	100	97	99	82	97	98
Participation in V.C.T	A	10	53	5	21	10	40	20	31	13	48	19	39	12	21	15	19
	Dis	90	47	95	79	90	60	80	69	87	42	81	61	88	79	85	81

Responding to the question of the frequency with which the participants have sexual encounters, the findings of this study revealed that students rarely abstain from sex. About 87% respondents claimed they have sex 5 or 6 times a week on average. This observation lent credence to assertions by Jackson (2010) that the university community is made up of highly sexually active students. There were not much differences in the response of first, second and final year students in terms of the frequency with which they indulge in sexual activities within a week. Eighty percent of the respondents reported they have sex 4 times on average a week. The implications for such sexual behaviour were that university students are faced with a very high risk of HIV/AIDS infection if they do not use preventive strategies.

4.4 Preventive measures to STIs and HIV/AIDS

About 65% of the male respondents claimed they use condoms for sex. However, despite knowing about the female

condom, many female respondents (55%) answered in the negative when asked whether they use the condoms. They argued that it is not easy for them because more often than not, their male partners force them to have sex. It was indeed a sad story to note that in this day and age there are some students who engage in casual sex without condoms. The highest number of students who indulge in unprotected sex are first year students especially females. This was considered evidence of leading a highly risk life in the age of HIV/AIDS infections.

Asked why they hardly use condoms, 45 % of the female students claimed that the female condom is currently not as popular in their society as women hardly share such sex related information in their society. In addition, they found it neither so easy nor decent enough to be carrying it with them all the time unlike the male condom. Although quite a good number, 40% of final year Education students, 50% of Science students and 50% male education students were using it, the response was not so high among the first and second year students across the Faculties. The implication for this was is that awareness campaigns on the use of the condom remains an imperative for many organizations. The respondents' views on the existence of multiple sexual partners was quite shocking as most students indicated that they have had at least some sex encounter with more than one partner. The implication was that students were having multiple sexual partners implying their sex lives are risky.

To find out if students ever take heed of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) on campus, their responses were quite encouraging especially among final year students. The highest was education with 53% followed by Sciences with 48% and the arts with 40% and finally commerce with 21 % students having undergone VCT in the last 6 months as at 30 April 2014. Those who have not undergone VCT claimed that this was because there was no new start centre on campus and so they experienced transport challenges from campus to town to attend VCT sessions. According to some of these students, going into town for a test was expensive for them since they are already struggling to raise money for food on campus due to liquidity crunch.

4.5 Helping victims of HIV/AIDS infection on campus

Participants cited the challenge of stigmatisation as being rampant on campus especially in the language used by some students. The respondents argued that some of the students used language that discriminated those that were HIV/AIDS positive or ill. For instance there were terms such as "*Idzo dziri pachirongwa*" referring to a person on ARV treatment programme or *akarohwa nematsotsi* (*he was beaten by thugs*), implying one is already infected. Such discourses discouraged some students from participating in the VCT programmes. Asked why many final year students had a high frequency at VCT centres, the reasons given were that the many of them went for VCT because they were completing their studies and therefore needed an assurance to settle down and make informed decision about their future life.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed several critical issues about attitudes of university students to sexuality. Male students showed that even though they know about gender equality issues, they still want to control and dominate their female counterparts. They believed that they needed to be more sexually experienced than females. Females also believed that their sexual partners were to be more experienced and their role was to satisfy their male partners' sexual desires. Women expressed that they did not need an equal for a sexual partner but somebody older. In addition, both female and males students believed a real man should cater for the needs of their sexual partners. The study also revealed that most students' sexual behaviours were driven by gender biased attitudes that were highly negative. There was evidence of a high prevalence of STIs and HIV among students, a clear indication that some of the students were not responding favourably to preventive strategies of HIV/AIDS. These findings have serious implications for both male and female students in light of the spreading of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For example, the fact that women wanted to have a sexual partner who provided most of their physiological and psychological needs was clear testimony that most female students could not be able to negotiate for safer sex and were in danger of continuing to lead a risk relationship as long as their sexual partners provides for these needs. The findings are in tandem with what Marthur and Gupta (2007) found out when they concluded in their study that young women could not succeed in negotiating for safer sex and thus lived sexual relationships that were perceived as risky.

6. Recommendations

In light of the above findings and conclusion, the study recommends the following: students need to take the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention seriously by practising safe sex if they cannot abstain. Female students need to be encouraged to

familiarise themselves with and adopt the female condom as this can go a long way towards helping them fight the pandemic in their society instead of claiming to be victims yet doing nothing to help the situation. Society needs to deconstruct gender role stereotypes, myths and misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS infection. Students also need to take VCT seriously if they are to make informed decisions about marriage, child bearing, rearing and healthy living. Students need to be fully enlightened to refrain from viewing HIV/AIDS victims as social misfits and to avoid discriminatory tendencies towards its victims. It is important that students be aware of their HIV status so that they do not continue to infect others. In addition, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns on campus need to influence behavioural change among students by offering comprehensive programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention to all students. Since the study showed that most students held on to gender based attitudes that hampered prevention efforts of HIV/AIDS there was a need for a holistic approach towards this. This can be achieved by having an HIV/AIDS policy that paves way for effective advocacy, awareness, assertiveness and gender sensitive programmes that would involve all students through provision of the right information to deconstruct stereotypes, myths and misconceptions around sex, discrimination and HIV/AIDS. Thus, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention programmes should be fully integrated into the university curriculum to include students in all faculties of the institution.

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