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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF YOUTH SEXUALITY
AND RELATED HEALTH ISSUES AMONG COLLEGE
STUDENTS IN NEKEMTE TOWN**

BY:- TOLESSA GEMEDA

MARCH, 2013

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IN NEKEMTE TOWN**

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This Thesis by TOLESSA GEMEDA is accepted in its present form by the Board of Examiners as satisfying thesis requirement for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology.

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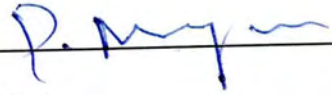


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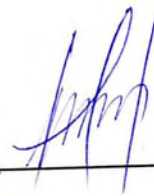


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Abstract

Youth sexual behavior was not given enough emphasis until recently. As a result, this segment of the population has been at the centre of the HIV pandemic around the world. The current study sought to explore the sexual experiences, sexual behavior and safer/unsafe sex practices of male and female college youths in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country by placing it within the existing socio-cultural context. To that end, the study investigated: college students' narrated sexual experiences, their perceived sexual relations, the degree of students' engagement in negotiated safer-sex practices, and factors facilitating / constraining students' initiation of sexual relationship and safer sex practices.

Data gathered from survey questionnaire administered among randomly chosen college students (N=200) in Nekemete town revealed that 34% of the students were sexually engaged. Empirical materials obtained largely from focus group discussions with 35 college students (18 male and 17 female) revealed that college youths were sexually engaged with one another and non-college people as well. Students' sexual engagement with people outside colleges included female students' sexual relations with "sugar daddies" and male students' sexual experience with high school students and less commonly with commercial sex workers. Female and male students had generally positive perceptions towards the sexual relations existing amongst themselves. They were, however, critical of relations female students had with "sugar daddies", and sexual affairs between male students and commercial sex workers. The significant number of college students' youth, as revealed by empirical material, are in such sexual affair. The qualitative data further revealed that college female students rarely negotiated their sexual motives. Female students were presented as people who passively or sub-consciously surrender into young men's trickeries in to sex after momentary resistance.

Notwithstanding some positive signs of safer sex practices, students' overall sexual practices were characterized by unsafe sex (procrastinating HIV testing, promiscuity, non/inconsistent condom use, and absence of meaningful communications on sexual matters), risky behaviors including alcohol and/or chat use were reported to have led the college youth to risk sexual behaviors, including sex with having commercial sex workers without condoms.

Qualitative data showed students' high level of knowledge about contraceptive methods and condom use, but students' failure to translate it into protective behaviors implies the need for interventions beyond provision of knowledge. Among other things, the study underlined the need to raise students' positive attitudes towards safer sex practices and developing students' skills and abilities in using condoms and other contraceptives through peer-led education and training of life skills.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY AND ITS APPROACH

1.1. Background of the Study

Youth constitutes the population between 15 and 24 years of age (WHO 2007). It is a period of rapid physical, sexual, psychological and social changes. As a socio-cultural phenomenon youth is defined as a stage in which young people are confronted with some models of the major roles that they are supposed to emulate in adult life and with the major symbols and values of their culture and community (Conger 1991). Worldwide more than 1 billion people are between 15&24 years of age and most of them live in developing countries (UNAIDS 2009).

Conger (1991) argues that although sexuality in its broadest sense is a lifelong part of human being, the hormonal changes that accompany puberty lead to stronger sexual feelings, although these feelings may be expressed in different ways by different individuals and by the same individual at different times. Youths may find themselves thinking more about sex, getting sexually aroused more easily, even at times feeling pre-occupied with sex. Successfully integrating sexuality with other aspects of the young person's sense of self is a major developmental task for both boys and girls. How well this is handled depends on many factors such as complexities of early parent-child relations and contemporary social standards and values. UNAIDS (2009) also added that in most parts of the world, adolescence is a time of sexual experimentation and risk takings often with little regard to the possible consequences. It is also the time of life when most people have their first sexual experiences either within or outside of marriage. Youth sexuality, with physical and sexual maturity, inevitably leads to sexual involvement.

According to Conger (1991) adolescents are more vulnerable than adults to the adoption of health damaging behaviors. This is basically due to their openness to change, uncertain sense of the self, a need to define themselves as separate from parents and greater dependence on peers. This is also accompanied by effects of social change that have increased adolescents' vulnerability to maladaptive behaviors such as opportunities for becoming involved in drug use, unplanned pregnancy and other problem behaviors that abound. According to Hedgepeth and Helmich (1996) today's youths are characterized by greater openness about sex than their counterparts of earlier generations. They also increasingly tend to base decisions about sexual behavior more on personal values and judgments and less on conformity to institutionalized social values and judgments and less on conformity to institutionalized social codes. These and other recent changes in youth sexual interests, values and behavior in the society, particularly among girls, provide impressive evidence that cultural influence play a significant role in sexuality.

Nevid and Rathus(2011) asserted that the youth revolution of the late 1960s has led to transformation not only in sexual attitudes and values but in sexual behavior as well. Premarital intercourse at an early age is on the steady increase, both for males and females. Here, one thing should be clear that such teenage premarital sexual intercourse is increasing amid the burning HIV pandemic. AIDS information campaign and other related efforts are claimed to have increased condom use among youths. But it is far lower than it is expected. Unfortunately the lowest rates of use are reported, more often, by those who engage in behaviors that put them at greater risk of contracting AIDS.

According to UNAIDS (2009) lack of mutuality in heterosexual relationship, using young girls for immediate sexual gratification and superficial closeness in the context of randomized sexual relationship, are problems reported by young males. There is prolonged experimentation

among youth concerning heterosexual relationship. Heterosexual transmission is accelerating the spread of HIV infection. Worldwide 70% of new HIV infection is acquired through unprotected heterosexual contact. In the regions severely affected by the virus (Sub Saharan Africa and south East Asia) it is the primary mode of transmission. In Sub Saharan Africa, unprotected heterosexual intercourse account for about 90% of HIV infections.

Ethiopia is among the countries severely affected by AIDS pandemic in Sub Saharan Africa. Young people constitute one third of the total population in Ethiopia and this proportion is expected to increase in the upcoming years (MOH 2007). Available data indicate adolescents and young adults are the age groups that are at risk (Gemeda, Assefa & Tushunie(2004); Negash, Gebre & Benti (2003). In a recent study conducted by Gemeda et al. (2004), it is reported that 15- 24 is the age group with the highest HIV prevalence. Obviously, this is the age group where most college students, particularly the target group of the present study, are found.

Sexual experience starts early in Ethiopian society. One in two young women and one in three young men are sexually experienced early (before 18 years of age). The median age at which women had first sexual intercourse is 16 (MOH, 2007). Traditional practices and poor living conditions often lead young people to engage in sex at an early age (Molla, Yemane and Bernt 2009). According to Molla et al (2009) in a survey conducted among high school students in Addis Ababa, 38% reported that they were sexually active. Of these 71% experienced first sex between the ages of 14 and 16. Similar situations have been observed in other Ethiopian cities. 58% of students from Gondar Medical School, 55% of youth from Harar and 32% of unmarried youth in Jimma were reported to be sexually engaged. Different studies conducted among youth (Alene, Wheeler & Grosskurth 2004; Molla et al.2009) revealed a significant number of youth to engage in sexual activity, early sexual commencement and low rate of consistent condom use,

which puts them at risk of HIV/AIDS. Studies conducted in Addis Ababa, Awassa, Dera, Dubtie East Gojjam, and Bahir Dar town reported that about half and even more than half of the study participants were reported to have ever had sexual intercourse sometime in the past.

According to MOH (2007), the two major risk factors for the spread of STDs among the youth in Ethiopia are the practice of having multiple sexual partners and the limited use of condoms. Besides, sexually transmitted infection is additional risk to young Ethiopians. Using demographic health survey data, MOH (2007) show that more than half of women aged 15 - 19 years and two in five women aged 20 - 24 have no knowledge of STIs. The presence of STIs makes transmission of HIV more likely. Sexually active youth are at substantive risk not only for HIV but also for other STIs because they tend to have multiple sex partners, to engage in unprotected sex and among young women, to have older men as sex partner. Unintended pregnancy is also a serious problem among teenagers, especially since teenage pregnancy is associated with health risk.

As shown above, due to interrelated biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors, young people are at risk of HIV and other STDs infection. Especially those young people whose age category falls between 15&24 years of age are the most vulnerable population group. Majority of this population group, who are attending their formal education, are found at college level. Taking into account such factors, the current study sought to bring into light sexual involvement, sexual behavior, factors initiating and restraining sexual activity, and unsafe/safe sexual practices of college youth.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

General improvements in health and nutrition cause young people to reach physical maturity much earlier than their predecessors; the gap between puberty and marriage age is increasing. Faced with an extended adolescence and normal sexual desires, many youths do not wait until finishing their education or committing to a long term, monogamous relationship before beginning sexual activity (Hedgepeth and Helmich1996).According to Conger (1991) social norms reinforced greatly by media messages exacerbate peer pressure to “just do it” while the social stigma for sexual consequences (such as unintended pregnancy) no longer exists in most groups. Changes in family structure and parents’ work patterns have resulted in a decline in adult supervision of youth.

Many learners are sexually experienced, by the time they complete high school, some by choice and some not (Hedgepeth and Helmich1996:132). They argue, today’s learners initiate sexual activity earlier, have more lifetime sexual partners and face many more sexual risks than did their parents. Together with these, many sexual problems such as STDs, HIV, rape and child sexual abuse are disproportionately reflected in the youth population. Almost all students are affected by others’ behaviors-unwanted sexual pressures, harassment and offers of illicit drugs. Added to these is the fact that half of 15-19 years old youths do not have enough accurate information about sex and reproduction. However, many literatures (UNAIDS 2009; WHO 2007) confirm that today’s young people are of the AIDS pandemic generation. They have never experienced a world without HIV. So far, the HIV\AIDS epidemic among young remains largely invisible.According to Conger (1991) more highly educated youth are less conservative in their sexual attitudes and values. It is among college or college-bound youths, especially females that the greatest changes in sexual behavior have occurred. In America, for example, prior to the mid-

1960 the incidence of premarital experience among college seniors was about 55% for males and 25% for females. In contrast, several more recent investigations (Miller 2002; Netting and Burnett 2004) indicate a substantial upward shift for both sexes, but particularly among women. Thus for males the incidence ranged up to a high of 82%; comparable percentage for females ranged up to 76%.

According to Odutolu (2005), a study conducted among unmarried urban youth in Guinea showed that 50% of females and 76% males were found to be sexually active. Mean number of sexual partners was found to be 4 for males and 2.1 for females. Study conducted in Nigeria (Betts, Peterson, & Huebner, 2003) found that 44% of adolescents were sexually active before the age of 17 and 80% were active before the age of 20. Likewise; studies conducted in Ethiopia confirm the above figure. In a survey conducted among high school students in Addis Ababa (Taffa et al 2003) 38% reported that they were sexually active. Similar situations have been observed in other Ethiopian cities: 58% in Gondar University (Gebrekidan and Azeze 1995), 55% in Harar, and 32% of unmarried youth in Jimma (Getnet and Melesse 2008) were reported to be sexually experienced.

Even though the real situation is this, there are no sufficient investigation of youth sexuality that places it within the current social transformation and emerging new cultural norms and values. Getnet(2007) claimed that the study of sexuality seems to be a " virgin field", barely touched by Sociologists, Anthropologists and other social scientists. He asserted that sex research should focus on the social and cultural contexts in which sexual activity is shaped and constituted, in order to yield an intended result. Research attention would have to be drawn not merely to the collection of behavioral frequencies, but to the relations of power and social inequality within which behavior takes place and to the cultural systems in which it becomes

meaningful. Of course researches (Adamu, Mulatu and Haile 2003; Anteneh 2009; Cleland and Ali 2006; Taffa et al 2003;) are showing that youths are at high risk of HIV infection. However, most researches focus on KAP, risky behaviors, commercial sex work and HIV/AIDS, condom use and similar issues. It is argued that much of such studies give much concern to the individual agency. These studies assume human behaviors are determined largely by attitude, perception, and knowledge. Such efforts are lacking in that humans cannot exercise a 'free will' kind of behavior.

Nonetheless, these studies have indicated that their respondents demonstrated high level of awareness of HIV/AIDS. At the same time, the studies revealed students' low level of awareness of other STDs and risky sexual behaviors. Though limited in number, earlier published studies confirm this finding insisting that students' knowledge is not translated into protective behaviors. They chronicle that college students are among at risk groups for HIV/AIDS. Their age, lack of immediate parental supervision and apparent freedom to experiment with new things (e.g., alcohol, drugs) are some of the factors contributing to their being an at risk group. In the Ethiopian context, the environment where colleges are situated makes the situation even riskier for students. Until very recently, colleges are located in big cities and towns where the sex industry is "vibrant" and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is very high. Since prostitution is not illegal in Ethiopia, commercial sex workers (possibly potential clients of male college students) do their business at bars, nightclubs and even at hotels. Said differently, the social context in Ethiopia is permissive of prostitution as way of socializing for young men. In spite of these risky environmental and individual factors, few researchers investigated the sexual conduct and practices of college students. And I believe this lack of sufficient study in itself justifies the need to conduct the current study.

Therefore, the current study is conducted among college students. This target population is chosen due to the fact that majority of them are from rural origin who come to town to pursue their education where they are exposed to differing and in some cases, antagonistic cultural values and norms. They interact, on daily bases outside and in college compounds, with someone with similar age group that confirms high exposure to persistent peer pressure. Likewise they are also leading their daily lives and performing their day-to-day activities, almost exclusively independent of adult, kinship, neighborhood and familial direct supervision. This might be a buffer for engaging in and developing healthy and risky behaviors. This target population is also crucial in that they are “transitional group”-currently they are college students, after some stay in the college, however they will soon become public servants whose current and future behavior and health condition is essential for the present and future generation alike. With such realities in mind, the current study has shed light on youth sexuality within the existing social and cultural setting. The study has also investigated health issues such as HIV risk behaviors and other related issues in light of their sexual behavior.

1.3 Significance of the study

In Ethiopia todate, though it is indicated in the health policy that, addressing the health problems and needs of adolescents and youths as an issue, and MOH is undertaking some initiatives, still practical activities are not yet visible at public health service delivery points. In light of the previous findings and the magnitude of the problem, reduction of the number of people exposed to HIV/AIDS and other consequences of youth sexual behaviour is found to be necessary.

The purpose of this study is therefore to generate information on risk and protective factors

that is likely to influence the sexual behaviour of the youth. Therefore, the current study is justified at least for three reasons. Number one; there is apparent paucity of published research on the sexuality of youth and HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. Secondly, while there are studies conducted on the youth, almost all of them are quantitatively slanted and they give a partial picture of the problem. Other than information gleaned from different survey research, the influence of contextual factors, peer norms on the sexuality, and gender disparity of sexual practice about Ethiopian youth via qualitative studies are to date unexplored. Thirdly, none of the studies (except Taffa et al. 2003; Getnet 2009) uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative method. By embarking on an area that has not been adequately explored so far and employing qualitative as well as quantitative methods, this study hopes to contribute to the debate on the sexuality of youths and HIV/AIDS by placing it within the existing socio-cultural context in Ethiopia, where the AIDS epidemic is very severe.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

The current study is conducted in Nekemte town with emphasis on college youth attending their study currently in three public colleges. Due to financial, time and other resources constraints, the study hasn't included college youths attending their education in private and religious colleges, youths out of college setting and other segments of the youth population. Added to this, in the current study I proposed to assess the health complications of the college youth (abortion and STDs cases) in relation to their sexuality. However, this became impossible due to absence of clear data on the issue and reluctance of students to share such information. Therefore, in order to have a clear picture of youth sexuality in the modern age of HIV pandemic, other researches that handle the above mentioned issues are in place.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

- **General Objective:** to assess the socio-cultural context of youth sexuality and related health issues among college youth students in Nekemte town.
- **Specific Objectives:**
 - ❖ To assess how college students understand & express love and relationship in their daily lives.
 - ❖ To explore factors that influence students' sexuality and examine their sexual behavior
 - ❖ To identify health risk behaviors of the college youths in relation to their sexuality.
 - ❖ To explore youths' involvement in sexual activities and their contraceptive use.

1. 4. Research Questions

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives of the study, the following research questions were set separately:

- How do young people understand and express love and relationship in their daily lives?
- What are the hindering and permitting factors for initiating sexual relationships?
- What are some of the changes in the meanings of traditional sexual values and mores as a result of socio-economic changes in the modern period?
- What are the health risk - behaviors associated with youth sexual involvement and behaviors?
- Do the youth protect themselves from sex-related health problems and how they practice 'a safe sex'?

1.6 Operational Definitions

Age of sexual debut: The age at which the first sexual commencement occurred.

Casual sex: A sexual intercourse happening by chance without care or thought.

Commercial sex partner: A partner who was paid money in exchange for sex.

Consistent condom use: Using condom every time when sexual intercourse is performed.

Drugs: In this study drugs are any sort of stimulants, which alters the body physiology;

e.g. alcohol, chat, shisha, hashish.

Early sexual initiation: A penetrative sexual intercourse performed before the age of sexual maturity (18 years of age).

High-risk-sex: A history of sexual intercourse involving either multiple sexual partners and/or no condom use and frequent change of sexual partner.

Non-commercial sex partner: Any partner other than a commercial partner.

Parental monitoring: Is defined as the parents' knowledge of their child's about whom they are with and where they are spending their time.

Premarital sex: A heterosexual vaginal sexual intercourse performed before formal marriage.

Risky behaviors: Are such behaviors as frequent changing of sexual partners, inconsistent condom use, sex with sugar daddies and commercial sex workers, and engagement in sexual intercourse under the influence of any drug and pornography.

Safe sex: those students who had sexual intercourse but with consistent condom use, coupled with only one partner, undergone VCT test with the partner, there is open communication between the partners and those whose age was above 18 years.

Sexually engaged: A student who had had sexual intercourse, at least once prior to the study.

Shisha: A mixture that may include tobacco, hashish and spices; it is smoked from an oriental

tobacco pipe, which has a long, flexible tube that draws the smoke through a water-filled container.

Substance abuse: Practice of chewing chat, using hashish, smoking cigarettes, shisha and drinking alcohol.

“Sugar Daddy”: a sexual relationship in which a man is 10 or more years older than his sexual partner in non-martial relation.

Unprotected sex: A heterosexual vaginal sexual intercourse carried out without using condoms.

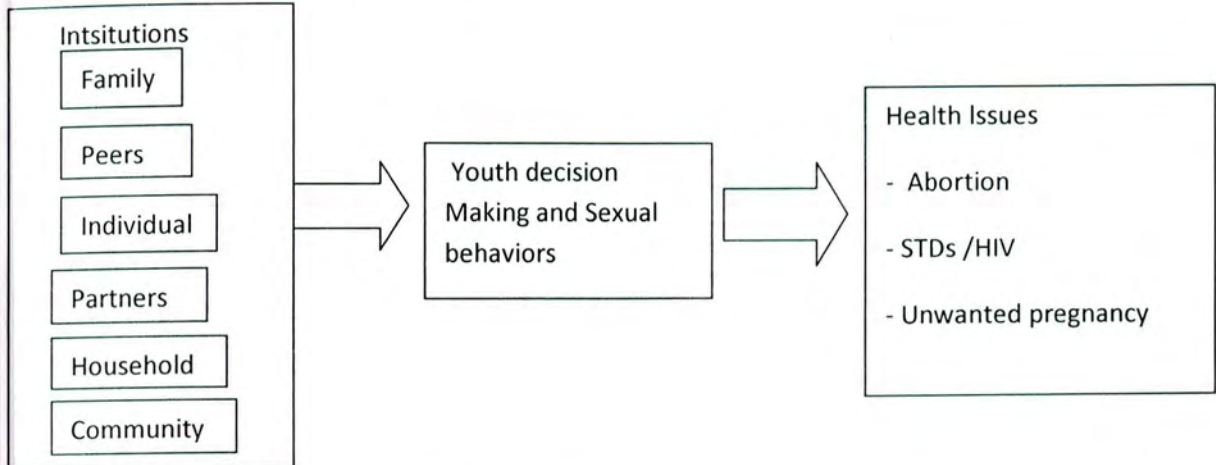
Unsafe sexual behavior: In this study unsafe sexual behavior is referred to those behaviors of unmarried youth that started sex with no consistent condom use, no VCT test between the partners, no and /or low communication about safe sexual practices, whose age less than 18 years, having sexual partner and those with more than one sexual partner.

Youths: Young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years are considered as youths.

1.7. Conceptual Framework of the Study

In order to show the relationship between various variables that were employed in the current research undertaking, the following explanatory conceptual framework is established.

Factors that Influence youth sexuality



Individual

- Age and gender
- Place of residence
- Knowledge, attitude and beliefs
- Religion
- Self- Efficacy
- Skills
- Alcohol and drug use
- Sexual and physical abuse

Peers and partners

- Perception of peer behaviors
- Relationship with partner (s)
- Exchange of money or good for sex
- Sense of commitment to partner

Family and Household

- Low SES
- Family attitudes
- Harmonious relationship with family

stitution

- Connectedness with religious institutions
- Connectedness with schools
- Availability of Youth programs
- Relationship with other adults through community institutions

Communities

- Disorganization
- Social norms
- lack of opportunities
- Policy
- Mass media

Adapted from Aklilu and Hailom, 2002: p25

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The age group which constitutes youth varies considerably across countries. WHO (2007) recognized that the youth constitutes the population aged 15–24 years. According to Conger (1991), as a socio-cultural phenomenon, this period is characterized as a stage in which one is confronted with role-models for emulating life in adulthood and with the major symbols and values of one's culture and community. Youth, generally refers to the stage that falls between childhood and full manhood or womanhood that is distinct and crucial phase of development of human being.

Specific attributes attached to this phase of life includes rapid physical growth and development, social and psychological maturity, sexual maturity and the onset of sexual activity, development of adult mental process and adult identity, and transition from total socio-economic dependence to relative independence(WHO 2007). It is a transition period in life from dependent childhood to self-reliant adulthood for joining the labor force. It is at this period that young persons achieve the highest stage of cognitive and physical development and strive to define their self-identity (UNAIDS 2009).

2.1 The Situation of Youth in Ethiopia

Worldwide, there are more than one billion people within the ages of 15–24 years, most of whom live in developing countries (UNAIDS 2009).According to MOH (2007) young people constitute one-third of the total population in Ethiopia. Ethiopian youths face a multitude of problems caused by poverty, traditional beliefs, and misconceptions. Traditional practices and poor living conditions often lead young people to engage in sex at an early age. As an age group, however, their material, social, health and reproductive needs have not been given the required

attention. According to Getnet and Melesse (2008) government policies and programs so far have tried to address the needs of youth along with those of the general population. However, there is now greater recognition that youths have special needs that require different policies and program efforts.

The reproductive health situation of youths is also a major concern. The prevalence of STDs like HIV/AIDS is relatively high among young people in Ethiopia. The two major risk factors for the spread of STDs among youth in Ethiopia are the practice of having multiple sexual partners and the limited use of condoms (MOH 2007). A study conducted in high schools in Addis Ababa, indicated that 54% of sexually active youth have experienced sex with more than one partner; 43% of sexually active students reported knowing about condoms at the time of their first sexual experience, but only 18 % said they had ever used condoms (Molla et al 2009).

In most cases, unwanted and unplanned teenage pregnancy, which has many negative consequences on the health and wellbeing of girls, is one of the greatest problems youths face due to early and unprotected & unsafe sexual practices. In developing countries, approximately 60% of pregnancies and births to married and unmarried adolescents are unintended and complications of unwanted pregnancy are the leading cause of death among young girls aged 15 to 19 years(Becker 1993). In Ethiopia, 15% to 60% of adolescent pregnancies are unintended, resulting from unprotected sexual intercourse. Often unwanted teenage pregnancies lead to serious health risks as well as social and economic problems. Early and unplanned marriage, teen parenthood, school dropout, and unsafe and complicated abortion rank high among these problems (MOH 2002).

Unintended pregnancy is a serious problem among teenagers, especially since teenage pregnancy is associated with health risks to the mother during pregnancy and delivery. Several studies in Ethiopia (Adamu, Mulatu and Haile 2003; Getnet and Melesse 2008; Taffa et al 1999; 2003) have documented the prevalence of unintended pregnancies among young women. A household study of adolescents in Addis Ababa (Eshetu, Devid and Dereje 2004) found that the median age at first pregnancy was 16 years with two in three women becoming mothers before the age of 20. Of the 957 female respondents, 50 % had been pregnant in the past and 74 % of these pregnancies resulted in abortions. Abortion, which is illegal in Ethiopia, places many young women at risk, primarily because it is usually conducted under unsafe conditions (MOH 2002).

Drug trafficking and drug abuse, although not a problem in the past, are becoming more common in Ethiopia. According to the MOH Department of Pharmacy report of 2007, of the 291 drug abusers and traffickers for which age was reported, 223 (77 %) were aged 15-25. The majority of these young people were students or unemployed youth. Chewing *chat* has become a major problem among youth. It is exacerbated by lack of employment opportunities and general feelings of hopelessness (WHO 2007).

2.2 Influential Theoretical Models

Like many other disciplines, sociology relies heavily on broad conceptual frameworks as the basis for theorizing about sexuality. In doing so, sociology has made important contributions to sexual theory. Sociology has an impressive history of sex and theorizing its social origins in a body of scholarship dating from the early twentieth-century Chicago School. The Chicago school viewed non-institutional forms of sexual expression as the result of a breakdown in informal controls such as family and neighborhood (Nevid and Rathus 2011). According to Tiefer

(2004:187), all sociological theory, including theories of sexuality, is based on the fundamental assumption that human behavior is socially learned. These theories do not deny the existence of forces inherent in individuals. Sociological perspectives assert that the specific thoughts and behaviors exhibited by individuals are a product of social rather than biological forces. The fact that we are sexual is determined by biological factors, but how we are sexual—where, when, how often, with whom, and why—has to do with cultural learning, with meanings transmitted in a cultural setting.

However, there is no single sociological theory that can well explain the full content of the issue of youth sexuality. Therefore I have chosen the following theoretical frameworks that help me achieve the research objectives and answer the research questions.

2.2.1. Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction theory is based on the writing of George Herbert Mead in the 1930s and 1940s and it gradually replaced the Chicago School in the 1950s and 1960s (Ritzer 2006). According to DeLamater & Hasday (2006), for symbolic interactionists, objects acquire meaning, thus becoming symbols, through communication. The self is seen as not only subject, but also object, and like other objects, it too becomes imbued with meaning through interaction. Importantly, the self is not seen only as an object to others, but also to oneself (p 42). That is, people have the ability to take on the role of others and thus see the self as others see it, objectified. This view of self as other contributes to behavioral decision making, as people act in ways intended to foster certain perceptions of themselves on the part of others. Generally, symbolic interactionists focus on how individuals define situations and thereby construct the realities in which they live; they also focus on the ways in which location in the social structure influences the self and the self's construction of reality—reality is constructed in interaction.

In studying sexuality, symbolic interactionists turn their gaze on how people construct their sexual realities, from which follow their sexual beliefs and practices (Foucault, 1998:75). Foucault (1998) added that the major social institutions play central role in shaping human sexuality. Some of the major social institutions thought to influence sexuality are religion, family, economy, law, and medicine. Each institution is associated with a sexual ideology or discourse. For example, most religions emphasize marital relationships as the appropriate context for sexual intimacy. The family has traditionally been a strong institution; it is associated with a discourse that emphasizes family functions of support and childrearing, norms of fidelity, and the incest taboo.

2.2.2 Scripting Theory

The premise of scripting theory is that sexual behavior (like almost all other human behavior) is the result of elaborate prior learning that teaches us etiquette of sexual behavior (Tiefer 2004:54). The author explained that without the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors, and plots the behavior, little is likely to happen. Socially learned sexual scripts tell people who to have sex with (e.g. what the race, gender and age of an appropriate sexual partner should be), when and where it is appropriate to have sex, and what acts are appropriate (and in what order) once sexual behavior is initiated.

According to DeLamater & Hasday (2006), however, sexual scripts are not rigid or absolute; individuals engaged in sexual behavior do not feel like they are simply performing a script they have memorized. Accordingly, scripting is theorized on three levels: *cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic*. Cultural sexual scripts are the instructions for sexual and other conduct that are embedded in the cultural narratives that are provided as guides or instructions for all conduct and it is these cultural scripts that form the general basis for sexual conduct.

However, the authors added that these cultural scripts are interpreted on both interpersonal and intrapsychic dimensions, which accounts for both the range of sexual behaviors and the sense of individual expression inherent in many sexual encounters. Interpersonal scripts are defined as the structured patterns of interaction in which individuals as actors engage in everyday interpersonal conduct, and intrapsychic scripts are the plans and fantasies by which individuals guide and reflect on their past, current, or future conduct (p 40). Thus, the intrapsychic dimension of scripting allows individuals to derive personal meaning from cultural scripts, while the interpersonal dimension opens the door for situational symbolic interactionism, where reality is defined by interacting people in a given situation.

2.2.3. Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange framework focuses on the exchange of resources between people and has thus been used extensively in the study of relationships (Balswick 2008:62). All social exchange theories share a number of basic principles centered on the concepts of rewards, costs and reciprocity (Ibid). Specifically, social exchange models share the following three basic assumptions: (a) Social behavior is a series of exchanges (b) individuals attempt to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs and (c) when individuals receive rewards from others, they feel obligated to reciprocate.

According to Tiefer (2004) in studying sexuality, these principles are applied to the exchange of sexual resources for other resources that can be sexual or non-sexual (like intimacy, commitment, social position, or money). People are portrayed as entering, staying in, and leaving sexual relationships based on the reward-cost balance experienced in them. Of specific interest is the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction which focuses on the exchange of specifically sexual resources and consequences for sexual (as opposed to general relationship)

satisfaction. These theories have been applied to understanding and predicting sexual behaviors including partner selection, occurrence of premarital sex, relationship longevity or dissolution, and extra-dyadic sexual relationships.

2.2.4. Modernization Theory

It has been noted that (Foucault 1998), contact with western societies influenced the economy, urbanization, migration, education and religion in many African and Asian societies and cultures. These changes altered the religious customs and practices, which in turn led to a gradual change in sexual norms and behavior. Consequently, there were changes in marriage customs, especially later ages at marriage, the abandonment of formal polygamy and non-marital (both pre-marital and extra-marital) sexual activity. Molla et al.(2009) for example confirmed that the socio-cultural context of young people's sexuality in urban Africa, in general and in Ethiopia in particular, is influenced by the clash between traditional values and modernization and its ideals. This is reflected in the conflicts between the dominant norms of youth and the wide society. Cultural norms of premarital virginity, emphasized more for females than males, are still the rule. Nevertheless, the practice of premarital sex among adolescents is widespread, contrary to these norms. Thus, deeply rooted social functions coexist with modern external features.

This theory is used in the current study to answer one of the research questions 'What are some of the changes in the meanings of traditional sexual values and mores as a result of socio-economic changes in the modern period?'. It explains well about economic factors, peer and normative pressures on sexual behavior of students as a result of exposure to new(college) setting. It has also led the research undertaking by viewing the expansion of urbanization and its ideals in light of college students' sexual behaviors such as male students' sexual relationship

with commercial sex workers and female students' sexual relationship with the 'Sugar Daddies'. It also sheds light on the permissiveness of college youth for premarital sexual intercourse.

2.3 Safer Sex Practices and Risky Sexual Behaviors

2.3.1 Safer Sex Practices

Though the literature on safer sex practices includes a number of items, this section selectively reviews practices, which are deemed relevant to the Ethiopian context. Some studies conducted in the US (e.g Wilkinson, Holahan & Drane-Edmundson 2002) operationalize safer sex practices as: mutual masturbation between sexual partners, use of condoms during vaginal sex, using condoms during anal sex (insertive or receptive) and use of condoms during oral sex . Practices of oral sex, anal sex, and mutual masturbations are culturally frowned upon in Africa and particularly in Ethiopia. The very mention of these practices might even be potentially offensive to participants. For these reasons, practices of that sort would not be reviewed in detail. In other words, in this review, the discussion of safer sex practices by and large dwells on condom use, HIV testing and communication about sex (e.g., communication between sexual partners, communication between parents and children). These issues have attracted the attention of a number of researchers in the literature. As shall be seen in the reviews below, it is important to note that these practices may, sometimes, overlap.

With the belief that sex is something that involves at least two partners (more technically a behavior which is relational and dyadic in nature), researchers and theorists (e.g. Bird et al. 2001) have looked into the possible communication that takes place between sexual partners particularly on the use of condoms and other safer sex practices. Using the technique of semi-structured interviews, Bird et al. (2001) investigated strategies used among 90 heterosexual couples to get their partners use condoms. Overall, the study revealed that young men and

women used both verbal and non-verbal strategies to have their partners use condoms. As a whole though, by far the most frequently technique used to get partners use condoms is what Bird et al. (2001) call bilateral verbal techniques-they involve interaction of both partners. By engaging their partners in some conversation say about disease prevention, pregnancy or condom use, people would persuade partners to use condoms. Participants in that study, both male and female, felt that it would be easier to convince partners to use condoms for preventing pregnancy than for disease prevention; the risk of pregnancy was thought to be more real and of immediate concern than the risk of contracting HIV which was considered unlikely and perhaps remote. Besides, asking partners to use condoms for preventing pregnancy is not provocative for it does not involve the issues of trust. Threatening to withhold sex was a strategy used more frequently among women than among men probably because women perceived greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than their counterparts.

Other researchers (e.g. Coleman and Ingham 1999) investigated whether verbal- or non-verbal strategies were effective ways of communicating sexual matters between sexual partners. And contrary to conventional wisdom and widely accepted assumptions, it was witnessed that in 40% of the situations where condoms have been used, explicit discussions did not take place. This has been accounted for three reasons: spontaneity of sex, thereby not necessitating explicit discussion of condom use; inability of sexual partners to initiate discussion; and the willingness of young men to take responsibility of using condoms avoiding discussion on it at the same time. In terms of gender, it was, in fact, found that young men usually just use condoms avoiding discussion basically to prevent embarrassment and some possible conflicts. Coleman and Ingham (1999) found more than half of condom use was reported in situations where there is explicit (and specific) discussion between partners.

Overall, most commonly used verbal strategies include: persuading partners to use condoms or suggesting condom use; commanding or asserting their desire for condom use; and threatening to withhold sex in the event that condoms are not used. On the other hand, non-verbal techniques centered at condom use included activities such as putting on condoms themselves, buying or getting condoms, or presenting condoms. Even then, there are situations where, some researchers (e.g. DiIorio, Dudley & Lehr 2000) found that safer sex communication does not necessarily guarantee/entail condom use. The study, which was conducted among college students, showed weak association between safer sex communication and condom use.

In her qualitative study, Lear (1995), on her part, demonstrates: sexual encounters, at least early in a relationship, often involve very little spoken communication; communication is rather non-verbal and coded. Ambiguity is deliberately maintained in case one of the partners decides not to proceed. This muteness clarifies the explanation “that sex “just happened”, for talking about sex can be interpreted as sexual act itself” (p.1313). Lear’s findings are corroborated by that of Mitchell and Welling (1998). Though not conducted exclusively among college students, the interviews the authors had with young people aged 16 to 19 showed that communication between sexual partners are rather poor ; the study also showed that young people do not verbalize their expectations.

Lear’s study further shows whenever there are discussions, they take place between friends. Discussions among young women are explicit and specific. In contrast, men’s discussions were found to be rather vague and at times presented as a joke. Still, friends were found to be sources of information and support. Men were willing to listen to sexual recounts with sympathetic ears. This finding is echoed by a more recent quantitative study (DiIorio, Kelley & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). The study has indicated that young people communicate

about sexual matters with different groups but the kinds of topics they deal with are different. While more serious matters (e.g., sexual intercourse) are discussed with friends, less serious issues are relegated to parents (e.g., menstrual cycles with mothers; sexual abstinence with fathers). Still, mothers are reported to have been the preferred parents to discuss sexual matters with. As a whole, though, there is empirical support that the closer the children and the parents are, the more likely for the former to remain sexually abstinent (Miller, 2002; Whitaker et al.1999). Whitaker et al. (1999) found that parents' communication about sexuality and safer sex practices with teenagers takes place when parents are skilled, transparent/open and comfortable and this is in turn likely to result in safer sex practices among sexual partners. Contrary to that, the study of Kim et al. (2001), a rare study on communications that takes place between young people and their parents in Africa, shows communication about sex between children and parents is very rare. The study further shows that obtaining sexual information from aunts and cousins by the youth, which was a common practice in Africa, is dwindling as a result of urbanization.

In spite of the belief that discussion about safe sex can lead to safer sex practice, many studies indicate the absence of such a discussion among sexual partners. That is so partly for cultural reasons. Kim et al. (2001), for example, argue in the literature in Africa as well as elsewhere, gender stereotyping is quite common: men are encouraged to express their manhood by having sex; women are expected and in fact dissuaded to be submissive—this makes them unable to: discuss sex openly, suggest condom or resist unsafe sexual advances by their male counterparts. Economic dependence of women let them also give in to sexual demands of men for opportunity of marriage and gifts from “sugar daddies” (Kim et al., 2001; Weiss, Whelan & Gupta, 2000).

Related with sexual communication is the notion of HIV testing. There is generally a consensus among qualitative researchers (e.g. Lear 1995) and some quantitative researchers (e.g. Fisher & Rye 1995) that asking one's partner to get tested for an HIV antibody is one of the safer sex practices. Findings on this regard are not however encouraging (e.g. Lear, 1997, 1995; Siegel, Debora & Roghmann, 1999). In a study conducted among college students, Lear (1995) has, for example, found that testing for HIV antibodies was found to be a rarely practiced safer sex practice among her participants. Even though the participants subscribe to the notion, she notes, they tend to procrastinate the testing. In a quantitative study conducted among young people including college and high school students in North America, Fisher et al. (1995), on their part, have found men in particular disincline to ask partners to get tested. Considering that the idea of bringing up such sensitive and possibly lethal subject in the face of an intimate relationship, they argue, it is not easy to ask a partner to have an HIV test: it is likely to endanger the maintenance of future relations. Contrary to many social cognitive models, Lupton, McCarty, and Chapman (1995) also caution against "taken for granted understanding [that] risk privileges rationality, logical decision-making and concerns for one's health as important aspects of people's lives" (p.270). Along with this assumption, the authors argue, there are other discourses that underlie the disease is a manifestation of punishment, blame, deviance and social control that discourage people from practicing these safer sex practices including HIV screening.

2.3.2 Risky Behaviors: Sexual and Non-Sexual

The flip side of safer sex practices is in fact risky sexual behaviors, and as discussed earlier young people are characterized by risky behaviors. It is with that understanding that this section reviews qualitative as well as quantitative studies that dwell on risky behaviors. There is no common understanding as to what risky sexual behaviors should contain. Their major

difference lies in the number of factors/variables they include/exclude. A case in point is the conceptualization of risky behaviors by two recent studies (Buseh 2004; So, Frank, & Wong 2005). For Buseh (2004), risk behaviors exposing the youth to HIV infection are directly related to sex and include: high level of sexual activity, having sex with multiple partners, and inconsistent or failure to use of condom. So et al. (2005), conducting a study in Swaziland among 248 students, have a more detailed understanding of risk behaviors which include behaviors that are directly or indirectly related to sex such as: unprotected sex, intercourse without condom, sex with prostitutes, sex with prostitutes without condom, anal sex without condom, sex for money or drug, alcohol immediately before sex, and drug immediately before sex. The study found three behaviors among their 248 respondents: lifetime unprotected sex (37%), alcohol before sex (23.8%), and drug before sex (6.3%).

On the other hand, some researchers (e.g. MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; UNAIDS, 1999) view risky behaviors in relation to environmental /contextual factors (and not as individual problems). They argue factors that influence young people's sexuality include: peer norms and pressures, negative and unsupportive adult attitude towards youth sexuality, limited availability of condom, economic and gender constraints.

Of the various contextual factors given great emphases in the studies of sexuality in relation to HIV/AIDS, arguably gender is the major factor. With the belief that gender is an important factor in the spread of the HIV/ AIDS pandemic, and that women's rate of infection is more accelerated than that of men, many researchers (Amaro 1995; Holland, Ramazanoglu & Scott 1991; UNAIDS 1999) have investigated the situation of women in relation to HIV/AIDS. Such studies are generally conducted by researchers who critique behavioral models that are primarily concerned on individual traits, and not on social norms or social/environmental

contexts. Amaro (1995) argues that contextual factors such as the relation between men and women based on inequality is more important for explaining as to why women are more vulnerable/ prone to sexual risks. "For most women," argues the author, "sexual risk of HIV infection occurs within the context of their relation with men" (Amaro 1995: 442). This has to do with the permanent inequality of women shared by the society at large or by the dominant group. The traditional socialization prescribes that women possess characteristics like: submissiveness, passivity and lack of initiative. In contrast, the ideology of masculinity promotes that boys be sexually aggressive. Amaro further notes that women avoid negotiating condom use for fear that it would be a source of conflict. He further indicates that factors related to power and gender as major barriers of condom use: men's unwillingness, stubbornness; and feelings of powerlessness, low self esteem, lack of voice, inability to make risk reduction decisions, and feeling of isolation on the part of women.

The study of Hynie and Lydon (1995), too, shows evidence for sexual double standard. Their study chronicles that recreational sex is okay for men whereas sex is acceptable for women only in the context of serious relationship. In casual relationships, women (as dating partners) are expected to be permissive whereas a non-permissive behavior is a desirable trait in a serious relationship such as that of marriage partners. Similarly, being contraceptively prepared by women for an initial sex encounter can be perceived as being sexually permissive. In short, as regards to women, sexual modesty was much more valued than sexual safety.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom that gender relation at least in academic communities like colleges is based on equality, Cohen and Lederman (1998) also found double standards for men and women as regards to sexual practices and alcohol consumption. While women with multiple partners were considered: disgusting, easy and quick lay; men were

complimented as playful. Similarly, men who “hook up” (involved in kind of spontaneous sex as a result of drinking) were at its worst blamed for taking advantage of women, whereas women were labeled as weak, passive, dirty or naïve.

In a more recent study (Martinez-Donate et al. 2004), it has been found that sexual double standard is also quite apparent. In this study, women are depicted as people who: enter into sexual encounters uninformed, unprepared, and unlikely to request a male partner to use a condom. Lest they would appear distrustful and disrespectful, women refrain from requesting a partner to use condom and from questioning their partners’ sexual history. Even worse, if they carry condoms they give the impression that they are promiscuous.

In studies conducted in Africa (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Longfield, Glick, Waithaka, & Berman, 2004) the importance of gender as a contextual factor, is even more vivid. In an ethnographic study (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002) that employed a number of techniques, it was found that South African young women exhibiting some interest and assertiveness in sex were labeled as “bitches”, “sluts” or “whores”. In some cases, women wearing attractive clothes or make up are given similar kind of labels. In contrast, young men demonstrating some interest in sex are applauded for it. As rightly noted by Campbell and MacPhail (2002), contrary to their female counterparts, young men are presented “as conquering heroes and macho risk-takers in the sexual arena” (p.332). Even worse, young women find themselves in conflicting situations while trying to maintain their sexual identity.

The work of Longfield et al. (2004), a study conducted in Kenya, further examines the role gender plays in “promoting” risky sexual behaviors. Their study evidences those cross-generational sexual relations (sex between young women and much older men—commonly referred as “sugar daddies”). Cross-generational sex put young women at risk for a number of

reasons. Older men generally prefer to have sexual affair with much younger girls thinking they would be free from HIV and thereby comfortably involve themselves in unprotected sex; they are generally reluctant to use condoms; and when they use, they do it inconsistently. In their sexual relations with much older men, women themselves are much worried about getting pregnant than contracting HIV and other STDs. Women's concern over being pregnant is in fact understandable: it jeopardizes their marriage prospects with men of the same age and more importantly, because older men refuse to shoulder responsibilities linked with pregnancy resulting from extramarital affairs, young women are left to deal with the problem single handedly. While having sex with "sugar daddies", the maximum care younger women take is use contraceptives (mostly birth control pills) to avoid pregnancy. On top of that, albeit women's willingness to use condoms, because it is a male domain, women do not have the power to do so. "Young women's power to negotiate condom use," the authors rightly note, "is compromised by age disparities and economic dependence within such relationships" (Longfield et al. 2004:126).

It is however worth noting that it is not always "sugar daddies" that are to blame in the victimization of women. In some cases, women themselves, albeit forced by circumstances, have their own share. They, for example, actively seek relations with older men and use different strategies (e.g., ask for a ride, make seducing/tempting remarks). It is in fact assumed that it is often due to peer pressures that young women are dissuaded to have an affair with older men. Not only do peers pressurize women to indulge in a relation with older men, but also "serve as brokers for cross-generational relationships and help to find older partners for their friends"(Longfield et al. 2004: 129).

Afifi (1999) contend commitment to use condom (unlike other risky behaviors such as drinking alcohol, substance abuse, dangerous driving) is not an individual act and

involves “dyadic negotiation and cooperation” (p 198). For Afifi, condom has a social meaning: suggesting condom use to a partner may imply that there is something wrong at either of the ends: either the one who proposes it or the one who is proposed to has that problem and in a way this threatens one’s identity. “A fear of relational destruction and identity threat,” argues Afifi, “leads individuals to risk their lives and those of their most desirable partners” (p.203).

2.4 Sexuality of the College Youth and HIV/AIDS

Most of the studies conducted on sexuality and AIDS among college students (e.g. Cohen & Lederman 1998; Farrow & Arnold 2003; Roberts & Kennedy 2006), are done with a rationale that the target groups are at risk for various reasons. The study of Farrow and Arnold (2003) was, for example, triggered by the authors’ belief that there is certain university milieu that seduces students to be involved in unrestrained sexual activities. In colleges and universities, they argue, students enjoy unprecedented freedom free from parental guidance and supervision. Secondly, institutes of higher learning provide them with an opportunity to meet potential partners whatever the background of the partners might be. Thirdly, coupled with the curiosity resulting from their young age, the apparent freedom offers them more conducive situations to experiment things such as alcohol and drug which in turn lead to unsafe sex practice.

Lewis et al. (1997) note college students are adventurous and are likely to be involved in risky sexual activities. They conclude that a substantial portion of students exhibit high level of HIV risk sexual behaviors in various forms: some use condoms inconsistently; some don’t use condoms at all; some others have multiple sex partners; still some others are involved in perilous behaviors (take drug or drink alcohol) that lead to risky sexual activities.

Contrary to the report given by Lewis et al. (1997), a recent study by Netting and Burnett (2004) which has surveyed college students’ sexual behaviors in Canada for twenty years, in

fact, shows that young people in college settings have changed positively in their sexual lives over the last 20 years: they discuss safer sex practices with their sexual partners, they maintain monogamous relations, and they use condoms with new partners. At the same time, the authors acknowledge a good number of students particularly young men exhibit risky sexual behaviors. They also emphatically note that college students do not have uniform sexual culture across the board. Their study indicated that three major sub- cultures (celibacy, monogamy and free experimentation) that exist side by side: some exhibiting protected behaviors and others are demonstrating risk behaviors. Among the three sexual sub-cultures found to be coexisting in the study setting, the free-experimenters were found to be involved in high-risk acts like having multiple casual sexual partners.

A much earlier study by Cohen and Lederman (1998) investigated a similar issue—the sexual behavior of college students. The qualitative study came up with two major related findings: One, students talked about the unprecedented freedom they enjoyed as they entered college and that led to alcohol consumption and unrestrained sexual practice. For freshman students in particular, college gave an opportunity for overindulgent alcohol drinking. In fact, a significant number of students consider alcohol as a social lubricant that would help them to socialize with their peers and the opposite sex in particular. A normally muted student, for example, opens up and gains the courage to engage in casual sexual relations after consuming alcohol. The more alcohol college students consume, the less inhibited they become. On a positive note, students tend to grow mature in their sexual behavior and alcohol consumption as their academic classes increase—a finding corroborated in the study of Farrow and Arnold (2003). It is worth noting that this finding contradicts that of So et al. (2005) conducted in Africa.

So et al. found that the longer students stay in colleges, the greater the likelihood for them to be involved in risk sexual behavior.

In an attempt to find whether heterosexually active college women students are involved in safe sexual practice, Foreman (2003) on her part found her subjects' decision to engage in sexual activity and their decision to practice safe sex is influenced by the meaning and significance they attach to their sexual encounter. Sexual encounters identified in this study are: "wham-bam sex" (sex for no reason), casual (sexual experience with no extended commitment), "homie-lover friend" (occasional sex with an old friend with no committed relation), and long-term relationship. The first two are generally casual, but "wham-bam sex" is the most risky. Young women describe such kind of sexual encounter, the writer further reports, as immoral, improper, and it is initiated and controlled by the male partner. Consistent with other studies, Foreman (2003) concludes the longer the dating relationship, the less likely for young women to use condoms consistently.

2.5 Sex and HIV/AIDS in Africa

The other body of literature, the most relevant literature to the proposed study, is drawn from empirical studies conducted in Africa including Ethiopia. Prior to making a review of studies of sexuality in Africa, it is important to look into how various researchers view sex by the youths. AIDS related studies that revolve around young people's sexuality that are conducted in Africa view sex differently. Alarmed by the intensity and the magnitude of HIV/AIDS, most quantitative researchers and educators (Adamu, Mulatu, & Haile 2003; Bosompra 2001; Fekadu 2001) argue that sex, at least unsafe sex, is something to be refrained from, if the youth have to protect themselves from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As a result, they show serious concern in the "decline" of the age at which sexual initiation takes place.

On the other hand, some qualitative researchers, (Campbell et al.2005; Campbell & MacPhail 2002), are critical of such an outlook. Campbell et al. (2005) argue adults tend to fail to acknowledge young peoples' natural desire and their right for sex. In a rare study that view sex among young people positively, the study of Campbell et al.(2005) reveals that "Girls reported that adults had taught them to associate sex with shame and danger, rather than teaching them to be discreet about their sexual activities and to use condoms"(Ibid). This negative view of sex by adults has in fact led young people to view sex and sexual experience negatively as well.

Like the situation in the West, the research on youth's sexual experience, sexual conduct and safer sex practices as related to HIV/AIDS in Africa is predominantly quantitative. While published studies on the area in Africa are very scanty, compared to the severity of the AIDS pandemic in the region and in comparison with the literature in the West, the available literature is quantitatively biased(Getnet 2009). Dominant type of research, particularly at the early stage of the epidemic (in the late eighties and early nineties) was what is known as KAPB (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Behavior) and seeks whether variables such as knowledge and attitude predict people's sexual practice and behavior. The KABP surveys, however, reveal a disparity between knowledge about AIDS (usually good) and changes in risk practices (usually less good) (UNAIDS,1999).

Studies conducted in relation to condom use among sub- Saharan African youth indicate low-level use of condom .For example, in a study conducted in Nigeria,it was found that "44% of females and 40% of women had never used condom" (cited in Bosompra 2001). In other studies, only 23% of Malawian females (with a mean age of 19) and 28% of Ghanaian youth (with a mean age of 16.1) have ever used condoms (cited in Bosompra 2001). Various studies conducted in Africa indicate that the youth are sexually active. In Ghana, for example, some

studies report that only 15% of young people among the 82% of young people sexually active are aged 15-30 years. Unfortunately, the African youth do not seem to have safe sex. Despite the firm belief that consistent use of condom during sexual intercourse is the most effective behavioral measure to prevent HIV infection by researchers (e.g. Agha 2002), the practice of condom use is, however, discouraging. Some studies ascribe the non- and inconsistent use of condom to lack of knowledge. Other studies (e.g. Astatike and Serpell 2002) on the other hand, indicated that the association between knowledge about AIDS and condom use is rather inconclusive.

The impact of peers in promoting condoms is another area that has received due attention among various researchers. An experimental study by Agha (2002) shows “peer sexual intervention was effective in increasing knowledge of and positive normative beliefs about abstinence and condom use and in increasing personal risk perception” (p.279) among subjects exposed to some sexual health intervention. On the other hand, there are researchers (e.g. Jaccard, Blanton, & Doge 2005) who have reported that peer influence on risk behavior is quite limited and the findings of previous research are rather overstated. Investigating the influence of peer among 1,700 students from grade 7-11 over a period of time, they reported that the influence is small. Still, they acknowledge that peer influence could be important when relation between adolescents and parents are rather strained.

Even though the bulk of the research on AIDS and related issues is quantitative, some qualitative studies in Africa (e.g. Campbell & MacPhail 2002; MacPhail & Campbell 2001) emphasizing the socio-cultural contexts and peer norms are emerging. MacPhail and Campbell (2001) found that male adolescents’ norms (in contrast to female norms that promote morality and thereby safe sex) impinge upon safer sex practices: friends using condoms are disparaged

and young men delaying sexual onset are jeered at. At the same time, some young people (often with church background and high-level knowledge about HIV) were found to assertively withstand the norm. In sum, the study found factors that influence young people's sexuality: peer norms and pressures, negative and unsupportive adult attitude towards youth sexuality, limited availability of condom, economic and gender constraints.

Underlined in the works of MacPhail and Campbell (2001) is the fact that factors influencing young people's sexuality are not limited to peer norms and pressure. Like researchers such as MacPhail & Campbell (2001), who put great emphasis on social context, sexual cultures and other environmental factors, Odutolu (2005) also note normative behavior-“the social expectations the groups maintain to define appropriate behavior” (p. 242), plays a great deal in shaping young people's personality. He further contends, “People do not behave in isolation of their particular social context. For example, it is the consequence of the social construction of female and male sexuality, and the profound inequalities that continue to characterize many heterosexual relationships in Africa” (p.245).

In another study, Sherman and Bassett (1999) found that there was a differential treatment between boys and girls towards their sexual behavior (the latter being berated to avoid boys and remain virgins, and the former receiving little pressure); boys and girls are engaged in gender stereotyping as regards to sexual behaviors (e.g. male sexual feelings are uncontrollable, it is the duty of female to control the male and herself). A somewhat positive presentation of women's sexuality is shown in a recent study (Tawfik & Watkins 2007) conducted in Malawi among the general public. In agreement with the findings of Holland et al. (1991), their study shows that women are motivated for sex not only for money and survival but also because of attractive consumer goods, for passion and by revenge for a husband's infidelity.

2.6 Studies of Sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia

Scanty as they are in comparison with the severity of the HIV/AIDS, a number of studies have been conducted on Ethiopian youths' sexuality as related to the pandemic (Getnet 2007; Getnet 2009). The target groups of the studies can be grouped into two: in-school and out-of-school youths. Whereas the subjects of in-school youths are predominantly high school students, college students have also captured the attention of some studies. As regards to out of school students, school dropouts and high school leavers are the major subjects. Getnet (2007), however, examined street youths' sexuality in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It could be argued that the issues, the emphases as well as the findings of most of the studies conducted in Ethiopia so far are somewhat consistent. Studies whose subject were in-school students are primarily interested in students' knowledge about HIV/AIDS and its transmission, students' sexual onset, their attitude towards condom use, and whether or not they do safe-sex practices (e.g. Mulatu, Adamu & Haile 2000; Astatke et al. 2000; Fisseha et al. 1997). Most of the studies reveal a bleak picture: substantial proportions of secondary school students are sexually active and are involved in risky behaviors (start sex prematurely; have multiple partners; have sexual intercourse with sex workers; have sex either without condom or use condoms inconsistently). Fisseha et al. (1997), for example, found a large proportion of high school students are sexually active (39.8% of boys vs. 5.6% females); most of sexually active students do not use condoms (only 42.2% use condoms during initial sexual experience; 27% use consistently). Mean age for sexual onset was also found to be low: for males 15.3 and female 16.45. In a more recent study conducted among 1,102 high school students from four major geographically different towns, Adamu et al. (2003) found that a third of their subjects were sexually active. The mean age of sexual debut is 15 years. Compared to studies conducted

earlier, the study revealed that the age of sexual debut is decreasing. The decreasing trend is more vivid when compared with a study conducted in 1999. A recent study conducted in Agaro, a more rural area, has revealed that 25 % of the students reported sexual history with an average age of 16.7 of sexual debut (Belayneh, Demeke & Kora 2004).

Studies among Ethiopian College Students' sexuality in Relation to HIV/AIDS

Compared to studies done among in- and out-of- school youths, published studies conducted among college youths are fewer in number (Getnet 2009). Even among these rather limited studies, most of them are conducted in colleges with health related programs. It is only a study by Petros, Solomon and Yared (1997) that was carried in non- medical college settings. Studies conducted in health related fields (e.g. Fitaw and Worku 2002) found that most of the subjects demonstrated high level of knowledge on HIV/AIDS and ways of conducting safer sex practices but that did not translate in safer sex practices.

The results as well the research questions of these studies are, however, quite similar. The earliest published study by Gebrekidan and Azeze (1995), for example, found that a great majority of the respondents (81%) were sexually active. In agreement with other studies conducted among school and non-school youths, college students demonstrated behaviors that put them at risk: over 38% had more than one partners, 53% had sex with commercial sex workers and their condom use was either inconsistent or virtually absent. In a study that followed up the same subjects over a two-year period Teka (1997) found that there was no correlation between knowledge of AIDS and safer sex practices and reported sexual behavior; nor any relation with condom use. Like other researchers, despite the obvious disconnects between knowledge and sexual behavior, he surprisingly recommends, "It is a prime duty of health and

educational authorities [to provide young people] with accurate and appropriate information on the risk of HIV infection” (Teka 1997:189).

The work of Petros et al. (1997) as noted earlier, examined the knowledge, attitude, practice and behavior among 1, 214 randomly chosen college students attending in different colleges (other than health related programs) in Addis Ababa. Consistent with the findings of most of the studies conducted in Ethiopian and elsewhere, the study found the students are well informed about HIV/AIDS; they have sense of invulnerability; condom use among sexually active students is very low. It is noteworthy that there is one striking similarity across the studies reviewed: a great majority of respondents are highly knowledgeable but that awareness is not accompanied by safer sex behavior. Despite this obvious disconnect between knowledge and practice, the recommendation given is again to maximize college students’ knowledge/awareness about HIV/ AIDS and safer sex practices.

Most of the studies reviewed so far have contributed in a number of ways by advancing our knowledge on sexuality of Ethiopian youth in the context of HIV/ AIDS. Contrary to the mainstream ideology that condones sexual involvement by young people, sizable number of youths start sex relatively early; in spite of having high level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and its transmission and reasonable knowledge on how to protect themselves, a significant number of youths are reported to be engaged in risky behaviors (non- or inconsistent use of condoms; having sex with high risk groups; Ethiopian youths are exposed to behaviors such as alcohol and *chat* –that expose them to unsafe sex).

Published qualitative studies on college students’ sexual experience and sexual conduct in Ethiopia are unavailable (Getnet, 2009). There are however two studies (Getnet, 2007; Taffa, Sundby & Holm-Hansen 2003) that employed qualitative methods to examine the sexuality of

non-college youth. In a study that combined quantitative methods and a focus group discussion (for investigating socio-cultural contexts of sexuality of the Ethiopian youth), Taffa et al. (2003), came up with interesting findings. Among other things, the study found a cultural clash between adults and the youth, the former prescribing the norm of premarital virginity particularly among women and the latter resisting the norm; the practice of motivating girls for sex in exchange for money, gifts, job promotion, or a promise to send them abroad; the adverse impact of unlicensed pornographic films and substances such as *chat*; the practice of privileging of the boys to have sex before marriage. Though the study does not include college students, it is relevant to my study in two ways. Number one, it chronicles some of the socio-cultural contexts that influence in-school and out of school youth. Secondly, its effective use of focus group discussion has methodological pertinence to the current study.

As can be surmised from the bodies of literature reviewed, the current study is justified at least for three reasons. Number one; there is apparent paucity of published research on the sexuality of youth and HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. Secondly, while there are studies conducted on the youth, almost all of them are quantitatively slanted and they give a partial picture of the problem. Other than information gleaned from different survey research, the influence of contextual factors, peer norms on the sexuality, and gender disparity of sexual practice about Ethiopian youth via qualitative studies are to date unexplored. Thirdly, none of the studies (except Taffa et al. 2003; Getnet 2009) uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative method. By embarking on an area that has not been adequately explored so far and employing qualitative as well as quantitative methods, this study hopes to contribute to the debate on the sexuality of youths and HIV/AIDS by placing it within the existing socio-cultural context in Ethiopia, where the AIDS epidemic is very severe.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Study Area

Nekemte "Naqamtee" in Afan Oromo, is a market town and separate woreda in western Ethiopia. Nekemte is one of the old towns in the country, established in the mid 19th century. Located in the East Welega Zone of the Oromia Region, Nekemte has a latitude and longitude of 9°5'N 36°33'E/ 9.083°N 36.55°E and an elevation of 2,088 meters. Nekemte is at the center of the road network for south-western Ethiopia. The first major road dates to the early 1930s, with a road that extended from the capital Addis Ababa west through Holota. Postal service for this city has been present as early as 1923. A branch of the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority began providing electricity to the city by 1960. By 1957, phone service extended to the city.

The 2007 national census reported a total population for this town of 103,623 of whom 52,894 were male and 50,729 were female. The majority of the inhabitants were Protestant, with 48.49% of the population reporting they observed this belief, while 39.33% of the population said they observed Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 10.88% were Muslim.

Nekemte town is characterized by mutually contributing socio-economic problems. Ever increasing rate of population pressure from excessive immigration, income shortage, urban poverty, unemployment and strikingly high and ever increasing HIV/AIDS prevalence rate are among the town's socio-economic problems. Obviously known, Nekemte is aged more than a century and relatively largest town among the Western Oromia Regional State. However, despite the age and geographical convenience, different constraints dwindled or dwarfed the development of the town.

Quite recently however, Nekemte town is in better position in responding to the question of private investors. Here in Nekemte town there is relatively adequate infrastructure such as roads connecting the towns from all corners of the city as well as 24 hour hydro-electric power, telecommunication services, different types of Banks available in the town. Investors have recently begun to engage themselves in major investment options.

Currently, educational institution, particularly, colleges are flourishing at a rate of unprecedented before, most of them by the private sector. Accordingly the town has a total of ten colleges (seven by private and three by government). There is also a university that recently started its operation in the town and is feasible potential for the surrounding research center for socio-economic development.

The recent report by MOH reveals that HIV prevalence for the town did significantly and uniformly increases during a period of three years. The national level urban prevalence declined (though slightly) during the same period, the corresponding figures for urban Oromia has also showed a decline during the same period. Therefore, Nekemte town's HIV/AIDS transmission is characterized by an increasing rate as opposed to the declining or at least stabilizing rates at the corresponding regional and national urban levels. At present especially after 1997 onwards the town has gradually held first place (rank 1st) in HIV/AIDS prevalence rate compared to other towns in the region. Various factors are reported to be responsible for the situation. Among the factors indicated, there has been a significantly growing influx of rural population to the town mainly for educational purpose as increasing of private colleges especially after the last five years. On the other hand lack of adequate entertainment facilities in the context of significant proportion of unemployed population has increased alcoholism and prostitution. It is in this town, with the above mentioned realities that the current study has undertaken.

3.2 Research Design and Approach

A descriptive cross-sectional study design that employed quantitative data collection method in combination with qualitative focus group discussion was used in Nekemte within selected public colleges existing in the town.

3.3 Study Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Population

The source population was all public college youth students in Nekemte town attending their education in the academic year 2011/12 in any of the programs of those colleges except summer students who were not around during data collection. From these a random sample of 235 students was selected using the class name list of the departments, class year and sections.

Inclusion criteria

All voluntary preparatory youth students who were in 15-24 age groups were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Colleges and students with peculiar socio-demographic characteristic composition and inconveniences to conduct the study were excluded; regarding this the following listed college students were not included in the study.

- Students pursuing their education in private and religious colleges
- Summer students of public colleges
- Married college students
- Students who were not able to complete the questionnaire without assistance (having visual and hearing impairments)

3.3.2 Sampling Techniques

There are 3 public colleges in the study area: Nekemte Teachers Training College, Darge Technical and Vocational Training College and Nekemte Nursing College. First quota was determined for the 3 colleges based on the proportional size of their students. Accordingly, 85(50 females and 35 males) from Nekemte Teachers Training College; 71(34 females and 37 males) from Darge; 44(24 females and 20 male students) from Nursing College were included in the quantitative study.

To show the detail sampling procedure, by using simple random sampling, specific departments in each college were included. Afan Oromo, Biology, English, IT, Mathematics and Statics departments were chosen from TTC. Similarly, Accounting, Building and Construction, Electricity and Surveying departments were chosen from Darge Technique School. While Clinical Nursing, Pharmacy and Midwifery departments sampled from the Nursing School. After choosing departments from the colleges, stratified sampling technique (by sex, year of study and program of study), was used in order to select students from year of study and program of study from each department of all programs in each college (except summer students who are not around during the research undertaking). Finally, by employing systematic random sampling and using student list by order of ID number that is found from registrar office, students were chosen from specific stratum and students in each college under the sampled departments were chosen and studied. Accordingly, 200 students were included in the survey research.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

3.4.1 Sample Survey

The research has mainly relied on sample survey to collect quantitative data from respondents. Self-administered questionnaire that include both open-ended and close-ended questions was distributed by the researcher himself. Respondents filled the questionnaire by themselves while the researcher facilitates the process. This is gainful because respondents themselves put their own responses by their own right; of course as it is probed by the questions. Because the research participants are educated college youth, they can easily understand the questions and provided their responses. To facilitate this mutual cooperation with research participants, the questionnaire that was originally prepared in English was later translated to the local language (Afan Oromo) and the questionnaire was administered by using the local language that can easily be understood.

3.4.2 In-depth Interview

In-depth interview was held with key informants of the college compound. The guidance and counselors of the campus were first interviewed to get necessary preliminary information about love related cases. Health workers working in college clinics were also interviewed to get data about students' sexually related health matters. Some heads of HIV clubs are part of the in-depth interview in order to identify what the clubs are doing, how the students are participating, and the perceived needs of students brought to them. Head of the registrar of the colleges were also interviewed to approach the withdrawal and other related files of students that are necessary in the research endeavor.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

In order to support and triangulate the data found through other mechanisms, especially quantitative methods, focus group discussions of 2, (1 session for each sex or single sex FGD), terms were arranged in each college and the total of 35 students participated in the focus group discussion. The FGD participants were chosen based on the information obtained from college instructors and heads of HIV clubs. Participants willing to take part in the FGDs were recruited and included in the study after mutual discussion is held and agreement is reached. It is the data gathered through FGD that unveiled the qualitative data about college students' sexuality most. This was detrimental to get clue about the overall sexuality of the college youths and analyze whether students participate in free discussions of sexuality. Here, however, caution was taken not to spoil the discussion by selecting appropriate issues for discussion.

However, one thing is worth mentioning here. During the proposal development, I proposed to conduct FGD discussion of 7 or 8. However due to practical reasons, undertaking this number of FGD was found to be cumbersome and later I decided to reduce number of FGD discussion to be 6.

3.4.4 Secondary Data

In order to get some insights about the current issue under consideration, files and documents of the college, counselors, health workers and HIV clubs were visited.

3.5. Data Quality Assurance

To assure the data quality, short time training had been given for youth counselors that assisted me during data collection. Appropriate information and instruction had been given on the objective, relevance of the study, confidentiality of information, respondent's rights, informed consent, and technique of data collection.

Ethical clearance had been obtained from the Colleges' administration and informed consent has obtained from the research participants at each level of the research process. Pre-test was conducted on 10% of the study population other than the selected colleges. Principal investigator and supervisors closely followed the data collection process properly; daily filled questionnaires were checked for completeness and errors. Privacy and confidentiality of the respondents as well as good interaction between respondents, youth counselors and supervisors were maintained.

3.6 Data Management and Analysis

After the data collection, the question number in the questionnaire was identified and the appropriate variable name was given by data coding. The responses were entered on to a computer after the layout scheme was developed. Following this, two individuals who have expertise in data entry entered the data using SPSS. Range and skip checks were done during data entry. Random sample (20%) of the data was entered and printout was visually compared with the original data. Errors identified were corrected by referring to the raw data whenever needed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This chapter deals with the analysis and presentation of the empirical data. As indicated in the preceding chapter two of this paper, the study has employed Sample Survey, Focus Group Discussion and In-depth Interview methods. Data found by using these whole methods will be presented and discussed in this chapter. To give coherence and organized presentation of the data, this chapter contains the following sections. The first section deals with socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. Section two focuses on the sexual engagement and sexual behavior of the survey respondents. The third section entails Unprotected and safe sexual practice among the college students. The fourth section is about communication and discussion of respondents regarding sexuality and HIV/AIDS and their preference of with whom to discuss such issues. The fifth section deals with major determinants of the respondents' sexuality and normative influences that push them to initiate sexual relationship. Non-campus sexual experiences of respondents are presented in section six of this chapter. The final section presents risky behaviors that put respondents at higher health risks for HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profiles of Respondents

One of the major objectives of this study is to explore the major determinants of sexuality of the college youths. Accordingly, this section presents a description of the general socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on the bases of data collected through survey questionnaire administered to a selected sample of 200 college students in the town. It presents a description of sex, age, class year, program of study, religion, place of origin, living arrangement, attachment to religious institutions and educational background of respondents' parents.

As shown in table below (Table 4.1), more than half of the respondents (108) are female college students. On the other hand, 45.43% of the respondents (92) are male students. Age-wise, not surprisingly, the vast majority of the respondents (79.5%) are in the age brackets between 18 and 20. Respondents who are in their twenties are only 41(20.5%) of the respondents. As a whole, as is the case of undergrads' age profile in Africa (e.g. Bosompra 2001; Iwuagwu et al. 2000) and elsewhere (e.g. Farrow & Arnold 2003; Foreman 2003) the great majority of the student population are either in their late teens or their early twenties. Added to that, the mean age of the 200 respondents whose ages range from 18 to 25 was close to 20.70 (in exact terms, $M = 20.69$, $SD = 2.21$). On average, male students were older ($M = 21.15$, $SD = 2.35$) than the female students ($M = 19.83$, $SD = 2.35$) and the difference was found to be statistically significant ($t [200] = -6.332$, $p = 0.000$)

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Sex(No=200) | | |
| Male | 92 | 45.43 |
| Female | 108 | 54.57 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Age(No =200) | | |
| 18-20 | 159 | 79.5 |
| 21-25 | 41 | 20.5 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Class year(No=200) | | |
| First | 53 | 26.5 |
| Second | 59 | 29.5 |
| Third | 88 | 44 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Program of study(No=200) | | |
| Regular | 123 | 61.5 |
| Evening | 77 | 38.5 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Religion(No=200) | | |
| Orthodox | 43 | 21.5 |
| Muslim | 21 | 10.5 |
| Protestant | 121 | 60.5 |

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Catholic | 5 | 2.5 |
| Others | 10 | 5 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Living Arrangement (No=200) (Currently living with) | | |
| Both Biological Parents | 2 | 1 |
| One biological parent Only | 5 | 2.5 |
| Friends | 127 | 63.5 |
| Alone | 48 | 24 |
| Relatives | 18 | 9 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Place of Origin(No=200) | | |
| Urban | 23 | 11.25 |
| Rural | 177 | 88.75 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Attachment to religious institutions(N=200) | | |
| Attends frequently | 127 | 63.5 |
| Seldom attends | 63 | 31.5 |
| Not religious | 10 | 5 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Educational Status of Father(N0=200) | | |
| No formal education | 35 | 17.5 |
| Some primary education | 55 | 27.5 |
| Secondary education | 41 | 20.7 |
| Post-secondary education | 69 | 34.3 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |
| Educational Status of Mother(No=200) | | |
| No formal education | 64 | 32 |
| Some primary education | 55 | 27.5 |
| Secondary education | 42 | 21.1 |
| Post-secondary education | 39 | 19.4 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |

Place of Origin and Living Arrangement: As far as the place of origin of respondents is concerned, majority of them 177(89%) come from rural; whereas only 23(11%) students are of urban origin. When we see the living arrangement of respondents in general, the majority (63.5%) were living with friends, followed by those living alone (24%) in rented houses. About

9% of the students live with relatives and the least significant number of students (3.5%) live with both or one of biological parents. For urban students, the most common living arrangements were living with relatives (52.9%) or with one biological parent only (27.9%), while a significant share of rural students lived with their friends (45.7%) or live alone (31.9%) [P-value < 0.0001].

Religion: Concerning religious affiliation, a big majority of the students (84.5%) has reported to be Christians (about 60.5% Protestant; 21.5% Orthodox; and 2.5% Catholic. When compared to the figure given by the national census which estimates that nearly half the Ethiopian population is Moslem, the number of students whose religion is Islam is rather low— a little more than 10%. That is possibly because either the number of Moslem students attending colleges is quite low or most of the Moslem students selected to take part in the study turned down the offer to participate probably for religious reasons. Concerning attachment of the respondents to their respective religious institutions, the vast majority (64%, 127 in number) are frequent attendants and only 31.5% are seldom attendants. A little proportion of the respondents (5%) is reported to be non-religious at all.

Educational level of Respondents' parents: Summarized in the above table (Table 4.1) are also data about the participants' demographic characteristics related to their parents' education. While the father's education of participants is relatively high (34.1% for post secondary education), the educational profile of the participants' mothers for the same level is only 19.4%. Added to that, 32% of the respondents' mothers have no formal education. Likewise, 27.5% of the respondents' fathers and mothers have attended their formal education only until primary level. In general, the vast majority of the respondents' mothers (60%) and a significant number of respondents' fathers (45%) haven't attended their secondary education. This kind of family background has an important bearing on the sexual behavior of the college students because most literature on the

topic, (e.g. Taffa,et al.2003; Bosompra 2001; Iwuagwu et al.2000), agreed that educational level of parents affects sexual behavior of their children through its effect on open communication between parents and children on issues of sexuality and condom use and access to knowledge about sexuality, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health issues and sexually transmitted infections.

4.2 Sexual Engagement of Respondents

4.2.1 Respondents' Understanding of Sex

Prior to discussing the sexual experiences of College students, it is worth noting down that the students' overall understanding of what sex is. The respondents' overall understanding of sex can be grasped from the discussion of the FGD participants. Sex is tacitly understood by the FGD participants as an insertive vaginal sex between heterosexual couples. As shall be seen later in detail, sex between same sex groups is strictly frowned upon. It could generally be said that the students' views range from the most liberal perceptions to the most conservative outlooks. On the extreme liberal end of the continuum, some students advance the view that sex is desirable. Speaking along Freudian line of thought, one male student for example, captured the appreciation of other participants of the discussion in his group, when he said:

For me, as Freud says, sex is a flavor of life. From psychological point of view, practicing sex is healthy and acceptable. A couple should be well informed about sex. And I believe factors encouraging people to have sex are three: cognitive, behavioral, and cultural... What we say cultural is related to your surrounding and environment. Behavioral factors have to do with individuals' behavior. And it is a combination of these factors that lead one to sex. And it is up to the individual to choose and to capitalize on one of these.... But I'd generally say to have sex is ok and healthy. Not to have sex could be harmful. But I want to underline that young people need to go for safe sex. (Male FGD-2)

Majority of the participants of the FGD have affirmative view of having sex by students of college age. As their male counterparts, among which the above quotation is one, the female participants also approve the sexual practice of the youth at college level. Though in a less direct

way, the following excerpt dictates female participants' view of engagement in sexual relationship:

I don't feel there is anything wrong with having sex. You can have sex. It is natural. The kind of sexual practice I was objecting to was, the kind of sex people have in the open air. Sex is too private. When people have sex, they should have it in private. It could be in hotel rooms. It could be in their friends' homes. But people shouldn't have it in Public places such as on the pockets of main streets, and places like that. For me that is shameful. (Female FGD-2)

4.2.2 Sexual Practices Considered Appropriate and Inappropriate

Female as well as male participants of the FGD have such notions of appropriate and inappropriate sex. The most appropriate sex on which participants seem to have unanimous agreement is sex between heterosexual married couple. Some air a more liberal attitude to the notion of appropriate sex. They don't limit the issue of appropriate sex to matrimony alone. They speak in favor of sexual relations between boyfriends and girlfriends. For people of their age, they note, having sex is normal and healthy. As noted earlier, some participants speaking with Freudian language, empathically asserts that "sex is a flavor of life."

A fresh idea that has emerged from the discussion of both sexes was the inappropriateness of non-egalitarian sex. The remarks made by two participants may make the notion much clearer. Maintaining a view that is rarely advocated by African women (Bosompra 2001), one of the female participants confidently notes that sex needs to be a source of pleasure for young women as well, and sexual practices should be performed in less archaic ways. Here is her eloquent observation:

Well, people talk about different positions [in performing sex]. There is common understanding [among the youth that] we shouldn't have sex the way it was done in olden times. It is not a question of accepting all the things in the films we see. There seems to be some common understanding among the youth that everything you see on films shouldn't be experimented. For most of us, some of the things you see [on movies] are rather weird and not acceptable. At the same time, we, young people think that up to a point, we need to perform sex in accordance with what we see in films. There is consensus, for example, among my friends that sex shouldn't be a five-minute ordeal in which the guy gets

satisfaction from and ends it there like it was the case in the past. They [female students] do not accept the idea that sex is something out of which only the guy gets satisfaction. People say it shouldn't be practiced in such a way it reflects the male dominance. We feel that sexual partners should take time to make themselves ready for it and get pleasure out of it. There is some agreement amongst us that to some degree we should practice what we see in films and sexual partners should get mutual satisfaction. Other than that, there are sexual scenes that we find too disgusting to talk about. (Female FGD-2)

Though not a common finding in other studies, the above observation reinforces an emerging sexual agency demonstrated by some of Holland et al.'s (1991) female subjects.

Defying women's presentation as mere sexual objects of men in most of other studies, the current study sheds light on women's advocacy for sexual pleasure in the same way it is sought by men.

Supporting the view that sex should be egalitarian in nature, one of the male FGD participants also underlies:

When you form a friendship with a certain girl, you should be able to treat her like your equal. Among other things, sex is something that binds you together. So, you should be able to "read" her feelings. If satisfaction is not mutual, if you as a guy, are only concerned with satisfying just your sexual needs, that is selfish. And I call that inappropriate. There is this thing called "short". For me that is also inappropriate. (Male FGD-2)

What appears to be underlined by both of the above quotation is the outlook that women are entitled to sexual pleasure. Females disapprove of a sexual practice in which women are viewed as objects of sex by their male counterparts. Most male participants also share this view of egalitarian sexual relationship between male and female sexual partners. They point out that sex is not something to be rushed. In a similar way that the above female FGD participant rebukes "a-five-minute" sex, the male participant clearly expresses his disdain towards a sexual practice known as "short"—a practice where men go to sex workers and buy sexual gratification in the possible shortest time. In their emphasis on how young people should make the most out of their sexual encounters, it can be argued that the participants have in fact gone beyond adults'

unrealistic expectation i.e. a failure to acknowledge the “reality of young people’s sexual desire, especially in relation to girls” (Campbell et al 2005).

Despite the existence of such surprising and in a way progressive perspectives that challenge the previously held views by both sexes in Africa that promote men’s supremacy presenting them as “conquering heroes and macho risk-takers” (Campbell & MacPhail 2002), highly conservative views are forwarded in parallel. A discussion on these issues has, for example, revealed theological views that admonish any sexual activity before marriage. Here is a segment of the discussion:

Appropriate sex is sex between a wife and a husband. Personally, I don't even consider sex between boyfriends and girlfriends appropriate sex. Whatever, I don't call that appropriate! I know in ssthese days that if the two parties come to an agreement and there is love between these two parties, the relationship is okay and is acceptable by majority of the youth. But religiously speaking whether we like it or not any sexual relationship is sin unless and otherwise made in a marriage relationship. (Male FGD-2)

A more or less similar view is held by another female participant:

I disagree with what my friends have just said. I don't believe it is important to have boyfriends and girlfriends. If you ask how many of the students [in this College] are strong and whose love relations last, the answer you get will be about 5 percent. If a guy had a freshman girlfriend, he would drop her the next semester and would start a relation with another. So, friendship between opposite sexes in this campus is not lasting. And I would assume it [having a girlfriend/boyfriend] has no any advantage whatsoever other than being a hindrance to your studies. It may also expose you to different problems. Therefore initiating opposite sex relationship in the campus is so risky seen from a number of angles. (Female FGD-2)

Though not in great detail, and not consensually, sexual practices of double dating, promiscuous sexual relations, having sex without condoms, having sex prior to getting tested for HIV, western-style sex with “disgusting” positions, and raping a girl in groups are identified as inappropriate sexual behaviors/practices. Strange sex such as incest and sex with animals are also presented as abnormal.

It is, however, the practice of sex between same sexes that has instigated great horror among the male participants of the FGDs. An attempt to find the female participants’ view on the

issue, didn't work at all. Contrary to their female counterparts, male students were more vocal. Despite accepting the existence of the practice, male participants seem to strongly object to the practice of homosexuals. Some participants acknowledge that there are men having sex with men in the town and the identity of these people is an open secret. One male participant argued that those men are forced to have that kind of sex as a result of incurable disease:

I have never heard of such things [homosexuals] in this campus.... But out of this campus, there is such a practice. Homosexuals are known as Bushti. In fact, it is said "Ekele ekelen boshetew!"- [so and so had anal sex with so and so]. I am sorry to say this, but in the place I come from, it is believed that these men have got some kind of worms inside them that instigate them to seek insertive anal sex. (Male FGD-1)

Bizarre as they may seem, the stories by the participants are reflective of the degree of negative perception people have about men having sex with men. Despite the paucity of systematic studies investigating people's attitude towards homosexuals, a recent study by Getnet (2007) has indicated that men having sex with men "suffer from internalized and externalized stigma and discrimination". Male participants' stories from the other FGD, though not as objectionable, indicate that the practice is deplorable. When asked about his opinion of abnormal/inappropriate sex, a participant in this group first talks about incest, sex between human beings and animals. A little later, this is what he says: *There is some other thing I forgot to mention. Having sex with same sex! Men having sex with men! Lady with a lady! For me, this is completely abnormal. (Male, FGD-1)*

I can tell the other participants were too shocked to talk on the subject further. Their grimaces say it all. When pushed to air their views, almost all of them say it is quite abnormal, unreligious, and culturally unacceptable. My attempt to know whether the practice of having sex with same sex is practiced among college students have, however, resulted in divided opinions. Other than two students who with a sense of disgust, report that there are lesbians, most

participants say they are unaware of such a practice. Regarding the practice of homosexual, some students say, albeit infrequently, the practice is there.

Though the data is not supported from the female participants of the FGD, the male participants have mentioned also that there are lesbian students (female having sexual intercourse with female). One male participant has indicated that:

In the compound where I rented, there are a number of other students of this college that were living in-groups. One day, I went to a 'service' where three female students reside together. One of the three students is a regular student and she was not there that time. When I try to enter, I heard one unusual sound and looked at them beneath a closed window to identify what is going on. They were watching a pornographic movie on the cell phone and are doing something that I couldn't speak in front of my friends here. Frankly speaking, I failed to trust my open eyes. Really it is disgusting. (Male-FGD-1)

4.2.3 Prevalence Of Opposite Sex Relations in Colleges

Prior to examining students' sexual behavior, it was first attempted to see the degree to which students were sexually engaged. A frequency distribution result revealed that the number of students who were sexually engaged was smaller than those who were not. Of the 200 students who responded to the item that required respondents to say whether they were sexually engaged or not, only 68 students (34%) responded in affirmative. 132 of the respondents (66%) said they had no sexual experience. That was, however, contrary to the data obtained from the FGD participants of the present study who said at least 80% of the target population are sexually active.

One common question raised and discussed in all the focus group discussions triggering similar responses was the following query: *To what extent do you think it is common to have a boyfriend/girlfriend among college students?* That is probably the only question that elicited more or less uniform responses among all the participants. Given the uniformity of responses gathered, one would in fact think that it was an issue discussed upon in advance and a consensus was reached on. The empirical material from the FGDs is more revealing. Male participants

confirmed that having boy/girl friend is very common. They mentioned that it is even observable among elementary school students. Even though they are skeptical of estimating the exact percentage of college students that are sexually engaged, the overwhelming majority of the participants agreed that over 80% of college students have got boyfriends/girlfriends. Let us take the following excerpt of two male FGD participants:

This is a reality. I mean it is a fact... In the past, we hear stories that College was a place for students to engage to one another and become future partners, I mean husbands and wives. But nowadays the thing is like a game, I mean having boyfriends and girlfriends. You know, it [the practice] is there. But there is nothing genuine about it. There is nothing right! (Male-FGD-1)

What I want to add is a little more. I mean, this is a reality! Let alone in this College, students are having [boyfriends and girlfriends] at lower levels including the high school level. As my brother said, the figure would be 80 to 85%. If there are students without friends, it is because of fear of HIV/AIDS, or because of something or family members or lack of "business" [the financial resources]. Or someone who believes he doesn't have "business". (Male FGD-2)

To our amazement, the stories got from the discussions with female students were a confirmation of the stories narrated by the male students. When asked to say how common having boyfriends/girlfriends was in their colleges, female participants in both discussion groups, like the male students, were quick to say, "It is very, very common." The following excerpts from discussions held with the female students may be representative of the shared feelings among all the female participants:

The way I see it, it is very, very common to have a boyfriend/girlfriend here in a very astonishing manner. Given the enormity of the practice, one would think it is a must to have a boyfriend/ a girlfriend. The first thing you are expected to do as a first year student is to have a boyfriend and to have a girlfriend. You see girls, rushing to have a boyfriend. The way it is done, it gives you the impression that College is not only a place for academic study but also for starting this kind of relation. Without even knowing what they are doing, students start relations and you see couples hanging out (Female-FGD-1)

When I asked participants to guess what percentage of the student population had boyfriends/girlfriends, 75% was the figure given as the least estimate. The overall estimate was 80% and above. Two of the female participants have in fact tried to justify their estimates:

If the figure you are asking us to guess include those who have friends off campus. I mean in the home country and all that, in that case, I'd say it would be over 85%. You know that; it is a very few students from among freshman students who don't have [boyfriends/girlfriends]. And they avoid that until they get used to the campus. They too will have friends later. If you are asking me about seniors, almost everyone has one. They form relations to one another. It is only few freshman students that have no friends. And that is for a maximum of a semester. (Female -FGD-2)

Another female participant of the FGD shares the above point when she mentioned that:

I think about 80% of the students have got girlfriends/boyfriends. If you look at the situation in every section, most of the girls have [boyfriends]. And that is over 80%. Among the experience of girls of various sections I know, it is only one or two of all the girls who do not have boyfriends. Consider the average. That obviously amounts to 80%. (Female FGD-1)

Irrespective of their gender and academic class, all the FGD participants strongly note that opposite sex relations among college students is a very common feature. Citing some of the colloquial language they use to describe the situation may perhaps make the prevalence more vivid. While some say, "having boyfriends/girlfriends is considered synonymous with joining college," for others, sexual relations emanating from joining colleges are equated with "some kind of common course" given to every college student.

Emerging from the theme of intimate opposite sex relations prevalent in colleges were other related sub-themes such as: the frequency of such relations even at lower academic settings among much younger students, the degree and nature of the intimacy and what the intimate relations involve. Perhaps with the idea of making the opposite sex relations widespread in their institutions appear quite acceptable, it is with a sense of sarcasm that participants talk about the frequent occurrence of intimate relations even at primary schools. Male as well as female students say that much younger students than themselves indulge in opposite sex relations. Considering the way they ridicule the behaviors of younger students, they seem to be saying, "No wonder the opposite intimate relations among us is widespread; after all we are college

students. But look at what our much younger siblings are doing!" The following could be regarded as a representative opinion of the participants' feelings:

Nowadays, it has even begun in Elementary schools. Very surprisingly, students from elementary schools have begun forming opposite sex relations with one another. When I was elementary [school] student, such a relation was not there. But now it has become so common. The kind of things they do is very surprising. In the place I came from, there are many elementary schools. And I often overhear their conversations. I have never heard them talking about good things. When we were their age, we never talked about the way our teachers dressed. These are the kind of language they talk about: "Have you seen the clothes she [one of her teachers] wore?" "What an old woman! Did you notice the way that old junk behaves? He winked at me!". But mind you, these are elementary [schools] students. At their age, we would never put make up on. But they are different. They do all sorts of things that would let them attract guys. They never wear uniforms they are supposed to wear on their way from home to school [or vice versa]. Putting their uniforms in their big bags, it is in fact at the school gates that they change their uniforms. The girls' effort to attract guys' attention is in fact amazing. When I was their age, I never properly kept my hair in order. Our parents are in fact appalled in the way these kids behave. When I see what they do, I find it difficult to give an age limit [for a sexual initiation]. But disregarding what these young people do, it is with people of our age that sexual feelings surface. When you join colleges, you are 18 or 19. I think that is the age when young people should think of having boyfriends. ... (Female FGD-1)

Making fun of the intimate opposite sex relations taking place at lower levels including high schools, they are at the same time appreciative of/justifying the sexual relations existing at college level. On top of that, inasmuch as they disparage relations among students from lower levels, they seem to idolize such relations taking place among college students in the past. In the same vein, participants tend to condemn younger students having intimate relations. Surmised from their discussion is, in fact, that age at sexual initiation among students is decreasing at a speedy rate—an observation reported in studies conducted in Ethiopia (see Adamu et al., 2003; Belayneh et al. 2004). In connection to this, one of the female FGD participants recounts an interesting anecdote she has recently heard on the radio on music selection program. The story goes as follows. A very young female student, she says she could tell from her voice, calls the program host and asks him to select and invite music to "her boyfriend". Suspecting that she is too young to choose music to her boyfriend, the program host asks her what grade she is.

Imperviously, the girl responds she is a six grader. She goes on telling how she loves him, when she met him, how frequently they go out, and all that.

Opposite sex relations taking place in colleges, as articulated by most participants, have different manifestations. Not surprisingly, the dominant opposite sex relations is the one that exists between boyfriends and girlfriends involving sexual relation. Unfortunately, the ways participants paint this special friendship are rather bleak. In the first place, some think the relation is materialistic. According to almost all male participants and a couple of female students, college women start relations with an aim of getting some material advantages. They contend that there are girls who start relations with guys thinking they will get financial benefits from them. Actually, there are some girls who are reported to have five boyfriends: One, a businessman; two, a student who assists them academically; three, an instructor who assist them with their grades; four, a guy for romantic reasons, and five, someone else. Anyways, college female students are said to have five boyfriends.

According to participants, a substantial portion of college students also forms opposite sex relations out of romance. Contrary to their experience while they were at high schools, students get the chance to reside together, dine together, and to study together for relatively longer periods with fellow college students. Partly because of the intimate relations created as a result of staying together for a length of time, students consciously or subconsciously develop romantic/intimate relationships leading to sexual relations. While joining colleges, some students come with the expectation that college is not just an academic institute but also a place to enjoy life. What a participant has said, and in a way an idea subscribed by other members of the FGD, is reflective of such a belief. "Life'n Mekchet", a hybrid of English and Amharic terms which literally means "To Enjoy Life" is a norm held by the majority of students. And not surprisingly,

the cumulative result of all these manifestations of college students' sexual life is the high prevalence of opposite sex relationship and the transient nature of such relationships.

To come back to the previous discussion, according to the data revealed from sample survey, from those sexually engaged students, 69.11% and 30.88% were males and females respectively. The minimum and maximum age of sexual initiation for males was 12 and 24 years and that of females was 10 and 19 years respectively. The mean age of sexual initiation for both sexes was 16.7+2.8 and that of males and females were 17+3 and 15.7+2.1 years respectively. This shows that females had more likely started sexual activity earlier than males which was statistically significant ($t=2.02$, $(df)=83$, $p=0.046$). Having had sexual activity for both sexes rises with age from 16.5% in the age group 10-14 years to 70.6% in the age group 15-19 years. Eleven (16.5%) of the sexually engaged respondents started sex before 15 years of age.

To have a clearer picture of the sexual engagement of the respondents, a cross-tabulation between sexual engagement and socio demographic variables was made. An assessment of results of the cross-tabulation has showed that only three of the demographic variables (gender, academic class, and religion) have demonstrated some meaningful relations. An attempt to examine the sexual engagement of the respondents in terms of gender, has for example, as expected, revealed that the male respondents were more sexually engaged than their female counterparts were. More specifically, more males (50.8%) than females (19.5%) reported to be sexually engaged and a Chi-square test revealed that the difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 63.53, p = .000$ (see Table 4:4). Social desirability notwithstanding, this is consistent with the literature (e.g. Bosompra 2001).

Table 4.2: Gender and Sexual Engagement

| Gender | Sexually Engaged? | | | X ² (Exact Sig. two sided) |
|--------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| | Yes | No | Total | |
| Female | 21 | 87 | 108 | 0.000 |
| | 19.5% | 80.5% | 100 | |
| Male | 47 | 45 | 92 | |
| | 50.8% | 49.2% | 100 | |
| Total | 68 | 132 | 200 | |
| | 34% | 66% | 100 | |

The other difference in sexual engagement was attributable to respondents' academic class. Accordingly, the least sexual engagement was witnessed among first year students: only about a-quarter of them (13 respondents) admitted that they were sexually active. In contrast, close to 60% of the third year respondents said that they were sexually active. A chi-square test indicated that the difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 200) = 30.10, p = .000$ (see Table 4.3 below). The overall trend was the more students stayed in colleges, the greater their sexual engagement and the finding is in agreement with related studies (e.g. Getnet 2009).

Table 4.3: Academic Class and sexual Engagement

| | Sexually engaged? | | Total | X ² (Exact sig.two sided) |
|--------------|-------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| | Yes | No | | |
| First Years | 13 | 40 | 53 | 0.000 |
| | 25% | 75% | 100 | |
| Second Years | 19 | 40 | 59 | |
| | 32% | 68% | 100 | |
| Third Years | 53 | 35 | 88 | |
| | 60% | 40 | 100 | |
| Total | 85 | 115 | 200 | |
| | 42.5% | 57.5% | 100 | |

The third demographic variable that contributed to the different sexual engagement observed among college youth was religion. Viewed from the background of their religion, the sexual engagement of respondents is summarized as follows in an ascending order: Islam, 31.6%; Catholic, 33.2%; Protestant, 39.1%; Orthodox Christians, 41.7%; and Others, 66.7%. As can be shown in Table 4.4, the difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (3, N = 200) = 8.36, p = .044$ (see Table 4.4). A closer look at the table was in fact indicative of the stereotype in Ethiopian society. Muslims are believed to be generally reserved in terms of sex before marriage, and their lowest percentage is suggestive of that. On the other hand, respondents who identified as “Others” are the most sexually engaged groups—66% of them have responded that they were sexually engaged and that is perhaps attributable to their being “non-believers”. That again is in support of the stereotype that non-believers are the least conservative and their decision to be involved in sexual matters is not affected by religious beliefs. It is also worth noting that the result is consistent with the findings of Astatke et al. (2002), which showed that subjects who attached high importance to their religion were unlikely to be engaged in sexual activities.

Table 4.4: Sexual Engagement Resulting from Religious Difference

| Religion | Sexually engaged? | | Total | X ² (Exact sig. two sided) |
|------------|-------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| | Yes | No | | |
| Orthodox | 17 | 26 | 43 | .044 |
| | 41.7% | 58.3% | 100 | |
| Muslim | 6 | 15 | 21 | |
| | 31.6% | 68.4% | 100 | |
| Protestant | 50 | 71 | 121 | |
| | 39.1% | 60.9% | 100 | |
| Catholic | 2 | 3 | 5 | |
| | 33.2% | 66.8% | 100 | |
| Others | 7 | 3 | 10 | |
| | 66.7% | 33.3% | 100 | |
| Total | 82 | 118 | 200 | |
| | 41% | 59% | 100 | |

The sexual engagement of respondents was also examined in relation to the number of sexual partners that respondents reported to have. Of those who admitted to have had some sexual experience, nearly 45% of them said they had one sexual partner. Those who reported to have had 2- 5 accounted for nearly 28 % of the sexually engaged respondents. Strangely, some 24 respondents (nearly 30%) who claimed to be sexually engaged responded that they had no sexual partner: perhaps, these respondents had had some sexual partners but they are currently un-partnered (not living with their sexual partner). On the other hand, only some 4 students, about 5%, responded that they had six or more partners.

Another important issue that has been dug out by the quantitative study is about college students' contraceptive use. Of the sexually engaged students, 49 (71.4%) reported contraceptive use at first intercourse. There was no statistically significant difference according to gender, residence or living arrangement. Of those using contraceptives, 25 (51.0%) students reported condom use. Overall, 72.1% (49/68) students reported contraceptive use at their most recent sexual intercourse and of these, 37% (17/49) used condom. Consistent condom use was reported by 6 (12.2%) males and no female and did not differ significantly by gender. Figure 2 below

depict the different contraceptive methods used at first sexual intercourse.

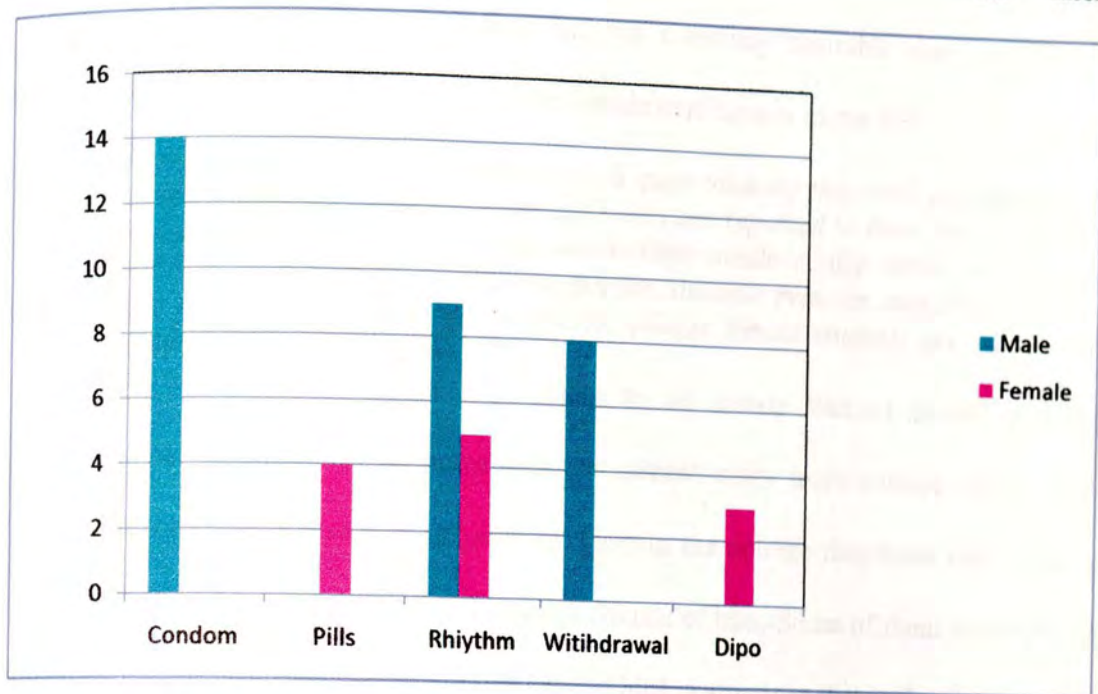


Fig.2 Contraceptive methods used at sexual initiation

With regard to the different contraceptive methods used at sexual initiation, no significant difference was found in terms of gender, residence or living arrangement. In contrast, at most recent sexual intercourse, more rural (43.2%) than urban (11.1%) students reported condom use, while more urban than rural students reported having used pills (55.6% versus 27.0%). Contraceptive use at sexual initiation and most recent sex did not differ significantly by gender or living arrangement.

As a whole, though, the average number of sexual partners (mode and median considered) was found to be one, that data need, however, to be interpreted with caution for at least two reasons. In the first place, the finding is not in harmony with the empirical material found during the FGDs of both sexes. In the focus group discussions, there was a consensus among participants that almost everybody is sexually engaged. There is also strong agreement among participants of both sexes that double dating, is the campus norm. Since the FGD

participants talked about other people, and not about themselves, there is a very likelihood for them to provide trustworthy information, and not a socially desirable response. Here, let me quote an important point raised by one of the female participants of the FGD:

...there are girls who start relations with guys thinking they will get financial benefits from them. Actually, there are some girls who are reported to have five boyfriends: One, a businessman; two, a student who assists them academically; three, an instructor who assist them with their grades; four, a guy for romantic reasons, and five, someone else. I forgot the purpose of the fifth. Anyways, college female students are said to have five boyfriends. (Female FGD-2)

Male college students are also found to be dating various sexual partners. The participants have reached to the agreement that almost every male college student has a girl friend from the place where they come from. Here in the college they have one sexual partner who is probably his classmate or dated through friends of him. Some of them also have multiple sexual partners within the college campus itself. Third is a partner that is dated most of the time from the nearby high schools or elementary schools. There are also some students who visit commercial sex workers to buy sex for money. In general however, the participants are anonymous in sharing the view that dating multiple sexual partners is the campus norm.

4.2.4 Sexual Activity of Respondents and Reasons to Initiate Sexual Activity

There are a number of factors mentioned by the respondents (as found both from the quantitative survey and discussion held by the participants of FGD). According to the data found from the sample survey, personal desire, and both personal desire and peer pressure are the most common reasons to start the first sexual intercourse reported by 81.2% and 10.6% of sexually engaged respondents respectively. Both personal desire and maintaining relationship, personal desire and psychical attraction and peer pressure were the reasons to start sex reported by (2.4%), (2.4%) and (1.2%) of the sexually active respondents respectively. Rape was reported by (2.4%) males. See table 4:5.

Out of the 68 (11.8%) of respondents who had ever had sex, 34(52.9%) of them had sexual intercourse during the previous 12 months. Among these, 37.6% and 15.3% were males and females respectively. The majority (91.1%) of them reported that they had one sexual partner and of which 64.4% and 26.6% were males and females respectively. 8.9% of those who had sex in the previous 12 months had more than one sexual partner and of these, 6.7% and 2.2% were males and females respectively. The minimum number of partners for both sexes was 1. The maximum for males and females was 3 and 2 respectively. The average number of partners for both sexes (per person) in the past 12 months was 1.1 ± 0.4 (median=1). The mean number of partners was 1.1 ± 0.4 (median=1) and 1.1 ± 0.3 (median=1) for males and females respectively. From this, we can observe that females had more likely high number of sexual partners than their male counter parts but there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t=0.16, (df)=42, p=0.87$). Commercial partners were reported by 2.2% male respondents only. Non-commercial partners were reported by 44 (97.8%) respondents who were sexually engaged in the past 12 months. From these, 68.9% & 28.9% were males and females respectively. See table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Sexual Activity of College Students

| Characteristics | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| | | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Age at first sex (n=68) | 10-14 | 9 | 11.8 | 7 | 4.7 | 16 | 16.5 |
| | 15-19 | 31 | 48.2 | 14 | 22.4 | 45 | 70.6 |
| | 20-24 | 8 | 12.9 | 15.7(2.1) | | 8 | 12.9 |
| | Mean(SD) | 17(3) | | 16 | | 16.7(2.8) | |
| | Median | 17 | | 19 | | 16 | |
| | Maximum | 24 | | 10 | | 24 | |
| | Minimum | 12 | | | | 10 | |
| | Age of sexual partner | Same age | 33 | 48.2 | 3 | 3.5 | 36 |
| More than 10 years older | | 1 | 1.2 | 4 | 4.7 | 5 | 5.9 |
| 5-10 years older | | 3 | 4.7 | 8 | 42.8 | 11 | 47.5 |
| Less than 5 years older | | 9 | 12.9 | 5 | 7.1 | 14 | 20 |
| Younger | | 4 | 5.9 | - | - | 4 | 5.9 |
| Reasons for starting sex (n=68) | Personal desire | 41 | 60 | 15 | 21.2 | 56 | 81.2 |
| | Peer pressure | 8 | 12 | 14 | 20.4 | 22 | 32.2 |
| | Personal desire and peer pressure | 6 | 9.4 | 22 | 31.5 | 28 | 40.9 |
| | Maintain relationship with partner | 2 | 2.4 | 11 | 15.2 | 13 | 17.7 |
| | Personal desire and physical attraction | 9 | 12.8 | 1 | 1.2 | 11 | 14 |
| | rape | - | - | 2 | 2.4 | 2 | 2.4 |
| Sex in the last 12 months (n=68) | Yes | 26 | 37.6 | 10 | 15.3 | 36 | 52.9 |
| | No | 24 | 35.3 | 8 | 11.8 | 32 | 47.1 |
| No. of partner in the last 12 months (n=36) | One | 23 | 64.4 | 10 | 26.7 | 33 | 91.1 |
| | More than one | 3 | 6.7 | 1 | 2.2 | 4 | 8.9 |
| | Mean(SD) | 1.1(0.4) | | 1.1(.3) | | 1.1(0.4) | |
| | Median | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| | Minimum | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| | Maximum | 3 | | 2 | | 3 | |
| Type of partner in the last 12 months | Student | 14 | 39.2 | 10 | 25.3 | 24 | 64.5 |
| | Teacher | - | - | 6 | 15 | 6 | 15 |
| | Others | 9 | 23.4 | 11 | 28.9 | 20 | 52.3 |

Out of the 36 sexually engaged students who had sex in the past 12 months, 53.3% had sex over the last 30 days of which 31.1% and 22.2% were males and females respectively. The

minimum and maximum sexual encounters for males and females were 1 and 15 and 1 and 4 respectively. The average number of sexual encounters by both sexes in the past 30 days was 4.1 ± 3.7 . The mean number of sexual encounters for males & females was 4.8 ± 3.9 and 1.8 ± 1.2 respectively. Males were more likely sexually engaged than females and the difference was statistically significant ($t=2.93$, $(df) = 23.97$, $p=0.007$).

According to the discussion held with FGD participants, opposite sex relations taking place in colleges, as articulated by most participants, have different manifestations. Unfortunately, the ways participants paint this special friendship are rather bleak. According to almost all male participants and a couple of female students, college women start relations with an aim of getting some material advantages.

Some participants go to the extent of detailing the benefits enjoyed or required by girls. According to them, before starting a relation with a man, a college woman makes sure whether the man approaching her is capable of meeting her material or academic demands. Thanks to consumerism promoted through global commercials, a typical demand made by various female students these days revolves around cell phones whose use has recently become so fashionable. Some women, for instance, want their boyfriends (actual or prospective) to buy them pre-paid phone cards. Others expect men to buy them cell phones that are stylish. The more demanding ones even ask their boyfriends to secure them mobile subscriptions. Occasionally, a boyfriend may be required to fulfill all these demands. Alternatively, boyfriends may be asked to take their girls out and invite them. Boyfriends with no adequate financial resources should at least be academically strong. As high achievers, not only would they assist female students in their semester works, but they will also be a source of pride. Linked with this is women's preference for dating men who are academically senior to them.

According to participants, a substantial portion of college students also forms opposite sex relations (have girlfriends/boyfriends) out of romance. Contrary to their experience while they were at high schools, students get the chance to reside together, and to study together for relatively longer periods with fellow college students. Partly because of the intimate relations created as a result of staying together for a length of time, students consciously or subconsciously develop intimate relationships leading to sexual relations.

FGD participants are generally dismissive of the opposite sex intimate relations existing among college students. As indicated earlier, some say the relation is materialistic and in a way devoid of love. Male participants are by and large critical of the female students along this line. Similarly, there is a consensus among female participants that most of the opposite sex relations are formed with sexual motives in mind. In this regard, male students are accorded with the greater blame. While men are presented as people who are misleading, sex mongers, female students are pictured as naïve and as people seeking more lasting and more meaningful relations from men the same way Hoppe et al.'s (2004) research participants from high schools viewed their sexual relations with boys.

Partly because of women's fascination for materialistic benefits and men's obsession with gratifying their sexual needs, opposite sex relations among the college youth under investigation are described as transient and inauthentic. Said differently, the discussions held with both sexes reveal that genuine relations between boyfriends formed out of love are rare. Participants, women and men alike, are also of the opinion that meaningful relations having marriage in mind are a rarity in the college settings. No sooner than students start some relations, participants decry, that they rush themselves to sex. At the center of most of the relations is thus sex.

Despite the overall feeling among participants that the relationship between sexual partners among college youth is not good saying that it is quite transient, nothing beyond sex, and quite casual, there are participants who say it is unfair to attribute opposite sex relations to sexual motives alone. While some say opposite sex relations could potentially lead to future marital bond, some others feel it is a strategic friendship used to jointly withstand challenges in campus life.

Some female participants have mentioned that in addition to being a source of mutual benefit for both sexes, such a relation can also bring some sense of security to female students. Girlfriends and boyfriends in the college can help each other at different levels. For example, if the guy is academically better, he might assist her with her studies. And she can do the same if he's weaker. They can exchange different materials useful for their studies. For other female students, having a boyfriend could be quite prestigious and the advantage is more psychological. Therefore, college students might initiate sexual relationship based on one or more of the above mentioned factors that directly or indirectly push them to enter.

4.2.5 Peer and Normative Pressures

In the preceding discussions, we have attempted to see the sexual engagement of male and female college youths. In doing so, our emphasis was examining the traits of individual students that lead to sexual engagement. The impact of peers and environmental factors contributing to the sexual practices of college students in college as well as non-college settings have not been dealt with. That does not, nonetheless, mean the influences of peers and environmental factors have been found to be of little importance in the research setting. On the contrary, consistent with the literature (Agha 2002; Campbell et al. 2005; Campbell & MacPhail 2002; Cohen & Lederman 1998—though not solely in college settings and not necessarily in

negative ways—the empirical materials reveal that peers as well as college norms have been equally influential and in some cases even more powerful in shaping the sexual practices of the target groups.

4.2.5.1 Peer pressures: Private as it may seem, the sexual life of male and female students, the FGDs show, is greatly influenced by peers in various ways. The influence begins with a dramatic change in the overall lifestyle of the students following their joining colleges. Contrary to their lifestyle in high schools students begin to live and stay together in various non-academic and academic settings. These students form some kind of friendship and begin to share information on mutual interests of various natures (sometimes in pairs and other times in small and large groups). At the earlier stages, discussions would revolve around the new environment and subjects of discussion might include 'ordinary' topics such as food, accommodation, and academics. As the students get closer through time, they would begin talking about personal matters and at times start sharing secrets.

The discussions held both with male and female students, for example, reveal that female students play a considerable role in involving other female students in opposite sexual relations. As shown in earlier sections, female students are somehow dragged into starting relations with senior students who are equipped with deceptive mechanisms. (In a way, the various techniques used by male students can be considered as peer pressures on female students). Ironically, female students in opposite sex relations would directly or indirectly influence peers to follow suit.

Female students in a relation, for example, serve as matchmakers. Compared with students who haven't started intimate relations with men, male students can comfortably ask female students who have got boyfriends to introduce them to women they are interested in. Understandably, these students in a relation in most cases comply with the request; at the same

time, 'single' students find such a favor rather awkward. Matchmaking requests are often made quite lightly. The response by female participant below to how students commence to have boyfriends/girlfriends is typical of the matchmaking practices taking place among college students:

...I think it is the result of peer pressure from girls. It is usually under the influence of our friends that we start a relation. Outdated as it may seem, matchmaking is quite common in this campus. There are people known as matchmakers (Atabash). Well anyway, when guys want to be match-made, they come to you and say, "this friend of yours kind of suits me". This is an expression commonly used by guys here. After double checking the seriousness of your male friend, you go to your girl friend and half-jokingly tell her, "So and so said that he's attracted to you. He says you are good looking." Then the girl starts thinking about him. And the guy doesn't stop there. He begins taking you two out [the matchmaker and the girl he likes]. First both of you; then when the two get used to, the guy starts to single out his "girl" and takes her out for tea or coffee. When they are together, the relation becomes stronger and stronger. (Female FGD-1)

In addition to playing a role of a matchmaker, female students in a relation also play a more direct role of pushing fellow female students to sexual relationships. They often do this by candidly telling their friends about their own boyfriends. Some emphasize the enjoyment they get as result of having boyfriends/ sexual partners. Others, as reported in the work of Longfield et al. (2004) capitalize on the material benefits (money, gifts, mobile apparatus) or academic assistance they obtain from their partners. Still others say that there is nothing wrong and it is in fact acceptable to have boyfriends for college students. That college is a place where one has to enjoy life (i.e. have sex, drink, smoke), that the age college students are in is appropriate for starting opposite sex relations, and that forming sexual relationships in colleges is an acceptable norm, are some of the explanations given by some pushing friends to start a relation.

Pressures put on women to be involved in sexual relations do not, however, come from their women friends alone. When it comes to the actual engagement of sex, female students encounter stronger pressures from men. Until they eventually give in to their sexual requests, men wouldn't "give them a break." And in most cases, women concede to men's uninterrupted

sexual pursuits for fear of losing them for good. Here is an interesting observation made by one of the female participants:

... the pressure from guys is very high. When a girl meets a guy, it is in fact he who persuades her to have sex with him. Guys usually need to satisfy their immediate sexual desire. Once a guy satisfies his immediate needs, he may say, "Go to hell!" The girl usually gives in for fear that she might be left out. She might love him. "If I don't have sex with him, I might lose him for good," she thinks. And guys try all their best to persuade girls to have them. (Female FGD-1)

In the same way female students are influenced by their peers in their sexual lives, the sexual engagements of male students in colleges are also influenced by their male friends. In agreement with the findings of some related studies (e.g. Cohen & Lederman 1998), the desire to share one's private sexual experience by some students, on the one hand, and the apparent readiness to listen to these stories on the part of some other students, on the other, is reflective of the pressures peers can have on another at a wider level. Participants' narratives may make this assertion more vivid:

Well, in the first place there is age factor. As you grow older, you tend to be more and more interested in sex and in opposite sex relationship. Young people enjoy talking and listening to sex related matters. People have sex and they talk about it: sometimes, including matters those are too private. And that is normal. There is nothing wrong with that. But living on your own and living in groups have different impact on this. When we join colleges we live in groups. We all have different backgrounds and experiences. If, for example, two of these guys start dating and begin sharing their experience with us, we begin to be inspired by what they do. And the same is true with girls. Then the guy will try and go out for himself. And after the experience, he too will have something to talk about. He won't be a bystander. He begins to be active participant. (Male FGD-1)

The above quotes merit additional explanation. Obviously, the peers who are likely to be pressurized to follow suit are those enthusiastically listening to their friends' sexual encounters. Their enthusiasm primarily implies their need to do the same as their friends and enjoy the experience firsthand. On top of that, they have an implicit desire of sharing their new sexual experience and in a way the need to look for peer recognition in the form of interested audience.

4.2.5.2 Normative Pressure/Environmental Factors: The unprecedented freedom found in colleges giving every opportunity for male students and female students alike to do whatever they like is perhaps the strongest normative pressure/ environmental factor hugely affecting their sexual lives. In harmony with the literature (e.g. Farrow & Arnold 2003; Ferguson et al. 2006; Foreman 2003; Lewis et al. 1997; Roberts & Kennedy 2006), stories told by FGD participants corroborate this trend. Expressing the absolute freedom enjoyed by campus students, FGD participants use an Amharic saying “*Netsanet Bakafa*” which literally means “Freedom with a spade”. (Note that the metaphoric use of spade in the Amharic context is implicitly contrasted with a spoon and implies an excess supply of the thing under consideration). Let me use the following expert to make the above point sounding:

While we were with our parents at home, most of us were strictly supervised. Parents would impose curfews on us. If we don't observe the curfew they would say to us: “where the hell have you been? Who the hell were you with?” Things of that sort were common. Here the world is all ours. Who knows what I do and what I don't? I'm on my own. As a result of that freedom, students want to try out what their peers do. It doesn't mean students are unaware of the possible consequences of what they do. They do know. Very well! There is this thing we call sense of righteousness in religion. That can tell them. But they do it all the same. They don't want to feel inferior to downtown guys. Well, the city guys may do this because it brings them happiness. Perhaps they don't do well in academics. What worry me are the deeds of village guys. They just follow suit. (Female FGD-1)

That the impacts of newly earned freedoms are particularly stronger on students coming from rural areas is a subject further picked by female participants.—an observation which sheds light on how young women coming from too strict family are influenced—is worth quoting:

...In fact, it is a girl from the countryside who takes the lead in having boyfriends. You can tell that she had no [sexual] experience whatsoever before joining college. She would be under strict parental control. All she would be allowed to do is just go to school and come back home from school. She would know few places other than her school and home. Maybe she knows few other places when she is sent to fetch water or when she is sent shopping to the nearby shops. But such a girl gets her complete freedom when she comes here. There is nobody to ask her, “Where the hell have you been?” So, when she is here, she wants to blast off (mefendat). Why not I tell you the way these kind of girls dress? When they come here, they are dressed with foot length traditional skirts. But after

a while, they end up wearing Vale Velt. It is these girls who want to have boyfriends.
(Female FGD-1)

Expectations that students bring along with them when joining colleges—that college is not just an academic setting but also a place to “enjoy life”—is also a normative belief that pressurize students of both sexes to have sexual engagements. This normative belief is expressed through hybrid of English-Amharic expression, “*Lifen mekchet*” mentioned earlier. This belief held among the student community is not limited to promoting young people to sexual culture. As shall be seen in more detail, substances like *chat*, liquors and shisha (most of which push users to more sexual engagement) are believed to form features that make life in colleges quite enjoyable.

4.2.5.3 Differential Impacts of Peer and Normative Pressures

In matters pertaining to sex, two groups of college students, as shown in FGDs held with both sexes, are reported to be susceptible to peer- and normative pressures. In terms of academic class, freshman students of both sexes are presented as people exhibiting sudden changes. In relation to place of origin, students coming from the countryside have been found to be the groups more vulnerable to peer pressures and environmental factors. The pressures and thereby the influences become more apparent among students possessing the two features.

There was, for example, a consensus among female FGD participants that initially freshman female students coming from the country tend to keep themselves aloof from men. Because of their humble clothes, they don't feel comfortable approaching men. Nor do men themselves find these women attractive enough. That is, however, the case only at the beginning. As soon as they get money, the first thing women from the country do is change their dressing style.

On the other extreme, students who come from towns or those belonging to a family where sexual matters are discussed openly and freely are presented as persons having meaningful sexual lifestyle. They find it easy to withstand pressures from peers. Nor are they influenced by tempting factors of the college setting. As a result, they either avoid rushed sexual relations or tend to have durable relations with opposite sexes.

The impacts of peer and normative pressures on male college students are still more pronounced on the two sub-groups: freshman students and students with rural origin. The influences are, however, rather indirect. Freshman students seem to share campus-wide beliefs that sex in college settings is widespread and permissive for those who stayed there longer. Irrespective of the length of their stay in campus, those people also know students not actively involved in sex are given all sorts of names with negative connotations—*wochege*, , *fara*, *mude gedada* , *geja*—all Amharic colloquial expression implying absence of refined culture and modern qualities expected of young people of college age. At the same time, the sexual engagement of these two groups with college students is rather limited. Still, some say, the sexual affairs they have with female students from high school have earned them impressive records. Relatedly, these very men coming from regions turn out to be fast subscribers of substance abuses: *chat*, smokes and alcoholic drinks. Sometimes with amazement and at times out of sympathy, some participants note how these students are influenced by peer pressures and environmental factors.

4.2.6 Mechanisms Used By College Students to Form Intimate Relationships

Whatever their motives, sexual or otherwise, college students, men as well women, use different mechanisms while forming opposite sex relationships. Though college men have sex with non- college people, as shall be seen later, their sexual partners are dominantly fellow

college students. The FGDs conducted with both sexes reveal that sexual relations take place between female freshman students and senior college male students (men in the second year and above). Not surprisingly, most often it is young men who take the initiative in forming the sexual relations. Not only do they take the initiative, they also leave no stone unturned to have girlfriends/sexual partners at any cost, and most succeed in having at least one. By way of referring their success and the efforts they exert to start sexual relations, male college students refer to the period when freshman students join campus as "harvesting season"—a season when new girlfriends are harvested. For the sake of convenience, we will examine the techniques used in terms of gender.

4.2.6.1 Male Students' Mechanisms

Men use various mechanisms to recruit girlfriends, and after the fact, girls are also aware of the methods used by their male counterparts. In fact, it is female participants who talk more articulately than the men do about the techniques used by the latter. One of the most commonly used mechanisms is offering to show women around the campus. Let alone for students coming from the country and from small high schools. Men who are aware of this complexity of the campus offer to act as considerate hosts, and bewildered new female students do not often turn down such offers. Relations formed that way serve usually as an inception for future intimate relations.

Male college students hosting women who come from their locality also use the opportunity to form intimate relationships. Notwithstanding that there are well-meaning men, female participants say, most male students use this common origin as an excuse for recruiting future sexual partners. Approaching them as people who are there to give them help about life in college—how to withstand the academic rigors, how to deal with instructors, how to prepare for

exams and things of that sort—men often act as counselors. But relations formed in this manner would soon take the directions men want. First, the couple sticks together, going out for tea or coffee. Through time, they turn out to be boyfriends and girlfriends or sexual partners. As reported by female participants and understandably so, it is men who “propose”. Women would then comply with the request out of a feeling of gratitude, and not out of love.

The other common opportunities created by men take place after the female freshman students settle and they are related to helping them succeed in their studies. Men provide women with materials known as handouts (e.g., lecture notes taken the previous year, reading materials supplied by previous instructors, and previous exam papers). Related with this is academic support given by male students to their female counterparts in the form of informal tutorial commonly referred to as “*Mastenat*”, an Amharic phrase. “*Mastenat*” (giving informal tutorials), though most common among freshman students, is also exercised among senior college students. As shall be seen in the discussion below, despite male students’ attempt to sound genuinely helpful, the female participants feel only few men want to offer true academic help. While the tutorial can take place either in the open air or in a place known as “space”, couples (more truthfully men) make sure that it is done in the absence of other students. That gives potential lovers the opportunity to have privacy, which through time leads to creating special friendships.

Other than mechanisms used by both senior and freshman students, the FGDs have also revealed, that there are ways of initiating opposite sexual relations often used by senior students. Senior students make use of verbal communications as well as non-verbal cues when initiating opposite sex relationships. Rather traditional as it may seem, “winking” is reported to be a prominent non-verbal signal commonly used by male college students. Men who are sure of themselves wink at women they are attracted to in order to express their desires. They do this in

libraries or recreational places after making sure that they are not observed by other students. Steps the “winkers” take following that obviously depend on the signals sent back to them by “the winked”. If the winked, for example, reacts to the winking by smiling, the men are encouraged to take further actions (say, going to the women and introducing them, waving hands or inviting women out for tea or coffee). For “lucky men”, introductions initiated as simply as that may develop into close relations. In situations where women demonstrate negative signals (e.g., make a face, get angry, and frown), men often vanish from the site and the sought relation aborts there and then. Some of the participants say less timid men may go on taking further steps like harassing young women. The understanding among male participants is that generally “winking” works out fine for men.

Demonstrating qualities that girls think men should possess are other non-verbal cues used by male students at college. What male participants call *erasin metebek* in the vernacular – literally means “watching over oneself”—makes up a portion of qualities appreciated by female students. Watching over oneself includes: dressing well (e.g., dressing fashionably, dressing up), keeping oneself neat, and looking sportive, and most importantly refraining from different addictions (chewing *chat*, smoking, and drinking alcohol). Since men know that possessing these assets makes dating women easy, FGD empirical materials indicate, male students often try and demonstrate these dispositions—that is, if they can afford to. Exhibiting verbal qualities as a cheerleader, entertainer, and good talker—features appreciable by women students in general—are some of the other mechanisms male students use.

4.2.6.2 Female students' mechanisms

Contrary to the case with that of male students, when we talk about mechanisms used by female students to form intimate relations with college men, it is having senior students (second year and above) in mind. Female students who have the courage to show their sexual interest to men are reported to be those who have stayed in campus more than a year. Women as freshman are practically out of the game. Not surprisingly, non-verbal cues are the techniques senior female students commonly use when they want to start intimate relations with their male counterparts. When a woman is interested in a man, she makes sure she is in a perpetual contact with him. She creates every excuse to be around the young man she is attracted to. In situations where the man needs her assistance, she readily does that and constantly so. She provides assistance to him to the extent that the man feels indebted and be tempted to take the initiative to start a relation.

In the event that these clues go unnoticeable, participants candidly say, college women do things comparable to communicating their desires in explicit terms. When they are with men they are interested in, they do all sorts of tempting things. They dress up. They put on make-up. And in extreme cases, they dress and act "sexy". This is how one female participant who says women are good or even better than men are at communicating their desires unguardedly sums up the seductive ways discussed by fellow participants:

... the direct way of asking is not just saying, "I love you!" There are other ways of asking. If you start harassing a guy, you are asking him. That is as good as taking the initiative. If I act sexy in front of a guy, it is tantamount to proposing. Women express their love to guys well. In fact, we are good at it. I think we women find it difficult to hide our emotions. When we love, we love full heartedly. And we have different ways [of communicating that]. To go tell a guy you love him is just one way. To dress up and be consistently visible to him is still another means. Assisting him is one way. If I am always there whenever he needs some assistance, which is one way of expressing my feelings. Even though we all have different techniques, we all have a way of expressing our love. If I find it difficult to say "I love you", I can express my love by giving him handouts. If I do

a lot of things to help a guy, I'm expressing my love. But the means vary. Without we knowing about it, we all somehow express our love to guys we love. (Female FGD-1)

Albeit often indirectly, female students also express their interests verbally. Some, for example, look for cell phone numbers of men they are fond of. They then make calls to them and give clues about their desires. Some others tell men the positive qualities they seek from men knowing well that those young men possess those very qualities. Still some others haphazardly give favorable comments about their favorite men— say about their looks, about the way they are dressed, and that sort of things. While some daring women directly speak in favor of the men they are attracted to, others do it indirectly. They say endearing words about a man as if to their friends, but they make sure that they are overheard.

4.2.7 Non- Campus Sexual Experiences of College Students

Contrary to my expectation and as opposed to the practice in the past, the stories articulated by FGD participants by and large disclose that the sexual relations that exist amongst college students are quite abundant. Their stories, however, reveal their sexual practices are not restricted to the campus scenario/context. Men have sexual affairs outside campus. So do women.

4.2.7.1 Male students' Experiences: If we may start with male students, next to campus women, the largest group of students that college students form sexual relations with are high school students. And there are several reasons for that. College men, on their part, find their sexual experience with high school girls quite fascinating for various reasons. First, they feel dating these girls is less expensive and less time consuming. Since they are aware that the girls, too, are interested in the relation, compared to the time and effort they exert for dating college girls, they know they can date them effortlessly. In terms of cost, they find dating schoolgirls less costly: They don't have to buy them expensive lunches or drinks. They can date them just

after inviting them for tea, coffee, and if exaggerated, snacks. Nor do they have to take them to fancy hotels, as is sometimes the case with college girls. They can take them to modest rented bedrooms for sex, and that is ok. Secondly, because they think these girls (who they nickname "onions" and "buds" to mean they are young and delicate) are sexually inexperienced, and though rarely, it gives them an opportunity and pleasure of conquering them (making them lose their virginity). Related to this is the fascination they get by sharing their experience with fellow men who are inquisitive listeners. As a whole, the sexual experience college men have with schoolgirls is something they are animated with, something they brag about and something they talk about enthusiastically. And it is by no means an experience, which they make a secret of. After all, it is with buds of girls, who are the envy of men of their age, that they have slept with.

Followed by the sexual experience college men have with girls from high schools is the practice of going to DC for sex. DC is an acronym used for designating a commonly used colloquial expression known as Dirty Corner which refers to shanty or modest places where sex workers do business. As opposed to the sexual experience college men have with schoolgirls, participants do not seem to have consensus regarding the nature of sexual relations they have with sex workers. While some say sex with prostitutes, to use their term, is widely practiced among college men, others say, the practice is quite rare. Those who note the practice is widespread plausibly argue that it is because people keep their affairs with prostitutes secret that it is not thought to be as common as it is. And they further contend that men keep their sexual experience with prostitutes for fear of being stigmatized: prostitutes are believed to be HIV carriers and a confession of having sexual affairs with them could mean accepting being the carrier of the virus (UNAIDS 2006). Contrary to that, for a considerable number of the

participants, it is only people with problems (for example *chat* chewers, drinkers, students under stress) that go to "visit" commercial sex workers and such people are few in number.

4.2.7.2 Female students' experiences: As can be understood from the discussion groups, particularly from what the men say, the kinds of non-college sexual practices female college students have include: sexual relations with off campus men of their age with better incomes, opposite sex relations with businessmen, and having sex with "sugar daddies". At least from the male participants' perspective, young women often tend to date young men with money. Most girls, male students note, prefer dating well off non-college men including "sugar daddies" to college students.

College women's reaction to older men dated by female students is quite mixed. All in all, owning a car in Ethiopia is a big deal, and most female students dating men with cars, be it young or old, are generally happy about their relations and they don't make a secret of it. As a result, most students dating car owners want that to be known. Contrary to that, some participants say there are female students who go to extra length to hide these relations from fellow college students. Excerpts from the male FGDs below may be more informative:

I'd say most would prefer to go out with men outside campus. They know that college students don't easily meet their financial demands. They prefer to date business people or guys who have jobs. Many girls in fact talk about dating on-campus guys as something degrading. They are heard saying, "Listen, I'm not a sort of girl who goes out with college students." That's true. Actually, age doesn't matter. They don't consider age difference. If they think a man has enough money, they don't care even if he is old enough to be their father. Girls think guys who own cars are all rich and men owning cars know this. Some even want to show off. Others want to avoid the scene and they make sure that they get off in surrounding places. But people see them anyway while they have walk or something of that sort and talk about it. (Male FGD-2)

The kinds of sexual relations female students have with older men referred to as "Sugar Daddies" require more discussion. The empirical material collected from the male FGDs reveal that it is often poorer students from the country that indulge in sexual relations with "Sugar

Daddies.” And their motives are financial. Poorer students are said to be envious of fellow female students from urban and richer students. The poor students are jealous of the clothes the richer female students wear and their financial capabilities to do whatever they want. Their easy way to behave like richer women is thus to date “sugar daddies” and get the money or other material benefits they require in return.

Though they don't use the term “sugar daddies”, female participants also concede that college women often date and even prefer dating off campus men with money. According to the participants, the sexual affair female students have with off-campus men is comparable to prostitution and that is widely known by the society at large as well. Here is one eloquent observation by one of the female participants:

... I think female students tend to date older people off-campus. There is something I have recently read from a newspaper which supports this. In the newspaper I read, it is reported that sex workers have complained that college students have competed them in their business. According to most of their clients, the sex workers say that their clients tell them, “Instead of spending a lot of money for one-night stand with you, it is easier for us to date campus girls with two or three beers. Compared with them, you sex workers are rather costly! It is much cheaper to date campus students. They are tricked with two or three beers.” This might be exaggerated, but one can't deny that it has some element of truth. This is a very, very big (serious) problem. There are a lot of nightclubs in the surrounding areas where college students frequent. If you go there, you will see a lot of ugly scenes. (Female FGD-1)

As a whole, male and female participants report that a good number of female students have sexual affairs with men much older than themselves and this is in harmony with the findings of Astatke and Serpell (2000) conducted among Ethiopian high school students. Unlike Astatke's and Serpell's subjects who face some kind of physical compulsion, participants of the current study do not report sexual coercion of that sort: their compulsion, as indicated earlier, is much more indirect: aspiration for financial and material gains in an exchange for sex.

But participants also emphatically note that college female students dating off-campus older guys are those who have boyfriends in colleges or elsewhere. Even more powerful, and in

way more worrisome, than the above discussion on the practice of sexual partnership by female students is the trend of having multiple sexual partners by college women as told by women themselves.

This empirical finding from the participants of the FGD is also supported by the data found from key informants of the colleges under consideration. Particularly Student Deans has mentioned that some of their students "misbehave" in terms of their sexual lives and found to be initiators of some other problems such as personal and group fight among students themselves or most of the time between students and those referred to as "city boys" of the town; this more often takes place in night clubs. The main causes of these kinds of problems, they added, are reported to be students' engagement with multiple sexual partners. Such information are gathered by the group recently founded and run by the name "*Educational Raya*" that is composed of students belonging to a common class and is formed of students up to 6 or 8 in number. Actually the establishment of such minimal groups among students learning together serves a number of purposes such as educational, political, social and likewise disciplinary by nature and hopefully such and other related efforts will help us reshape and control students' sexual life.

Security workers/guardians have also revealed that there are some minimal fight among students of the campus and when the cause is sought, most of the time the underlying factor is sexual jealousy as a result of dating multiple sexual partners (for both boys and girls).

In conjunction with the practice of college women dating older off-campus rich men, sometimes referred as "sugar daddies", though limited in number, there are also women, who have got fiancés to whom they are loyally committed. There are also young women who abstain

from sex for various reasons; most dominantly for religious purposes. All these practices indicate the co-existence of multiple sexual cultures in the colleges.

4.3 Unprotected Sexual Practice and Safe Sexual Experiences of College Youths

4.3.1 Unprotected Sexual Practice

According to the quantitative material evidence found from sample survey, amongst 68(11.8%) students who ever had sex, 30(43.5%) had used condoms during the first time they had sexual intercourse and of which 9(29.4%) and 2(14.1%) were males and females respectively. Out of those 36(52.9%)students who were sexually engaged during the previous 12 months ,7(40%)students of which 5(22.2%)males and 2(17.8%) females reported that they were using condoms every time .(20%) students of which 6(13.3%) males and 3(6.7%) females reported that they were using condoms some times and 17(37.8%) students of which 15(33.3%) males and 2(4.4%) females reported that they had never used condoms during sex in the past 12 months. See table3.6. The proportion of male students who had unprotected sexual intercourse at least once (sometimes and never) was higher than those of female counter parts (46.6%VS 11.1%) but this was not statistically significant($\chi^2=3.25$, (df) =1, $p=0.07$) From this ,we can observe that many students had been engaged in a risky sexual activity that could make them vulnerable to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, termination from school, etc.

Among those 36(52.9%) students who were sexually engaged during the previous 12 months 22(53.3%) students of which,15(31.1%) males and 7(22.2%) females reported condom use during their most recent sexual encounter. From these, the majority (62.5%) of students of this, 33.3% males and 29.2% said that condom use was suggested by joint decision. Thirty three point three percent (25% males & 8.3% females) and 4.2% females reported that it was suggested by themselves and their partner respectively. However, 17(44.4%) students of which,

37.8% males and 6.7% females reported that they had not used condoms in their most recent sexual encounter. The commonest reasons for non-use of condoms reported were partner trust (50%) and both partner trust and don't enjoy sex when using condoms (20%). See table4.6.

Among those 17(44.4%) students who had not used condoms in their most recent sexual encounter 1(2.2%) male student had sex with commercial sex partner without using condoms.

The reason for non use of condoms was he thought that it was not necessary. See the following table for more detail.

Table4.6: Unprotected Sexual Practice among Sexually Engaged College Youths

| Characteristics | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--|--|------|------|--------|------|-------|------|
| | | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| Condom used at first sex(n=68) | Yes | 20 | 29.4 | 10 | 14.1 | 30 | 43.5 |
| | No | 29 | 42.4 | 8 | 11.8 | 37 | 54.1 |
| | Do not remember | 1 | 1.2 | 1 | 1.2 | 2 | 2.4 |
| Frequency of condom use in the past 12 months(n=36) | Every time | 5 | 13.3 | 2 | 6.7 | 7 | 40 |
| | Sometimes | 8 | 22.2 | 7 | 17.8 | 15 | 20 |
| | Never | 12 | 33.3 | 2 | 4.4 | 14 | 37.8 |
| | No response | 1 | 1.1 | 1 | 1.1 | | 2.2 |
| Condom use in most recent sex | Yes | 11 | 31.1 | 8 | 22.2 | 19 | 53.3 |
| | No | 14 | 37.8 | 3 | 6.7 | 17 | 44.4 |
| | No response | 1 | 2.2 | - | - | 1 | 2.2 |
| Initiative of condom use in most recent sex | Self | 9 | 25 | 3 | 8.3 | 12 | 33.3 |
| | Partner | - | - | 2 | 4.2 | 2 | 4.2 |
| | Joint decision | 12 | 33.3 | 11 | 29.2 | 23 | 62.5 |
| Reasons for non-use of condom in most recent sex(n=17) | Partner trust | 8 | 45 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 50 |
| | Partner trust and do not enjoy sex | 2 | 10 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 20 |
| | Not available | 2 | 10 | - | - | 2 | 10 |
| | Partner trust and not comfortable initiating | 2 | 10 | - | - | 2 | 10 |
| | Partner trust and transmits HIV | 1 | 5 | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| | Did not think it was necessary | 1 | 5 | - | - | 1 | 5 |

4.3.2 Safer-Sex Practices of College Students

4.3.2.1 Condom Use

As anticipated, the safer sex practice that generated a lot of discussion among the FGD participants was use of condoms. At the same time, condom use was the area about which participants could not come to some kind of shared view. It was a thorny issue. Given the aggressive nationwide condom promotion (Kloos & Haile Mariam 2000), I have, for example, the feeling that participants would unanimously agree to the idea that people using condoms would protect themselves from catching HIV/AIDS. But that was not the case. A couple of the male participants are, for example, of the opinion that abstinence is a much-preferred safer sex practice than condom use and they argue that condoms have created some complacency among the youth. They say the availability of condoms in abundance, and its promotion has given unwarranted confidence in condoms for the youth. Arguing that condoms are not reliable, they recommend that college students had better stop using them.

We may further our discussion of condom with college students' understanding of the term. Students' perception of condoms should begin, I argue, with their understating of what condoms are. Interestingly, the students' understanding of condoms differs along gender lines. For almost all female participants, condoms mean female and male condoms. At the very mention of condoms, female students begin to talk about male- and female condoms. Without being prompted, female students are quick to classify and compare the two types of condoms. Despite their limited exposure to female condoms (some say they have only seen it; some others say they have only heard about it), female participants all express appreciation for female condoms. Some even regretfully note that much hasn't been done by way of making female condoms available and promoting their use. In a marked contrast with that, none of the male

participants in the two FGDs even mentioned female condoms. In other words, the existence of female condoms does not even occur to the minds of the male participants. Their discussion circles around male condoms.

The favorable attitude of students towards condom is not, however, accompanied by practical matters that are likely to result in condom use as is the case in the bulk of the literature (e.g. Campbell, Foulis, Maimane, and Sibiyi 2005; James, Reddy et al. 2004). To start with, the FGDs of both sexes indicate that there is a feeling of embarrassment about buying or carrying condoms. The degree of embarrassment differs between male and female students. For almost all female participants, the idea of a female student purchasing or carrying condoms is simply unthinkable. Nearly all of them say they have never seen or heard of a female student purchasing condoms or keeping condoms with them. The implicit as well as explicit understanding is that it is unbecoming of women to buy, carry, and suggest condom use or even to talk about condoms. Condom as a topic of discussion between female students is not simply there. Asking a man to use condoms could convey the woman posing the request is sexually too experienced.

Male students carrying and purchasing condoms, though to a lesser degree, are not viewed favorably either. Guys carrying condoms could be regarded as wanton or promiscuous. Expressing their opinions on a hypothetical scenario in which a student is "caught red-handed" dropping a condom, this is what a few participants have to say: "people make fun of you; people think that you are sexually well-experienced; some might even consider you as somebody very sexy. Particularly girls would take you that way. And people don't want to be considered that way."

The practice of purchasing condoms by men, which might have led to condom use, is reported to be not an easy task. Men as well as women articulate circumstances hindering their

intention to buy condoms. More specifically, male students wanting to buy condoms refrain from doing so: when the salespersons are elderly people, when they see many customers buying other items, and when the stores selling condoms are too noticeable (e.g., when vendors are situated in main streets). Said differently, the FGDs with both sexes reveal that students feel comfortable purchasing condoms from shops with young salespeople. Participants mentioned that people are too shy to buy condoms. In our culture, on matters of sex we are too secretive. Young people would have liked to see condom vendors to be situated in secluded places. Unfortunately, you can only buy condoms from shops or pharmacies that are situated in the open. If someone wants to buy condoms and if he sees a lot of shoppers, he won't buy. He will simply go away.

Another factor that has been reported to be affecting the practical use of condoms is male students' perception that condoms kill sexual sensation. Discussions held with male students indicate men's preference to having sex without condoms. From their discussions, it is possible to surmise that the youth think sex with condom is not at least as pleasant as sex without. The now cliché simile "having sex with condoms is like licking a wrapped candy" has been repeatedly raised in five of the six FGDs. Related to that is men's obsession to trick female sexual partners in having sex without condoms. Not only men do their best to take women to bed without condoms deceptively but they also share their adventurous trickeries to their friends and they are applauded for that. Interestingly enough, female students raise the idea that sex without condoms is unpleasant practice from men's perspectives. They don't say sex without condom is pleasant or unpleasant for them. What female students time and again underlie is that the unpleasantness of sex without condoms is men's idea.

Even though certain things were mentioned as factors contributing to the use of condoms (e.g. fear of contracting HIV/AIDS, the need to avoid pregnancy), the feelings among most

participants of both sexes are that the situation in campus as a whole is unsupportive of condom use. As indicated earlier, college students have sex in various places, in a way, designated for the purpose. Understandably, sex performed in campus is not planned. Men and women fatigued by academic pressures meet with the intention of fighting their exhaustion off, but they suddenly find themselves having sex at a certain spot. In circumstances of that sort, for sexual partners who regard the sexual encounter as some kind of windfall, protective sex like condom use is not thought of. Even for those who might think of using condoms, the situation is not that relaxing.

In sexual experiences encountered in non-campus settings, participants' opinions on the practice of condom use are quite mixed: use of condoms and to non-use of condoms (still it leans to non-use). Sexual encounters with virtually no condoms occur when a man has sex with a virgin girl. And there are reasons for that. In the first place, participants' stories show, men take virgin girls to bed forcefully and deceptively. Obviously, deceptive and forceful sex doesn't lend itself to protective sex such as condom use. More importantly, for young men, to have sex with a young woman with no prior sexual experience is quite an experience and they make sure to make "the best" out of it. Disagreeing first to another female participant's view that campus men are keen on using condoms, one female participant beautifully recounts men's perception of such an experience:

...I don't think we can confidently say [college] guys use condoms. I hear some guys saying, "I don't want to use condoms. It kills my sensation!" There are also guys who say, "If I know a girl is virgin, how will I ever have sex with condom with her? Who is said to have deflowered the girl: the condom or me?" ... Perhaps we might say a few thoughtful and responsible guys who worry about making their girlfriends pregnant or contracting HIV might use condoms. But most of us are not farsighted. We are carried away by our sexual satisfactions now and we don't want to use condoms (Female FGD-1)

An interesting theme emerging from participants' discussion is a contrasting portrayal of male and female students as condom users. Men are presented as people who prefer to enjoy sex without condoms. As a result, they are painted as people dragging young women into unsafe sex

often deceitfully. In contrast, female students are portrayed as people seeking and expecting men to use condoms. They describe men using condoms as "thoughtful and responsible; who worry about making their girlfriends pregnant or contracting HIV." These contrasting perceptions of female and male students are believed to hold, in fact, imply that it is women, and not men, who are beneficiary of condom use. Ironically, male students are the ones entrusted to the task of delivering condom use. They are, at least, expected to do the condom shopping. At the same time, female students doing this are viewed negatively even by their fellow female students.

Irrespective of gender, communication about condom use between sexual partners is reported to be virtually non-existent. It appears that students are more concerned about the psychological repercussions resulting from the suggestion to use condoms than the possible risk of contracting HIV/AIDS brought by failure to use condoms. For fear that students would convey a feeling of mistrust they, for example, refrain from suggesting using condom to a sexual partner. Some also avoid mentioning condoms because of feelings of embarrassment.

4.3.2.2 Voluntary Counseling and HIV Testing (VCT)

Next to condom use, the practice of voluntary counseling and HIV testing (VCT) before starting a sexual relation is the other safer-sex style that has triggered a lot of discussion among FGD participants of both sexes. Contrary to condom use, participants seem to have a shared view about its utility of making their sexual life quite safe. They all agree that VCT is something that students should undergo in this era of HIV-pandemic. Despite this unanimous consent about its usefulness, participants concede that the practice of VCT among college students is very rare.

The discussions with the FGD participants disclose that, in the main, there are personal reasons and institutional constraints contributing to the rarity of the practice of VCT. At a personal level, fear of being told negative news, i.e. fear of receiving an HIV-positive status

result is the reason that stands out prominently. Such a fear is so ingrained among the student community that it even scares people who claim to be virgin. Interestingly, should they know their sero- positive status, rather than catching the disease and their imminent death resulting from it, it is the fear of jeopardizing their college studies that worries college students most.

Participants are also of a strong opinion that the way VCT is handled in the College has discouraged the student community from having HIV test. In the first place, most of the participants feel the VCT is not publicized enough to persuade the student to go for it. VCT is promoted seasonally, once or a couple of times on occasions like AIDS day, giving them the impression that it is an annual ordeal, and not something of a serious concern. Secondly, there is a strong feeling among participants that VCT as practiced in the College campuses lacks professionalism. Proper pre- and post-counseling, they complain, is not there. The service rendered, participants feel, is not commensurate with the huge number of students and it is thus incapable of maintaining the confidentiality of the status of people with HIV-positive.

An interesting issue emerging from the VCT related discussions is the practice of procrastinating HIV testing by student community at large—a practice reported in some qualitative studies (see Lear, 1995, 1997). In the current study, whereas less scared students tend to postpone HIV-testing to another year, more anxious students are inclined to delay it until after their graduation. The idea of procrastinating HIV testing on the part of college students is, in fact, beautifully described by a male participant as follows:

The participation [of students in HIV testing] is very limited. It is common among most of us to plan things for a New Year. And to get tested for HIV for a New Year is what every student plans. But I'd say, HIV testing is something that we all plan but procrastinate for yet another year. (Male FGD-2)

Here it is worth noting to add an important observation made by health practitioner currently working in the college clinic. He demonstrates that generally the issue of VCT is not a

campus norm. Said differently, majority of the college student community are not well interested to undergo the test and there are only few students who are confident enough to get tested. He adds, actually this is not the issue of confidence alone; rather it has more to do with the level of awareness about usefulness of the test and students' feeling of responsibility for themselves and for their sexual partner as well. What is usual about this issue in the campus is that they are few students who have once or more undergone the test and admits to get tested several times who visit the clinic more often. Therefore, there is very limited number of students who visits our service as fresh participants. Here he stressed that this is not to blame the recurrence of getting tested by few students; rather to encourage students those are never got tested in their life time. Therefore, as far as the issue of new infection and data of sero- prevalence is concerned, we cannot confidently speak because of low level or non-existence of VCT by the student community in the campus.

4.3.2.3 Sexual Abstinence and Faithfulness to Sexual Partners

As indicated earlier, as far as sexual practice by college students is concerned, the overall college norm is permissive of sex. FGD participants of both sexes, as a whole, emphatically note that it is acceptable, and for some encouraged, for college students to have sex. Contrary to the mainstream thinking, even the practice of having multiple partners is not frowned upon. Nor is sexual abstinence in an opposite sex relation considered a virtue anymore. Virginity of girls, which was traditionally a non-negotiable quality for a marriageable woman in Ethiopia (e.g. Pankhurst 1992), no more enjoys its prestigious status among the student community. Most of the male participants in particular are of the opinion that girls' virginity has outlived its significance. Participants' own words are quite telling:

...Really, virginity is losing importance fast. At a college level, nobody expects girls to be virgins. Guys mockingly say, "if a college girl is virgin, so is my mother". The way some

guys present it is even worse than that. They say virginity doesn't exist at all. It is said even baby girls are born un-virgin. Personally, I do love that. The thing is we guys don't believe it exists anymore. There is a saying on this: "Smallpox and virginity vanished simultaneously from Ethiopia three decades ago." (Male FGD-2)

Alongside with this dominant permissive sexual culture of the college setting, there exists a sub-culture promoting sexual abstinence and faithful sexual partnership. Students subscribing to sexual abstinence are reported to be dominantly students with religious background (Muslims and followers of Christianity with different denominations alike). Students strictly observing their respective religions form opposite sex relations often in the form of formal engagement. These students are, however, reported to be delaying sexual gratification until they get married. The practice of sexual abstinence is, nonetheless, not limited to matrimony. Students of both sexes, with a sense of purpose, who give priority to their studies; female students who are assertive enough to withstand peer pressures and all the tempting campus environment have also been reported as champions of the sexual abstinence sub-culture—a disposition detected among a group of Ethiopian high school students of both sexes in a quantitative study of Astatke et al. (2000). In line with that, in the present study, a female participant, talking from personal experience, says seriousness of purpose can result in postponing sexual gratification. Interestingly, there are also men who claim to be avoiding sex with their sexual partners/girlfriends for fear that they would damage the relations.

The large majority of the FGD participants are, however, too suspicious of the existence of the sexual abstinence sub-culture. For them, religiosity as a reason for sexual abstinence doesn't hold water. Religion among some college students, they reason, is used as a mask to cover up the sexual affairs taking place among religious students. Nor has assertiveness and seriousness of purpose been left unchallenged. Females particularly stressed that, "if you were really in love, you would do whatever your boyfriend asks you to do. When you are in love, you

will be afraid of losing him and will comply with whatever he asks you to do". Trying to change one's partner's position is not that easy; particularly if the guy is well experienced. Experienced guys have every trick to keep their partner with them no matter how strong they think they are... There are guys who are good at pretending and who can act as if they were genuinely in love and these guys are good at convincing their girlfriends to do whatever they want them to do.

4.4 Communication and Discussion on Sexual Matters

As indicated in the literature review, the sexual communication students have with family members, friends and relatives; their degree of openness while talking about sex amongst themselves; and most importantly the kind of talk they have with their sexual partners is thought to have great impact (positive or negative) on their sexual practices/behaviors. Though not conclusively, related studies (Miller, 2002; Whitaker et al., 1999) show that the quality and the nature of communication about sex that young people have with different parties is very likely to contribute to promoting safer sex practices.

According to the empirical material found from the quantitative sample survey, overall, 180 (90.1%) students reported that they had ever discussed sexuality or HIV/AIDS, mostly (65.1%) with their same sex peers. Compared to urban students, rural ones were significantly more likely to discuss with teachers (p -value <0.05). More males than females reported discussion with friends of the same sex [OR=1.76, 95%CI 1.04 to 2.98]. Health practitioners and mass media were the dominant sources of information regarding sexuality and HIV/AIDS, mentioned by 138 (68.8 %) and 119 (59.3%) of students respectively. There was no significant gender difference with regard to the dominant source of information regarding sexuality and HIV/AIDS. A significantly higher proportion of rural students mentioned health practitioners (70.8% versus 47.1%; p - value <0.001), as the most important source of information. Overall,

160 (79.8%) reported that they relied on health practitioners and 46 (22.8%) on teachers to get information and guidance about HIV/AIDS. There was no significant difference by gender or place of residence concerning source of information.

Table 3.7: Communication and Discussion Regarding Sexual Matters

| Discuss With | Responses | |
|---------------------|-----------|------|
| | No | % |
| Mother | 22 | 11 |
| Father | 19 | 9.4 |
| Brother/Sister | 26 | 13.1 |
| Family member | 15 | 7.3 |
| Same sex friend | 37 | 18.5 |
| Opposite sex friend | 16 | 8.1 |
| Boy/Girl friend | 8 | 3.9 |
| Health practitioner | 31 | 15.5 |
| Teacher | 26 | 13.2 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |

To support the above quantitative empirical material, FGDs revolving around the theme of communication involving sex have revealed various patterns of communication: communication among peers (communication among female students, and communication among male students, and in rare cases between male and female friends), communication between sexual partners, and communication between students and parents/relatives. Communications taking place amongst peers is probably the subject that is greatly discussed among college students in general and male students in particular. Partly because of the unprecedented freedom they enjoy while entering colleges, an issue discussed earlier, college students have sex with one another and people outside their colleges.

Considering the nature of their conversation and the subjects of their discussion, it is not very difficult to say whether or not what they talk about sex has anything to do with promoting safer-sex practices. More directly, one can safely say what they talk about has little to do with promoting safer-sex practices. Topics men share with their friends regarding sex revolve around

their sexual experience/behavior in general or their recent sexual experience. Discussions of a general nature includes: the type of young women they prefer, the number of young women they have dated, the number of women they have made redundant (stood-up), and that sort of thing.

It is, however, talking about topics related to recent sexual experiences of their peers, the FGDS indicate, that men find most interesting. Consequently, when coming from a date, men, for example, animatedly report on their experience to their eagerly awaiting friends. Men report about their experience in the form of adventures presumably seeking some appreciation for their adventure stories in return. Their adventurous talk includes: the number of times they had sex the previous night, the amount of liquor they had with their dates, the exciting places they went together, and various tricks they used to take their dates to bed.

Contrary to the shared understanding by female and male students alike that college male students talk about sex openly and they are keen on talking about sex, there doesn't seem to be a consensus among female participants' sexual communication taking place amongst themselves. For some of the participants, such kind of communication is rather superficial and it lacks candidness. When they talk about sex, these participants say, it is about other people's experience, and not about themselves. And not surprisingly, many women find themselves gossiping about other people—men in particular. They discuss male students as follows: how they trouble them, who they have betrayed, the number of women they date, and things of that sort. Such female students thus attempt to give people the impression that they have no sexual experience whatsoever. Despite every indication that college female students are sexually engaged, "sexual innocence" and "virginity" is the kind of impression they want to create to one another.

Some of the participants, on the other hand, tend to associate sexual communication by female students' with academic class or place of origin. While senior female students talk about sex, these participants note, freshman students and women with rural origin avoid taking part in the communications. In the event that they talk, their role is limited to asking questions. Two of the participants on their part comment that, irrespective of academic class and place of origin, young women talk about sex at great length and they enjoy doing that. They acknowledge that freshman female students and those from the country are reserved and at times mute, but they underlie their muteness and reservations are temporary.

Despite the overall bleak story about the absence of sexual communication among female students in particular, there is some "window of hope" for an open communication on the subject within a segment of the student population. An interesting finding, in a way challenging previous assumptions, is the tendency of male and female close friends—I mean just friends—to talk about sexual matters freely and openly. Contrary to conventional wisdom, experiences of the four participants, two males and two females, indicate that there is a sub-culture in which male and female students with no special relationship can share intimate information. Interestingly, two participants reflect on similar experiences in the sense that they are both on the receiver's end. In the case of the male participant, for instance, the female friend sharing information of a personal nature to him is presumably older and sexually more experienced. Not only does she seem to enjoy telling him her experience with her boyfriend, but also kind of advises him on how to use condoms. Similarly, the female participant, who claims to enjoy the company of men better than that of fellow female friends, says men often share intimate details to her, which could in way be instructive.

As regards to communications taking place within other parties (e.g., between students and family members, between sexual friends), there is no marked difference between the female and male discussion groups. In spite of that, it is worth noting that it is the discussion with female students on the subject that has generated a lot of empirical material. In relation to discussions between students and family members, communication between children and their parents has been found to be rare. There appears to be a consensus among many of the participants that their parents don't have the orientation, the traditions and the determination to prepare their children for later sexual lives—a finding reported in a related study carried out in Ethiopia (Taffa et al.1999). This is particularly true among students coming from the countryside: they are even more disadvantaged because their parents don't have the competence even if they want to communicate.

In families where both parents are educated, the mother can sometimes supply information to her female children on new phenomena such as periods. Even then, in situations when elder siblings (sisters in particular) are there to provide such assistance, younger children feel more at ease with them not only to talk about these things but also to be reactive.

Educated or uneducated, participants note, most often parents don't freely discuss sexual matters with their daughters in specific terms, a finding reported in a couple of related studies (Lear, 1997, 1995). In agreement with the findings of other related studies (Dilorio et al.2000; Dilorio et al. 1999), the communication is also unidirectional. Rather than preparing their young daughters for new lifestyles resulting from being teenage, mothers and even elder siblings resort to giving short and abrasive "warnings and advice." In some cases, even siblings who some describe as better confidants fall back on behaving in the same manner.

4.5 Risky Behaviors Leading to Risky Sexual Behaviors

4.5.1 Substance Abuse

As depicted by the qualitative study, students' narratives on substance abuse disclose that there are four substances frequented among the student population in the colleges under consideration. These items include: *chat*, alcohol, cigarettes and shisha. Contrary to recent findings reported in colleges in the West (e.g. Roberts & Kennedy 2006) and other African countries (Buseh et al. 2004; So et al. 2005), use of drugs (e.g., hashish, cocaine) has, however, been found to be very rare. Despite their unanimous agreement on the prevalence of consumption of alcohol, *chat* chewing, shisha inhaling, and cigarette smoking in their colleges, participants have varying opinions (in some cases conflicting information) about: the intensity of each practice, their relation to students' sexual behaviors/practices, students' perceptions of people accustomed to these substances, the degree to which students (male or female) are characterized by these habits. A separate treatment of three of these items may give a better understanding of the "substance abuse" theme. Cigarette smoking is not, however, discussed further because it has not invoked enough attention on the part of the participants and there is no empirical evidence showing a clear connection between students' smoking habit and their sexual behaviors/practices.

4.5.2 Alcoholic Drinks: A comparison among the four substances outlined above reveals that liquor is the substance abused most. Not surprisingly, it is male college students who are reported to be frequenting the habit much more than their female counterparts. Participants are also of the opinion and strongly so that liquor is very closely linked with students' sexual behavior. Their narratives reveal a number of drinking patterns visible in the colleges under investigation and most of the patterns have a bearing on students' sexual behavior/practice. The

first pattern and the one that concerns the vast majority of the student community is the drinking practice during semester breaks or in periods right after the completion of exams. In those times, students go out en masse and they drink in groups. Notwithstanding that there are couples who drink together with an aim of forming opposite sex relations, oftentimes, people drinking in groups are of same sex students. Male students drink together. So do female students—albeit disproportionately to their male counterparts. Drinking in a mixed sex group is quite rare. Students seem to feel comfortable hanging out with friends of same sex. While male participants have no other particular reasons for sticking to their fellow male students, female participants, in addition to enjoying themselves, drink in their respective groups for “security reasons” — a finding not reported in previous studies. We female students tend to walk, eat or drink together, says a female participant in FGD-1, because it is enjoyable and because it is easier to withstand provocations from men—sexual or otherwise.

For some reason, it is said students’ pockets fatten up during inter-semester breaks and in periods after exams. Going to bars, which would be a luxury in other times for most students, becomes quite affordable during breaks and students buy drinks to one another. In moments such as that, enjoying alcohol is the norm and people don’t generally make a secret of their drinking. Some students are visibly drunk and they pride themselves on being drunk. Perhaps emboldened by the liquor they imbibe excessively, at such moments, a lot of male college students have sex with commercial sex workers and very likely with no condoms. In short, it is this kind of drinking, which could in a way be termed as “seasonal drinking”, that increases the vulnerability of college students to HIV/AIDS.

Coming under the second drinking group are male students who oversubscribe to the notion that “college is a place where you enjoy life.” Instead of using *chat* for a study purpose—

a widespread held norm in colleges—these students chew *chat* for enjoyment—say to have fun with friends, often talking about, soccer, politics, women and sex. Portions of them, however, chew *chat* for sexual reasons: first to maximize their sexual desires and then have liquor (or colloquially known as *chebse*) so that they would become more potent sexually than they normally are. In other words, some people chew *chat* as a prelude to a sexual encounter: The stereotype is men who chew *chat* and subsequently drink alcohol are sexually stronger than they normally are and are very likely to satisfy their sexual partners.

Dominant as these patterns are, to try and categorize all the drinking practices taking place in the colleges under investigation could be over-simplistic. FGDs conducted with participants of both sexes disclose other reasons for drinking alcohol. For some female students, drinking could just be something that they normally do while they go out with their sexual partners (“sugar daddies” or otherwise). There are also students who drink alcohol as a stress reliever. Some, particularly men, are reported to be frequenting drinking alcohol simply because they are alcoholics.

Whatever the pattern and whatever the reason, there is a firm belief among participants that there is a strong link between alcohol consumption, sexual practice, and HIV/AIDS though less directly.

4.5.3 Chat: it is very popular and a widespread habit mainly among male college students. Suggestive of its popularity, *chat* is known by different colloquial names such as: the leaf, *bercha*, and MGD—Mood Generating Device. The acronym MGD in particular is worth explaining a little further for it carries its supposed inherent function in the academic as well as social spheres of students—it has the potential to generate the *mood* to sit down, study and enjoy the exercise at the same time; it has got the potential to generate the *mood* to drink alcohol; it

possesses the potential to raise the *mood* to have sex, and it is endowed with the potential to serve students as a "a social lubricant" to socialize with fellow students.

As regards to its prevalence, rough estimations by participants indicate that 30-40 percent of the male student community is *chat*-chewer. A few participants say that estimation is a bit exaggerated arguing that the percentage could only be as high as that (or even higher) only during exams. That is because *chat* is primarily chewed for study purposes. "The belief here is," say participants, "that *chat* helps you to study for longer hours and it sharpens your memory".

FGD participants also agree *chat* is not chewed for study purposes alone. They believe it is chewed by a substantial group of students for entertainment purposes as well. There is a convergence of opinion among participants on that. It is when talking about the groups of students frequenting the habit most that participants (particularly female participants) begin to diverge. For most of the female participants, true to the stereotype, it is Moslem women and those coming from places like Harar who chew *chat* in colleges. Some female participants, especially Moslems and "Hararians" don't buy that. It is young women from cities, they counter argue, who chew *chat* frequently. Despite these divergent opinions, female and male subjects still agree *chat*-chewing habit is much more apparent among college men than among women—it is an emerging habit among a limited group of female students, they say.

Participants' opinion on the impact *chat* has on students' sexual practice/ behavior is quite mixed. Some say *chat* kills sexual desires and they claim addicts use it for that purpose. For others, *chat* maximizes people's sexual desires but makes them sexually impotent while they are still under its influence. This is in fact a view held by most of the participants. We had better say the effect of *chat* varies from people to people.

It was, however, on the combined effect of *chat* and alcohol on sex that there was a unanimous agreement among participants. Whatever the effect of *chat* might be on individuals' sexual activity, male and female participants all agree that people who first chew *chat* and then drink alcohol turn out to be not only sexually desirous but also equally potent. Participants acknowledge that there are groups of students belonging to that sub-culture: They first chew *chat* and deliberately take liquor (*chebse*) afterwards when they want to make the best out of a [pre-arranged] sexual activity—making the group prone to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS as evidenced in the work of Seime et al., 2005

4.5.4 Shisha: Shisha is a shared experience among consumers. Consumers of shisha sit round a water-filtered pipe in “Shisha cafés” and two or three of them can inhale it at a time from pipes steaming from the major pipe. Flavors are added in the clay pot with a glass base. Like the case of *chat* and liquor, the number of male students smoking shisha is much higher than that of female students. More males than females are believed to be regular customers of shisha cafes mainly because it is believed it has cosmetic effects and it serves as some kind of stress releaser. Except that shisha smoking is a habit being less frequented by women, I would say, contrary to what liquor and *chat* do, it has little to do with students' sexual practice/ behavior. Still, some participants claim that female students' adherence to shisha on the pretext of smelling good and looking nicer is aimed at attracting their male counterparts is not unwarranted. If as claimed, smoking shisha makes them smell good and more attractive, the result could be good enough to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

4.5.5 Pornography: On top of substance abuse, students' addiction to pornographic information from videos and the Internet, participants strongly believe, has got adverse impact on students' sexual lives. For male participants in particular, this has its roots in the lives of the

students while they were still in high schools. As high school students, while still under their family's supervision, they are prohibited to watch pornographic videos. Not only is pornography frowned upon by the society, but it is also illegal. "Video houses" found showing pornography to the youth could be closed for good often even without court orders. Owners could also be fined or penalized by imprisonment. That is in theory. In practice, though, the "video houses" and the youth have every means of beating the system and hoodwinking the public. Pretending to be *chat* venders, some video houses, for example, put on advertisements such as "Beleche Today", "Abo Mismar Today" or "Gelemso Today"—all designating different brands of *chat*. Others act as if they were "juice venders" and put up announcements like, "Today Avocado with Bread". Other video shops secretly show pornographic videos on the pretence of transmitting live football games from the English Premier League—programs very popular among the Ethiopian youth. Participants explain that their advertisings may read: "Arsenal vs. Chelsea" or "Liverpool Vs Manchester United", but "pornography" is what is shown inside the video houses. For laypeople and local authorities, those advertisements may look genuine advertisements on *chat* or juice or soccer. But for the business people engaged in showing pornography and the youth in a given locality, they are all coded messages. They know very well those advertisings are all cover-ups for "porno" video-shows.

Pornography shown on regular basis through deceptive mechanisms such as that, participants elucidate, make high school students addicted porno viewers, eventually making them susceptible to risky sexual behaviors/ practices. According to the male participants, colleges create favorable situations for practicing what they have learned from porno shows as high school students.

Though not as strongly, female participants also subscribe to male students' notion of porno videos' contribution in instilling risky sexual behaviors among high school students including women. For female students, more than pornographic films shown in video houses, it is videotapes containing sex films rented cheaply to the youth, which are influential in making them to be sexually engaged in their early teens or even before.

Once students join colleges, male participants believe, the source with bad influence is the Internet and these fashionable mobile phones, which is being increasingly accessible to students, influencing browsers negatively. Although college rules forbid students accessing indecent information from websites, students violate the rules all the same. While computers are primarily meant for educational purposes, participants complain, few students pay attention to that.

In the discussions held with both sexes, students from the country are depicted as people who are easy prey to these impacts. Not only do they become addicted to porno sites relatively fast, but they also find themselves trying to practice what they have seen in the sites in the real world. According to some participants, students from rural areas think everybody out there has sex in similar fashion and they are tempted to follow suit.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The current study sought to explore the socio-cultural context of sexual experiences, sexual behavior, safer sex practices and the risk of HIV infection of male and female college students in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic rampant in the country. Even though there are a number of colleges in Nekemte town, (both public and private), the target population of the present study were students pursuing their education in the public colleges. With the belief that studies on sexuality that are private in nature would better be understood by using a mixed methodology (Fenton et al. 2001), the study has combined qualitative and quantitative methods. The study that involved some 235 students was guided by the following major research questions:

- How do young people understand and express love and relationship in their daily lives?
- What are the hindering and permitting factors for initiating sexual relationships?
- How youths understand and express sexuality and cope with the HIV/AIDS risk in their lives?
- What are some of the changes in the meanings of traditional sexual values and mores as a result of socio-economic changes in the modern period?
- Are there youth's attitudes and behaviors permissive towards premarital sex?
- What are the health risk - behaviors associated with youth sexual involvement and behaviors?
- Do the youth protect themselves from sex-related health problems and how they practice a safe sex?

As regards to sexual engagement of students, the qualitative and the quantitative data revealed quite a mixed result. According to the estimates given by FGD participants, a very high

percentage of the student community (at least 80%) was reported to have some kind of sexual engagement. The proportion of sexually experienced students as revealed from the survey data is, in contrast, much lower than that—it is about 35%. Since there is a considerable gap between the two figures, some explanation is in order. Considering the representativeness of the sample for the quantitative segment of the study), it is tempting to accept the data from it as more plausible. In light of the literature and the nature of my qualitative data, that percentage is, I argue, an underestimation and I have some justifications. Number one, as rightly argued by researchers engaged in the field (e.g. Fenton et al. 2001); mainly due to social desirability bias characterizing sexuality studies, respondents tend to underreport their sexual experience. Secondly, a comparison of the quantitative data with reports from earlier studies also indicates that the sexual engagement of the respondents of the present study could be higher. Most important, the data supplied by the FGD participants is more convincing since the information they provided was on college students in general and not about themselves. In sum, while acknowledging that the data found via the survey questionnaire was more representative, I tend to believe the 35% figure is likely to be an underestimation.

Whatever the degree of their sexual engagement, the empirical materials from the FGDs revealed that male and female students perform sex, dominantly with one another and with non-college people alike. Three major factors seem to have contributed to facilitating the sexual practices taking place amongst the students. The first factor has to do with the absolute freedom students enjoy in the new environment. Students assume complete responsibility in managing their own life, including their sexual practices. Related with this new environment is the expectation the students bring with them about life at college. Most students equate colleges as places to enjoy life.

The second factor facilitating students' sexual activities is peer pressures on both sexes, though the pressures on female students were found to be much stronger and multifaceted. Using various deceptive mechanisms (approaching them as counselors, as academic tutors, or as considerate friends belonging to the same place of origin), male students gradually drag college women into unwanted sexual relations. Though less stringently, female students are also gravitated towards sexual relations via fellow female students with sexual experience who play the role of matchmakers. The need to get material and financial benefits from sexual partners is another indirect pressure forcing some college women to start opposite sex relationships in this days consumer society.

For male students, the sources of peer pressures are other male students with sexual experiences. By sharing adventurous and treacherous stories including dating multiple sexual partners, they pressurize other students to follow suit—in a way they encourage them to assert their masculinity. By consistently telling their fellow college men that having sex is a kind of "coming of age" and a sign of manhood, peers also pressurize their fellow male college students to assert their masculinity.

Normative pressures are the third factors that facilitate the flourishing of opposite sex relations in college settings. Practices such as drinking alcohol and *chat* chewing, arguably closely linked with sexual practices that embolden students to pursue sexual relations, can also be considered as normative pressures/ environmental factors. Indeed, the unprecedented access to porno movies, according to FGD participants, motivated students not only to start sexual relations but also tempted them to experiment what they watch there.

In non-college settings, despite many other types of sexual relations college students reportedly form, three major patterns stood out clearly: one is the sexual relations taking place

between female students and "sugar daddies"- female students are allegedly having relations with "sugar daddies", much older but rich men, in exchange for financial or other benefits. This is a troubling relation based on miscalculated hypotheses by both sexual partners. "Sugar daddies" often go after college girls with the belief that they are sexually inexperienced and they tend to perform unprotected sex. On the other hand, college women, mostly with an aim of maintaining sexual innocence, a quality appreciated by "sugar daddies", refrain from negotiating safe sex.

Male students also delve into comparable sexual relations in a non-college setting. They hunt for girls from surrounding high schools. Like that of the sexual relations between female college students and "sugar daddies", their relation is based on miscalculated anticipation about each other. Using metaphors such as "buds", "flowers" and "onions"—expressions suggestive of freshness and virginity—college students approach the school girls as people who are sexually innocent, the school girls on their part form relations with these "learned" men with a sense of being in good hands. As a result, protective sex such as condom use between these partners is thought-of. Empirical studies, however, indicated the assumptions and expectations of both groups are groundless. Getnet(2007), for example maintained that those regarded as home girls (*ve bet lijoch*), particularly students are more exposed to HIV than prostitutes are. Most troubling of all these relations are, however, the sexual relations existing between some college students and commercial sex workers. To make matters worse, college students in the current study are believed to involve themselves in these kinds of risky relations motivated by the combined effects of *chat* and liquor; when under the influence of alcohol; students are unlikely to use condoms.

On the whole, students believe having sex is acceptable for college students of their age. Some male participants even underlie that satisfying one's sexual needs is as necessary as meeting one's primary needs. However, participants are at the same time critical of most of the sexual practices that students have. From the perspectives of the male students, having multiple partners is a virtue (e.g., a sign of cultural refinement, a mark of civilization). Students having sexual experiences/ relations with commercial sex workers are, however, despised and men experiencing it make a secret of it.

In agreement with a couple of related qualitative studies, the present study showed that male and female students rarely negotiated their sexual relations. Sexual relations are often male-initiated. Instead of directly acknowledging their interests, men students would use deceptive mechanisms to start relations and their sexual motives would surface later. Generally, the finding indicated that female students lacked the assertiveness to refuse sexual advances by male (college students or otherwise).

Despite some reported signs of safer sex practices and behaviors (e.g. condom use in very spontaneous sexual relations, undergoing voluntary counseling and HIV testing, sexual abstinence, being faithful to sexual partners), the sexual culture of college students is characterized by unsafe sex practices and behaviors (non-condom use, multiple sexual partners, having sex with commercial sex workers, and failure to undertake voluntary testing). There is virtually no open discussion between sexual partners about using condoms or related matters. Sex just happens. Female students do not generally talk about sex amongst themselves and when they do, they often want to give the impression that they are "sexually innocent" (e.g. that they are virgin). Male students enjoy talking about sex but the information they exchange would often lead to unsafe sex practices. The desire to undergo voluntary counseling and HIV testing (VCT)

among the student community was reported to be very high. This apparent enthusiasm was not, however, put into practice. Instead of getting tested "today," students were inclined to procrastinate it until "tomorrow." The contraceptive use of the study population is also meager, particularly that of female students, that put them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

5.2 Recommendations

As can be realized in the concluding section above and in the discussions of the preceding chapters, there are a number of problems worth addressing in relation to the sexual experiences, sexual behavior and safer-or unsafe practices of college students in the context of HIV/AIDS pandemic. Since problems related to sexual lives of young people and issues revolving HIV/AIDS are rather complex and involve hosts of complex structural and contextual factors such as economic development, political will, gender norms (Boler & Aggleton, 2005), I would like to acknowledge that to try and provide workable recommendations is equally complicated. However, the following are worth noting recommendations:

- Contrary to the assumptions made by previous related studies in Ethiopia and elsewhere, the reliance on provision of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and some preventive mechanisms would do very little by way of bringing behavioral changes. Students themselves have become increasingly cognizant of this disconnect between knowledge and behavior. We should thus think of more practical and workable preventive measures.
- Whatever our attitudes and preferences towards sexual relations existing between young people of college age might be, most young people are increasingly involved in opposite sexual relations with one another. Including young women, the youth are openly and boldly telling us that they are entitled to sexual pleasures. Instead of making a futile

attempt to prevent the youth from sexual engagement by instilling fear in them (e.g., a fear of catching HIV/AIDS), we need to openly acknowledge their right to sexual pleasures and help them pursue it in a more responsible manner. Narratives of young people from educated families brought up in less conservative environments have shown that they are less vulnerable to risky behaviors. That could be educative.

➤ Despite expressing positive attitude towards sexual engagement between them, college students themselves have admonished some sexual practices (e.g., sexual relations between students and sex workers, sexual relations between female students and “sugar daddies”). There is thus a conducive situation for intervention by way of mitigating these admonished sexual affairs that are potentially very risky. The sexual involvement of female students with “sugar daddies” is partly attributable to the poverty characterizing people from developing nations like Ethiopia and it needs to be addressed at a macro level. Female students date “sugar daddies” in exchange for financial benefits which they would otherwise find it difficult to secure. Identifying poor female students and helping them earn some money through part-time jobs available in colleges may be a short-term solution. Raising the awareness of parents about the female students’ financial difficulties and its repercussions might also help. Addressing the more troubling sexual engagement, the sexual relations between male students and commercial sex workers is closely linked with students’ consumption of alcohol and *chat* chewing. Students are reported to “visit” sex workers motivated by liquor and *chat*. Further research that would help students to minimize chewing *chat* and drinking alcohol is needed.

- Raising students' positive attitudes and developing their skills and abilities about safer sex practices (e.g. through peer-led education, through training of life skills) might work. The enthusiasm expressed by the student community for undertaking voluntary counseling and HIV testing could be translated into practice. Currently, the treatment is given for free for those who live with the virus. Letting the students know about the availability of the treatment in the event they are sero-positive is likely to embolden them not to procrastinate HIV testing. Dealing with the reported inefficiency of the current way of handling the VCT should also bolster the practice.
- It was observed that there is disproportionate peer pressure on freshman students coming from the rural and female students in particular. Instead of treating the college youth as a single entity, interventions targeting these groups separately could be effective. Providing students' assertiveness training in resisting peer pressures (e.g., saying "no" to unwanted sexual relations) and negotiating sexual relations is helpful. Under optimum situations, such training could be given as early as in primary schools.
- Finally, it is highly recommended that related studies (preferably qualitative and quantitative researches) be conducted in other colleges, found in other towns of the country may give us additional data on the sexual experiences, sexual behavior, and safer/unsafe practices of Ethiopian college students whose number is on the increase.

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SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE PREPARED FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

My name is Tolessa Gameda and I'm a graduate student in Sociology at Addis Ababa University. I'm currently undertaking research on "socio-cultural context of youth sexuality and related health issues among college students in Nekemte town" as a partial fulfillment for the requirements of MA Degree in sociology. Your response to the questions below is vital to the success of my study and I kindly request your cooperation in providing your responses. The research finding is purely academical and no part of your response is made accessible to anybody in any form. I want to thank you for your willingness and patience to fill this questionnaire in advance.

Part One: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age -----

Sex-----

Name of the College-----

Place of residence: Urban----- Rural-----

Place of Origin: Urban----- Rural-----

What is your current educational status? - First Year -----

- Second Year -----

- Third Year-----

Program of Study -Regular----- Evening -----

What is your average monthly pocket money? -----

With whom do you live currently?-----

Which religion do you follow?

A. Orthodox

D. Catholic

B. Muslim

E. If others, please specify-----

C. Protestant

How frequent do you go to your church/mosque?

- A. Daily
- B. Many times a week
- C. Once a week
- D. Once a month

- E. Once a year
- F. On holidays

G. If others, please specify-----

What does your religion say about:

a. Virginity? -----

b. Premarital sexual intercourse? -----

c. Having multiple sexual partners? -----

Do you follow your religion's rules on sexuality?

Yes----- No-----

Would you explain why? -----

From where do you get most information about sexuality and HIV/AIDS?

(Select two most important sources)

- A. Family
- B. School
- C. Books
- D. Friends

- E. Mass Media
- F. Health workers
- G. If others, please specify-----

Do your friends have sexual partners? Yes----- No-----

If yes' do you think they have more than one sexual partner? How many-----

Does your very intimate (same sex) friend has sexual partner?

Yes----- No-----

Do you think your peers' sexual behavior influences that of yours?

Yes----- No-----

If yes, how?-----

Can you resist pressure that comes from your peers to have sex? (**Would You Explain Your Feeling Please**)-----

Part 2: Love and Relationship

Have you ever fall in love?

Yes ----- No ----- (**Skip to Q. No 7**)

If yes, how old were you at that time? -----

Did you tell to the person you fall in love with?

Yes ----- No -----

Have you ever been loved? Yes----- No-----

If yes, how did it feel to be loved?

A. Adventurous

B. Higher self-esteem

C. Proud

D. Amazement

E. Uncomfortable

F. If other, please specify -----

Do you tell to the person if you fall in love?

Yes----- No-----

If yes, how?

- A. Directly to the person
- B. Through letter
- C. Through friends
- D. Through telephone or SMS
- E. If other, please specify-----

If 'No' for question number 9, why?

- A. Fear of rejection
- B. Because of religion
- C. Fear of discrimination
- D. Because of culture
- E. Fear of other people
- F. If other, please specify-----

Have you ever been in a relationship? Yes----- No-----

12.1 If 'No' why do you decided not to enter into a love relationship? -----

Do you have a boy/girl friend now?

Yes-----No----- (Skip to Q.No.19)

Is he/she your fist boy/girl friend? Yes----- No-----

14.1 If 'No' what happened to your fist relationship? -----

How long have you been together? -----

Do you love him/her? Yes----- No-----

If yes, do you think you will never love another person again?

Yes----- No-----

17.1 Do you trust him/her? Yes-----No -----Why? -----

17.2 Are you honest to your boy/girl friend? Yes-----No-----Why -----

How long do you think the relationship will sustain?

- A. Until marriage
- B. Until graduation
- C. I'm not sure

Is it common to have a relationship without love?

Yes----- No-----

If yes, why?

- A. For money
- B. For entertainment
- C. For sexual pleasure
- D. To gain academic advantages
- E. To show he/she is wanted
- F. Fear of torture
- G. If other, please specify -----

Do you believe those in a relationship should make sex?

Yes----- No-----

Do you think a relationship will sustain without sex?

Yes----- No-----

Which of the following do you think affects love most? (Would you put in rank, please?)

- A. Money
- B. Talk
- C. Physical Beauty

D. Personality

E. Educational Achievement

F. Religion

G. Family Background

H. If others, please specify -----

25. What do you think makes a girl say 'yes' to a relationship? (Select two most important factors)

A. Money

B. Love

C. Good Manners

D. Fame

E. Physical Beauty

F. Intimidation

G. If others, please specify-----

26. At what age do you like to get married? -----

Part Three: Sexual Behavior

1. Have you ever had sexual experience?

Yes ----- No----- (Skip to Q. No 8)

2. If yes, how old were you at your first sex? -----

3. With whom did you make your first sex? -----

3.1 Do you remember your feeling of your first sexual experience? (Would you explain please?) -----

4. How many sexual partners did you have so far? -----

4.1 Why did you choose to have this number of sexual partners? -----

4.2 Is it good to have many sexual partners?

Yes-----No----- I don't know -----

4.3 Would you explain why? -----

5. Do you have a sexual partner now? Yes----- No-----

6. How often do you make sex?

- A. Daily
- B. Once a week
- C. Once in two weeks
- D. Once in a month
- E. If other, please specify-----

7. Do you practice different sex positions? Yes ----- No-----

7.1 If 'Yes' from where you heard/saw it for the first time? -----

7.2 Do you know the so called **new styles of sex**? (Please specify those you know) -----

7.3 Who initiated such styles for the first time, you or your partner? -----

7.4 Do you discuss such issues with your partner? Yes ----- No -----

8. If you did not have any sexual experience, when do you think is the ideal time to start sex?

-For Males-----

- For Females-----

9. Why didn't you start sex so far? (Select two most important reasons)

- A. Because I didn't get the opportunity
- B. Because I don't think it is right to do it at this age
- C. Fear of HIV/AIDS and other STDS
- D. Because I don't want to do it before marriage
- E. Because of fear of my parents

F. Due to religious reasons

G. If others, please specify-----

10. When you start sex, do you want to practice different sex positions?

Yes----- No-----

11. Do you have a special value for virginity? (Would you explain your feeling, please?) -----

12. If you are a virgin, what do you feel about it?

A. Proud B. Ashamed C. Nothing

13. Do you think it is hard to graduate a virgin from College?

Yes----- No-----

14. If 'yes' for the above question, why do you think it is so?

15. What do you think are the circumstances that stimulate young people to have sex?

- A. Substance abuse
- B. Peer pressure
- C. Pornography movies
- D. Love
- E. If others, please specify-----

16. To your knowledge, where do students meet to engage in a relationship?

- A. College campus
- B. Hotels and Cafeterias
- C. Bushes
- D. Wedding and other ceremonies
- E. Religious places
- F. Streets
- G. Chat houses

H. Neighborhoods

I. If others, please specify-----

17. Do you know the so called "same sex sexual relationship or homosexuality"? Yes-----
No-----

18. If yes, do you remember from where you heard it for the first time?

19. Do you support or oppose such a relationship? Why? -----

20. Have you ever heard of homosexual students in your college?

Yes----- No-----

21. Do you think sex education should be given in schools and colleges?

Yes----- No-----

26.1 If 'Yes' why? -----

Part Four: Risk Behaviors

1. Which of the following substances do you use?

-Cigarette Yes----- No-----

-Chat Yes----- No-----

-Alcohols Yes----- No-----

-Other drugs, please specify-----

2. Do you use any substances (like drugs, drinks, chat) during sexual intercourse?

Yes----- No-----

3. If yes, what do you use?

- Cigarette Yes----- No-----

-Chat Yes----- No-----

-Alcohols Yes----- No-----

-Other drugs, please specify-----

3.1 Do you think that using substances affects your decision for intercourse? Please, would you explain how? -----

3.2 Do you believe using substances affects contraceptive use? Yes----- No-----

3.3 If 'Yes' how?-----

4. What do you do to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS?

A. Abstinence

B. Be faithful with my partner

C. Use condom

D. If other, please specify-----

5. Do you use condom during sexual intercourse?

A. Always

B. Most of the time

C. Sometimes

D. Never

5.1 Have you used condom during your first sexual intercourse? Why? -----

5.2 Have you used condom during your recent sexual intercourse? Why? -----

6. Have you ever watched pornographic movies? Yes----- No-----

7. Does watching such movies affect your sexual behavior? How? (Would you explain your feeling, please?) -----

8. Do you use any contraceptive with your sexual partner now?

Yes----- No-----

8.1 Which method do you use most of the time? -----

8.2 Do you discuss about contraceptive use with your partner? -----

8.3 Who is more powerful, you or your partner?

9. Have you ever got pregnant? Yes----- No-----

10. If yes, for the above question what did you do with the pregnancy?

A. Aborted

B. Gave birth

10.1 How many times? -----

11. How many sexual partners did you have in the last 6 months? -----

12. What do you think is the role of having many sexual partners in the transmission of HIV among the youngsters? **(Would you explain your feeling, please?)**-----

14. Have you ever changed your sexual behavior because of HIV/AIDS? **(Would you explain your feeling, please?)**-----

15. Do you communicate, openly and freely, about your sexuality and related cases? Whom do you prefer to communicate with and about what?-----

THANK YOU!!!

FGD Discussion Guide

1. What are the narrated sexual experiences/engagements of college students?
2. How do female and male students perceive their sexual relations?
3. To what degree do they engage in and negotiate safer-sex practices?
4. What factors facilitate/ constrain condom use?
5. How is relationship viewed and what should it include to be a proper relationship?
7. What is students' experience of love and relationship?
8. Students' Perception of Sex and the role of sex in a loving relationship?
9. How do you view love, relationship and sex in one opposite sex relationship?
10. Do you communicate, openly and freely, about your sexuality and related cases? Whom do you prefer to communicate with and about what?
11. Do you think there is equal power relationship (between males and females) in partner selection, expression of love, decisions in a relationship and feeling of responsibility? What role does such power relationship play in a decision to participate in risky sexual behaviors and prevention of HIV/AIDS?
12. What factors do you think shape youth sexual behavior?
13. How do you evaluate students' sexuality in your college?
14. What do you do to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS?
15. What do you think are factors exposing students to HIV/AIDS?
16. Practices of safe sex among college students.

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS


1. Do students usually come for guidance for cases of love and relationship?
2. From reported cases, how do you understand students' experience of love and relationship?
3. Is it common to have relationships among students in the same college? If yes, how does the administration see this?
4. How do you understand the nature of love and relationship among students?
5. What is your knowledge of students' sex experience?
6. What do you think are students' major challenges and risks in their experience of love and relationship?
7. How do you evaluate students' exposure to HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health problems?
8. Are there any reported cases of abortion and other reproductive health issues by students?
9. What do you, as a college administration, do to improve students' sexual behavior, to protect students from HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health problems?

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology and has not been presented for a degree in this or any other university. All source of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Declared by:

Name: Tolessa Gemedu

Signature: 

Date: 14/03/23

Place: Department of Sociology, Addis Ababa University