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## CASE REPORT

'You Can't Be in Grade 12 and Don't Have a Kid'. Boys' Masculine Conversations Towards Impregnating in Namibian Schools: A Case Study of the Kavango East Region

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## ABSTRACT

The prevalence rate of adolescent pregnancies seems to be escalating in Namibia especially in Kavango East region. This study sought to find out the contribution boy's masculine discourses made to teenage pregnancy in Kavango East Region. To answer the research problem, a qualitative research design using an interpretive paradigm was used. The study drew on in-depth, focus group and individual interviews with a diverse sample of 42 adolescent males aged 17 - 20 years in schools of Kavango East region in Namibia.

Findings of this study revealed that boys' masculine discourses play a significant role in determining teenage pregnancy in Namibian schools, especially for the inexperienced boys who listen to the discussions and attempt to experiment with sexual intercourse. Boys' narratives regarding masculinity, sex, sexuality, and sexual expectations exert sizable influence on adolescents' ideas to engage in sexual relationships. This study recommends that a sensible approach to reducing this teenage pregnancy rate is to develop ways and policies that discourage negative masculinity. The article further foregrounds the imperative of addressing the need for more open communication on matters of sexuality with young people to be encouraged - especially with boys who are the main perpetrators of teenage pregnancy. Finally, more comprehensive gender education at school and traditional level should be provided to address gender disparity which consequently leads to teenage pregnancy.

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Discourses, Sexuality, Teenage pregnancy

## INTRODUCTION

The escalating rate of school drop-out, baby dumping and street children are a consequence of unplanned or teenage pregnancies. Several girl children are getting pregnant before they are able to take care of their babies and ready to start a family. There are some consequences associated with adolescent pregnancies chief among them generational poverty if not rectified by any of the generations in the family. There is also a growing concern among stakeholders about these pregnancies as it contributes to the high poverty rate of the region (Kavango East). This study therefore sought to investigate the role boy's masculine discourses played in determining teenage pregnancies, with particular attention to schools in Kavango East region of Namibia.

## CONTEXTUALISING TEENAGE PREGNANCY WITHIN THE SUB-SAHARAN REGION

According to Odejimi and Bellingham-Young<sup>1</sup> the World Health Organisation (WHO) defined teenage pregnancy as pregnancy in females aged 15-19 years. Mkwanzani<sup>2</sup> postulated that teenage or adolescent pregnancy is observed as a serious public health and demographic problem with medical, psychological, social, and demographic implications. In congruence UNESCO<sup>3</sup> established that adolescent pregnancy also interrupts young women's schooling, thus endangering their future economic opportunities, including reducing job market opportunities. While Lillian and Mumbango<sup>4</sup> argued that an increasing consciousness of social and economic ramifications of teenage pregnancy has led to an agreement among researchers, policy makers, and the general public at large that teenage pregnancy and childbearing is a serious social problem. Darroch et.al<sup>5</sup> 2016 as well as UNFPA<sup>6</sup> stated that an estimation of 12 million girls aged 15-19 years and at least 777,000 girls under 15 years give birth annually in developing regions. Darroch et.al<sup>5</sup> further indicated that at least 10 million unplanned pregnancies occur each year among adolescent girls aged 15-19 years in the developing world.

Gunawardena et.al<sup>7</sup> highlighted that sub-Saharan Africa of which Namibia is a member, had the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the world. According to UNFPA<sup>6</sup> adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa have one of the highest birth rates compared to adolescents in the other regions of the world, accounting for a significant proportion of the general fertility in several countries within the region. Other studies Molosiwa and Moswela<sup>8</sup>; Nyakubega<sup>9</sup> on teenage pregnancy in the sub-continent found that

individual, demographic, socio-economic and reproductive health factors, and behaviour parameters contributed to teenage pregnancy. In a study recently carried out by Indongo<sup>10</sup> in Namibia, factors such as the use of contraceptives, age at which teenage girl first had sex, education level, and household wealth status played a significant role. Although these studies played a critical role in identifying factors which contributed to teenage pregnancy, boy's masculine discourses as a possible source of the phenomenon enjoy little attention.

The Parliamentary Commission on Human Resources and Community Development<sup>11</sup> in Namibia found that Kavango East region was one of the regions with the highest teenage pregnancy rate. This justifies this study, considering that the majority of these region's girls are being affected with teenage pregnancies. The biggest challenge is that teenage pregnancy can lead to incomplete education, unemployment and other numerous social challenges justifying the importance of finding out the role boy's masculine discourses played in determining teenage pregnancy in Namibian schools with particular attention to Kavango East region.

## Statement of the Problem

Indongo<sup>10</sup> asserted that despite the measures taken by the Government of Namibia to reduce adolescent pregnancy it remains a major concern for parents, education and other stakeholders as it continues to pose serious public health and demographic challenge. This is in spite of there being so much information on this issue nationally and globally. Like in most regions of the country the menace continues to trouble schools and communities in Kavango East. The communities in this region still believe that proving one's fertility and sexuality is by having sex and producing children. The report which was compiled by the Parliamentary commission on Human Resources and Community Development<sup>11</sup> showed that 241 pupils fell pregnant within the first term, 148 within the second term, and 156 within the third term, whereas during 2017, there have been 544 cases registered in Kavango East region. While there are several reasons for the high rate of teenage pregnancy, understanding this issue from a masculine discourse is limited or non-existent in the Namibian context. Hence the role boy's masculine discourses is needed to understand more deeply the contributory factors in determining teenage pregnancies in Namibian schools, using Kavango East region as a case study.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative case study research design and was exploratory. It aimed at gaining knowledge and a better understanding of the problem under study. The aim of the study was to explore boy's masculine discourses as determinants of teenage pregnancy in the Kavango East region of Namibian schools.

### Research Setting

The study was conducted in Kavango East Region of Namibia. The population of the study comprised of 42 school going boys. Those adolescent boys came from both rural and urban public secondary schools (Grade 8-12) in Kavango East region of Namibia.

### Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who took part in the study. A total of 42 schoolboys (six at each school) between the ages 17-20, from grades 11 and 12, were selected purposively at seven schools in the region. Although the study called for those aged 17-20 years and who were in grade 11-12 to participate, only those in grade 12 was included in the study and all of them were aged between 18-20.

### Study design

This study used a qualitative research approach involving the case study method within an interpretive paradigm as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison<sup>12</sup> to understand how boys' masculine discourses contribute to teenage pregnancy in Kavango East region of Namibia.

Sampling occurred in two phases. The first phase included identifying seven schools where the research was conducted while the second phase involved the identification of participants. Criteria for selecting the schools were based on purpose and not necessarily the teenage pregnancy rate. The focus group interview was the first method used to generate data by selecting six (6) learners at each school. The focus group data did not only provide significant information from a larger sample but also served as a sampling tool to identify respondents for individual interviews (one-on-one). Seven (7) boys, one participant from each focus group discussion at each of the seven schools were identified for individual interviews.

### Study Limitations

The study encountered methodological limitations especially in the sample size. The study focused only on boys who were in public schools. However, the number of participants for the study was large enough to ensure a representative distribution of the population and to be considered representative of groups of people to whom results will be generalized or transferred.

### Data Analysis

In-depth focus group and individual (face to face) interviews were recorded, translated into English and typed in Microsoft Word. Content analysis was then utilised to analyse these interviews. The interviews were read several times and frequent themes were identified. For the purposes of this study, the analysis focused on boys understanding of masculine discourses.

### Ethical consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Humanities of Health Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Regional Education Director, Kavango East Region and school principals. Informed consent was obtained from all participants who were between 17-20 years. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so. Other considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, respect and dignity were ensured. Anonymity was ensured through the use of pseudonyms

## FINDINGS

The narratives below present findings from both the focus group and individual interviews as narrated by adolescent boys aged between 17 and 20 years from the seven schools where the interviews were conducted. Findings covers masculine discourses as a theme to understand the reasons which inform schoolboys' understanding of masculine discourses, the extent to which masculine discourses have an impact on teenage pregnancy in Namibian schools, what dominates boys' discussions during their free time when they are together and gain insight into masculine discourses which can be addressed to mitigate teenage pregnancy in Namibian schools.

### Community discourse about masculinity

Answers to the question of 'who is considered a man in the community?' appear to rest on the broader question of 'who is considered a man according to the social and cultural practices in the community.' Amongst this cohort of boys, community discourses about masculinity included a man being able to have his own family, having a girlfriend and being able to procreate. For example, participants in the focus groups and individual interviews regularly spoke of a 'real' man as virile and heterosexual. This ideal was what they aspired toward; a key indicator that shaped how they regarded themselves as men.

Participants in this study cited community discourses and beliefs of having a family as paramount in influencing its inhabitants in portraying certain characteristics about being a man. The following narratives depict the characteristic responses from the participants of both the focus group and individual interviews. When asked what they thought of who was considered a man in their community one participant has this to say.

*"[T]hat for a boy to be called a man in the community at least you must be doing something and you happen to be someone's father"* (Alsina, Ntjive SS).

Some of the community discourses or beliefs about manhood pressurises boys to procreate to qualify as real men, as indicated below by the participants in the focus group.

Kamndoxiedo said, *"[Y]aa (Yes), it is true because sometimes friends also they, they have and you don't have then they will start talking like, no, unless you will never have a child in your life because like at the age of 18 up there you must prove that you also can have a kid or not"* (Ntjive SS, FG2, 25/07/2018). Ulox at the same school during the discussion contributed by saying *"is like according to the tradition especially the Nyembas, some Nyembas believe a person like in my case who is a first born I must be the first one to have a kid before my young siblings. That also because it will not be good for a younger sister to have a first born than you. It shows like you are not showing respect to the elders"* (Ntjive SS, FG2, 25/07/2018). Continuing with his contribution, Kamndoxiedo went on to say *"[T]here is a belief that I know that sometimes I remember one guy he was sleeping (sharing bed) with his young brother when he woke up the young brother's manhood was erected then he told his young brother that my brother, aah, that is a sign that it is time for you to have a girl if you always be sleeping like that there is something that will happen to you. You need to have a girl so that you remove those things (referring to*

*sperms) inside. That is also a belief that when you see a boy starting to have an erection, he needs to have a child, people will start encouraging him or her to have a child* (Ntjive SS, FG2, 25/07/2018).

Participants in this study reported that they experience pressure to conform to the discourses in the community for fear of not being considered real men or being respected. Through their discourses, it seemed that both elders and peers alike reproduced and reinforced discourses that potentially predispose boys since they were 'expected' to have girlfriends and have sex (sometimes leading to pregnancy).

### Boy's discourse about masculinity

Boy's discourses about masculinity were influenced by different factors, stemming from peers, the ability that one has transitioned from boyhood to manhood, natural drive, and competition. Participants of this study indicated that the pressure to prove that they are able to propose an intimate relationship with a girl in order to prove their manhood, forced many boys to have a girlfriend.

*"[B]ecause one is forced when you don't have a girlfriend especially at school and they know you don't have a girlfriend especially if you are in grade 12 it will not look good but when you decide to propose a girl and those girls at school know that you don't have a girlfriend they will say he wants to start learning with me. That is a big thing. Maybe what one can do at least to have proposed a girl and when you propose someone else they can say he is also having a girl in order for them to know that you proposed someone before and even if you are going to leave her they will know you slept with her. If for the whole year while in grade 12 you do not have a girlfriend while those in grade 8 have, it becomes a shame and it is not good"* (Payet, Njiru SS).

During the individual interviews, participants indicated that boys' masculine identity was also shaped by their families at home especially grandfathers and uncles. They said their grandfathers or uncles taught them what a boy should do when looking for a girlfriend. Breeze said, *"[H]ow boys are brought up normally at home who educate boys are the grandfather when they see that a boy is old they teach him that if you want a girl you must look at her behavior not those who drinks and go to people's houses without permission. If you are serious with her, you must inform us to speak to her parents"* (Mashwa SS).

Boys in this study believed that their masculine identity was mostly transmitted through generations (by their grandfathers or uncles, but not their fathers). The nature of influence is also dependent upon exposure within the home environment. Some variations were noted in the urban/rural divide, while some variations were noted in immediate family (e.g., boys brought up by single mother). Through these generational beliefs, it seemed that boys in this community reproduced and reinforced norms that potentially impacted on teenage pregnancy.

### **Impact of boy's masculine discourses on teenage pregnancy**

The participants of this study in both the focus group and individual (face-to-face) interviews unanimously agreed that boys' masculine discourses had an impact on teenage pregnancy. One respondent stated: *"Yes, too much, let me say when boys are discussing one can come up and say that girl, I want to impregnate her so that I will get a chance to propose another one because the one he has is not giving time to propose others. Through impregnating her she will be on leave which will give him time/chance to propose other girls"* (Alsina, Ntjive SS).

When asked whether boys' masculine discourses had an impact on teenage pregnancy, participants responded as stated below.

*"Very much, highly because nowadays you giving into peer pressure that's it, when you might, are together then one friend will just start talking about it, when he start talking about sex, then starting it in a group and one of them will say, aah, no, "ame simpe kapi nayirugana" (I never did it) and the other will say, öve onodiva asi yinke ono kumesa" (you, do you know what you are missing?), "kaze tupu okayiheteke ove" (just go and try it), "ghutovara" (it is nice) and when he goes and does it he forgets about using protection, some guys will tell him, bra, just go and do it without protection, it is even nxaa (nice), maan, you even feel better than using a condom, it will be nice and all that because that talk it is where the sex desire of boys start, eish, my friends say that let me go and try it, maan, let me go this and go try it because when boys talk, we nowadays talk about having kids, nowadays you talk like having kids, it is just like even you can get 16 years old boys having kids, 15 years old girls having kids all this, this are all just boys do, we just want to have fun and enjoy the whole way"* (Big Nax, Mbahe SS).

It would seem therefore, that the masculine discourses of this cohort of boys was shaped by a dominant community discourse. They positioned themselves to fit within the classification of real men by identifying particular dispositions, beliefs, and practices that they reported distinguished them from the ordinary boys 'other'. They also distinguished 'real men' from those men who acted outside the community discourse. Boys were 'expected' to prove they were 'real men' by adhering to or complying with dominant community practices. It was clear in the focus and individual interviews that participants experienced social pressure from peers and other significant members (parents and elders) in the community to live up to the 'ideal' of being a 'real man'. These practices sometimes put them at risk of impregnating.

### **Boys' dominant discourses when in groups**

The cohorts in this study agreed that what dominates their discussions during their free time, when they are in groups, is mostly girls. This is confirmed by their input below.

*"Yaa (yes), I would say when it comes to the gender of boys that is obvious, when boys are together the most interesting thing, they can talk about is girls because it is, it is natural in our minds even girls they mostly talk about boys. So, we boys when we are together we mostly talk about girls"* (Ricky, Maguni SS).

*"Yaa (Yes), when boys, three or five of them are together, the discussion which normally take place is mostly about girls, one brings up about a girl he likes and how to go about it, he asks advice from others on what to do to get her as a girlfriend, mostly that is what boys discuss (Alsina, Ntjive SS).*

From this engagement, it seems that when boys are together, they gravitate their conversation towards girls. This gravitation seems like a natural transition, even though they may begin conversations on other matters, the topic about girls continued to pop up as the next section looks at what boys talked about girls.

### **What boys discuss about girls when in groups**

One of the intriguing topics which dominate boys' conversations when they are together is girls. When

participants of this study, during the individual interviews, were asked what formed part of their discussion about girls.

*Yaa (Yes), those things are not missed by boys, boys mostly that's their important discussion when they discuss about girls. You will find others discussing that when you are with your girlfriend maybe what others call rounds, how many rounds do you do with her. Also, there those who discuss how they feel when sleeping (having sex) with a girl, they do not like using a condom because it does not feel like having sex with a girl. That is what they say according to what I hear. If he uses a condom it does not really feel that he is having sex with the girl unless it is flesh to flesh than he can feel he is sleeping with a girl"* (Sadio, Njiiru SS).

Boasting about sexual encounters and experiences influenced some boys to experiment with sexual intercourse or propose intimate relationships to girls, as participants stated below.

*"[B]ecause us boys if we are four, we discuss about that maybe last Friday it went well to sleep with a girl when I meet my best friends, I will tell them, eish, that girl is normal (meaning good), she is good. Sometimes when I am telling them two of them do not have an interest in girls or of proposing. Maybe they are only interested in their schoolwork but when they hear what I am telling, now, I am feeling well, I enjoyed it adding some enticing things that will let them to get ideas. Maybe one is a virgin but because of what you are telling them it will make him to believe that if it is true maybe it is good because things one does not know and you hear it will also make you to try it. When you try it you might over do it while your friend knows how to control himself ending up in trouble of impregnating"* (Payet, Njiiru SS).

When participants of this study in the first focus group were asked how the discussion about girls influenced them to engage in sexual relationships this is what they had to say:

*"If am not having a girl I be joining a group, when they discuss about girls, I will learn from that which will lead me to propose a girl and at the end of the day have sex with her. Another way again is this stories that we normally used to hear also make us to lose control of ourselves because sometimes if I don't know how to date a girl, when I go to the girl maybe she doesn't like me and at the end I will make sure because we normally use to discuss and finally, I will make sure to have sex with her because of the discussions"* (KB, Njiiru SS).

*"When boys are having discussions like if there is another boy who does not have a girlfriend, every time others will try to talk about girls he brings up a different topic, he will be teased and told, aah, look at you, you are a virgin, they will put a coal between your buttocks when you will be buried. Now, at night when he goes to sleep, he will also feel bad and think about it. Those things they talked about me what is wrong if I also find a girl which might be better"* (Thuso, Njiiru SS).

Drawing from the above excerpts it seems that when boys are together, they talk about a range of things associated with girls, from gaining their attention to having sex and describing their experiences, to encouraging others in the group about having a girlfriend and engaging in sexual activities and what happens when a boy does not have a girlfriend after being enticed or enlightened through others' sexual experiences.

### **Boys' discourses and risky sexual activities**

It emerged during focus group discussions that the discussions boys had about girls or sex influenced them to engage in risky sexual activities, as the quotes below reflect:

*"When we are with friends who like never tasted sex, we tease them by telling them also to try. We tell them like, why being like that while you are completing grade 12, you are missing good things. Sometimes we can discuss about, I remember when we were in grade 10, our teacher asked, the sexual pleasure during intercourse, is it felt before or after ejaculation? The other boy who is a virgin just answered after the ejaculation but other boys in the class told him, no, it is not like that, that showed he was an amateur or virgin from that day he was used to be teased by others, you don't know girls. Sometimes they called girls for him to propose but he did not know how to propose. They continued to bring girls to him until he was able to propose. Yes, the discussion boys have about girls influence them to engage in risky sexual activities"* (Payet, Njiiru SS, FG1, 21 /06/2018).

*"Yaa (Yes), let's say that people try to do things to fit into their peers once you hear everybody saying I have a girl, we do this and that and that, that's how it feels, of course you will be moved to do that. I have to do it also so that I can fit, I mean, imagine that your friend is talking about a girl and you are quiet, you don't have anything to, it will make you decide let me get a girl so*

*that when they talk I can also talk. I must also have a girl and when we are going, I will also have a girl so that I will be equal"* (Jay, Maguni SS, FG1, 23/06/2018).

According to Seun at Ntjivi Secondary school, the cultural belief that those without kids, when buried and a coal is placed in the anus, are put at risk of impregnating. He remarked that, "Sometimes maybe others have kids and I don't have they might say when I die and be buried they might put a coal between my buttocks. Things like that motivate you to get a kid (FG1, 23/06/2018).

Keeping up with the conversations and cultural fear are amongst some of the fears young boys are fed through group conversations and discussions. These fears have the potential to influence risky sexual behaviours amongst the young boys, especially those that do not have girlfriends or sexual intercourse with girls.

The data also revealed that the social constructions of gender and sexuality in this community give particular meaning to being male or female, and boy's masculine discourses were shaped by both the personal and institutional orderings of gender and that overlaps and intersects with the ways in which sexual relations and identities are organised by the community.

The findings above provide one level of evidence of the social practices that boys experience pressure to conform to dominant masculine norms assigned by different sectors of the community (such as parents, peers and other members of the community). To qualify as man or prove one's masculine prowess, a man needs to produce children, own material possessions and have multiple partners.

## DISCUSSION

### Boy's understanding of masculine discourses

The narratives of participants in this study indicated that the discourses of boys were not only gendered but also framed in a normative, heterosexual discourse portrayed by the community. They reported that community discourses were amongst the enduring structures shaping boys' masculine discourses and perspectives on 'being a man'. Prime amongst these were discourses that encouraged boys or men to prove their manhood and being 'real men' by engaging in sex. This study also revealed that key in the case of boys in this study, was the need to comply with social expectations from the community or peers

to have a family and children as a dominant marker of their masculine identity. In this community, failure to comply with the expectation leads to someone being labelled as weak or impotent. The revelation is consistent with Connell and Messerschmidt's<sup>13</sup> statement which pointed out that men who do not meet certain masculine ideals based on their specific social context can incur social disapproval, social ostracism, and/or violence from their social networks. Bhana<sup>14</sup> stated that masculinity may be thought of as a social construction about what it means to be male in certain times and places. In line with the social construction theory, boys' experiences are shaped by the societies they live in and they in turn reshape those societies (Chimanzi<sup>15</sup>). Itulua-Abumere<sup>16</sup> said that masculinity is composed of those behaviours, languages, and practices, that exist in particular cultural and organisational locations, and which can be commonly related to men and for this reason culturally defined as no longer feminine. The statement is in line with the finding of this study which revealed that boys' behaviour, language and practices were shaped by the communities they were living in and that in turn were used during their daily conversations and interactions with other boys. The participants of this study also revealed that their masculine sexuality was shaped by the societies in which they were living, which expect them to be sexually active by having a girlfriend and engaging in sex.

Another revelation by the participants of this study is that due to the pressure from grandparents to prove their masculine virility, boys during their daily conversations influenced each other to impregnate girls at an early age and ignore the use of condoms. This finding is similar to a review of school-based studies of adolescent sexual behaviour in sub-Saharan Africa by Schaalma and Kaaya<sup>17</sup> which found that significant proportions of adolescents were sexually active by the time they were in their mid-teens with many having had sexual intercourse with two or more partners and condoms being rarely used.

According to Kar et al<sup>18</sup> the attitude of the parents toward sexuality, parenting fashion, peer dating, cultural influences are the essential social factors which facilitate the sexual learning and determine the sexual mind-set of the adolescent. Edinyang<sup>19</sup> posited that social learning theories deal with the potential of teenagers to imbibed and show the behaviours exhibited within their surroundings. In support of the above notions, participants of this study postulated that the practices and beliefs which formed part of their discussions were in part informed by their parents and to a lesser extent the gender ideologies

observed within their context. They revealed that men in their community talked about the masculine prowess for a man to prove his virility. This, according to the participants of this study, shaped their masculine discourses whenever they met. Bandura's<sup>20</sup> social learning theory confirms the above findings by suggesting that individuals learn to engage in deviant behaviour by observing those around them. Bandura believed that children learn behaviour by watching and then imitating (Murray<sup>21</sup>).

Bandura's theory of social learning, specifically his notion of observational learning and modelling, goes some way to explain the perspectives and dispositions held by boys in this study. He argued that observational learning enables agents to model the behaviour of people they interact with. Edinyang<sup>19</sup> pointed out that observational learning predisposes members of a particular society to learn certain behaviour when observing others. This theory further posits that social learning theory explains how people learn new behaviours, values, and attitudes. For example, a boy might learn certain attitudes by listening to his peers and observe how those attitudes are put into practice.

Evidence from this study reveals that boys in the communities where the study was conducted imitated other boys who had impregnated girls and had children. This result confirms the social learning theory's notion of imitation, which states that individuals engage in behaviours previously witnessed from others. Congruent with the revelation, Akers and Sellers<sup>22</sup> maintained that people observe characteristics of the models, their behaviour, and the outcome of that behaviour, and then imitate them. Predominantly, according to Akers and Sellers<sup>22</sup> the people with whom one is in immediate proximity will become sources of imitations.

The narratives of participants in this study revealed that, for the most part, boys in the community discussed their elevation from boyhood to manhood to prove their masculine prowess. They reported that during discussions they encouraged each other to prove that one is no more a boy but a man by engaging in sexual activities or through impregnating a girl. Consistent with these findings, McFadden<sup>23</sup> wrote that "heterosexual sex is indispensable in the apprehension of maleness, in the social mobility of the male from boy to man, to father, to head of ménage, to decision-maker, to man".

#### ***Impact of boys' masculine discourses on teenage pregnancy***

Participants of this study in both the focus group and individual (face-to-face) interviews revealed that

boys' masculine discourses had an impact on teenage pregnancy. Boys in this study thus emphasised the role that boys' masculine discourses played in determining teenage pregnancy, stating that during conversations they encouraged each other to prove their sexual virility through impregnating girls. The narratives of participants in this study further revealed that boys wanted to have children to be accepted by the society. The assertion is supported by Fleming et al<sup>24</sup> who affirmed that a man's masculinity depends on both his public behaviours and interactions as well as how his social environment judges them. In support of the statements above, Spiering<sup>25</sup> stated that discourses necessarily convey and reproduce larger power structures and ideology. Spiering<sup>25</sup> further argued that language through discourses always happens with a social context and meaning is made and generated in relation with people.

Chimanzi<sup>15</sup> pointed out that social interactions of any kind are of great interest to social constructionists. The interactions between people in the course of their everyday lives are seen as the practices during which their shared versions of knowledge are constructed (Chimanzi<sup>15</sup>). The statement is in line with the revelation which was made by a participant during the individual interviews, stating that many boys are lured into sexual activities for fear of being teased by others. The narratives of the participants in this study were in line with the finding of a study by Mtenga, Shamba, Wamoyi, Kakoko, Haafkens, Mongi, et al<sup>26</sup> which was carried out in Tanzania and found that Tanzanian truck drivers engaged in risky sex because of fear that refusing to do so would cause peers to question their masculinity and tease them. The result provides evidence that many boys engage in sexual activities or impregnate girls due to teasing each other during boys' masculine discourses. There are parallels with the revelation by a participant during the individual interviews who stated that boys' masculine discourses contribute to teenage pregnancy because what boys hear from others often results in them experimenting to see whether they are able to impregnate a girl.

#### **Boys' dominant discourses**

The present study revealed that what dominate boys' group discussions during their free time, is girls. Participants further revealed that not only did boys discuss girls, as girls also discussed boys. It was further confirmed through the discussion that boys used the platform to advise each other on relationship issues.



Schoolwork or any other topic such as cars enjoyed little attention, as per participants' revelation. Another widely held expectation and supported by the findings of this study is that festivals and special social gatherings served as venues for boys to discuss girls and engage in sexual activities; either because the usual social controls are absent, or the sexual license has some ritual function. Funerals and tournaments involving large gatherings over several days, and weekly markets, are renowned as opportunities to arrange and have sex

Perhaps one of the fundamental conclusions in the data from this cohort of participants is that being in a sexual relationship was mostly influenced by different discourses emanating from friends, girls, and parents. The participants of this study reported that they mostly discussed having intercourse just to have fun with girls and not necessarily committing to serious or long-term relationships.

Evidence from this study reveals that boys in this community were influenced by the boys' discourses to engage in sexual relationship. During the discussions, boys mostly talked about how they enjoyed spending time with their girlfriend. They also reported that those without girlfriends were teased that they do not know how to propose having sex and that they do not know how it feels to have a girlfriend, which led to their exclusion from the discussions.

## CONCLUSION

We argued at the beginning of this article that boy's masculine discourses as a possible source of teenage pregnancy enjoyed little attention from previous studies which investigated contributing factors to the issue. The finding that we presented suggest that community discourses were amongst the enduring structures shaping boys' masculine discourses and perspectives on 'being a man' which encouraged boys to have children. Prime amongst these were discourses that encouraged boys or men to prove their manhood and being 'real men' by engaging in sex. It would seem therefore, that the masculine discourses of the boys were one shaped by a dominant community discourse. During conversations when boys were together, it seemed that they gravitated their

conversation towards girls. This gravitation seemed like a natural transition, even though they may begin conversations on other matters, the topic about girls continued to pop up. They positioned themselves to fit within the classification of real men by identifying particular dispositions, beliefs, and practices that they reported distinguished them from the ordinary boys 'other'.

We, therefore, recommend that topics about the effect of masculine prowess should be part of traditional meetings in communities to address the negative effects of masculinity. These meetings should include a focus on community engagement focusing on conversations with the community about traditional beliefs about masculinity discourses and about teenage pregnancy, childbearing and childcare and support. Such meetings will assist parents when raising their children and to talk openly about the challenges that they are facing as teenage boys.

Ministry of Health and Social services and policy makers must acknowledge and discourage negative masculine discourses, promoting collaborative interventions to engage communities in order to change cultural norms and modify parents' behaviours related to male sexuality.

Attempts to deal with and understand boys' discussions about masculinity and sexuality must value individual interpretations and the social and cultural environments in which teenage boys are located as these mould adolescent boys' sexual realities and may reinforce risky sexual behaviour.

More debates about boys' masculine discourses in Kavango East region although complex should be encouraged. Lastly, discourses analysed are part of the slightly varying cultures shared within different social groups in the communities and modifying them would almost certainly require a multi-sectoral approach such as a positive masculine beliefs programmes to defeat teenage pregnancy.

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