CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0 SITE AND HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF AKAMBA PEOPLE

The Akamba people are classified under the Bantu speaking group who predominantly occupy Kitui, Machakos, Makueni and Mwingi districts in Eastern Province, Kenya. Kenya is situated in the Eastern part of the African continent. The country lies between 5 degrees north and 5 degrees south latitudes and between 24 degrees west and 31 degrees east longitude. The country is divided into 8 provinces and 72 districts and has a total area of 582,646 square kilometres of which 571,466 square kilometres forms land area (see map – Appendix 2). There are about 42 ethnic groups which are distributed throughout the country, with Akamba people as a major tribe. The total estimated population in the last National survey carried out in 2003 was 32.2 million people (KDHS, 2003) in Kenya. The Akamba people are the fourth largest ethnic group in Kenya numbering around 3.5 million people (11% of the total population). The people (plural) are called Akamba, one person Mukamba, their language Kikamba and the place of their abode is Ukamba or Ukambani.

There are many myths and oral traditions which suggest how the Akamba people came to settle in the region known as Ukambani. One oral tradition suggest that the Akamba people wandered south into Malawi and Zambia before turning northwards Kilimanjaro area in northern Tanzania (Muthiani 1973:11). The tradition pin-points a place known as Mbwa to have been the original point of dispersal. According to Akonga
(1986), oral traditions indicate that Mbwa was probably Shungwaya, in the horn of Africa. The Akamba people are said to have wandered south along the coast of East Africa before they eventually came to a place referred to Mwa Mwasas in Tanzania. The Akamba speaking groups of people among the Nyamwezi in Tanzania are the living evidence of the Akamba of Kenya having sojourned in that part of Africa for a while.

They are detailed to have proceeded northwards from Mwa Mwasas into Kenya settling in Chullu hills, close to the border of Kenya and Tanzania (Akonga, 1986). Akong’a observes that due to draught as well as sporadic attacks by the Maasai people, the Akamba people dispersed with one group to coast of Kenya and settled in the area called Mariakani. This group was nicknamed “Mavikila Mbua”, meaning those who followed the rain. The second group temporarily settled on Kibwezi Hill, preoccupying themselves mainly with collecting honey, fruits, roots and leaves. The group according to Akong’a (1986) was nicknamed “Ikuli” because of their occupation, living like monkeys. The group later migrated and crossed river Athi, into Kitui district through Ikutha. The third group, the bulk of Akamba people after leaving Chullu hills moved to Machakos, more particularly Ulu, Mbooni and Kilungu hills. Overtime, the Akamba people eventually spread and scattered to fill the geographical area known as Ukambani region in Kenya which comprise Kitui, Machakos, Mwingi and Makueni regions.

In a different version, a fascinating myth of creation is reproduced from Akamba oral stories, and narratives about their origin. Akong’a (1986: 134) asserts that according to the myth of origin, “Mulungu” or God created spirits and human beings. The first Akamba were a man and his wife who, after the process of creation, were tossed from Mulungu's or God’s abode in the skies onto Nzaui mound in Machakos district.
Mulungu also tossed down livestock for the couple to look after and to use their products. As a result of much rain, many more mounds formed from one of them, and miraculously emerged another couple. The myth indicates that the children of the couple tossed from the skies were all boys while the children of the couple from the earth were all girls. Eventually, the sons of the first couple used their livestock to pay bridewealth in order to marry the daughters of the second couple. The descendants of these people who moved away from Nzau in Machakos district spread to other nearby regions in search of pasture and water, and these are the people referred to as the Akamba of today (Mbula, 1974: 34).

The last description into the historical origin of the Akamba people quotes a Kikuyu myth by Middleton (1953: 15). Middleton says that Kikuyu, Akamba and Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania were born as three brothers. However, in order to give them socio-economic differentiation, their father gave them a spear, bow and arrows and a digging stick for each to pick whichever he liked. Maasai chose the spear and became a pastoralist; Akamba chose the bow and arrows and became hunter/gatherers; while the Kikuyu chose the digging stick and became an agriculturalist.

This study was carried out in Machakos district, Kenya, an area predominantly viewed to be occupied by the Akamba people. The district covers an area of 6281 sq. km. and is divided into 12 administrative divisions namely Central, Kathiiani, Yathui, Athiriver, Matungulu, Mwala, Yatta, Ndithini, Kangundo, Katangi, Kalama and Masinga. (See Map-Appendix 3). It has a population of 1,102,934 (projection 2006) and a growth rate of 2.8% per annum (Ministry of Health Report, 2005). The choice of Machakos district for this study was predicated on the fact that it has a larger population compared to other districts occupied by the Akamba people. Moreover, Machakos district is viewed
as the epitome of Akamba culture, and indeed, historically, the other districts (Makueni, Mwingi and Kitui) sprung from or are offshoots of the district.

2.1 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was designed for the adolescents in the age category 12-19 years, with emphasis on two age sets 12-15 years and 16-19 years. It involved school going boys and girls in these two age categories. The study examined the sexual behaviour of the adolescents and in particular, sexual intercourse, relationships, sexual attitudes and knowledge. Additionally, the study investigated the factors that account for early and indiscriminate sexual behaviour as well as the accompanying consequences among the Akamba adolescents of Machakos district, Kenya.

2.2 STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLE TECHNIQUES

The study was carried out among primary schools and secondary schools within Machakos district. Two sets of adolescents; that is, 12-15 years and 16-19 year olds were involved. The standard eight class (primary) represented the age category 12-15 years, while those in form four class (secondary) represented the age group 16-19 years. The purpose for the choice of the two age subsets was to be able to access, understand and explore the sexual behaviour of early adolescents and those at later stage of adolescence.

Machakos district with 12 administrative divisions has 155 secondary schools and 795 primary schools. All the schools form a sampling frame. The schools are spread almost evenly in all the divisions. Out of the 12 divisions, simple random probability sampling was used to choose and concentrate the study in only six divisions. This
ensured every division had a known probability of being selected for the study. The six divisions were arrived at through writing the name of each division in a piece of paper, folded and placed in a box, then shuffled. After every shuffling, a folded piece of paper was picked and the division represented selected for the sample. Through this procedure, the following were selected for this study: Central, Yatta, Mwala, Kalama, Kathiiani and Kangundo divisions.

From the six selected divisions, one secondary school and primary school were to be included in the study. In order to arrive at the six primary schools and six secondary schools from the six divisions, Judgemental sampling was utilised. The main reason was to ensure both rural and urban school setups were to be represented in the study equally. In total, 12 schools participated in this study with 6 rural and 6 urban or semi-urban schools being represented for each category (Primary and Secondary) in equal numbers. Moreover, purposefully, the study was carried out in mixed schools; that is, schools with both boys and girls. Ten boys and ten girls participated in each school, thus in total, 120 girls and 120 boys formed part of this study. The choice of mixed schools was predicated on assumption that in such schools, where boys and girls interact at close proximity, sexual behaviour is likely to be more manifested compared to single sex schools.

For the purpose of arriving at the 10 boys and 10 girls for every school category, the assumption was that each class had 50 students, this was divided with the required number of 10 students (50/10 = 5) thus, the sampling interval was 5 (five). Subsequently, the class register of names was used in each school, and through Systematic Random Sampling procedure, every fifth student was picked from the register, until the total number required. This applied for both girls and boys. In total, the study sample in the
primary school was 120 adolescents (60 boys and 60 girls) and the same figure of 120 (60 boys and 60 girls) applied for secondary schools, totalling 240 adolescents.

The nature of the study also required further application of Purposive Sampling in selecting key informants to participate in the FGDs and in in-depth interviews. In total, 31 key opinion leaders; that is 6 village elders, 6 teachers, 4 parents, 3 Church leaders, 3 social workers and 3 medical practitioners participated in this study- 25 opinion leaders participated in in-depth interviews while the other six comprising all above categories of opinion leaders participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD):

2.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data for this study was collected using various research techniques. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour is well examined using qualitative procedures and methods (Bernard, 1988, Casley and Kumar, 1988). Qualitative research methods provide the respondent with room to offer personal accounts for their attitudes, motivations, perceptions, views and feelings, the meanings and interpretations given to events and things as well as their behaviour (Hakim, 1987). Through qualitative research, behaviour is understood from the point of view of the participant and in its socio-cultural context. Sexual behaviour is both verbal and non-verbal. It is viewed as a private, individual, sensitive and taboo subject which cannot easily and openly be discussed particularly within the context of many cultures. Due to the sensitivity involved, any study on sexual behaviour, according to Njau (1993), requires a lot of in-depth knowledge and understanding of people’s values and social norms. These cultural qualities can only be understood through use of qualitative methodologies. Further, according to Njau (1993),
qualitative research has been recommended for deviant studies. When respondents are assured of confidentiality and anonymity, they open up and discreetly describe sensitive issues including their sexual behaviour. The qualitative research instruments utilised to elicit information on sexuality from the respondents included:

2.3.1 SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Bernard (1988) points out that a self-administered questionnaire is an important tool to be used by respondents to willingly and accurately report socially undesirable behaviour and traits. The self-administered questionnaire in this study was administered to the school adolescents in both primary and secondary schools. In order to ensure confidentiality and willingness to respond, the respondents were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaire and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. They were also assured that not even their friends or teachers would know what each one had reported. For ensuring that no collusion, duplication and contamination of information occurred, the respondents were not allowed to discuss the questionnaire with their friends before answering. The purpose of this study was made very clear to the students so that they could not associate their responses with imminent victimization. They were thus assured of maximum confidentiality and anonymity to responses provided.

The respondents sat far apart from one another in order to ensure objectivity and also, so that one could report according to one’s understanding. The clarification of questions was done by the researcher where necessary to ensure the respondents understood the questionnaire contents.
Bradburn and Sudman (1979) recommended the use of long open-ended questions when seeking information on threatening and socially undesirable behaviour. This study used open-ended questions in some of the questions. This was more in questions which sought explanations to certain issues. Open-ended questions were useful in eliciting information on opinions, attitudes, feelings and perceptions on their sexual behaviour. The close-ended questions sought information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and information on actual sexual experimentation.

2.3.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provide valuable qualitative information (Casley and Kumar, 1988). Further, Dawson, et al., (1992) and Hakim (1987), suggest that an FGD is a group discussion that gathers together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to deliberate on specific topic of interest to the researcher. Focus group discussions were conducted with three groups of respondents, one each at the secondary school level and at the primary school level. FGDs made it possible to derive direct quotations from the participants as well as to have a direct interaction with the adolescents through which one could also gauge and interpret their behaviour. Synonyms were used in certain cases to imply personal behaviour or experiences.

Each focus group held at both levels comprised of ten participants (five boys and five girls). As the FGDs progressed, the proceedings were recorded while at same time, one adolescent boy and girl acted as note takers of issues discussed. The researcher further moderated and facilitated the group discussions. The tape recorded information reinforced or complemented the notes taken by the adolescents.
The criterion of choosing members for the FGDs was through Systematic Random Sampling procedure. After randomly identifying the first participant in the class register, the other students were chosen systematically up to the required number, for example, 5, 10, 15, etc, for both boys and girls. The other FGD was carried out with only five village elders in the Central division, Machakos district. During the FGD sessions, the participants were well encouraged to participate freely and reticent participants would be encouraged to participate by asking for their opinions. In order to gather qualitative and broad information, the application of probing and prodding techniques was necessary. The participants were also given room to ask and answer questions amongst themselves.

2.3.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND NARRATIVES

Bernard (1988) and Hakim (1987) pointed out that semi-structured as well as unstructured in-depth interviews work well when dealing with key informants. Both offer room for thorough exploration of an issue. An interview guide was used with a list of questions and topics to be covered. The probing technique was also used to gather more information. The use of the in-depth interviews and probing techniques enabled eliciting information from the key informants' opinions, attitudes, knowledge and feelings towards pre-marital sexual behaviour. Narratives recited by key informants were utilized to gather historic and legendary details about traditional Akamba culture as well as detailed information on specific case studies of undesirable adolescent sexual behaviour involvements. Narratives according to Oxford Advanced Dictionary (2005), refers to a "tale, story, recital of facts, especially story told by people." Through narratives, personal
accounts and experiences were collected from village elders and opinion leaders at large, related to the study. Further, during FGDs with adolescents some went ahead to narrate their own sexual behaviour experiences.

2.3.4 NON-PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION

This is a method of data collection in the social sciences which is also known as unobtrusive research or covert observation (Srivastava, 1994). It involves the observation of events and behaviour without getting embedded in them. The subjects being observed rarely have any idea of the researcher’s presence. It was necessary to observe the kind of environment where interactions between adolescents and the community took place. Variables of interest and relevant to the study for observation included nature of the housing structures in Machakos district, the transport system, recreational facilities, clothing and hair patterns, peer groups and the general behaviour as manifested by adolescents in the public. In order to get a thorough grasp of adolescent behaviour in its natural setup, the researcher was compelled to attend and observe adolescent behaviours during school music festivals, drama, games, church youth groups and in other cases visited disco theatres and clubs frequented by the youth in Machakos district.

2.3.5 USE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

The nature of the study called for a review of secondary literature from libraries and other institutions relevant to the study. Data and records were obtained from the youth serving organisations in Machakos district, voluntary and counselling centres (VCTs), Machakos provincial hospital, Ministry of education offices, Machakos district,
as well as websites and newspaper articles related to the study. Also, of great importance were studies as well as publications on adolescent sexual behaviour and historical and socio-cultural information about the Akamba way’s of life. The researcher also gathered material from University of Nairobi Libraries, Nehru Memorial and Jawaharlal Nehru University Libraries in India, NGOs dealing with adolescent issues as well as the World Bank libraries in Nairobi, Kenya and New Delhi.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected through the FGDs, in-depth interviews and observations were necessary for deductive as well as descriptive purposes. The questionnaires offered information which was first coded into data sheets then, summarised through SPSS and Microsoft excel which were crucial in developing proportions (percentages), averages and tables. Also, FGDs, interviews, narratives and ethnographic literature offered useful data for quotations and verbatim. Information from interviews and narratives were transcribed and later edited for the purpose of presentation.

2.5 STUDY DESIGN

The design of this study was of qualitative type. Data was collected among adolescents using qualitative methods among them namely, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews and narratives which took place with the key informants. The self-administered questionnaire provided descriptive information using percentage and tables. Also in analysis, deductive methods and quotations were utilized.
2.6 PRE-TESTING QUESTIONNAIRE

The first phase of this study was to pre-test the self-administered questionnaire and interview guides with a number of respondents and key informants. The pre-test took place in Athi River division, Machakos district, Kenya. Two schools; that is, a primary school and a secondary, were chosen for the exercise. Also, two key informants were involved in the pre-test. A rough draft questionnaire and interview guide were used to identify accuracy in the flow of questions in order to make corrections where necessary.

An observation on the responses was made to ascertain whether the research questions and objectives were being addressed. Of great importance also were question wording, question order, missing questions and words, inappropriate phrasing as well as inadequate, redundant or confusing response categories.

2.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the course of the fieldwork, several difficulties were experienced:-

1) The nature of the topic “Adolescent Sexual Behaviour”, as observed did not appear to be comfortable especially with several school Principals. Suspicion compounded with anxiety that the topic was sensitive to the students made some teachers reluctant to permit administering of questionnaires. It required a lot of prodding and explaining that this was an academic research, and furthermore, the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education had issued a research permit.

Moreover, there was noted indifference and lack of cooperation from several head-teachers. In one secondary school in Kathiiani division, the Principal bluntly declined to avail the students for the research, suggesting that the questionnaires ought to
be left behind to be administered by one of her teachers. Leaving the questionnaires behind would have interfered with the quality of information. Consequently, the researcher quietly opted for a nearby school with a promise to comeback, which went on successfully. Other head teachers would insist to have one of his/her teachers present during FGDs or questionnaire answering sessions. Although all along this effort would be surmounted, it was queer for it would also have compromised the nature of responses adolescents were to provide.

2) The other noted handicap was Government bureaucracy in getting the research permit. The process required getting clearance from the Ministry of Education headquarters in Nairobi and thereafter, subsequent clearance from Machakos district Commissioner’s office and the local Ministry of education office, Machakos district. This daunting process took exactly one month. This was lost valuable period owing to the fact that the researcher was to be in Kenya for a period of six months after having taken time off from the university where the he had been enrolled for PhD programme in India (Jawaharlal Nehru University).

There were further frustrations in accessing valuable statistical records relevant to this study from Government offices, more so, from Machakos Provincial General Hospital and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) offices in Machakos district. Although some information was later collected, the time wasted in waiting and in dealing with “bouncing officers” was quite unnecessary. At the TSC office in Machakos town, information on disciplinary cases for randy or amorous teachers was inaccessible as they were said to be classified but the duty officer intimated that there were numerous cases of
teachers awaiting disciplinary procedures for either impregnating or found to have illicit affairs with school girls.

3) There was weather problems, rough terrain as well as inadequate finances. During the time of carrying out the research, the region of Machakos was experiencing the short rains in April and May 2006. This made accessibility of some schools and divisions an uphill task. Some roads were totally impassable, resulting in long distance walking to elicit information. In the initial stages of the research there were financial deficiencies, but later on, the Post-graduate and Research Institute of Maseno University, Kenya, granted some research funds.

4) Lastly, even though some samples for this study as well as some sampling techniques (purposive and judgemental) may not be statistically significant, there is a great hope to generate insights into the phenomenon under investigation.