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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NON-CONSENSUAL SEXUAL EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRANSACTIONAL AND INTER-GENERATIONAL SEX AMONG FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWALE COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of non-consensual sexual experiences and attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex among female students. Participants included 201 female secondary school students aged 15-25 in Kwale County, Kenya. Consistent with previous research, students were required to report self and others' experiences of non-consensual sexual experiences and personal attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. Though most girls responded favourably towards self, they indicated that their friends experienced non-consensual sexual contact, both verbal and physical. This came in the form of colleagues blocking their way in doors and corridors, being fondled and even sexual intercourse with fellow students and teachers. Age was found to explain differences in reports of experiences and attitudes. Implications of the findings are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Non-consensual sexual experiences are becoming widespread in schools across the world. The implications on adolescents' health outcomes and educational attainment are enormous. In Africa, sexual violation of adolescent girls varies from unwanted touch by boys standing in strategic places like doors and hallways (Ajayi et al., 1997; Ruto, 2009) to coerced or forced first sex, including their partner not taking 'no' for an answer, threats, money/gifts, or physical force (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007), to unwanted touch on breasts and verbal humiliation (Erulkar, 2004; Mirsky, 2003) and to commercial sexual exploitation (UNICEF, 2006).

Age differences have been noted in reports of non-consensual sexual relationships (Nzyuko, Lurie, McFarland, Leyden, Nyamwaya & Mandel, 1997). In a meta-analysis by Chatterji, Murray, London and Anglewicz (2004) young women were found to be significantly more likely to engage in transactional sex in at least half the countries reviewed.

Non-consensual sexual experiences in school

The school setting is increasingly being mentioned in the literature as pertinent in the prevalence of non-consensual sexual experiences among adolescent girls (Wane, 2009). Sexual coercion within the school takes many forms. Studies indicate that both teachers and peers perpetrate varying forms of non-consensual sexual behaviours from teasing to lewd remarks, unwanted touch on the breasts and private parts, pressure to engage in sexual intercourse, transactional sex and forced intercourse (Ajayi et al., 1997; Mirsky, 2003).

Some teachers have also been reported to force adolescent girls to engage in sex through the use of threats and favours. In a school-based study in Kenya, sexual harassment and unwanted touch like boys fondling girls' breasts was found to be pervasive and silently accepted by teachers (Ajayi et al., 1997, as cited in Jejeebhoy & Bott, 2003). This corroborates findings of Plan Togo in 2006 (ECSA-HC, 2011) which identified the concept of '*notes sexuellement transmissibles*' (sexually transmitted marks) being in common usage in secondary schools.

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A study by Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lemani and Machakanja (2003) in Zimbabwe indicated that older male pupils forced themselves aggressively on younger girls and accosted them in the classrooms, corridors and grounds. Sexual relationships varied from sexual touch, proposals, and threats while money and gifts were often used by both male students and teachers to secure consent. Additionally, male teachers used false promises of marriage. These findings reveal that schools are fertile breeding grounds for non-consensual sexual acts. These forms of unwanted sexual behaviour create a hostile learning environment for girls.

### Transactional and inter-generational sex

A number of qualitative studies in sub-Saharan Africa have shown that young people have sex for economic reasons. The average age of male partners varies in studies between two and seven years older (Gregson *et al.*, 2002, as cited in Luke & Kurz, 2002). It has emerged in the literature that relationships between teachers and adolescent girls are part of non-consensual relationships grounded on an economic perspective (Kaiser Report, 2012). Studies have identified items such as money, food, gifts, clothing, books and toiletries as encouragements for young women to have sex. Wane (2009) confirmed in her study of 2074 adolescents in Kenya and Uganda that poverty was one of the issues that led young girls to agree to engage in sexual acts. Adolescent girls receive gifts and money from both older partners (sugar daddies) and peers in and out of school. Because of scant economic resources, high demand for material goods, and high levels of peer pressure, money/gifts and social pressure to have a 'provider' become strong 'push factors' for non-consensual sexual experiences to occur.

This is heightened by the added demand for school fees, uniform and books which forces parents to let their daughters get 'sponsors' in exchange for sexual favours (Bledsoe, 1990; Meekers & Calves, 1997, cited in Mensch, Clark, Lloyd & Erulkar, 1999; Odaga & Heneveld, 1995). This finding contradicts UNICEF (2006) who found out that some girls who wanted to live high life and be 'Western' by having extra money engaged in transactional sex. The girls were not necessarily from poor families.

Leach, Machakanja and Mandoga (2000) found out that boys aggressively demanded girls' attention and sexual favours and were ready to pay for them. Girls are socialised to depend on men for support and were found to be passive when faced with abuse from boys. Additionally both pupils and teachers in the Zimbabwean case accepted the state of affairs as normal. Other studies point to the role of parents (Nyanzi *et al.*, 2001, as cited in Chatterji *et al.*, 2004) and peers (Frost & Bingenheimer, 2011) in forcing girls towards transactional sexual relationships. In contrast, Swidler and Watkins (2007) indicates that poverty is not the only reason for girls accepting gifts and money for sexual relations as evidenced in some studies (Leach *et al.*, 2000; Leach *et al.*, 2003; UNICEF, 2006). It is suggested that transactional sexual relationships cushion against life's uncertainties. Studies suggest that age plays a crucial role in reports of transactional sexual relationships. Luke and Kurz (2002) argue that older girls are

more likely to receive money or gifts for sexual favours (or are willing to report them) than are younger girls. Studies show that transactional sex is increasingly intergenerational in nature. In many countries in southern Africa it is the norm for a young woman to have a boyfriend who is five years older than she is (Luke, 2005, as cited in Hope, 2007). The exchange of money or gifts from older partners is perceived as normal practice in these relationships. In Kenya, data suggests that the primary motivation for inter-generational sex is financial in nature. Studies also show that girls in inter-generational sexual relationships have lesser control over their sexual health. For instance, such girls are less likely to insist on condom use (Terry *et al.*, 2005, as cited in Hope, 2007).

### Statement of the Problem

There is concern that a culture of sexual violence is taking root in Kenyan schools. Press reports of unwanted sexual experiences have highlighted the high risk adolescent school girls face in pursuing their education. The St. Kizito tragedy on July 13, 1991 whereby 71 girls aged 14-18 were raped, leading to the deaths of 19 girls among many others are a constant reminder of the dire situation. It is however difficult to accurately estimate the prevalence of non-consensual sexual experiences and attitudes towards transactional sex in Kenyan schools because of the limited amount of research done in the area. This study was an attempt to fill that gap.

### Research questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the extent of non-consensual sexual experiences of secondary school girls from a personal perspective?
- What is the extent of non-consensual sexual experiences in reference to the group?
- What are secondary school girls' attitudes towards intergenerational and transactional sexual relationships?

### Conceptual framework

The study employed the conceptual model by Weismann *et al.*, (2006) as cited in Hope (2007) referred to as the continuum of volition. The model suggests that sexual coercion occurs on a continuum whereby girls enter sexual relationships voluntarily on one extreme and have sexual experiences against their will on the other extreme. Consistent with Weismann *et al.*'s., model, this conceptual framework suggests that the "push factors" (drivers) for adolescent girls' entry into coercive sexual relationships range from emotional security to economic security with peers and older partners respectively. The model explores how non-consensual sexual relationships span a continuum - from voluntary sex to coerced sex while supported by economic want, emotional needs and catalysed by the school environment (peers) and the larger culture (sexual socialisation).

### METHODS

The study was carried out on a sample of 201 female secondary school students in Kwale County.

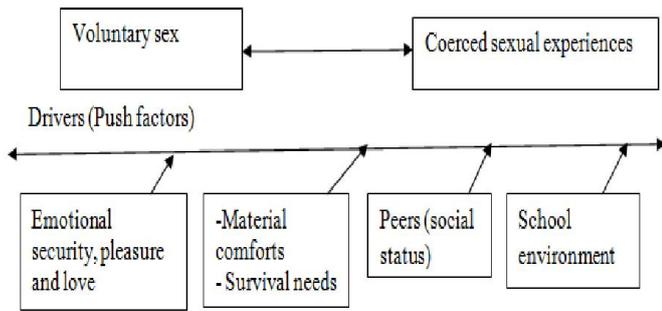


Figure 1. The continuum of volition: Adapted and modified from Weismann et al. (2006)

The sample comprised students aged 15-17 (n = 98), 18-19 (n = 91) and above 20 years (n = 12) in form 2 (n = 59), form 3 (n = 84) and form 4 (n = 58). A questionnaire modelled on Weissman et al. (2006) as cited in Hope (2007) was administered.

Findings

Prevalence of non-consensual sex (self)

The first objective of the study was to find out the extent of self-reports of non-consensual sexual experiences. Findings were reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of non-consensual sexual experiences of self

Statement	M	SD	Disagree		Agree	
			f	%	f	%
Remarks on physical appearance by teacher	1.32	.47	136	67.7	65	32.3
Verbal abuses of sexual nature	1.14	.35	172	85.6	29	14.4
Corridors blocked by male students	1.30	.46	140	69.7	61	30.3
Seduced by male teacher	1.13	.34	174	86.6	27	13.4
Requested sexual favours by school staff	1.09	.30	181	90.0	20	10.0
Kissed on cheek	1.22	.42	155	77.1	46	22.9
Touched or fondled on breasts and other parts	1.69	.38	167	83.1	34	16.9
Harassed in classrooms and toilets	1.19	.39	162	80.6	39	19.4
Arm put around waist or shoulders	1.27	.44	147	73.1	54	26.9
Sexual intercourse with teachers/students	1.04	.21	192	95.5	9	4.5

Table 3. Reports of friends' non-consensual sexual experiences

Statement	M	SD	Disagree		Agree	
			f	%	f	%
Teacher remarks on friend's body	1.51	.50	99	49.3	102	50.7
Verbal abuses of sexual nature to friend	1.51	.50	100	49.8	101	50.2
Corridors blocked by male students for friend	1.58	.49	85	42.3	116	57.7
Friend seduced by male teacher	1.49	.50	102	50.7	99	49.3
Friend requested sexual favours by school staff	1.35	.48	130	64.7	71	35.3
Friend kissed on cheek and other parts	1.49	.50	103	51.2	98	48.8
Friend touched or fondled on breasts and other parts	1.36	.48	128	63.7	73	36.3
Friend harassed in classrooms and toilets	1.37	.48	126	62.7	75	37.3
Arm put around friend's waist or shoulders	1.55	.49	90	44.8	111	55.2
Friends have sexual intercourse with teachers/students	1.31	.47	138	68.7	63	31.3

Findings in Table 1 indicate that almost a third of female students reported suffering from verbal remarks on their body by male teachers, having their path blocked by male students on corridors and arms placed on their waists or shoulders. The least form of non-consensual sexual experience was sexual intercourse. Further, to establish whether differences in reporting non-consensual sexual experiences were due to age and class, 2-way ANOVA was done.

Only 5 of 10 self-reports of non-consensual experiences show significant differences on the basis of age. Findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Significant differences in reports of non-consensual sexual experiences (self) by age and class

Statement	df	F	p	ηp <sup>2</sup>
Seduced by male teacher for romantic relationships	2	4.30	.015	.04
Request for sex from school staff	2	4.39	.014	.04
Kissed on cheek or other parts	2	4.37	.014	.04
Harassed in classrooms and toilets	2	4.47	.013	.04
Arm put around waist or shoulders	2	3.72	.026	.04

Concerning reports of being seduced by male teacher for relationships, post hoc analysis show significant differences between 15-17 year old female students (M = 1.22, SE = .12) and 18-19 year olds (M = 1.59, SE = .13); and also between 15-17 year olds and students above 20 (M = 2.00, SE = .29). No significant differences were found between students above 20 and 18-19. Therefore, older students (above 20 years) were more likely to report cases of by seduced by male teachers. Age differences in reports of requests of sex by non-teaching school staff were found. Post hoc analysis show differences between 15-17 year olds (M = 1.18, SE = .11) and 18-19 year olds (M = 1.65, SE = .12). Results show that older students reported higher incidences of requests of sex by school staff.

Significant differences were also found on the basis of class with students in form 2 (M = 1.75, SE = .16) significantly different from form 3 students (M = 1.17, SE = .14); and form 3 students significantly different from form 4 students (M = 1.27, SE = .16). This contradictory finding means that form 2 students were more likely to report more requests for sex by non-teaching school staff. Age differences were also found in reports of kissing on neck or other part of the body.

Significant differences were found between 15-17 year olds ( $M = 1.46$ ,  $SE = .15$ ) and 18-19 year olds ( $M = 2.02$ ,  $SE = .15$ ) and students above 20 years ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SE = .34$ ). No significant differences were found between 18-19 year olds and their counterparts above 20. This finding implies that age determined the reported frequency of being kissed.

Concerning being harassed in classrooms and toilets, age differences in reporting were also found. Students aged 15-17 ( $M = 1.38$ ,  $SE = .14$ ) were significantly different from 18-19 year old students ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SE = .15$ ) and those above 20 ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SE = .34$ ). No significant differences were found between 18-19 year olds and those above 20.

Finally, age differences were found in reports of boys' arms on the waist and shoulders of girls with 15-17 year old students ( $M = 1.75$ ,  $SE = .16$ ) significantly different from their counterparts above 20 ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SE = .37$ ). No significant differences were found between students aged 15-17 and 18-19 ( $M = 2.04$ ,  $SE = .17$ ) and between 18-19 year olds and those above 20. Findings therefore show that an increase in age would explain higher incidences of having arms around girls' waists and shoulders, or reports of the same.

#### Prevalence of friends' non-consensual sexual experiences

The study then sought to establish the extent of non-consensual sexual experiences from the perspective of the 'other'. Descriptive findings were presented in Table 3.

Results from Table 3 show more experiences of corridors being blocked by male students, female students having arms wrapped around their waists and remarks of a sexual nature on female students' bodies. As expected, and in line with related literature, students reported higher non-consensual experiences of their friends than their own. The study then sought to determine whether the differences in reporting non-consensual sexual experiences of friend could be explained by age and class. Towards that end, 2-way ANOVA was done and only four experiences were explained by age. No differences were attributed to class of students. Results were presented in Table 4.

Post hoc analysis revealed significant age differences between 15-17 year old students ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SE = .17$ ) and 18-19 year olds ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SE = .18$ ) in reporting experiences of friends seduced by male teacher for romantic relationships. There were no significant differences between 15-17 year olds and those above 20 ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SE = .39$ ); and between 18-19 year olds and their counterparts aged 20 and above. These findings suggest that age could explain differences only to a limit beyond which it became insignificant. Findings also point to the 18-19 age bracket as a group at risk. Concerning reports of friends' being requested for sex by non-teaching school staff, significant age differences were noted between 15-17 year old students ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SE = .16$ ) and 18-19 year olds ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SE = .16$ ). No significant differences were found between 15-17 year old students and those above 20 ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SE = .37$ ) and between 18-19 year olds and those above 20. As in reports of friends seduced by male teachers, the 18-19 age bracket ranked highest in reports of friends requested for sex by non-teaching school staff and therefore pointing to the need of examining the 18-19 group as one at risk.

Class level differences were found to explain reports of female students being fondled on breasts and other parts of the body with form 3 students ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SE = .22$ ) significantly different from form 4 students ( $M = 1.68$ ,  $SE = .25$ ). No significant differences were found between students in form 2 ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SE = .25$ ) and those in form 4 and between students in form 3 and form 2. These findings suggest that students in form 3 are more likely to have a friend fondled.

Finally, significant age differences were evident in explaining reports of friends having sex with teachers or male students. Significant differences were found between 15-17 year old students ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $SE = .16$ ) and 18-19 year olds ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SE = .17$ ). No significant differences were found between 15-17 year old students' reports and those aged above 20 ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SE = .37$ ) and between 18-19 year olds and those aged above 20. Once again, the 18-19 age bracket reported highest means on friends having sexual intercourse with teachers and male students. Interestingly, students aged over 20 posted the lowest mean.

**Table 4. Significant differences in reports of non-consensual sexual experiences (friend) by age and class**

Statement	df	F	p	$\eta^2$
<sup>a</sup> Friend seduced by male teacher for romantic relationships	2	3.34	.038	.03
<sup>a</sup> Friend requested for sex from school staff	2	3.39	.035	.03
<sup>b</sup> Friend fondled on breasts and other parts	2	3.13	.046	.03
<sup>a</sup> Friends having sex with teachers or male students	2	3.09	.048	.03

Note: a = age, b = class

**Table 5. Students' attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex**

Statement	M	SD	Disagree		Agree	
			f	%	f	%
Okay to have sex for money/gifts	1.14	.36	171	85.1	30	14.9
No condom if given gifts/money	1.29	.46	142	70.6	59	29.4
Prefer a man 5 years and older	1.42	.49	116	57.7	85	42.3
I know a girl in love with a teacher	1.67	.47	67	33.3	134	66.7
Girls have voluntary sex with teachers	1.51	.50	99	49.3	102	50.7
I know a girl with a sugar daddy	1.52	.50	96	47.8	105	52.2

This indicates reports of friends' sexual intercourse peaked between 18 and 19 and then tailed off.

**Attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex**

The study sought to establish students' attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex and whether age and class influenced variance in attitudes. Descriptive analysis of students' attitudes was summarised and presented in Table 5. Findings from Table 5 show a worrying trend. Up to two-thirds of the sample knows of a girl in a romantic relationship with a teacher. More than half also know a girl in their school with a sugar daddy and a similar margin are of the opinion that sexual relations between girls and teachers are voluntary.

Overall, more than a third of respondents 71 (35.5%) had favourable attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. The study then sought to determine the extent to which age and class level interact in predicting differences in attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. The items comprising attitudes were transformed into a single variable labelled "Attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex". Two-way ANOVA was done. Age and class level accounted for 10% variance in attitudes towards transactional sex ( $R^2 = .10$ ). Findings were presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Influence of age and class level in attitudes towards transactional sex**

	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig	Eta
Intercept	450.87	1	450.87	1097.38	.000	.85
Age	5.93	2	2.96	7.21	.001	.07
Class	.96	2	.48	1.17	.312	.01
Age*Class	.99	3	.33	.81	.49	.01
Error	79.29	193	.41			

**Table 7. Post hoc analysis of age differences in attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex**

(I)Age	(J)Age	Mean Diff(I-J)	SE	Sig	95% CI for difference	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
15-17	18-19	-.37*	.11	.001	-.59	-.15
	20 >	.12	.20	.538	-.27	.52
18-19	15-17	.37*	.11	.001	.15	.59
	20 >	.49	.20	.015	.09	.89
20 >	15-17	-.12	.20	.538	-.52	.27
	18-19	-.49	.20	.015	-.89	-.09

Post hoc analysis indicate significant differences between 15-17 year old females ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SE = .08$ ) and 18-19 year old females ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SE = .08$ ). No significant differences were evident between 15-17 year olds and female students above 20 ( $M = 2.09$ ,  $SE = .19$ ), and between 18-19 year old females and their counterparts over 20 years old. This implies that 18-19 year old females had the most positive attitudes towards transactional sex and that up to a point, age ceased explaining such differences. Findings were presented in Table 7.

Simple main effects of age were significant for the form 2 class,  $F(1, 193) = 5.76$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ , and form 4 class,  $F(2, 193) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .049$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Attitudes of students aged 15-17 in form 2 ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SE = .09$ ) were significantly different from 18-19 year olds in form 2 ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SE = .20$ ). Additionally, significant differences were found in attitudes towards transactional sex between 15-17 year olds in form 2

when compared to 15-17 year olds in form 3 ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SE = .10$ ). This means that students in form 3 were significantly likely to have positive attitudes towards transactional sex.

Finally, the study sought to find out the extent to which self-reports of non-consensual sexual experiences and reports of others' predicted attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. In the first case, self-reports of non-consensual sexual experiences were found to be significant predictors,  $F(10, 190) = 4.99$ ,  $p < .001$  accounting for up to 21% of variance in attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. Of all the self-reported experiences, only request for sex from school non-teaching staff significantly predicted attitudes ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t = 2.57$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Additionally, a single experience, that is, verbal abuse negatively though insignificantly predicted attitudes ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t = -1.02$ ,  $p = .308$ ). Verbal abuse is considered negative and hence an increase in verbal abuse is likely to increase negative attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. On whether reports of friends' non-consensual sexual experiences predicted attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex, the results were significant,  $F(10, 190) = 7.11$ ,  $p < .001$  which accounted for 23% variance in attitudes. Teachers' remarks about friend's body ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $SE = .03$ ); friends seduced by male teacher ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $SE = .03$ ) and friends kissed ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $SE = .04$ )

positively and significantly predicted attitudes. Friends being verbally abused ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $SE = .03$ ); friends being fondled on breasts and other parts ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $SE = .04$ ); friends being harassed in classrooms and toilets ( $\beta = -.02$ ,  $SE = .04$ ) and arms put around friends waists or shoulders ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $SE = .04$ ) negatively but insignificantly predicted attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. These finding seems to suggest that these four experiences were perceived negatively by female students and therefore negatively predicted their attitudes towards transactional and intergenerational sex.

**DISCUSSION**

Findings of this study indicate that a third of female students suffered verbal remarks on their bodies, had their path blocked on corridors and arms were put around their waists and

shoulders. Significant differences in being seduced by male teachers, requests for sex by school non-teaching staff, kissing, harassed in classrooms and toilets and arms wrapped around their waists and shoulders were explained by age. Older students were more likely to report the cited experiences with the 18-19 age bracket ranking highest in self-reports. However a further increase in age had no significant influence on reports of non-consensual experiences.

Findings also show significant age differences in reports of friends being seduced by male teachers, requests for sex by non-teaching staff, being fondled on breasts and other parts and in having sexual intercourse. The 18-19 age bracket also ranked highest in reporting the experiences. Reports of unwanted touch support findings in the literature (Ajayi *et al.*, 1997; Leach *et al.*, 2003; Ruto, 2009) who found unwanted touch by boys standing in hallways and doors and verbal humiliation from male students and teachers to rate highest in non-consensual experiences reported. The finding concerning age differences in reports of non-consensual experiences partially support Nzyuko *et al.* (1997) and Chatterji *et al.* (2004) who found out that younger women were more likely to report non-consensual experiences.

The age brackets were however not clearly delineated. Up to a third of respondents reported favourable attitudes towards transactional and inter-generational sex. 18-19 year female students, whether in form 2 or form 3 reported the most favourable attitudes. These findings support Gregson *et al.* (2002) as cited in Luke and Kurz (2002) who found the average age of male partners to be 2-7 years; and other studies (Leach *et al.*, 2003; UNESCO, 2006; Wane, 2009) that found money and gifts to be incentives for unequal romantic relationships. The findings that few students told their boyfriends to use protection during sex concurs with Terry *et al.* (2005) as cited in Hope (2007) who found out that girls in unequal transactional relationships were not able to insist on condom use. The finding concerning the love of money in relationships confirms Luke (2005) as cited in Hope who found it a norm for young women to get money in relationships with older partners.

### Contributions of the study

Findings of this study are expected to add to literature on non-consensual sex among adolescent girls in Kenya. By addressing the context of sexual coercion, it will be easier to understand the school factors that put adolescent girls at risk of STIs/HIV infections, unwanted pregnancies and school drop outs. Findings also hope to communicate knowledge to teachers, policy makers, healthcare providers and the media in order to help in developing appropriate short and long-term policies and programs that affect adolescent girls' reproductive health.

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